

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna -

Chapter 361: Conflicted mind[1,313 words]

On the day before the ceremony, Matt arrived at the Grim pack in the morning, and shortly afterward Zoe and her date arrived as well, but unlike her brother, they had driven the entire way, because unless you owned a private jet, there was no flight into the Grim pack and a road trip was the only option available from Silver pack territory.

The sun was blazing and shining brightly over the pavements and the roofs of the pack houses in the Grim Pack, and Zoe watched the identical houses glide past from the car.

She had been looking forward to this day, hoping it would make up for the dry date they had already shared. She had tried to recreate some of the fun Viola had described having with her brother; the amusement park, winning a plushie and getting ramen noodles, but for some reason it hadn't come close to being half as enjoyable as she had imagined, and he hadn't won her a plushie at all.

In fact, Gilbert had spaced out for most of the time they were there. He had claimed he had never been to an amusement park before, but when they arrived he had shown barely any real interest in anything. He had paid for everything without complaint, and he had sat on the bench while she rode rides alone, and bought her ice cream when she asked, but when she offered him some he had said he didn't take chilled things.

It had been boring, if she was being honest with herself, and Zoe hated feeling that way because she was starting to wonder whether she simply wasn't a good enough entertainer, or whether she hadn't done enough to bring him out of his shell. She had told herself he was probably thinking about work, and as hard as she had tried, the date had stayed dry from beginning to end.

So when he had asked her to be his date to the Grim pack ceremony, where he had been invited as a widely respected doctor across the entire werewolf world, her dampened spirits had lifted again immediately.

She had been looking forward to the drive with him, just the two of them, plenty of time to talk and laugh and finally find their rhythm, if there was any. But just like the park, this journey had felt short and somehow even flatter than the last time. Was it her? Was she not good enough?

Was it because she was a hopeless romantic who had built up such vivid, sweet imagined versions of their moments together that the real thing could never possibly match them or live up to her expectations?

Gilbert was a good man, she knew that much. He had made sure she had everything she needed on the journey, handed her food packages and kept her comfortable without being asked. But that wasn't what she wanted from him. Zoe wanted more, and she couldn't shake the quiet fear that she was somehow failing to reach him.

"The weather here is nice." Zoe said conversationally as he pulled the car to a stop in the grounds of the Grim pack's main building, where she knew her brother and Viola were already settled somewhere inside and she desperately needed to find Vee and feel like herself again.

"It is." Gilbert replied, with a smile that didn't quite make it to his eyes.

This was his first time ever taking a she-wolf on a proper outing date, and while he wasn't entirely certain what was expected of him, he was well aware that behaving like a distracted and uninterested bastard was not it. But he couldn't seem to help it.

The mate bond was working against him in ways he hadn't anticipated, making everything Zoe offered feel somehow muted, because she wasn't the one his body was pulling toward, no matter how firmly his mind tried to override it.

Gilbert hated himself even more for longing for the wrong she-wolf and wanting the moments with Zoe to end, when he ought to be getting along with her and figuring out how to take her as a chosen mate.

He didn't want Laila, okay, but his mind was messing up real bad he could barely focus on one thing, and he wished he hadn't gotten himself into this in the first place. He knew he wasn't supposed to be acting like an uninterested jerk, but he couldn't help it, the mate bond was messing with him and making him uninterested in anything she had to offer because she wasn't the one he longed for.

"What color of dress are you wearing tomorrow? I believe we should match like couples on a date." He asked her, wanting to remedy his absent-minded behavior when he noticed her spirits were so down, it was so unlike her to be this quiet.

He knew her as a bubbly person and now she looked so solemn he wanted to kick himself, but until he had marked her, there was no changing the fact that he wouldn't be able to give her his full attention.

His question brought some light back to her eyes and she turned to him with a smile. "I thought you were never going to ask. Well, I was going for midnight blue, do you have a suit or attire in that color or do you need me to order one from my fashion house?"

"I have a lot of them in that color, Miss Zoe. Midnight blue it is." He said, coming out of the car and going around to open her door.

Zoe stepped out pouting as she said, "You're doing that again."

"Doing what?" He asked cluelessly, and he watched her sigh.

"Addressing me as Miss Zoe. I told you to just use my name, no more Miss. The Miss makes me feel like we are not dating but just doctor and patient." She had corrected him on this more than twice now, and every time he added the Miss she felt an invisible wall go up between them, which she hated.

Gilbert scratched the back of his neck and apologized. "You are right, I'm sorry. It slips out of habit because I have always thought of you in that context. I will make a proper effort to remember. Zoe. How is that?"

She beamed. "Much better." Then she stepped a little closer and said, "I know you might think I am too forward, but I have wanted this for a long time. Can I have a kiss? It is completely fine if you don't want to, I won't—"

Gilbert stepped forward, took her hands gently in his, and said, "You can. May I?" His eyes dropped to her lips, even as the pull he felt toward her in that moment was nothing like the involuntary surge that had overtaken him in the hallway with Laila, a comparison he immediately pushed away, hating himself for making it at all.

Zoe's heart surged and she nodded, leaning forward to close the remaining distance between them. And finally, finally, she kissed her beloved doctor. Her teenage crush. The man she had quietly carried in her heart for years and wished to love and cherish for the rest of her life.

It was a chaste kiss, lips only, no real depth to it, and Zoe wished with everything in her that he would part his lips and actually kiss her back the way she had imagined so many times. But even so, when he pulled back and she found his handsome face close to hers and his eyes on hers, she was head over heels.

"Let's do that often, Gilbert. I really liked it." She beamed at him.

He gave her a nod. "Sure. Go on ahead and text me your room location, I will bring your things around."

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Zoe bobbed her head and waved at him. "See you around then. Before I settle down, I want to go find my sister-in-law and brother first."

As Zoe bounced happily away from Gilbert's car and headed toward the pack house entrance, she almost walked straight into Matt, who was standing at the entrance with a bewildered look in his hazel eyes, his phone suspended in his hand as though he had been about to make a call but had forgotten all about it.

"Hi, Beta Matt." She greeted him, but he didn't reply, and she frowned. "Do you know where I can find Vee?" she asked, waving her hand in front of his face. When he still didn't respond and just kept staring past her toward Gilbert, who was pulling their suitcases out of the trunk, she poked him in the chest.

He grabbed her wrist and held on, finally turning to look at her face. "How come you were kissing the doc?"

Matt could not believe what he had just seen with his own eyes. Sebastian had told him that Zoe was on her way there, and Matt had come outside to check, perhaps to see what was taking her so long. The normal thing he had expected was for Gilbert to show up there with Laila, only to walk outside and find his lips locked with the little brat instead. What was she doing kissing her doctor, who had already found his mate? Did she have any idea how crazy Laila Serrano was?

Zoe's smile fell and she yanked her hand from his grip. "Duh, since when did it become a crime for a girl to kiss her boyfriend?"

"Boyfriend?" Matt asked, completely taken aback. How was he her boyfriend? Since when? "How come he is your boyfriend?"

Zoe narrowed her eyes at her brother's beta. "Do I have to repeat every word I say now, Beta Matt? Gilbert and I are dating, and I believe I am allowed to kiss him whenever I want."

