

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna -

Chapter 321: PDA[1,471 words]

Gilbert blinked rapidly, trying to claw back some control over his scattered thoughts. How could this woman possibly be his mate?

His wolf was moving restlessly inside him, but his human mind was still several steps behind.

"I... I don't know what you're talking about," he lied, refusing to claim any Serrano as his mate. His cheeks burned with a rare flush as he stared at her, equal parts dazed and wary at how bold she had been. Apart from not wanting any Serrano, he'd heard so much about Laila he would never have someone like her as his mate. This was something that could never work out.

Laila's lips curved into a slow knowing smile. His mother was an elder, one locked in a quiet, simmering feud with her uncle, and her uncle would absolutely lose his mind if he discovered her fated mate was Gilbert. Even though to get back at her uncle, Laila would make this work.

She lifted her free hand and slowly ran her thumb across his lower lip, tracing the wetness she had left behind. The simple touch sent another jolt straight through him. Gilbert's breath hitched audibly.

"I hope this haunts you until you understand exactly what I'm saying," she murmured, her voice dropping into an intimate tone. Her eyes held his for one long, charged second, letting him see the storm swirling behind them, the rejection she had just walked away from with Sebastian, and the rejection she had no intention of accepting twice in one day.

Laila had never been a one-man kind of woman, but Sebastian's rejection and her uncle's action had lit something reckless in her, something that wanted to push back against the world. She leaned in and pressed a final kiss to the corner of his mouth.

Then she released his collar.

Laila stepped back smoothly, smoothing down the front of her dress as though she hadn't just upended his entire world in the middle of a hallway.

Gilbert remained pinned against the wall, his chest still rising and falling unevenly, one hand drifting up unconsciously to touch his lips where her thumb had traced. His wolf whined in protest at the sudden distance, already mourning the loss of her scent and closeness.

She turned on her heel, then paused, glancing back over her shoulder one last time. "Doctor Gilbert," she said softly, almost like a promise, "you'll be seeing more of me."

With that, Laila walked away, her hips swaying with that same familiar confidence, even as fresh tears pricked at the corners of her eyes. She refused to let them fall again, and smiled through wiping them away.

Gilbert stood frozen for a long moment, staring after her retreating figure. His heart hammered violently against his ribs.

The faint mate bond, if that was even what this electric pull was, hummed beneath his skin. He bent slowly to retrieve his tablet, his fingers trembling slightly as he picked it up.

"Damn it," he muttered under his breath, dragging a hand through his hair. For the first time in years, the composed, unshakable pack physician felt completely unmoored, and scared shitless. Of every she-wolf in Silver, it had to be Laila Serrano.

"I have to avoid her from now on." He muttered, hurrying toward the Alpha's office and trying desperately to hide the flush still burning across his face.

When Gilbert entered the office, he found the Alpha walking toward his private room, but Sebastian stopped the moment Gilbert came through the door. Still reeling from the encounter in the hallway, the doctor failed to notice at first how his entrance had made the Alpha's expression shift into a frown of open irritation, not until he felt the atmosphere in the room change and looked up to find that dark scowl aimed directly at him.

"Can't a man get a single day of peace with his wife in this pack? Why does everyone keep coming to disturb my time?" Sebastian said with barely concealed annoyance, and Gilbert composed himself enough to notice the Luna standing at the private room's doorway in nothing but the Alpha's shirt, and he understood immediately that he had walked into something he very much shouldn't have.

"My apologies, Alpha. You told me to report to you today." Gilbert said.

Sebastian ran a hand through his hair, recalling that he had indeed sent a private message to the doctor last night asking him to come by today. Laila had been the real culprit who had eaten into his time, Gilbert was only doing his job.

Sebastian's eyes move to his wife, who was now standing in the doorway watching him, and he felt the last hope of spending the full day with her shatter quietly into pieces. As though she understood the situation perfectly, she walked over to him and said,

"I think it's best I head back to my place. You can come find me when your work is done, there's no need for me to stay here and distract you." She told him good-naturedly, even though a flicker of disappointment sat quietly in her chest at their moment being broken. She understood he had to work.

Sebastian didn't care that the doctor was standing in his office. He wrapped his arm around his wife's hips, pulling her close, and buried his face into the crook of her neck. "You should at least eat something before you go back, sunshine." He murmured, pressing a kiss to her pulse point and making her squirm in his arms.

Viola was very aware of Gilbert's presence on the other side of the room and felt it was rude to be displaying this level of affection in front of him. She tried to gently push away as she whispered, "I have eaten my fill and left the rest for you. I'm full." His arms only tightened around her in response rather than loosening.

She felt his hand settle flat against her stomach, pressing lightly before he pulled back to scold her with a look. "Your waist is still exactly as small as it was in the shower, and I can't feel a single bit of food bloating, amor. You didn't eat enough, did you?" He asked, looking down at her in open displeasure, because it seemed his wife was still quietly neglecting herself.

"I finished a ham sandwich, Seb, and I will snack when I get back to my place. The doctor is waiting for you." She reminded him carefully, wanting to escape the display before it went any further.

She had never been a particularly shy person, but perhaps years of receiving no affection at all had made her more guarded with it, wanting to keep it private, especially when she and Sebastian had always felt like something entirely their own, contained between just the two of them, until now.

But her husband wasn't finished fussing over her. He raised his hand and tucked a strand of hair behind her ear, looking down into her blue eyes. "Expect me tonight. I will sleep at your place, and keep your phone close by, because I will video call you in a little while to check that you actually snacked or ate something." He whispered.

Viola nodded quickly, agreeing to anything at all as long as it meant she could escape him before the wetness building between her thighs became obvious, because his affection was turning her on, and she wasn't wearing panties to contain it. With the sharp senses every werewolf possessed, someone would pick up on a scent like that quickly, and Gilbert being a doctor meant he would know instantly that she was getting damp for her husband.

Sebastian didn't release her immediately, but then his frown deepened when the scent of her arousal reached him. He let go of her briefly, retrieved a coat from behind his office couch, and walked back over to drape it around her shoulders.

"Let me walk you to the elevator." He said, settling his arm around her waist and pulling her possessively against his side as they walked past Gilbert, who, if they had only known, wasn't paying them the slightest bit of attention. His mind was miles away, still tangled up in his own very recent encounter in the hallway with Miss Serrano.

Sebastian walked his wife to his private personal elevator and kissed her hard one final time before reluctantly letting her go, with a promise from him that he would eat the food she had left behind when he was done working. He watched the elevator doors close, catching one last glimpse of her waving back at him, and turned away fighting an arousal so intense it was almost unbelievable, considering everything they had already done together in that shower just hours ago.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna -

Chapter 322: The report on the Luna[1,369 words]

The moment the elevator doors shut completely, the soft warmth that had been sitting on Sebastian's face dissolved. His expression shifted back into something cold and hard, and he turned and walked back toward his office, resolved to get through every meeting and every item on today's schedule as quickly as possible so he could make it back to his wife in time for dinner and claim at least one more blissful night beside her.

When he returned to his office and settled behind his desk, the one that looked out over the wide glass wall and the view of his pack city stretching out below, Sebastian looked up at the doctor expectantly, ready for the report. But he immediately noticed something was off. Gilbert looked vacant, his eyes distant, and there was a faint flush sitting high on his cheeks that made Sebastian slowly arch one brow.

He tapped his fingers against the desk to get the man's attention.

He might as well have shattered a glass on the floor for all the good it did. Gilbert didn't even flinch.

