CHAPTER 23: DINNER TIME

Seeing Sebastian right in front of her, Claire took a deep breath. His words still resonated inside her head, and she wanted to burst into tears at the thought of him suspecting her. But she didn't want to let him know she was hurt because of him. He didn't deserve to feel as if he had caused her pain when he did nothing wrong. It was just her past self that was pampered by Sebastian that couldn't take the distance he put between them now. It was not his fault that he hadn't lived the nightmarish life she once had and hence didn't know her as much as she did him. She should just give him time.

Trying to hide how upset she really was, she forced a smile on her face.

"It's time for dinner," she said in a cheerful tone and tried not to wince at the high pitch of her voice. It sounded so fake!

Sebastian frowned at her, wondering how she was back this soon when she had just gone with Liam. Didn't she say she wanted to have a walk? So where was that annoying brat now? Did he ditch her? Though he didn't want to see Liam and Claire together, the thought of him abandoning her didn't sit well with Sebastian. The prick will pay if he hurts his mate!

Seeing Sebastian's curious gaze, Claire realized he must be wondering where Liam was. But Claire was in no mood to talk about that poisonous jerk, and she promptly ignored his curiosity.

"The dinner will start soon. Let's go to the dining hall."

Sebastian shook off the strange feeling he got from Claire and nodded at her.

"Alright," he replied, and Claire forced another smile before turning to walk. She led Sebastian to the dining hall, both of them silent the entire way, each lost in their own thoughts. Claire was still upset about him investigating her while Sebastian wondered why he got the feeling something was off with her when his investigator was sure everything was fine in her life.

Before they knew it, they were already standing in front of the dining hall and Claire turned to Sebastian, opening her mouth to speak. Then she shook her head, unable to find anything to say.

They both looked at each other, a strange feeling enveloping their hearts. Both needing the other to comfort them but feeling distance seep between them with each moment that passed. Everything had felt perfect the moment they held each other in their arms, but now, they were standing there, looking at each other as if they were strangers. If only they could have lived in that moment forever. If only...

In the end, they just turned away from each other silently and entered the dining room. Inside, they spotted Gavin and Liam waiting for them there. They must have finished the work earlier to reach the dining hall before Claire and Sebastian. Well, she had kinda hoped her father would set Liam with more tasks and it would be just him joining the dinner. No such luck, though.

After the Alphas greeted each other, they took their seats, with Claire sitting next to Liam and Sebastian on the other side. The meal started soon after and to Claire's relief, Liam didn't try to feed her or do anything dramatic of that sort like he did in the restaurant.

As Claire started munching on the food, her mind wandered back to the moment she heard Sebastian demand his man to investigate her more. She had taken his affection for her for granted, and the reality that he was doubtful of her was hard to accept. Claire had expected him to trust and accept her instantly the moment he met her, and knowing he didn't, she didn't know what to think. The rational part of her knew that for him she was a stranger now and it will take time before he trusts her wholly. But the part of her that had known him for two years couldn't accept that the man who had always been there for her just changed to a stranger who was wary of her. She couldn't wait until he became her Sebastian again. The one who will hold her even if the entire world is against her.

Even though Sebastian wanted to avoid it, his eyes had a mind of their own and his gaze wandered to Claire. He frowned when he saw her chewing her food absentmindedly, a faraway look in her eyes. She looked lost in her thoughts and if the furrows in her brow were any indication; they weren't happy thoughts.

When she stopped munching and just sat there without taking another bite, Sebastian realised that something was going on with her. She seemed upset, and he tried to remember if he had seen anything that would have caused her trouble. She was fine when she was talking to Sasha and even when she left. So what would have happened in the short time she had gone away with that asshole? Did he do something to hurt her? But she didn't seem to have any issue with him when she sat next to Liam. So what exactly happened to her?

Even though he couldn't fathom the reason, his instincts were screaming at him to help his mate. Seeing her so lost, he couldn't help but want to cheer her up. But how?

Sebastian bit his lips, trying to think of ways to help Claire without being obvious. His gaze fell on Alpha Gavin, who was enjoying the dessert on his plate, his eyes twinkling merrily. He looked perfectly fine, and Sebastian wondered why Claire was so worried about him.

Sebastian straightened up as an idea hit him. Claire was worried about her father! Now he knew what exactly could

cheer her up. Hoping he was right, he smiled and turned to Gavin.

"So Alpha Gavin, how is your health nowadays?"

Gavin looked at Sebastian with a puzzled look, wondering why Sebastian was suddenly worried about his health. Then he shrugged it off, thinking it was just a casual enquiry.

"I am perfectly alright, Alpha Sebastian. In fact, I think I am doing better than all you young chaps." He raised his brows at Sebastian jokingly and at that moment he looked so much like his daughter that Sebastian couldn't help but smile fondly.

"Well, Claire was worried about your health," Sebastian said, and all eyes went on Claire who was gazing at Gavin with an anxious look. Seeing her worry, Gavin's eyes softened.

"My pack physician, Doctor Jordan, will be back from his trip this week. If you don't mind, I would arrange his visit here to check you and conduct some tests," Sebastian offered and threw a glance at Claire to see her straightening up. A bright smile formed on her face as she stared at Sebastian gratefully. He felt his breath hitch as he saw the way her eyes lightened up with hope. Whatever trouble she was having was forgotten upon hearing his words. Perfect!

"But.." Gavin started and Claire turned to him, a frown on her face.

"No buts. You are sick and I won't settle for nothing but the

best treatment for you."

Beside Claire, Liam squirmed in his seat.

"Darling, I don't think you should pressure the Alpha like this. If he says he is fine, he should be. He knows his body the best, right? Asking him to do tests and all, you will make him feel sick and that will do more harm than good," Liam said in a sagely voice, making Claire frown. As if he cares. What an act! ①

"I don't see what harm it can cause. If he is fine, the tests will tell as such. It will give me peace of mind to know my father is well."

"Alright children. Don't bicker." Alpha Gavin called out, making everyone look at him. "Princess, I think I am fine," he began and Claire frowned. "But if you want me to get checked, I have no problem with it. I know you are worried for me and you seem excited about this doctor. So let's arrange for his visit and ease your worry, kiddo."

Claire beamed at her father, excitement radiating off her making Gavin and Sebastian smile.

"Thank you, Dad! I will truly feel good to know you are fine as you say."

"Whatever you want, my princess."

As the father and daughter grinned at each other, Sebastian smiled seeing his mate's happiness. It had hurt his heart to

see her look so upset and now seeing her excitement; he felt lighter. He would do anything to see her smile like this. Always.

But as everyone else sat there smiling, only one person had a frown on his face. Next to Claire, Liam bit his lips anxiously, beads of sweat falling off his forehead. This doctor visit would not be a good thing. He could feel it in his bones...

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