"But you can't date him!" Matt said in a loud whisper before he caught himself and gave himself a mental knock on the head. Why on earth was he overreacting? She was an adult. But then it didn't matter because that man had found a fated mate, and from what Matt knew, once someone found their mate, they could never again find another woman attractive or want to be in a relationship with anyone else. It would never happen unless he had rejected Laila, which was very unlikely because the mate bond was still recent. None of this was making any sense to Matt.

Zoe rolled her eyes. "Sometimes you act more protective than my actual brother. Hermano wouldn't have a problem with me dating him, so I don't see why you should. Excuse me." She flashed him a tight smile despite her irritation at the look of open disapproval on his face. Just because he had helped raise her alongside her brother didn't mean he got to pick who she dated. Hmph.

Matt stood there for a moment, watching her until she disappeared into the halls of the mansion. He was still standing in the same spot when Gilbert came by with the bags, and Matt recovered quickly and stepped into his path with a look of clear irritation.

"Hey, Beta Matt. You came too, I wasn't expecting to see you here—"

Matt slammed the doctor into the wall before he could finish his sentence, pinning him there with a forearm pressed firmly to his chest. "What are you playing at, doc? Why are you here with Zoe when I heard you've got Laila?"

Gilbert's eyes went wide. "How did you know about Laila?"

"It doesn't matter how I know. Why are you with Zoe? What exactly are your intentions with her?" Matt demanded, not caring in the slightest that he sounded exactly as protective as he had when they were kids and boys used to approach her and he would scare them off with a single look.

Gilbert held his gaze steadily. He had heard enough about how present Matt and the Alpha had been in Zoe's upbringing that none of the Beta's behavior surprised him.

"My intention is to date her and make her my wife if she will take me for a chosen mate. And as for Laila, there is nothing there beyond a fated bond I intend to close. I don't want her and I never will. Now if you would kindly let me off this wall." Gilbert requested calmly, having no desire whatsoever to get into a fight with the beta over something like this.

There was nothing to discuss about Laila when he would remove her from his life soon.

Matt didn't release him immediately. "Why do I feel like you are using her to get rid of Laila?"

"Don't overcross it, Matt. I am dating Zoe with good intentions and I have plans for our future. She likes me and I feel the same." I am learning to like her. Gilbert corrected quietly in his own mind, knowing that if he said that part out loud, Matt would find a way to pull them apart, and Gilbert didn't want that because he had already decided to commit.

Matt slowly released him and stepped back.

"It better be exactly what you just said, doc. Because if you end up hurting her... I will forget that you and I are friends and I will make your life miserable. Zoe Kade is not to be hurt. Not even a little. Are we on the same page right now, man?"

Gilbert felt a knot of unease settle in his stomach at the beta's words, even though there was no visible anger in Matt's eyes, only that solid, immovable wall of protectiveness that made it very clear that going against him on this would not end well for anyone.

He had nothing to worry about, Gilbert told himself, because he genuinely had no intentions of hurting her. "I will not hurt her. You have my word on that."

"Good," Matt said. "Because I will keep my eyes on you from here on. And if you must know, your fated mate is among the guest list. I don't want to find Zoe in tears because of you or find Laila's claws on her." He watched Gilbert closely for any visible giveaway that he was excited about Laila being among the guests, but only saw his Adam's apple bob as he nodded.

Though Matt wanted to doubt the doctor, then it wasn't the first time it had happened that a fated mate had been rejected for a chosen mate, and because of that, he decided to put a little trust in him. However, it didn't mean his eyes wouldn't remain on Gilbert and his mate until he made his final choice and picked his chosen mate.

"Let me carry her things. The Supreme Alpha will like to see you."

Gilbert handed Zoe's pink suitcase over to the Beta without hesitation and then went to look for the Alpha, who was already mind-linking him.

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Chapter 363: Making new friends[1,466 words]

After the previous night, where Viola had pulled out all the stops with her husband to make Hailey jealous and make it absolutely clear where the shewolf stood, she noticed the very next day, stepping out of their room to accept Tess's invitation to tour the large mansion, that the omegas and several of the Alpha's family members were giving her strange looks.

Whispers followed her down every corridor, and fingers pointed in her direction like she was walking around with something unpleasant on her and it brought a frown to her face.

Viola was no stranger to bad attention, as she had lived most of her life shrouded in scandal even before she came to Silver. She had been a fallen pack princess and a once-discarded lover. People's whispered words wasn't a new thing to her, and so she tried not to let it affect her or pay much attention to the people around her, even though fragments of what was being said still reached her ears anyway.

"...shameless bitch. An apple never falls far from the tree. She came from an omega mother from what I heard, and no doubt she is attracted to low-ranking men and sleeps with them behind closed doors like the bitch she is. What a disgrace."

"I wonder how she can still show her face in public. She's disgusting and should be thrown out to the packless so she can fuck with all of them as she pleases." Spat another, and though she only caught pieces of each conversation, what she caught was enough to make her frown more in confusion as it didn't make sense, especially since she didn't even recognize most of the she-wolves saying the words as they were guests of the ceremony and families of the Alpha.

Last night had been one of the best she'd had in a long time. She and Sebastian had spent the whole night together in bed without work pulling him away. They had kissed, rolled around in each other's embrace, and then talked about irrelevant things that made her know him on a deeper level than she had thought possible.

She had woken up feeling clear-headed and purposeful, already running through her plans to secure an alliance with the Alpha heir and build a few meaningful connections at the ceremony. She had not woken up expecting to walk into a corridor of pointed fingers and whispers.

Unknown to Viola, Hailey had already been busy spreading the story that she had been entertaining male omegas behind closed doors since her arrival to Grim Pack. Viola walked past the whispers as though she hadn't heard a single word, because acknowledging them would only give them more fuel, and she made her way toward Tess, who was waiting for her.

The moment Tess saw her coming, she moved away from the Alpha heir, whom she had been making out with in the open, and waved excitedly. The she-wolf was dressed in beige linen shorts and an olive tank top, a big smile on her model-worthy, tanned, freckled face, and Viola waved back, making the people talking about her narrow their eyes.

Unlike most she-wolves she had encountered in this world, Tess was refreshingly easy to be around, and Viola suspected it was because she hadn't grown up here, hadn't been shaped by the rigid hierarchy and quick judgments that defined so much of werewolf society. Growing up among open-minded humans had left its mark on her in the best possible way.

"It's so good to finally have someone I can actually talk to, Luna Viola." Tess said warmly as they began walking through the mansion where guests were steadily arriving and filling the halls.

"It's genuinely hard to fit in here, they look at me like I'm some kind of alien. I would love to know more people since I'm going to be spending my life in this world now. Are there any friends of yours you could introduce me to?" She asked hopefully.

Viola opened her mouth to answer, and paused. Because when she actually thought about it, apart from Zoe and Nick, she didn't really have friends. The ones she had made in the past had drifted away or turned their backs on her so completely that she barely remembered their names anymore. Zoe alone wouldn't be the kind of connection Tess was looking for here, and Nick wasn't quite right for it either. She was about to disappoint her with that information when she heard her name called from somewhere behind them.

"Viola!"

They both turned to find Laila hurrying toward them in a pair of brown denim shorts and a cropped top, a baseball cap pulled down against the harsh sun of the region. She looked casual and completely unlike the polished, arrogant Laila Viola had come to know in Silver, and she was beaming at the sight of her like they were old friends reuniting.