Sebastian picked up a pen and hurled it at him. It hit Gilbert square in the chest and the doctor finally startled, finally noticing that the Alpha had returned from walking his wife to the elevator. Gilbert mentally kicked himself for getting so distracted and cursed whatever twist of fate had sent him down that particular hallway to bump into Laila Serrano.

"What's got you so lost?" Sebastian questioned, studying him curiously.

He wondered briefly whether it was the open display of affection he hadn't bothered to hide with his Luna that had the doctor red in the ears and vacant-eyed, but he doubted it. Gilbert was always professional, without exception.

Gilbert composed himself and said, "Nothing. I was just running through the report I gathered on Ember's body and Javier's, just as you asked me to." He said, forcefully pushing Laila from his thoughts and directing his full focus back to the matters that actually required his attention right now.

"So what does it say? Have a seat." Sebastian gestured to the chair across from him and watched the doctor settle into it, bringing up his tablet, which now had a crack running down the side of the screen, and scrolling through it.

"I secretly took samples from Laila—I mean, from Ember's body, and from Javier's, and your suspicions were not far off." Gilbert said, moving swiftly past his momentary slip of names and back into his report.

Last night, the Alpha had reached out to him privately and shared his suspicions about the two recent deaths in the pack, and Gilbert had worked through the night on it alongside the Luna's medical report. The Alpha had suspected that Ember had been poisoned with silver through something she had consumed, and that had proven correct. As for Javier, his death had not been caused by the electric pool either.

"Tell me everything." Sebastian said, settling back in his chair and watching the doctor steadily.

"From what I can determine, Ember had indeed been drained by a power similar to that of the sea creatures, but as we know, or as my grandfather's texts document it, the sea creatures' draining ability is not something capable of killing our kind outright. It would cause an intense dehydration that would eventually pass within a few days and leave the affected person with a condition of flaking skin, nothing more. That was not what killed her. What killed her was the silver she consumed afterward, and because her immune system had already been severely weakened by whatever had drained her, the silver took immediate and fatal effect." He reported, and Sebastian's brows knitted tightly together.

This didn't answer his questions directly and only deepened the confusion. A sea creature's draining power shouldn't have been traceable in Silver at all, and from everything he knew, his wife had been the last person to have gripped Ember's wrist.

Sebastian felt his stomach plummet at the possibility this was quietly pointing toward, even though the possibility was entirely impossible when approached from any rational angle, because no sea creature could survive on land for an extended period, and no sea creature would be terrified of water, much less stayed away from it the way his wife was.

He didn't like where that possibility was leading him, so he cut it off and asked instead, "How did she come into contact with a sea creature?"

"That is something that baffles me too. And before I forget, I also received the report from the men you sent to the American seas to search for one of the creatures." Gilbert said. "They found one. It is currently in their captivity and will be shipped back to Silver. It should arrive within two weeks."

Sebastian felt his heart leap. This was something he had been waiting and hoping for, and it had arrived at the very moment he had been thinking about pups and futures and the possibility of finally being free. The sacrifice that would free this generation from the curse had been found, and he would no longer have to carry that fear. He would finally be able to mark his mate without the risk of losing her.

"Can it get here any sooner than two weeks?" Sebastian asked, and Gilbert sighed.

"Unfortunately not. They cannot transport it by air, it will have to be shipped. The good news is that we have finally found it, and it will set you free. Whatever wait remains is worth it."

"Hmm." Sebastian hummed, feeling as though a great weight had shifted from his shoulders, but then the thread of their earlier conversation pulled him back and he said,

"There is no need to look too deeply into the sea creature connection with Ember's draining for now. What I want to know more about is how she came to consume the silver. I will send for an investigation into who served her last." He paused. "And what about Javier?"

Sebastian didn't particularly care that Ember was dead, she meant nothing to him personally. He was investigating her death because whoever had orchestrated it had likely done so because of the position Ember had been angling for, and that same threat could easily extend to his Luna. He needed to find and eliminate it before it did.

"Javier's report and tests showed that his neck bone was broken, cleanly, without breaking the skin, and without any sign of fingers or hands around his neck. It was a clean kill that left no trace of how it was carried out. Someone killed him and staged it to look like the electric pool did the job."

"Are you telling me someone went in there after he was thrown into the pool?" Sebastian questioned, his expression darkening, because none of the warriors stationed around that area had reported seeing anyone, and the CCTV footage outside the punishment room had shown nothing when Sebastian had reviewed it the previous night to confirm his own suspicions. Who was doing this, and how were they leaving absolutely no tracks?

"That is exactly what it appears to be, Alpha. His neck was broken without any hands doing it, and I cannot explain in any way how it was accomplished." Gilbert said.

He had puzzled over it for hours without arriving at anything conclusive, and had ultimately left that section of the report blank rather than fill it with speculation he couldn't support.

"The bastard is at it again then..." Sebastian muttered, the realization settling hard that this was the work of the same silent enemy who wanted him dead and wanted the seat for themselves. His fingers clenched slowly on the desk. This person was not going to stop, and he was going to have to flush them out one way or another.

"What about the report on my Luna? Do you have that as well?" He asked, not allowing his anger to crowd out the more important question, his wife's health.

"Yes, I have it, and there is something more. Something I have been wanting to tell you since yesterday but haven't had the opportunity to."

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 323: She's not a werewolf[1,185 words]

After his meeting with Doctor Gilbert was over, Sebastian couldn't stop thinking about what the man had told him. While he worked, it kept going round and round inside his head like a broken record, refusing to quiet down.

That day when they had been attacked in Nightshade and Viola had fallen into a bad state, Gilbert had used the opportunity to run some tests on her and take samples, quietly, without permission, simply to understand why her wolf hadn't awakened at the age it was supposed to.

He hadn't told Sebastian he had done this, which would have earned him a punch under any other circumstances, because Sebastian didn't like the thought of Gilbert touching his wife to collect those samples. But hearing the results of what those tests had revealed, Sebastian found himself more confused than angry.

"Her DNA is different from ours, and there is a very strong wolf suppressant in her blood that may be the cause of her not having a wolf, which brings me to the question of how she could even carry a wolf at all when she doesn't share the DNA of werewolves."

Sebastian had been too focused on the results to be as furious as he should have been about the unauthorized testing, and had asked, "So you are telling me she isn't a werewolf?"

"I would say that, but if she isn't, her blood shouldn't carry that level of wolf suppressant. The dosage is the kind that, when administered to a werewolf, would seal their wolf away for a very long time, potentially permanently, until the suppressant wears off. Do you know if she took a wolf suppressant herself? The dosage suggests something administered from childhood, consistently over many years, it's slightly overdosed, which is actually why I was able to detect it so easily in the test."

Sebastian could have sworn Viola hadn't taken the suppressant willingly, not from how desperately she had once seemed to want a wolf like everyone around her.

But thinking about it more carefully now, he realized that as much as she was his wife, when he looked at it honestly, he didn't actually know that much about her childhood or her real background.

All he knew was the orphanage, and then the Lindens, and he was fairly certain the Lindens wouldn't have administered a wolf suppressant to her, not when they had once wanted a daughter they could be proud of and show off to the world.

The other thing he couldn't set aside was her DNA being different from theirs. He would far rather accept that she was simply wolfless than entertain the thought that she was something else entirely, because that would change things. It would change everything. And Sebastian didn't want anything to change. Not what he knew about her, and not the future he planned for them.

Because if she turned out to be something that wasn't their kind, it would bring a change so massive he didn't want to look it in the face, for he had used his own hands to banish every non-werewolf creature from his world, and had written into law that any person caught keeping or hiding one of those outcasts would be sentenced right alongside them.