"Oh for fuck's sake, why is it so unbearably hot here?" Laila complained as she reached them, and then immediately added, "I am so glad I found you, I was starting to think I would die of boredom out here." She pulled Viola into a brief hug and stepped back.

Laila wouldn't have made the trip to this ceremony, actually she had wanted to stay in Silver and keep away from events until the scandal about her was over and no one remembered her anymore, but she couldn't have missed it knowing the man she wanted to be around was coming here too.

When she saw the guest list sent to her family, she had grabbed it immediately. And the moment she stepped into the pack, the whispers and words about her had sparked right back up again, her fall from grace that had happened since Viola had won over her, which no longer mattered to her the way it once had.

It had been a relief to spot Viola on her arrival, because at least there was one less judgmental person around, and someone she had shared the scandal with.

"I didn't know you were coming." Viola said, because someone needed to speak and she wasn't the sort of person who could be cold to someone who was being openly warm to her, regardless of history.

"I didn't know I was going to come either. So where are you headed, and if you don't mind, can I tag along?" She asked, with an almost awkward smile that sat on her alluring confident face.

Viola glanced at Tess, who was watching Laila with open curiosity, and something clicked. Laila knew everyone worth knowing in this world, moved through powerful circles like she was born to it, and could do more to help Tess find her footing socially than Viola could manage with her current unstable standing.

"Of course you can. Tess, this is Laila Serrano. Laila, this is Tess, the Luna-to-be of the Grim pack."

Laila's eyes widened noticeably. "I can't believe I'm actually meeting you. It's so nice to meet you." She immediately extended her hand, visibly delighted. Meeting important people was a habit deeply wired into her, one that no amount of scandal had managed to kill, and to her, Tess was soon going to be one of the most important she-wolves in the werewolf world once she married the heir. Furthermore, the idea of being friends with not one but two Lunas, even if one of them was Viola, lit something up in her emerald eyes.

"It's wonderful to meet you too, Laila." Tess said, shaking her hand with genuine warmth. "I've actually heard of you, in our little werewolf community back in Arizona, we keep tabs on notable people from the wider werewolf world even while we are keeping ourselves hidden among humans. I remember seeing a picture of you. I'm glad we are meeting in person."

Viola watched Laila practically glow at the revelation that she was known even beyond their world, her interest in Tess visibly multiplying by the second. From what she understood, werewolves living in the human world kept themselves carefully hidden while still maintaining small community connections with others like them, so the fact that Laila's name had reached Arizona was genuinely something.

"I am stunned and honestly honored to know my name has traveled that far." Laila said, falling naturally into step beside them as they continued walking, with Viola in the middle.

Both Laila and Tess were significantly taller than her, and Viola pursed her lips quietly at the realization that she was rather dwarfed between them. There was probably some truth to the idea that short women only ever seemed to attract taller friends.

"So where exactly are you two headed?" Laila asked, and Tess opened her mouth to reply.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 364: The sight In the stall[1,486 words]

"I was actually looking forward to riding a horse. Viola and I were heading to the stables, I noticed the Alpha's daughters take their horses from there. I promised to teach her how to ride, though I think it shouldn't be too hard since she must have ridden on her husband's back before." Tess said.

"That's a cool idea. So how are you adjusting to our world?" Laila asked, and when Tess gave a sad shake of her head to indicate she wasn't adjusting well at all, Laila said,

"Don't worry, you'll get used to it eventually. Our people find it hard to embrace strangers, especially in the Luna position. We always want someone familiar. You will face many challenges, and you have to be brave about them, just like Viola has been. You won't believe she defeated me in a competition to win the Supreme Luna position." Laila said with amusement, which wouldn't have been funny had it been a month ago.

The conversation and attention swung back to Viola, and Tess began asking her questions while Laila painted her as some kind of brave, remarkable figure, which only made Viola feel self-conscious because she genuinely didn't feel she had done enough to deserve any of it, especially when those words were coming from a she-wolf who had once been her rival.

She was relieved when, as they stepped out of the shade of the building and headed toward the stables, they spotted Zoe squinting through the harsh sun with her hand over her eyes, clearly looking for someone. The moment her eyes found Viola, they lit up and she came bouncing over.

"Vee!" She threw her arms around Viola and jumped happily. "Oh, Vee, I have missed you so much!"

Viola grinned, being made to jump along with her, which immediately made her feel dizzy and slightly nauseated, an annoying sensation she had been experiencing since last night.

"I missed you too. When did you arrive?" She pulled back to look at Zoe's flushed cheeks, her skin clearly unhappy with the harsh sun here, silver hair plastered against her sweaty forehead.

"Not long ago. I ran into my brother and he told me you were out with the Grim pack Luna-to-be." Saying that, Zoe's eyes moved to the two she-wolves flanking her friend, the brunette she figured was Tess, and then Laila, at whom she couldn't help but give a look that silently asked what she was doing here.

"You must be Tess." Zoe said.

"And you must be Zoe Kade." Tess's eyes went soft and delighted. "You are such a talented designer, every one of my werewolf friends has wanted to wear something you've made, but we don't have access to this part of the world."

Viola watched them fall into easy conversation, Zoe promising to give Tess a free tour of her fashion house and send a few of her top designs as a wedding gift, both of them hugging and laughing like they had known each other for years.

Many werewolves living in the human world were either descendants of banished wolves or packless wolves who had built new lives among humans. Even so, they still followed the werewolf world's trends through its private social media. Since they had no legitimate access to the werewolf network from the human world, most relied on hacked connections, underground VPNs, or illegal software to get back into it.

"Hi, Zoe." Laila greeted.

"Hi." Zoe returned, with considerably less enthusiasm than she had given everyone else.

Before long, Zoe had fallen into step beside Viola, and as they walked she leaned in and whispered, "What are you doing with her? Laila, I mean?"

Viola hadn't told Zoe about the recent situation with Laila because it was tied directly to Gilbert, and she wasn't about to unpack all of that right now. "She had a man problem and I helped her with it. It's a long story." She said carefully.

"So does that mean we are cool with her now?" Zoe asked, pursing her lips, fully aware that Laila's sharp hearing was likely catching every word and not particularly caring either way. As long as Vee didn't have a problem with the she-wolf, Zoe could work with it.

"We should be." Viola said.

"So when you say man problem, are you talking about my brother? Please don't tell me you are giving her pointers on how to court your own husband."

"I am no longer interested in your brother, Zoe." Laila answered flatly, rolling her eyes. "The moon goddess has sent me mine my way, and your brother is old news to me."

"Oh, praise the moon goddess! Finally, my brother is free from one less DP she-wolf!" Zoe exclaimed, DP meaning desperate she-wolf, and Laila shot her a sharp glare.

"Don't rejoice too fast. I haven't been claimed by my mate yet. He and I still have some things to settle before the claiming. He is taking his time deciding whether I should move into his place or he into mine. Men these days are so incredibly slow." Laila tutted, and everyone around her nodded in some form of agreement, except Viola.

"Not my man, at least." Viola mused warmly, thinking of how, that very morning, he had run her a bath and helped her into the tub when she told him she didn't feel like leaving the bed and wanted to sleep a little longer. After they had stayed up until past midnight, she had wanted nothing more than to keep sleeping, but his affection had made her get up. "He knows what I want before I even know it myself."

"Mine too." Tess agreed with a soft smile. "He's just the best."

"Well, not mine." Zoe said, with a sigh that carried more weight than she intended. "You two are the lucky ones. I haven't gotten mine to understand me anywhere near that level yet."

She couldn't help the quiet envy that settled in her chest, the wish that Gilbert would treat her even a fraction of the way her brother treated Vee. Not that she wanted a husband who acted like her brother, he was her brother and he drove her absolutely mad sometimes with his overprotectiveness, but absent-minded and distant was somehow worse than overbearing. The memory of the dry date crept back in and she pushed it away before it could fully ruin her mood with sadness.

"I think we need to take the lead ourselves and make them step up, Zoe." Laila said, drifting closer to her side as though she had found a kindred spirit, because in a way, she had. Gilbert had blocked her number and she had been unable to reach him since, which was a large part of why she was even here at all. If she had someone to commiserate with, at least she wasn't suffering alone.

"How are we going to achieve that?" Zoe asked curiously. Even though she had never been particularly fond of Laila in the past, she liked this new version of her.

Laila began talking about strategies for making their men chase them the way these two taken women beside them seemed to have mastered, not knowing for a single second that both of them were talking about the exact same man.

Meanwhile Viola, who knew the full picture, felt the guilt creeping in quietly. She knew she should say something. But she looked around at this little circle she had somehow found herself in, friends, actual friends, talking about men and laughing about irrelevant things, and she couldn't bring herself to shatter it.

She hadn't had something like this in a very long time. And even with everything pressing down on her, the uncertain future, the alliance she had sworn to secure before this ceremony ended, the half-breed secret she carried everywhere, being here, walking in the sun and talking like a normal shewolf, felt like something she needed to protect a little while longer.

Getting close to Tess was also part of the plan. Tess was still too new to this world to sway Kenny directly, but Viola intended to win over more than just him before this ceremony was done. She had made a promise to herself and to her pack, and she intended to keep it.

They reached the large stables, where healthy horses were shifting and neighing in their stalls, the smell of hay and leather thick in the warm air.

Tess led them through confidently, pointing out the stronger horses from the gentler ones. Laila chose hers, then Viola chose hers, then Zoe, and they were making their way toward the far end of the stalls to collect the keys when all four of them stopped dead at what they found in the last stall.

"Holy moly!" Zoe exclaimed.

"Oh my!" Viola said.

"What the..." Said Tess.

"Fucking hell." Laila's eyes went wide.

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Chapter 365: That's damn right! [1,635 words]

The four women stood before the stall, each wearing a different expression as they took in the scene unfolding before them, two people stumbling frantically with their clothes, trying to hide themselves behind the horse feed at the back of the stall.

It was Laila who spoke first. "Who are these naked babies?" She took in the two teenage girls who had clearly been making out in the back stall in full nakedness instead of simply getting a room. The girls scrambled to pull their clothes back on, and then one of them straightened up with an angry flush on her face and snapped, "What the fuck are you doing here?"

"I should be asking you the same thing, Kim." Said Tess, crossing her arms and giving the girl a flat look. Just like Hailey, Kim had been consistently rude to her since she arrived at the pack, never once giving her a real chance to be close to their family. Not once, however, had Tess thought that Kim's time spent in the stables had anything to do with the omega girl who cleaned and swept the place.

Alpha Daniel would be absolutely furious if he found out his daughter was rolling in the hay with a cleaning omega.

"Oh, so this is Kimberly, the baby girl of the Grim pack." Laila said, taking in the girl's flushed face and the furious eyes she was shooting at them as she pulled her girlfriend behind her protectively, as though trying to shield her from their gazes.

Many knew of the last-born daughter of the Grim Pack, who had come late into her family and was treated a little differently from the others because she had been considered a disgrace, or so the rumors said.

Her parents shouldn't have been giving birth at their age, which was well past a hundred years, though they still looked middle-aged by human standards. People had made fun of the sudden birth of a baby girl to parents that old, and the girl had become a laughingstock in werewolf society. More often than not, the Alpha tried to keep her hidden from the public, as though she were his greatest embarrassment.

"Don't fucking call me that, bitch. Get out of here right now." Kim gritted out through her teeth, scanning the four women and wondering what on earth had brought them into the stables when most people considered the place smelly and never came near it. She was panicking internally at being caught as she knew what would happen if her father knew, but she hid it well and kept herself planted in front of the trembling omega behind her.

Laila's brows pulled together at the girl's tone. "Hold on, little peanut, you don't talk to us like that. You really don't want to see me when I'm angry. I can have you on your knees right now. Show some respect to—"

Viola could see the girl was putting up a brave front, and if she was being completely honest, it was their fault for barging into something that was none of their business. She put her hand on Laila's arm to stop her and said, "We should leave them alone. It's none of our business."

"Yeah, that's damn right, you should." Kim said smugly, facing the wolfless woman, who seemed like the easiest target to taunt among them after they had ruined her moment. "After all, you're no better. The only difference is that I did mine with someone I love and will keep forever, while you did yours with two of our omega men on your very first night here. So listen to the bitch and get out of my space."

The four women each had a different reaction to Kim's words and looked from Viola to the teen shewolf.

"What's she talking about?" Zoe asked with a frown, not liking the tone of complete disrespect the girl was using toward her friend.

"The bitch didn't tell you she slept with our Omegas and moaned to high heavens?"

Viola's eyes narrowed instantly, and immediately she put two and two together, the whispers she had walked through that very morning, the accusing looks, the words she had only caught fragments of. She hadn't understood what was being said then, but now it made complete, infuriating sense, and anger settled into her chest like a hot coal.

Viola had always had a short temper by nature, but four years in the hollow had beaten it so far down inside her that she had almost forgotten it existed, conditioned into believing she didn't have the right to feel that emotion at all. Yet for some reason it was consuming her now at this baseless rumors, rising fast and sharp, and she had to remind herself to breathe as she stepped forward and demanded,

"What are you talking about?"

Kim smirked at her, pulling her hands into the sleeves of her shirt to wear it back properly. "You shouldn't pretend in front of your friends. Tell them how you slept with one of our workers last night behind your husband's back. Will you deny having sex last night with someone?"

Kim had been scolded by Hailey because of this woman. Growing up in a large family where her parents had her long after her siblings were already becoming adults, Kim had spent most of her life invisible, and she had worked hard to become visible to Hailey, the sibling closest to her age.

She had been slowly succeeding, too, until yesterday when this wolfless had shown up with the Supreme Alpha and put Hailey in a foul mood that she had since been taking out on everyone around her, especially Kim, at every available opportunity. It was like it was her fault that the Supreme Alpha came with this wolfless.

If she hadn't shown up, Hailey wouldn't have been in a bad mood. She wouldn't have been yelling at Kim at every turn. And now this woman had not only ruined Kim's plans for bonding with Hailey, she had also just walked in and interrupted her time with her girlfriend. Kim didn't give a damn and would put her in her place for all of it.

"Viola, do you need me to rough up that hair of hers a little? I don't care if she's just seventeen. Putting smart-mouthed idiots like her in their place, trust me, I do it fast too." Laila said, preparing to step forward and use her female Alpha aura on the girl.

She could tolerate a great many things, but not disrespect from a girl who was still growing tits and still making out in stalls instead of getting a room boldly. Who did she think she was, insulting someone in Laila's circle that way?

Zoe found herself quietly agreeing with Laila for once, but she wasn't the type to put her hands on anyone, so she said instead, "You should be showing some respect. She is the Supreme Luna."