It was a law built to keep the werewolf world pure and safe from other creatures who would seek to harm his people and take what was theirs.

"What DNA does she carry?" He asked, feeling his heart tighten inside his chest.

"Nothing I have studied before, which makes it significantly more complicated. I am still studying it and working to determine what it is." Gilbert replied.

"Is there anything she could take to counteract the wolf suppressant?" He asked, and Gilbert looked thoughtful for a long moment before answering.

"We haven't developed anything like that yet, since no werewolf in their right mind takes a wolf suppressant unless they intend to forsake their wolf and live permanently as a human, and that has never happened in our world. It has only ever occurred in the human world. But I will work on creating a counteragent and see what I can produce." Gilbert promised, making notes on his cracked tablet.

After Gilbert left him, Sebastian sat alone with thoughts that felt heavier than anything he had carried in a long time. His suspicions about his wife's true background were beginning to take shape inside his mind, and if he allowed himself to accept what they were forming into, he would also have to accept the possibility of letting her go.

Not because he wouldn't want to keep her, but because the entire werewolf world would turn against her, come for her like a pack of starving wolves, and he would be left with no choice but to send her to live somewhere like America, far away, safe, but away from him and his people.

What gave him any measure of reassurance at all was what he had seen with his own eyes during their intimacy, wolf fur rising against her skin.

She had a wolf, and it was slowly awakening. Even so, Gilbert's test had left a gaping hole of doubt in his chest that he couldn't seem to close, and it made him want to go to her right now and spend every moment he had with her, just in case the worst ever became certain and he was forced to let go.

He was so close to breaking his curse and marking her. So close to finding a way to cure Alex and finally be even with his twin. He didn't want Gilbert's tests to take any of that away from him. He never should have allowed the nosy doctor to run tests on her in the first place, except he hadn't permitted it. Gilbert had done it without asking.

The thought alone carved a hollow, aching pain in his chest, and he found himself reaching for his phone rather than his work, wanting to video call her the way he had promised he would.

Sebastian tapped on her contact and called. His heart seemed to leap with every ring, but it rang on and on until it beeped and went unanswered. His brows drew together and he tried again, with the same result.

Maybe she wasn't near her phone, he told himself, and he began to rise from his desk with the intention of rounding up his work quickly and going to her himself, but before he could fully stand, a mind link from Matt came through, reporting that Miss Lara and the children from the Nightshade orphanage had been brought back to Silver pack, just as Sebastian had once instructed.

"Where are they?" He asked.

"I put them in the omega building. Do you want to see the woman now? She isn't talking to me, she says she will only speak to you directly. She has agreed to share the information in exchange for being given a home here."

"I will be there in a few minutes." Sebastian said, grabbing his coat and heading out of the office.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 324: A private discussion with Lara[1,366 words]

When Sebastian arrived at the common building of the omegas, his presence alone caused a visible stir. The Alpha never came here unless a crime had been committed in the building, his Beta was the face they were accustomed to seeing, and some of the omegas had never even laid eyes on the Alpha in person, for their work had never brought them close to the main building.

Seeing him walk in dressed in dark blue, loosely fitted trousers and a matching coat, his silver hair disheveled and falling carelessly across his forehead, sent a ripple through the gathered female omegas.

He was gorgeous, more breathtakingly handsome in person than he ever appeared on screen, and the sharp set of his jaw only added to a presence that made them stare helplessly until he walked close enough that they were forced to bow their heads. He passed them in a warm drift of expensive cologne that lingered long after he had moved on.

"Goddess, I would give my life to be his mate. I have never seen a mortal with such good looks. Our Alpha is something else, only he got himself an undeserving Luna." The omegas whispered among themselves as he disappeared around the corner.

"I don't know what he saw in her, but then again, if a wolfless girl has a chance with someone like him, I believe wolves like us have a chance too. And I know for a fact that I am more beautiful than she is." Murmured another one, and the girl beside her rolled her eyes.

"Stop dreaming, Natasha, and get back to work." Nudged the other, but they weren't the only omegas entertaining such thoughts. Almost every female omega in the building had been quietly nurturing the same hope ever since word spread that the Alpha had banished his own blood

relatives for the sake of their unwanted, wolfless Luna. If he could do that for her, perhaps there was still a chance for someone more worthy.

Sebastian stepped into one of the common rooms Matt directed him to through the mind link. The room was spacious and just as well-equipped as the high buildings in Silver, except that it housed large bunk beds, a wide-screen television, and one full wall of glass looking outward.

His guests were seated on the bunk beds, the children pressed close together, their eyes moving around the unfamiliar space with quiet wariness. Everything they had ever known had been a run-down pack with muddy roads and crumbling buildings, and this was a world away from all of that.

Miss Lara was standing nearby, and beside her was Julia, who had stars in her eyes from the moment she stepped through the door, her mind already quietly rearranging her future and her ambitions.

When the Alpha walked in, however, she quickly smoothed her hair and composed herself, bowing alongside Miss Lara in greeting.

"Supreme Alpha," they said together, and Sebastian acknowledged it with a single nod before his eyes moved to Matt, who was standing to the side with his back against the solid glass wall, one foot propped casually flat against it, arms folded across his chest.

'She hasn't said a word since she agreed to the bargain. Good luck getting anything out of her.' Matt said through their link, and Sebastian's gaze returned to the woman. She and the children looked twice as thin as the last time he had seen them, matted hair, sunken faces, bones that pressed too visibly against their skin.

"Let's not waste time dragging this out, Lara. The sooner we talk and close this, the sooner I will have my people give the children rooms and proper care, they don't look to be in good condition." Sebastian remarked, and the woman's face remained blank as she said,

"Can we speak in private?"

Sebastian turned to Matt with a look that communicated everything, and Matt moved to take the children with him, signaling to the omegas to bring them food at the Alpha's silent orders. Sebastian had originally intended to hold that back until Miss Lara gave him what he came for, but he couldn't stand the sight of those protruding bones. They needed to eat first.

Everyone filed out, leaving the two of them alone.

"I didn't come here to stay, Supreme Alpha. My only hope is that you will take care of these children and give them a proper home here." Miss Lara said quietly. "I made a pact with someone I should never have made one with, someone connected to the Luna's twin, and if I give you the answers you're seeking, that person will take my life."

Miss Lara had not known who this man truly was until his people came for her. She had felt the energy coming off him from the very beginning, something that didn't belong to an ordinary

werewolf, and now that she had agreed to his terms, she needed to be certain he wouldn't throw the children out the moment she had given him what he wanted.

There was no doubt in her mind that the creature she had made that pact with would not let her walk away from this freely. Miss Lara had been carefully avoiding anything to do with water ever since, knowing that water was the easiest gateway, the creature's way of opening a portal from the sea to land.

"What kind of creature?" Sebastian asked.

"I cannot share that. It is personal." She said, her expression remaining passive. "What is it you want to know?"

"What did you do with my wife's twin, and where is she?"

Miss Lara's eyes drifted upward toward the sky visible through the glass wall, and sadness settled quietly over her face. "I can see that you love your wife, Supreme Alpha. I don't know how deep your bond with her runs, but if you force me to speak the full truth, you will be putting that love at risk. It will break what you have built between you." She turned to look at him directly and asked,

"Would you rather live in comfortable ignorance, unaware of what happened and what led to it, or be told the truth that will tear you away from the one you love?"

Sebastian's expression hardened. "I don't do riddles, Lara. In fact, I despise them. I asked you what was done with the twin, and I want a clear, straightforward answer."