"You can all kiss my ass." Kim shot back.

"Oh, I will make you kiss it yourself, little bitch." Laila began moving forward and Viola stopped her again with a firm hand. "I can handle her. Let it go."

"I honestly don't think you can, Luna Viola, that girl is something else." Tess said, turning to Viola with a troubled look. "Now that I think about it, I overheard people in the breakfast hall this morning talking about someone who had been with some omegas, but I didn't pay close enough attention to catch the details." She paused. "I think it was you they were talking about. How did this rumor even start?"

Tess had been so wrapped up in her own mate that she hadn't paid much attention to the gossip circulating through the family, and now that Kim had said it plainly and she realized the person being talked about was Viola, she couldn't make it add up at all. The Viola she had spent the last few hours with didn't look remotely like someone who would betray her husband the night they arrived.

Viola's face gave almost nothing away, but underneath it the anger was still quietly burning, and she tried to control it, tried to push it down because it wasn't something worth being this angry about, but it wasn't going anywhere easily. It was strange and gripping...

She had to breathe through it, slowly, finding the intensity of it completely usual. A rumor like this shouldn't rattle her this way. And yet it was, in a way that felt almost beyond her.

When she was certain she had steadied herself enough, she turned to face the girl who stood at roughly the same height as her and was still wearing that smug little smirk.

"Where did you hear this? And don't give me that smug reply of yours, because you will find yourself caught up in your own pack's scandal very quickly. I am perfectly willing to walk away from this stall and pretend I saw nothing, but if you don't tell me where this rumor started, you won't like how this ends for you."

Viola had nothing against what she had walked in on. She didn't care about rank, gender, or any of it. People loved who they loved. But Alpha Daniel, with his deeply old-fashioned values, would not

feel the same way about his youngest daughter being found in the stables with an omega. She was genuinely prepared to say nothing and walk away, but not if this girl was going to keep carrying that attitude.

She watched the smug expression flicker and dull slightly, watched the sweat appear at Kim's hairline, but the girl held her chin up and said,

"Nobody is going to believe the words of a whore."

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 366: The scheming shewolf[1,428 words]

"Nobody is going to believe the words of a whore."

"You bet they will when I have you recorded on my phone." Viola held up her phone screen to show the recording she had been using to capture the horses, right up until they had stumbled into this stall and found Kim.

She watched the girl's face paled in horror at the sight of the recording screen.

"Daddy will kill Liza! You can't let him know." Kim said in outright terror, the scared girl behind her trembling and with no power to back her up. Every trace of smugness had been replaced with pure panic now as she realized the wolfless had something that could make her father more furious with her than he ever was.

"He doesn't have to know, if you tell me what all this is about that I've been hearing." Viola said calmly.

She had no real intentions of showing the video to anyone and would delete it the moment the girl talked. Though she already suspected where the rumors had started, she needed to confirm it.

"It was Hailey. She told everyone at breakfast that she caught you fucking one of our male omegas in the room. I didn't start the rumors." Kim said desperately, her eyes fixed on Viola's phone.

Viola let out a quiet sigh and deleted the video, which hadn't captured Kim anyway, only the horses, and said, "That wasn't so hard, was it? Your sister is really something, isn't she? I was in the room with my husband, and she twisted it to fit her own narrative."

"Hailey. Of course it had to be that bitch." Laila said with a roll of her eyes. Before Viola had come into the picture, Hailey had been one of her own rivals for the Supreme Alpha's attention, so it was absolutely no surprise the she-wolf was pulling tricks on Viola at the first opportunity.

"Please don't tell anyone I was here with Liza. Her mother is sick, and Daddy won't hesitate to get rid of them both if he finds out. I promised to protect her," Kim pleaded. "You have a fight with Hailey, not me. I'll stay out of your way."

One would think Kim was rebellious and smart-mouthed, but deep down she acted that way so she wouldn't be bullied for being her father's unwanted daughter, and now she had done it to protect Liza.

"I am not going to rat on you. Your secret is safe with me." Viola said, her mind already turning toward Hailey's scheme.

After everything she had shown the she-wolf last night, made it crystal clear where she stood, rather than accept defeat, Hailey had turned around and spread rumors to make Viola look like an unfaithful wife in front of the very people she needed to win over. No wonder the guests had been giving her dirty looks all morning.

Kim looked at Viola with open distrust. Her sister always promised not to rat on her and then did exactly that. She had no real reason to trust this wolfless, whom she had never actually had a problem with personally, but had wanted to be sassy and arrogant toward to impress Hailey. And now look where trying to impress Hailey had gotten her.

"If you promise not to rat on me, Luna, I will tell you what Hailey is planning for the day of Kenny and Tess's ceremony." Kim said, her expression shifting into something almost pitiful.

"Now isn't this getting interesting, what is your bitchy sister planning?" Laila asked immediately, already looking for any opportunity to get back at Hailey. If she had something in the works, it would feel very good to throw it right back in her face.

"I am not talking to you, Miss Serrano. I am talking to the Supreme Luna," Kim grumbled, making it very clear that she didn't want this busybody involved because, from the looks of it, Laila would rough her sister up, especially since she had an Alpha wolf.

Laila opened her mouth to respond but Viola spoke first. "I already gave you my word and I don't go back on it." She looked at Kim steadily. "And you and Liza... I can see you care about each other. I want you to know I am not the kind of person who stands against love regardless of rank. But for her sake, be more careful next time. Now, what is Hailey planning?" Viola said, meaning every single word she had said to the girl.

Kim felt something shift in how she saw the wolfless, in a way that was completely at odds with what Hailey had spent so much time telling everyone. She shrugged and told Viola everything her sister was planning, in a flat, offhanded tone, like she had already decided Hailey deserved whatever came her way, for as long as they wouldn't rat on her to her father.

"Hermano is going to kill her if he finds out." Zoe remarked as they left Kim and her girlfriend behind in the stall, all plans to ride the horses abandoned after hearing everything Hailey had put in motion for tomorrow's ceremony.

"What are you going to do about this, Luna Viola?" Tess asked, still visibly unsettled, this kind of scheming and scandal was a long way from anything she had grown up around in Arizona.

"I say we confront her directly and put her in her place." Laila said, already warming to the idea. "She-wolves like that don't stop unless they are physically taught a lesson and shown that the territory is marked. You mark your territory."

She was genuinely ready, if given the green light, to shift and take Hailey on in wolf form, it wasn't unheard of among she-wolves, and it had been a while since Laila had had a fight in her wolf form. This felt like a perfectly reasonable occasion to unleash some steam.

Viola, however, did not see that as an option, not here, not in Hailey's father's own pack territory, not when Sebastian had been so careful to avoid anything that might tip into open conflict with the Grims and force them into using their abilities. It would be completely reckless to fight Hailey physically.

"That is not a good idea," Viola said, and Zoe nodded in immediate agreement. "No fighting. We could all get into big trouble if it turned into a pack battle because we challenged their daughter to a fight, and my brother would have to pay the price for it."

"Then what is your plan?" Laila pressed. "Don't tell me you are going to let her come after your man like that. Remember she is one of his fated mates, she has a real chance of succeeding in her stupid little plan if you give her room to breathe. You need a strong leash on this and you need to make sure she cannot get within smelling distance of your husband."