"She was taken away." Miss Lara said quietly. "I couldn't have stopped it even if I had tried, so I allowed it to happen in order to save the others."

"By whom?" He asked, just as quietly, because he could tell this woman knew far more than she was releasing, and for reasons he hadn't fully sorted yet, he was beginning to feel that he wasn't entirely ready to dig all the way to the bottom of it. But if it would lead him to his wife's twin, he would have to face whatever truth waited there, including the possibility that his wife was something he was never supposed to keep by his side.

"By their aunt, or so I was told."

Sebastian's brows furrowed. "Their aunt? You know their aunt?"

Miss Lara smiled, but it was a bitter, hollow one. "It is better to have no relatives at all than to have an aunt like that one. Take my advice, Supreme Alpha, do not dig into something that will only destroy you. Leave every unanswered question exactly where it sits. You cannot find the twin, because she is somewhere you cannot reach. Let Serena go on believing she never had one, it is the kindest thing for her, because the moment the aunt realizes she knows, she will come for her too."

Saying that, Miss Lara slipped a hand into her pocket as though she were about to retrieve something, and Sebastian didn't move quickly enough, he didn't even register the threat in the motion until it was already far too late.

His silver eyes widened as everything unfolded in the span of a single breath, too sudden and entirely beyond his power to have stop it before it happened.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 325: The secret Alpha[1,629 words]

Sebastian stared down at Miss Lara's body, a wolfsbane-coated dagger buried to the hilt in her heart, blood pooling darkly around her on the floor. She had killed herself right before his eyes, knowing he wouldn't let her leave without giving him the answers he came for.

Sebastian crouched down and pressed two fingers to her neck. No pulse. He let out a slow sigh. "What a mess, Lara. You would rather die than talk, and knowing I can't send the children back to Nightshade, you come here and do this." He murmured passively as he straightened up and connected to Matt through the mind link to send someone and clean it up.

Lara had given him a clue, even if she hadn't known it. Sebastian knew exactly where he would find the full answers he was seeking, he just wasn't certain anymore whether he still wanted to hear them.

Viola got busy the moment she returned to her penthouse. She first arranged for a bunch of flowers to be sent to Javier's home as a condolence, without her name attached, it felt like the right thing to do, even if she wouldn't be welcome there in person. Then she decided to push forward and not dwell on what had already happened.

As time passed, she kept her promise to herself and began preparing dinner, a proper meal planned for Sebastian when he came that night. She was in the middle of cooking it when Zoe sent someone to return her phone, and Viola found several missed calls waiting for her from both Sebastian and Nick. She tried her husband first, immediately, but his phone wasn't reachable.

She wondered why he had called so shortly after she left his office. While she cooked, she kept trying his number periodically until she eventually gave up and called Nick back instead. He picked up almost immediately.

"Hey, Vee." He said, his voice carrying a weight of sadness that made Viola turn down the cooker and lean against the counter to give him her full attention.

"How are you coping? Are you all right?" She asked with concern, and he only hummed in response.

"I'm trying to be." Nick replied from where he stood in his apartment, looking out at the setting sun with a cigarette between his fingers, blowing thick rings of smoke into the air and watching it drift around his face.

"You can talk to me if you want to. I am always here to listen." She assured him, being the good friend she was, though her words landed somewhere deeper than she intended in the heart of the lonely man who had been quietly harboring feelings for her for months now.

Nick smiled bitterly. "You are the first person to say that to me. Maybe second, after Zoe."

Viola let out a small chuckle, trying to inject a little warmth into the conversation to lift his mood. "I'm glad someone else said it to you first then. I'm sorry about your brother, Nick." She said sincerely, with no way of knowing the other person on the line felt no such sorrow.

"You shouldn't be. His time was up, and he wasted his life making others feel unworthy." Nick mused, and then added quietly, "His death isn't worth being sorry over."

"Even so, I am sorry it happened because of me."

"It's not because of you, Vee. He got what he deserved, I guess." He hummed, bringing the cigarette to his lips and taking a long drag, his eyes dropping to his palm where a thin silver smoke was curling and rising against his palm as he stared at it. "Can you do me a favor, Vee?"

"Anything, just ask and I will." Viola said quickly, genuinely wanting to do whatever she could to pull him out of the mood she could feel radiating from him through the phone. He had been there for her when she had needed someone the most, and she wanted to return that now as a friend.

"Can you have dinner with me tonight?" He asked, and then, before she could respond, he added quickly, "Please. I feel like the walls in my apartment are closing in on me and I am drowning inside myself. My mother disowned me today. She told me how little she wanted me, and it's killing me. Don't turn me away too, please. I just need some company and Zoe is meeting up with some important clients today, she's too busy for me." He pleaded, and his voice was earnest enough that it left no room to doubt him.

Viola looked at the food she had been in the middle of cooking, then at the clock on the wall that read 6:30 p.m. and felt with absolute certainty that she couldn't turn him away, even knowing she had been planning this dinner for her husband. She was torn between her husband and her friend. Sebastian also needed her, and she had been looking forward to this dinner with him, to him coming home and being welcomed by her home-cooked meal and a relaxing atmosphere.

But then Nick was depressed, and if she turned him away, he might end up hurting even more after being disowned.

She would be a terrible friend if she left someone this broken sitting alone with nothing but four walls for company. She would have invited him over to eat with them, but she had a feeling Sebastian wasn't going to like that. So she made the decision to go. She would only keep him company for a little while and return as soon as possible.

She switched the cooker off completely and said, "All right. Where should we meet?"

Nick let out a quiet breath of relief. "Outside the high tower. I'll ride us there."

"Okay. I'll be out in a few minutes. See you then."

"See you." Nick replied, and stared at the screen for a moment after the call ended, a slow smile crossing his face, before the knock at his door pulled him out of it.

"Come in." He called.

The door opened and Elder Halvrek stepped inside, locking the door behind him.

"What are you doing here?" Nick demanded irritably.

The elder replied warily, "I couldn't reach you, so I came in person. There is something important you need to know, Supreme Alpha."

Nick's gray eyes went dark and completely emotionless as they settled on the elder, the man who had served him in secret for years, fully aware of what he stood to gain from that arrangement and exactly what would happen to him if he ever went against it.

"How many times have I told you not to come to my apartment?" Nick said through his teeth, raising his hand and using his ability to seize the elder by the throat, lifting him clean off his feet with invisible force. "What could possibly be so important that it couldn't wait for me to summon you first?"

He was in a foul mood today and looking for something to take it out on, and this pathetic elder had chosen the worst possible moment to interrupt the one good thing he had managed to carve out of this terrible day, the prospect of finally spending time alone with the woman he loved.

He would get to be with her tonight, in a setting where his cousin wasn't standing between them, and where he might finally begin to win her over in a way she wouldn't be able to resist. It was long overdue. Everything that should have belonged to him, he was done waiting for it. Viola included.

Nick had spent his entire life living in the shadow of not just his brother, but his cousins too. Everyone had written him off, convinced he would never amount to what they expected of a Kade.

He should have been Supreme Alpha, but his father had wanted to spare him the burden of it, and Nick had let it go to give the man peace. And where had that gotten him? Nowhere. No-fucking-where!

Eric Kade had died and left his son to a resentful mother who refused to see him no matter what he did, a woman who could not forgive the fact that he had taken more nourishment in her womb than his dead twin.

Nick had wanted to be something great, a creator, a mind that built things, but the world refused to see him that way. Everyone looked straight through him like he was invisible, and he was tired. Tired of being overlooked, tired of being passed over, tired of being nothing.

"Perhaps I should take your head off before you learn not to disturb me." Nick said, clenching his grip and tightening the smoke around the elder's neck, just as it had tightened around his brother's in the pool room.

A euphoric feeling had surged through his veins. There had been satisfaction in watching his brother struggled, in pouring the pain of years of bullying into it, and in tasting the victory of finally killing him.

Nick had wanted to weep with joy while he killed Javier, and he had wept alone in this room the night Javier died. And now, as the elder choked and clawed at nothing, he felt that same smile begin to pull at the corners of his mouth.

Elder Halvrek struggled and managed to choke out the words that had brought him here before the grip could kill him. "I... I need to tell you... your cousin—"

Nick released him instantly at the mention of his cousin. The smile dropped from his face and his eyes narrowed into sharp coldness. "What about my cousin? What has the bastard done now?" He demanded.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 326: Stolen ability[1,302 words]

Elder Halvrek couldn't even find the breath to cough properly, knowing that if he didn't deliver his answers fast enough, those invisible fingers would find his throat again. "He has found a mermaid in the human seas. They are shipping the creature here to Silver."

Nick's smile returned slowly. "You should have led with that." He said, bringing the cigarette back to his lips. "It's about time. It's about fucking time. I never thought I would be this glad I didn't kill him that day, he has found me my precious."

"Should I send men to intercept the shipment and take it from him?" Elder Halvrek asked, rubbing at his throat.

"No. Let him bring it to Silver. I will take it from there once it arrives. A mermaid is not a creature that is easily captured and he has captured one." He remarked, glancing at the elder who was sweating visibly beneath the aura Nick was quietly releasing into the room.

He should have unleashed that on his cousin the day Sebastian tried to intimidate him into staying away from Vee. He should have, but he hadn't, because he needed to remain her best friend. Her innocent, harmless Nick.

"Keep me updated on the shipment." Nick waved the elder toward the door, but stopped him just before he reached it.

"Wait. I need you to send someone to dig up Javier's grave once they leave for Mexico. Cut off his head and send it along with my dear mother. Make sure it's hidden where she wouldn't see it until Mexico. I want it to haunt her for the rest of her miserable life. She doesn't want me? Fine. Let her see her precious son's head wherever she looks for the rest of her days."

Elder Halvrek thought that was going several steps too far, but he didn't dare say so. He simply nodded and turned to leave. He would never understand why Nick didn't just step forward and openly challenge Sebastian for the seat, they carried the same bloodline energy, and a duel would have resolved everything and spared them all this trouble.

Halvrek was still quietly holding out hope for his niece. If she were to marry Nick, it would benefit them all greatly, for Nick was a very powerful man and his rein would be hard to control as elders.

After the elder left, Nick found himself whistling quietly as he searched through his wardrobe for something to wear. A date. In the disguise of using half his ability to force a mate bond on the woman he loved.

She would finally be his, and Sebastian would watch the woman he was trying to keep away from him slowly and irresistibly fall in love with him the way a mate would. Viola would be his Luna, and he would give her everything Sebastian couldn't.

Nobody knew he possessed the bloodline they cherished.

His mind drifted back to the night everything had changed for him and he had gained these powers.

It had been snowing heavily, the kind of snowfall that left everything white and shrouded in fog, making it impossible to see clearly. The cold was bitter, but Nick hadn't felt it at all. The only thing he had been aware of that night was the pain lodged in the center of his chest and the single thought of walking through the snow until his body finally shut down.

Nick had wandered to the only beach in Silver, its surface frozen solid, unable to see anything beyond the few feet in front of him, when he found it, a creature dragging a bleeding tail across the snow, desperately trying to pull itself back into the water, only for the surface to be sealed shut by thick ice.

The teenage Nick stopped and stared. The blue scales along the tail shimmered even in the darkness, catching what little light filtered through the snowfall. He had never seen anything so hauntingly beautiful in his entire life.

Mermaids were real...

And he was looking at one.

The creature stilled the moment it noticed him, and turned to look at him, tears streaming down a beautiful, bleeding face, each one turning to a small pearl the instant it fell onto the frozen surface.

"Don't kill me, please... I am harmless." She pleaded, her voice hoarse and barely there.

"You can talk?" He muttered in surprise. "What are you doing out of the water?" He'd asked out of curiosity, studying the creature and keeping a distance from it.

"I am looking for my daughters. I mean no harm to you..."

Nick had never seen a mermaid before in his life. He had heard everything about them, knew that werewolves would kill one without hesitation to claim the power it carried. He had once wished, in the quiet and desperate corner of his heart, that he would come across one himself.

Something that would give him what he needed to make his mother stop resenting him. And now here one was, right in front of him, and upon closer inspection, her tail had been chopped nearly in half. His heart had leapt at the sight of it. Was his wish actually coming true? Here was a weak mermaid in front of him.

"Help me and I will give you whatever you want..." The mermaid looked completely drained, no longer able to drag herself any further toward the water as the snow continued to fall down and her wounds continued to bleed on the white blanket of it.

"You are a sea creature. My kind kills your kind," he said, walking closer and crouching down beside her. Being someone raised not to see sea creatures as beings to be pitied but as a source of food, Nick couldn't pity her as much as he hoped he would. "What brings your daughters to the land?"

"They were taken from me when I gave birth to them years ago. Please, help me. Someone is trying to kill me..."

"Why should I help you? I've heard creatures like you are skilled at manipulation."

She didn't reply. Her strength had completely given out, and she lay there breathing in shallow, labored breaths against the snow as the fog continued to thicken around them.

"Hey." He nudged her, and when she didn't respond, Nick felt a genuine pull of compassion stir somewhere inside him, before it stopped. He looked down at her and the cold logic settled in. There was nothing he could realistically do. She was going to die regardless, with a tail split nearly in two. A dead mermaid was no use to anyone and would do nothing for him.

And then the thought came into his mind.

His nails lengthened into claws and he reached down and turned her over, she had lost consciousness completely. His claws sank into her chest, and she gasped one final time, her clear blue eyes flying open and finding his, filled with a sorrow so deep it looked almost human, before they closed and did not open again. He took her heart and devoured it raw right there on the snow-soaked ground.

The repulsion hit him almost immediately afterward. He was sick for a long time in the snow, throwing up everything he had in him, and he had felt genuinely terrible for what he had done to something so beautiful, so human-looking, with those clear blue eyes he couldn't get out of his head.

Nothing happened that night. Nothing happened for weeks. He had almost entirely forgotten about the mermaid he had eventually pushed back into the water he broke when his first ability surfaced on the night of the next full moon.

Nick finished dressing and left his apartment to go and wait for Viola, just as he had planned.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 327: The Luna's help[1,558 words]

After ending the call with Nick, Viola sent a quick text to Sebastian so that if he came back and found her gone, he would see it the moment his phone became reachable again. She took a quick shower and changed into a summer dress that fell just below her knees, paired it with matching sandals, and slipped her phone into her purse.

She hadn't planned to leave the building at all today, not with everything going on in the pack, but Nick was a friend she simply couldn't turn her back on, not when he sounded like that.

She was almost ready to leave the penthouse when the door chimed. Viola hurried to answer it, hoping it was Sebastian, it would have been perfect timing to catch him before she left, but when she pulled the door open, the last person she expected was standing on the other side, grinning.

"Hello. Mind if I take a few moments of your time?" Laila asked, already stepping inside before Viola, who was momentarily too stunned to respond, had the chance to say a word either way.