To Laila, she didn't know that Viola was among Sebastian's mates, and so she believed that Hailey had a good chance of succeeding in her plans at the ceremony.

However, Viola had let jealousy drive her last night, and while it had worked, she didn't want that to become her default response to everything. She had faith in her husband. If he had been able to turn away from Laila, she had to believe he would do the same with Hailey. She wasn't going to let fear make her decisions for her this time.

"There's no point in doing anything about Hailey." She said simply. "Let her go ahead and do whatever she wants to. My Alpha is not that easily swayed." She paused and then smiled. "Why am I suddenly craving chocolate? Who's in? Tomorrow is Tess's big day, we shouldn't spend today scheming. Let's focus on getting her ready and excited for her marking." She said cheerfully, steering all of them firmly in a different direction.

Laila watched her with pursed lips. If she were in Viola's position, she would never allow any woman to sit around making plans for her man. In fact, Laila was fairly certain she would rip the face off any she-wolf who so much as looked at Gilbert the wrong way, because her mate possessiveness was already surging through her in ways she hadn't expected and could barely contain.

She couldn't wait to see Gilbert at tomorrow's ceremony and catch him completely off guard, somewhere he wouldn't be able to simply turn and walk away from her.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna -

Chapter 367: Advice from Laila[1,552 words]

The night before the ceremony, almost every guest had arrived at the pack and the pack house was filled with people. The more guests that poured in, the more the rumors about the Supreme Luna spread, moving through the crowds like wildfire, and through all of it, Viola kept her head up, pretended she heard nothing, and stayed focused on her own plans.

Sebastian escaped hearing the rumors because he wasn't out among the gossiping guests, and he never paid any attention to what anyone was saying anyway. He was a busy man with far too much to do. He spent half the day with Gilbert, who brought reports on the progress of Viola's antidote, and with Matt, who had tracked the progress of their mermaid shipment that would be arriving in Silver soon.

Meanwhile, Viola returned to her room after spending the entire day with her new friends. They had walked around so much that the soles of her feet were throbbing, and though she had genuinely enjoyed herself, she felt completely drained. She wasn't used to spending that much time in the company of friends, where conversations had to be carried back and forth almost constantly.

Still, she had learned so much from being with them. Laila had been teaching Tess how to win over her pack and what she would do to make them admire and practically idolize her, and Viola had found herself quietly taking mental notes.

"You have to show them you're the boss and that you don't care about anything they say. Don't give a fuck about what anyone thinks and show them you're the Luna. Werewolves are meaner than the humans you've lived with all your life, and if you show them they can walk all over you, that's exactly what they'll do, walk all over you and wipe their dirty feet on you."

"Won't acting all high and mighty make them hate me?" Tess had asked, and Laila had laughed.

"Ask our Supreme Luna here. She's never high and mighty and always tries to be humble, but where has that gotten her with our pack members? No offense, Luna Viola, I'm just trying to make a point. Werewolves aren't humans. They don't give a shit about your niceness. They respect you more when they know you're unreachable and untouchable."

"But mind you, girl, some won't like you no matter what you do. You have to live with the fact that the love you receive might be shallow. However, it's better than none because they'll still stand up for you against an outsider. Besides, you shouldn't worry too much. You'll gain even more authority over many of them once you receive his mark, especially after you give him a male heir."

Viola hadn't agreed with everything Laila taught Tess, but she had agreed with most of it. Many werewolves didn't respect you simply because you were humble, and always trying to keep her head down wasn't going to get her anywhere in this world without a wolf.

Viola sat on the couch in their room that night, going over everything Laila had said before finally putting those thoughts aside and reaching for her phone.

She was still sitting there, unwrapping pieces of chocolate and eating them while quietly working through her plans for tomorrow on her phone, the ones she intended to keep a surprise even from Sebastian, when he finally returned that night, looking worn out and carrying the warm, unmistakable scent of wine with him.

He came around behind her chair, dropped his chin onto her shoulder, and pressed his lips to the side of her neck. "Hello, sunshine." His voice was deep and low against her skin.

Not wanting him to peek at what she was reading on her phone, she quickly turned the screen off and brought her hand up to ruffle his hair. "Hi." She said. "You've been drinking." She pointed out.

He chuckled softly. "Just a little. I ran into some other Alphas and they pulled me into a drink." He came around and dropped down onto the couch beside her, then lowered his head onto her lap and looked up at her, feeling the stress of the day beginning to ease out of him just from being there next to her.

Being away from Silver had stripped away some of the constant pressure of work, though not all of it and he still brought some here. He still had so much to work through, particularly the shipment of the mermaid he had spoken to Gilbert about, and the plans for where to keep the creature until the next full moon, where it's heart would be cut open.

He was finally getting close to breaking the curse. Finally close to marking his wife and putting this Chapter of their lives behind them. Finally close to bringing his twin out of that place, because he couldn't keep the switching going any longer, not with Viola in his life the way she was now and the constant fear that, during a switch, Alex might take revenge for something that had already been done and could never be undone.

But he pushed all of that aside and looked up at her.

"Tell me how your day was."

"A lot happened today. I might bore you with it. Tell me about yours instead," she said, and the corners of his lips curled into a smile as he replied,

"How could you possibly bore me when I like listening to you talk? We haven't seen each other since this morning, and you think I'd get bored hearing about your day? Tell me."

Viola smiled before putting her phone away and telling him everything, about spending the day with Tess, Laila, and Zoe, about how good it had felt to have a group of friends around her for the first time in longer than she could properly remember. She told him how something about having

people who liked her for who she was made her feel more at home in the world and made the longing to belong feel a little less sharp.

They were talking about tomorrow's ceremony when Viola suddenly sat up straighter, as if she had just remembered something.

"I don't have a dress for tomorrow, Seb. You packed all my casual wear but nothing good enough for a mating ceremony." She began to panic quietly, reaching for another piece of chocolate and starting to rise to check the closet again, but Sebastian didn't lift his head. He simply reached out, caught her hand, and interlocked their fingers.

"Relax, darling. Didn't I tell you everything is covered? Your dress will be here first thing in the morning. You really think I would let my baby show up in something shabby?" He kissed her fingers one by one, and licked the chocolate residue off them while watching her flush, before humming softly and adding, "You've been eating quite a lot of these chocolates lately, sunshine. You've almost finished the whole box in a week. Isn't that getting a little too much?"

He looked up at her with genuine curiosity rather than complaint, not that he cared about the price of the chocolates, but about her health.

She could have the whole damn chocolate factory if she wanted, for as long as it wouldn't affect her health.

To him, she was still his wife, someone he needed to handle with care and look after. Until they knew for certain whether she had inherited a wolf or the healing abilities of a mermaid, he refused to take chances with her health. If she possessed either, minor ailments would become far less of a concern. But for now, he intended to be careful on her behalf.

Viola pursed her lips, looking down at him as he continued licking the chocolate from her fingers. She hadn't actually realized how much she had been eating until he pointed it out. She hadn't been able to stop thinking about chocolates since breakfast. Every time she finished a piece, she wanted another, and she hadn't even noticed when it had started.

"I'll try to cut down. Maybe don't buy me any more after this. I've noticed I'm putting on a little weight, and if I don't stop now, it'll turn into a proper addiction. It would be embarrassing if the Supreme Luna couldn't even run properly." She said, glancing toward the French windows, where lightning was beginning to flash in the distance and the curtains stirred gently with the incoming breeze.

"I don't mind. I'll still love you no matter what shape you become. And what weight are you talking about? You're looking healthy and radiant." He turned in her lap and gently pulled her head down, kissing her softly before stealing the lingering taste of chocolate from her mouth into his.

As they kissed, the rain began outside, the curtains blowing inward as they savored the quiet of the moment together, the calm before the storm of tomorrow, while outside, unseen and unnoticed, Wave was fighting and redirecting the sea witch's portal that was trying to use the rain as a channel, a way to push through from the sea to land and get to what the two of them had built together and were still building; their relationship.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna -

Chapter 368: That should be him[1,050 words]

As the rain fell harder, a car arrived at the pack house gates and was waved through by the patrolling guards. An umbrella was quickly held over the arriving guest's head as he stepped out into the rain, dressed in nothing more than a tank top and trousers, his silver hair already dampening from the downpour.

His gray eyes slowly lifted to the windows of the building above him, sharp and searching, as though looking for something. The moment he found it, his gaze remained fixed on a single window.

Neither the rain nor the darkness hindered his vision. From where he stood, he watched the scene unfolding inside with perfect clarity. His fingers slowly curled into fists at his sides, every muscle in his body tightening at what he saw.

"Welcome to the Grim Pack, Nick." Welcomed the man who had stepped out of the car alongside him, Kenny's distant cousin, the one who had extended the invitation in the first place to him.

Nick had wanted to come here with the woman his heart beat madly in love with. But she had turned him down with an excuse about being busy, and then she had come anyway, with his cousin, and there was no way he was going to miss his chance to see her.

The moment he stepped into the pack, her scent hit him first, before anything else, and made him look up at the open windows. He used his ability to sharpen his vision and found her there, kissing Sebastian, her head pulled down to his on the couch, their lips locked together.

That should be him.

He should be the one she was kissing, her fingers running through his hair while his head rested in her lap.

He had been hiding these feelings for so long, suppressing them along with his powers, and Nick felt as though it was slowly killing him from the inside out. Every day he fought the urge to burst out and scream to the whole world that he wasn't invisible, that Alpha blood flowed through his veins, carrying abilities no one else knew he possessed.

But doing that would not only ruin his chances of winning her over, it would also make Zoe hate him for challenging her brother. Nick would become Alpha, but he wanted to become Alpha in a way that no one would ever discover he had been behind Sebastian's many assassination attempts, including the one that had almost killed Zoe when she had accidentally gotten in the way.

Nick could become Alpha and force them all to remain in his life, but where was the genuine care and love he longed for in that? It would all be meaningless. No, he would become Alpha in a way that made him a hero in everyone's eyes, including Viola's. She would run to him, needing his shoulder to cry on after losing her husband, and he would give her far more than his shoulder. He would give her his heart as well.

Nick wanted love, and he believed he deserved it far more than his cousin did. He had been resented by his own mother his entire life. Wasn't it only natural that the Moon Goddess would give him a woman who would love him and heal all the broken pieces inside him?

Sebastian had been loved by both of his parents and by his siblings, yet he had grown into nothing more than an ungrateful, arrogant motherfucker.

"Nick?" Called his friend, stepping up beside him and noticing he had gone completely still, staring up at the building in the falling rain.

Nick snapped back, realizing he had been standing there too long while the rain came down harder around him. He pulled his eyes from the window and turned to his friend with an easy smile.

"What were you staring at up there?" Simon asked, trying to peek through the downpour, but he could barely make out anything beyond the curtain of rain.

"Nothing. Just admiring the layout of the building. Come on, I can't wait to get into a bed after that journey," Nick said cheerfully.

They jogged up to the entrance together, while Nick made a quiet promise to himself that before their time here was over, he would find a way to kiss her. Just like that, with his head resting on her lap.

The night before the ceremony stayed busy all the way through until morning, omegas moving through the pack house decorating and preparing for the big day ahead.

The morning of the ceremony arrived gray and cool, the rain that had fallen all through the night leaving behind a chilly air that cut through the humidity. Even before Viola opened her eyes fully, three omegas had already entered the room and arranged a mannequin near the window, dressed in a gold dress with jewelry draped around its neck.

"Good morning, Supreme Luna," one of the omegas greeted pleasantly, smoothing the dress as she spoke. "The Supreme Alpha sent us to help you get dressed for the day."

Viola hadn't expected anything like this the moment she woke up, so she was caught completely by surprise. She sat up in bed and stared at the dress, unable to look away, utterly mesmerized by the design of the gown laid out before her.

The dress sparkled as though it had been woven from melted gold itself. It was mermaid-shaped and sleeveless, with a sweetheart neckline that made it look more like a work of art than something a person was actually meant to wear. She was genuinely captivated and asked, without tearing her gaze away from it,

"Where is he?"

"The Supreme Alpha is currently showering in another room and asked us to use this one for you. He'll join you once we're finished," the omega answered respectfully, even though she, like the others, had heard the rumors circulating about this woman and privately wanted to treat her differently, to look down on her with the same scorn everyone else seemed to.

She didn't dare.

The Supreme Alpha had made it absolutely clear before leaving that he did not want to return to a single complaint from his wife. The omegas had no choice but to be warm, respectful, and obedient.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 369: Natalie's death[1,079 words]

Viola climbed out of bed and walked a slow circle around the mannequin, taking in every detail.

"This is lovely."

The excitement that rose in her chest was something she hadn't felt about getting dressed in a very long time, she had never owned anything even close to this beautiful. She told the omegas she would shower herself and come out ready for them to help with the dress and makeup, since the gown already looked like something that needed more than one pair of hands to put on properly.

She was looking forward to this ceremony for more than one reason today. There was her own quiet surprise for Tess and Kenny, and for Sebastian, that she had been carefully planning, and the wondering of whether they would receive it the way she hoped, since it was coming entirely from her heart.

She stepped out in her robe after her shower, having been careful the entire time not to use her ability even accidentally, something she only allowed herself in spaces where there was no risk of being seen.

She found the omegas laughing and chatting among themselves, clearly mid-gossip.

"...the bitch thinks she is something because she married him. He will no doubt find plenty of beauties today, see how far a cheater—"

Viola cleared her throat loudly. The circle broke apart instantly, the omegas scattering back to their duties with flushed faces and downcast eyes, moving with sudden purpose.

She shook her head quietly at them. Common omegas like these should be more careful about the ground they were walking on, if she wanted to, she could make their lives very difficult. But they hadn't said it to her face, and so she let it go and pretended she didn't know they were talking about her.

She lotioned her own skin before settling onto the stool in front of the mirror for her makeup.

It was while her makeup was being applied that her phone beeped on the vanity. She reached for it and saw a message on the screen from a private contact. A frown immediately creased her face as she tapped it open and began reading what had been sent to her.

[Your happy days are coming to an end, Mrs. Kade. You will be the next he kills for no reason, just like he killed Natalie. Her death was never about the curse. Did he tell you that?]

Viola felt her hand tremble slightly as she stared at the message, trying to figure out who could have sent it. When she noticed the omegas trying to peek at her screen, she quickly exited the message and turned the display off.

Outwardly, she acted as though nothing had happened and sat back so they could resume applying her makeup, but throughout it all, her mind kept circling the message. Who had sent it? And what did they mean by saying Natalie's death had never been about the curse?