Viola closed the door slowly and turned to find the she-wolf had already made herself comfortable on the couch without so much as an invitation. Laila's eyes swept over Viola then, taking in the dress and the purse, and she tilted her head. "Oh. You're going out."

"Yes, I am. And you're holding me up, Miss Serrano." Viola said, folding her arms. "What do you want?"

Laila let out a small sigh and said, "I came to thank you. I know you don't particularly deserve my gratitude, but here we are regardless." She crossed one leg over the other and added, "I also have something to tell you that I think you will want to hear. I take red wine, by the way, if you are hospitable enough to offer it. Chilled, please."

Viola stared at the she-wolf as though she had grown two heads, because her audacity was not only amusing but genuinely laughable. Since when had she and Laila been close enough for her to show up this casually and make herself at home on her couch? The request for a drink made Viola's brow arch on its own. Was she expecting Viola to serve her chilled drink?

"I don't have any wine, and I doubt you're lacking it at your place, Miss Serrano. I have somewhere to be."

Laila gave a small nod. "You're right, I don't lack it. But as a guest here, I assumed you were supposed to offer me something?" She cocked her head to the side, studying Viola.

"Shouldn't this be the moment when you realize you're holding me up and leave? If you came to thank me, you're welcome, but I really do need to go," Viola said, gesturing toward the door, hoping Laila would take the hint.

Instead, the she-wolf simply leaned back against the couch.

"I cannot leave until I have spoken to you, Luna. Shouldn't a good Luna listen and help her subjects when they are in need? I came to you tonight as a subject, so give me a listening ear." Laila said, and notably, her usual arrogance was absent from her voice, because tonight she needed this woman's help more than she needed her petty anger.

Finding her fated mate had made everything she had ever felt for Sebastian feel suddenly and strangely insignificant. She couldn't even remember clearly why she had hated the wolfless girl so much. It was remarkable, really, how completely a fated mate could make a person forget another man in the blink of an eye.

Viola glanced at her watch. 7:00 pm. She let out a quiet sigh and reluctantly walked back to the couch and sat down at the edge of it. She would give this ten minutes. Whatever Laila had to say couldn't possibly take longer than that.

"Won't you be hospitable? I really need a chilled wine, and if you won't offer it, I can serve myself, if you don't mind." Laila said, already rising from the couch before Viola had the chance to respond either way, making her way over to the wine display on the wall.

Viola watched her select a red wine, take two glasses, carry them back, pour both, and push one across toward her side of the table as though this were perfectly natural behavior.

"It's always nicer to talk over drinks, don't you think? Especially now that I'm welcoming you into my circle," Laila remarked, clearly expecting the wolfless Luna to be delighted by the privilege of being personally served by Laila Serrano.

Viola, however, wasn't impressed or delighted in the slightest. Laila noticed she maintained a calm, passive expression, as though she couldn't give a hoot about being welcomed into her circle, when other she-wolves would have been thrilled to be personally served by her. Well, perhaps they would have been in the past, before she had become the subject of gossip alongside this very woman.

Viola met her with a flat expression and didn't reach for the glass.

It almost felt as though this were Laila's penthouse and Viola were the visitor, and she didn't like that at all. The woman was behaving as though she owned the place, dominating the space like it belonged to her.

Viola was just glad Laila was no longer trying to lay claim to her husband openly, or maybe she was here for that reason?

"Why are you here, Miss Serrano?" She asked, looking at her emerald eyes directly.

Laila sipped her wine, settled back, folded her legs beneath her on the couch as though she owned it, and finally said, "I need your help with something."

"What could you possibly need my help with?" Viola asked, genuinely taken aback.

"I found my fated mate a few hours ago." She announced.

"Oh..." Viola said, and then it landed on her what that meant. It meant Laila would no longer be circling Sebastian, no longer be a threat to their relationship or future. She straightened slightly and said,

"Congratulations. I'm happy for you." Though she still couldn't quite work out why Laila was announcing it to her specifically.

"If you're happy for me, does that mean you'll help me?" Laila asked, shifting forward on the couch like she was settling in for a gossip session with an old friend. "He doesn't seem to feel the bond as strongly as I do yet, and I don't know him well enough to figure out how to get his attention without it being completely obvious that I want it."

"You seem to know him better than I do, so I think you can help me with some inside information." She added, looking at Viola with an expression that was almost hopeful.

Viola felt uncomfortable being looked at like that and pressed her lips together. "Could you give me his name? I don't know that many people here, unless you mean Nick. And fair warning, I am not a love expert and won't be much help in that department regardless."

Laila waved her hand dismissively. "Nick? Absolutely not. He is not my type, and thank the goddess this has nothing to do with him. I am talking about Gilbert. I heard he is your doctor. Do you have his personal contact? I cannot find it anywhere, I keep getting redirected to his receptionist, and that woman is annoying as hell and kept repeating I needed an appointment before I could meet him and she couldn't share his personal contact info."

Viola blinked. Then blinked again, just to be certain she hadn't misheard. "You mean Doctor Gilbert is your fated mate?"

Laila nodded. "Yes. Shocking, I know. I still can't quite believe it myself. I have never exchanged a single word with the man in the past."

"That can't be possible!" Viola exclaimed before she could stop herself, and Laila looked at her with a sharp frown.

"Why isn't it possible?"

Viola caught herself. What she wanted to say was, because my sister-in-law has been dreaming about that man for longer than I have even known her. Zoe had told Viola more than once about her feelings for the doctor, about the future she had quietly mapped out in her head involving him, and Viola had laughed and quietly hoped she would get the man she wanted someday. But it was looking very much like that door had just closed permanently.

She composed herself under Laila's suspicious gaze and said evenly, "I didn't mean it that way. I was just surprised, that's all. Does he share the bond too?"

Laila shrugged. "I'm not certain. I kissed him, and he kissed me back eventually, but I can't tell for certain how much he felt, which is exactly why I need to see him again. I need to know he feels it enough to want to mark me." She looked at Viola with an earnestness that didn't sit naturally on her prideful face but was there nonetheless. "I need his mark. I can't explain how badly I need it right now."

Viola was momentarily at a loss for words. With a kiss already exchanged between them, it seemed Zoe's chances had evaporated entirely. But could she help Laila without it feeling like a betrayal to Zoe?

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 328: Caught in the middle[1,126 words]

"Will you please just give me his personal contact? I need to move quickly before some other woman decides he looks available and starts working her way into his life. I have been unsettled since this morning and it is completely unlike me, I don't know what to do with myself." Laila said, and then seemed to catch herself, as though only now realizing how much she had just laid bare to someone she had treated as an enemy not so long ago.

She didn't even fully understand why she was telling Viola any of this. But the woman was listening, actually listening, without judgment or mockery, and with the entire pack having turned its back on her the way it had, that was more than anyone else had offered her today.

"I really wish I could help, but Miss Serrano—"

"Call me Laila from now on," Laila interrupted, then continued without pause. "It seems like you're about to turn me down, but I really hope you understand how the mate bond works. I need to be close to him, or I'll be filled with pain and restlessness. As a woman, can't you help another woman in need?" she asked, using a line she had once found cringeworthy, a line another she-wolf had once used on her during a she-wolf council meeting after Laila had refused to help with her own mate problem.

It had made Laila's skin crawl at the time because she didn't think any woman should manipulate another with words like those just to get help. But it seemed to be something they all reached for eventually.

Viola felt torn. But when it came to the matter of a true bond, a real fated one, was there anything she could realistically do to help Zoe fight against it? And seeing as Laila had swallowed whatever pride she had left and brought herself here, it must have been something she genuinely couldn't control, and she would be relentless about it regardless.