Natalie had died after being marked despite not being the prophesied mate. At least, that was what Viola had always understood...

She couldn't shake the message from her mind, nor the words claiming that her happy days were coming to an end. The thought sent a chill down her spine and made her stomach churn.

No... please don't let my happy days come to an end.

This was the life she had always wanted. The life she had longed for.

She needed to talk to Sebastian and show him the message, Viola thought, but only then did she realize her makeup was still being done and she couldn't simply get up halfway through. She forced herself to calm down, telling herself it was probably nothing, just so she could sit through the rest of it.

Despite the omegas' obvious dislike of her, she was genuinely impressed by how skilled they were once they got to work. By the time they finished, both her makeup and the way they had styled her hair were nothing short of stunning.

Her hair was styled in a voluminous messy bun, with soft curls pinned high on her head and delicate face-framing tendrils cascading down along her cheeks. The omegas pinned two diamond

teardrop-shaped earrings into her ears and clipped the diamond necklace around her neck, where it caught the light and sparkled.

The dress came next, and she had to step into it from the bottom so that all the work on her face and hair wouldn't be disturbed. Once the gown had been pulled up and the zipper drawn carefully up her back, even the omegas gasped, stepping back and staring at her with their lips parted, unable to help themselves at the stunning woman before them.

The Supreme Luna looked breathtakingly beautiful. The dress looked as though it had been made specifically for her body and no one else's, her fair shoulders left bare, her long neck emphasized perfectly by the gold diamond necklace resting against her collarbone.

Not one of the omegas could move. They stood there as though caught in a trance, unable to look at her the way they had been looking at her all morning, as something ordinary, something beneath them.

When she said quietly, "My shoes?" they all stumbled over each other to retrieve them, bowing as they lifted the hem of the gown and helped her step into them one at a time.

Her shoes were still being fastened when the door opened and Sebastian came in, fully dressed, trying to work the knot of his tie into place as he walked, and then he stopped completely at the sight of his wife's back.

As though she felt him, she turned around, smiling, and his breath left his body.

"Sweet mother of nature..." He muttered, his hands dropping away from the tie entirely as he simply stood there and stared.

Sebastian knew his wife was beautiful. He had always known it. But he hadn't known that beauty could be multiplied tenfold like this. The dress clung to her waist and hips perfectly, and from the knees downward it flared out in a sweep of gold. He got caught in a spell and couldn't even blink as he took her in from head to the hem of the dress.

"How do I look?" She asked with a slightly self-conscious smile, taking him in, his black and gold attire that matched hers almost as though it had been planned that way, which it had.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 370: Why did you kill her?[1,104 words]

"I have no words for how you look, mi amor. Zoe did well with the design, but you brought it to life." He told her, and watched the surprise cross her face.

The omegas quickly left the room with a look from the Alpha to give them privacy.

"Zoe made this?" She asked, and he nodded. "I had to bribe her into doing it on short notice. That's actually why she didn't fly with us."

Viola liked the dress even more knowing it had been made by Zoe, and she was running her hand over the fabric admiringly when Sebastian stepped closer to kiss her and she turned her cheek at the last moment.

"No kissing on the lips, I have lipstick on and you will ruin everything." She said, and heard him groan as he pressed his lips to her neck instead and put his hands on her hips, pulling her flushed against him.

"You look so beautiful I don't want any other man looking at you out there. I want to keep you right here in this room, just for me."

Viola reached up and fixed his tie properly for him, feeling him nibble at her neck, licking and grazing the skin with his teeth, and she pressed gently at his chest. "Sebastian, you are going to leave hickies on my neck."

"That's exactly the plan, to leave my mark on that lovely neck of yours." He smiled with deliberate mischief and then added, "You can leave one on me too."

She thought he was joking until he suddenly pulled his collar aside, revealing the thick, vein-corded expanse of his neck, tilting his head to one side and waiting.

When she didn't move to bite him, Sebastian looked at her and saw that she was staring at him strangely, without a smile and with slightly unfocused eyes. His smile fell. "Is something wrong?"

"I just remembered something that I need to show you." Saying that, she reached for her phone on the bed and tapped through to the message, only to find that it was gone, the private contact nowhere in her inbox. She frowned.

"What is it?" Sebastian asked, stepping closer and peering at her phone.

"I got a message from a private contact just a little while ago, but now it's gone. I could have sworn it was there..."

"Let me see."

Sebastian reached out and took the phone from her hand, all the playfulness disappearing from his face at the thought that someone had messaged his wife through a private contact. He carefully went through her messages.

She didn't have many messages apart from spam, the countless texts they had exchanged since they had gotten together, and a few from Nick, which he was momentarily tempted to open. But he

resisted the urge, unwilling to invade her privacy, and focused instead on searching for the message she had mentioned.

There was nothing from any private contact.

A scowl settled over his features at the thought that someone had dared to send his wife a disappearing message.

"What did the message say?" he asked, lifting his gaze from the screen to the beautiful, breathtaking face in front of him.

Viola told him word for word, without leaving anything out. She had no intentions of keeping it from him and letting it grow silently into a misunderstanding in the future again. She watched his scowl deepen and his lips press into a thin line.

"Didn't Natalie die from the curse?" She found herself asking, and his eyes, which had turned as cold and hard as granite, capable of freezing the hottest summer solid, cut to her. For a moment Viola felt a shiver run down her spine. That look was so unlike the warm, loving way he usually looked at her, and because she hadn't seen this look in his eyes for a while, she had forgotten how terrifying Sebastian was when he wasn't smiling.

She almost regretted blurting the question out, but then she realized she had always held herself back from asking him anything connected to his late wife, afraid of being told something that would make her jealous or hurt. She didn't take the words back. She waited for the answers to them.

"What do you think?" he asked calmly, watching her.

Viola pursed her lips. "I don't know what to think. But whatever you tell me is what I will believe, because I know you wouldn't lie to me. I trust you as much as I love you. And whatever was in that message... it doesn't change that."

She watched his expression soften, more than just a fraction, and he took her hand before gently pulling her into his arms.

He had never imagined she would trust him to the point of believing whatever he told her, something no one seemed capable of doing anymore. Not even his sister trusted his words, and neither did his brother. Sebastian had long come to believe that no one would ever truly trust him again after all the promises he had broken, and never had he imagined that those simple words from her would make his heart feel so full, so painfully in love. The feeling caught him completely by surprise, and he instinctively tightened his hold around her.

Because of what she had just said, Sebastian suddenly felt the overwhelming need to never hide anything from her again, to make sure that trust she had placed in him would never be broken. So he parted his lips and quietly confessed,

"I've wanted to tell you this for a while now, but I never found the right moment," he said softly against her hair. "The message is right. Natalie didn't die because of the curse or because I marked her. I killed her myself... and then I bit her neck afterward to leave the mark."

He felt her body go rigid in his embrace, but she didn't pull away. She didn't scream or look at him with terror. She stayed, and he found himself exhaling slowly. He had carried this alone for a long time, and he hated that some bastard had chosen to send it to her in a message first. He had his suspicions about who that bastard was, Alex, but for now he needed to put Alex aside.

"Why did you kill her?" She asked quietly, unable to fully reconcile the image she had built in her mind of his relationship with Natalie, the one she had quietly envied for so long in Moonwillow, the love she had once wished for herself and now had, with this.