Furthermore, if she helped the she-wolf get closer to her mate, it would sever every little thread she might have once had with her own mate, and Viola would no longer have to worry that she would try to seduce Sebastian in the future.

"All right. But please don't tell him I gave you his contact, since he never gave it to you himself." She fished out her phone, noticed several missed calls from Nick, and let out a quiet sigh before searching for Gilbert's contact information and sharing it with Laila.

Viola was caught completely off guard when Laila stood up and pulled her into a hug. "I owe you one. If you ever need anything, reach out to me and I will help you. Do you have any other tips about Gilbert I should know?" She asked, gripping Viola's shoulders and looking at her with an eagerness that sat strangely on her usually arrogant, entitled face.

"Uhm... I only know that he eats a lot of shrimp and puts his work before everything else." Viola offered, and received another hug that stunned her just as much as the first before Laila held out a small contact card and said, "Here, I'll be in touch if I need more."

Before Viola could clarify that this wouldn't be becoming a regular arrangement, Laila had already reached the door and was waving back at her, looking lighter than she had all day. Viola stood there with pursed lips staring at the closed door.

"What on earth just happened?" She wondered aloud.

She shook it off and picked up her purse, ready to finally leave, when another knock came at the door just few minutes after Laila was gone.

This time it was Zoe, flustered, red-faced, utterly disheveled, and on the very edge of tears. She launched herself into Viola's arms the moment the door opened and cried out, "I just did something really crazy, Vee. Oh goddess, I want to kill myself, but I also don't want to die."

Viola held her and it became immediately clear that she was not going to make it to dinner with Nick tonight. Not with Zoe looking like a tomato that had also been crying. She set her purse back down on the couch, reasoning that if Nick came outside and didn't find her, he would eventually come up and she could explain in person. Sebastian might be on his way by now too and maybe they could all have dinner together here.

"What's wrong? What did you do?" She asked, feeling very much like a counselor who had somehow double-booked her clients, given that Laila had only just walked out of this same door moments ago.

"Do you remember when I told you I was going to work up the courage to finally ask my Doc out? Well, I just did." Zoe said, biting her nails anxiously. "I was feeling really low at home because I didn't go into work today, and I picked up my phone and just... texted him. Told him everything. My feelings and all of it."

"You didn't go to work? I thought you had clients to meet?" Viola asked, remembering that Nick had mentioned Zoe being busy, too busy to be his company.

Zoe pursed her lips. "Vee, there is a funeral happening in Silver today, what client would I possibly be meeting? Oh goddess. I tried to delete the message but he had already read it. I turned my phone off immediately and ran here. Will he think I'm undesirable? Should a woman really approach a man first? I'm going crazy. Tell me what to do."

Viola found herself swallowing hard, torn in a way she hadn't been prepared for today. She had just helped Laila get closer to the very man Zoe had just poured her heart out to. If the matter came down to a fated mate bond, Zoe was going to be hurt regardless of anything Viola did, but she couldn't possibly tell her that Laila was Gilbert's mate. Could she?

"Oh Vee, say something, I feel like I can never show my face outside again. Maybe I should turn my phone back on and check his reply. Or maybe I shouldn't. I really thought I could just stop having these feelings for him, I tried, but I couldn't. I can't forget that day in the main quarter when he put his hand on my back and carried my bag. And he said he liked my fashion house." She sighed from somewhere deep. "I think I am in love with him and it was hurting me that he couldn't see it, so I texted him. How did you manage to win my brother's heart, Vee? Tell me."

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 329: The moody husband_Part 1[1,175 words]

"I didn't do anything to win your brother's heart, Zoe. It just happened." Viola remarked, tucking strands of silver hair behind her friend's ear, but Zoe was too restless to stand still and began pacing around the room, chewing her nails and pinching at strands of her own hair. Viola watched her go back and forth until she felt dizzy trying to keep up and simply sat down instead.

If she were ever asked how she had won Sebastian over, she genuinely wouldn't have a story to give, their first meeting had been a complete mess, and she had been a real pain to him in almost every way afterward, and yet he had still stuck around. Probably because of the irresistible mate bond he carried.

"Oh, I forgot, you and hermano are mates. You don't have to do anything and he would be at your beck and call." Zoe mused miserably, wishing desperately she could reach back through time and unsend that message, but what had been done had been done.

Viola was momentarily stunned that Zoe knew she was her brother's mate, but before she could say a word about it, her sister-in-law threw herself onto the couch beside her and dropped her head onto her shoulder with a drawn-out whine.

"What must he think of me now? I really love him. I daydream about him all the time, sometimes I make up entire scenarios of our love story and how he might turn out to be my fated mate. I read somewhere that men can act completely indifferent even when they are deeply interested in a woman, and that's what gave me the push to text him."

Viola put her arm around Zoe and drew her close the way a mother bear would pull in her cub, because this she-wolf was far too precious to be allowed to wallow in that kind of feeling without someone trying to ease it.

"Maybe he won't think anything of it at all. And maybe he didn't even fully read it, who knows, maybe he opened the text and lost his grip on his phone before his eyes got to the text, and the screen went dark. Maybe something distracted him the second he opened it and he put it down without reading a word." Viola offered.

Zoe pulled back and looked at her. "You really think so?" Then, before Viola could answer, she added, "I will hold onto absolutely anything that gives me even fake confidence that he hasn't read it."

"Then hold onto that and stop stressing yourself, silly." Viola reached over and nudged her forehead gently, and Zoe clutched it dramatically before collapsing back against her shoulder.

"I knew I'd feel better coming to you. But I am never letting myself be in the same room as him until I am completely certain everything has been forgotten. I don't even know what I would say if we came face to face after everything I wrote in that text." She grimaced at the thought. "My brother is going to have a nosebleed if he ever finds out his sister has absolutely no reservations. He once told me never to chase a man who wasn't already giving me attention, because it would only boost their ego and they would use me, but Gilbert isn't like that."

Viola looked down at Zoe, who had migrated to lying with her head in her lap, and parted her lips carefully. "What if he found his mate one day, Zoe? Someone who isn't you. Would you be all right with that?"

Zoe sat up and stared at her with pursed lips. "I think I prefer him single. And you heard him yourself at dinner at my place that day, he said he planned to stay that way. As long as he is, I will keep trying. Maybe not right now, but someday. You'll see, we are meant to be together."

"But what if he really did find her?" Viola pressed gently. "We have to think ahead sometimes. Maybe you should—"

"No, Vee. Please don't make me think that far ahead right now." Zoe cut in. "Do you know that apart from Nick and my brother, Doctor Gilbert was the next man who took real care of me? After I was shot, I would have died, but he was there the whole time, whispering to me, promising he

would stop the pain. And he did. I couldn't forget that day, and my feelings for him started there and have only grown since."

Viola bit the inside of her cheek. As a friend and as family, she knew she probably should encourage Zoe to let go, tell her the truth and let her grieve it now rather than later. But she couldn't bring herself to be the one to break that particular piece of her heart. Maybe it would pass on its own. Maybe once Zoe found her own mate, this fixation would fade the way Laila's feelings for Sebastian had dissolved the moment Gilbert walked into her orbit.

"Aren't you going out? You're all dressed up, did I hold you up?" Zoe asked, finally noticing, and started to rise quickly, but Viola pulled her back down.

"I'm not going anymore. Stay and rest. I was going to go out with Nick since he asked for company, but it's too late now anyway, and your brother might be on his way back. I promised to be here when he came." Viola said with a small sigh, realizing the dinner she had been cooking wouldn't go to waste anyway. She had been almost done before Nick called, and if he showed up here, they could all eat together along with her husband.

"I cannot believe Nick called you while completely ignoring my calls." Zoe grumbled. "I heard about Aunt Camila disowning him and rang him straight away, but he didn't pick up." She settled her head back onto Viola's lap. "I figured he just wanted to be alone, so I left him to it for now. That cousin of mine has a mood swing of a pregnant woman."

Viola absorbed that with a small frown, because Nick had told her he was lonely and that Zoe was busy, but Zoe had been trying to reach him and he had ignored it. What exactly was he trying to achieve? And to think she had nearly cancelled a dinner with her husband for him, when he had lied to get her there.

She had been telling herself she was reading too much into things, but she had noticed it, on certain occasions, those looks he gave her that lingered just a little too long, the way he had held her hand. Was he trying to maneuver her onto what amounted to a date, using loneliness as the excuse?

She dismissed the thought almost as quickly as it formed. Nick knew she was married. He knew she was the Luna. He wouldn't be foolish enough to jeopardize their friendship over something like that, would he?

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 330: The moody husband_Part 2[1,422 words]

Viola stayed in the living room with Zoe, who had finally fallen asleep against her, and when she glanced at the time she saw that a full hour had passed since Zoe arrived. Neither Sebastian nor Nick had come to the door.

Nick had stopped calling, but Sebastian's phone was still unreachable, which made her frown slightly as she sat there staring at his contact on her screen, his aloof picture the only one she had saved of him, staring back at her.

She didn't know how long she had been drifting in and out of a light doze before she heard the door unlock. She glanced at the clock, 10 pm, and before she could fully wonder who it was, her husband walked into view, shrugging off his coat, and stopped the moment he noticed her on the couch with his sister sleeping with her head in her lap.

He looked from Zoe's sleeping face to hers, his hand suspended mid-motion on the coat.

"Hello," Viola murmured, watching him from where she sat, unable to get up without disturbing Zoe.

"Hi," he replied, then resumed removing the coat and draped it over the arm of the nearest chair. "How did she end up sleeping here?" He asked, gesturing to his sister who was using his mate's lap as a pillow and looking perfectly comfortable doing so, where his head ought to be, not hers. That was his woman.

Viola looked down at Zoe's sleeping face. "You don't want to know. It's complicated."

"Complicated? Now I'm curious. Go on." He said with a smile, leaning down as if to kiss her, but then he paused. The smile slipped from his face and he straightened back up, his expression shifting into an aloof look, as though he had just remembered something unpleasant that made him pull back from showing her any affection.

Viola noticed it but didn't allow herself to dwell on it. She knew she had a tendency to overthink. Instead she said, "Have you eaten?"

"Hmm." He hummed softly, working at the buttons of his shirt. "I ate with some of the Alpha guests who came to Silver for Javier's funeral." He lied, knowing he couldn't have eaten anything even if it had been placed directly in front of him, not after what he had discovered, which had not only killed his appetite entirely but ruined his mood and made him deeply regret ever having invited Lara here to dig up the truth and plant seeds of doubts in his head.

"Oh." Viola said, unable to fully mask the disappointment in her voice, since she had cooked for him. The ham had still been warming when she turned the cooker off, and she could have redone it quickly, but he had already eaten.

"Have you?" He returned the question, giving her a sideways glance.

Viola nodded, even though she was no longer hungry despite having been earlier, when she had been waiting for him.

"Are you staying here tonight?" She asked, looking up at him hopefully.

"Yes. But first I need to remove that big baby from your lap, she's occupying a space that isn't hers. Should I wake her up?" He said, leaning down toward his sister, but Viola quickly stopped him.

"Can you carry her to the guest room instead? Don't wake her, she's going through some conflict. if you wake her up, her mind will go straight back into overdrive and she won't be able to sleep again." She said.

Sebastian arched a brow, quietly curious about what conflict could possibly be weighing on his sister so heavily that sleep would abandon her the moment she woke. He leaned in and lifted Zoe carefully from the couch, his face coming so close to his wife's in the process that they were barely a breath apart, his eyes dropping briefly to her lips, but he pulled back just as she began to lean in, and carried his sister up the stairs, taking that addictive scent of his with him.

Viola sat there staring after him with a small frown. "Am I overthinking his behavior again, or is he actually avoiding kissing me?" She said aloud to the empty room.

A few minutes later it became clear to her that she hadn't been overthinking it at all. As they lay in bed together, Sebastian was flat on his back, hands tucked behind his head, staring at the ceiling without blinking and without saying a word. He hadn't moved to touch her. He hadn't spoken since returning from settling Zoe in the guest room, he had only looked her over briefly when he came back to find her changed into her silk nightdress, and then walked to the bed and taken this position, where he had been lying in silence for the past twenty minutes.

"How was your day?" She asked, opening a conversation, because his quietness was baffling after the morning they had shared when he had barely been able to let her leave his office.

"As usual. Stressful." He muttered.

She waited a moment, then tried again. "Have they left for Mexico yet, Mrs. Kade I mean?"

He only hummed in response.

"Did you know Laila found her fated mate?" She tried, believing this might actually pull him out of wherever his head had gone since he once had a history with the shewolf.

He turned only his head and looked at her with a slight frown. "She has? Where did you hear that?"

"She came to me herself a few hours ago and told me. And you won't believe who the man is." She said, feeling quietly relieved that he was at least facing her now and engaging.

"Who?" He asked, fighting the overwhelming urge to reach out and pull her into his arms, to kiss her until neither of them could think straight and tell her he didn't give a fuck about Laila or anything beyond her. But he couldn't hold her. Couldn't kiss her yet, not until he had confirmed what he suspected tomorrow and make plans.

"Doctor Gilbert. She found out he was her fated mate and came to me asking for his contact information." Viola said, smiling a little at the sheer irony of it all. "Isn't that something?"

Even buried under the weight of everything else pressing on him, it was surprising enough to make his brow lift.

"I'll be damned. Is that why Zoe was here?" he asked.

And was that why Gilbert had looked so flushed that morning? Sebastian put two and two together and realized Laila and the doctor must have met that morning in the hallway outside his office.

"No, Zoe doesn't know yet. I haven't told her." Viola said. "She wouldn't have wanted me to tell you either, but I think you should know, since you're the one who raised her. She texted Doctor Gilbert today and confessed her feelings to him. She's been beating herself up over it ever since and can't stop regretting it."

Sebastian let out a slow sigh and turned onto his side to face her, his head pillowed against his bent elbow. "I didn't like how taken she was with that man from the beginning, and now she's going to walk straight into a heartbreak. I've spoiled her too much, she might not take this well at all when she finds out. Why on earth did she text him?" He muttered, the frustration of a protective older brother sitting plainly on his face.

"Please don't scold her for it. Women go through that, and there is no rule that says a woman can't make the first move." Viola reasoned, and reached out to place her hand over his, but she noticed him shift back slightly and turn his face toward the ceiling again. She felt the confusion settle in her chest but said nothing about it.

"It's different when it's my sister. She shouldn't have put herself in that position over a man who wasn't actively showing her attention, it will only feed his ego, if Gilbert even has one. Honestly, I have never met a man more clueless and more absorbed in his work and completely blind to everything else."

Sebastian said, still struggling to picture Laila and the doctor as a pair, though he couldn't deny he felt a quiet wave of relief that the she-wolf would finally stop circling him and disturbing his life. The problem was that now it was his sister who would pay the price for it.