Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 441: Might As Well Fix That[1,237 words]

"It’s either now or never. Tomorrow night is her execution date, and we need him to let her out by tonight."

"Be careful of the Cruella. She’s a scheming bitch." Laila warned him about Victoria, and Matt nodded.

"I’ll keep that in mind."

Matt left the two of them in his apartment in High Tower and went to find Sebastian, hoping with everything in him that he would actually be heard this time, that Sebastian would do what was right, even if Viola wasn’t his prophesied mate. In Matt’s opinion, she didn’t deserve any of this.

Matt was allowed into the penthouse after telling the guards he had an important pack report to deliver. He would have relayed the news through the mind-link instead, if Sebastian hadn’t shut his off entirely since returning, no doubt the Cruella, as Laila had called her, was keeping him from work entirely too.

When he entered, they’d already finished dinner, and Sebastian was clearing away the plates, laughing at something Victoria must have said. But the moment he noticed Matt, the smile froze on his face.

"What is it this time?" Sebastian demanded of his Beta, clearly unwilling to be interrupted again, unwilling to let his mate’s mood be ruined for anyone’s sake.

Matt’s eyes flicked subtly toward the she-wolf, who regarded him with obvious displeasure but said nothing, before he answered Sebastian. "I have something to report to you."

"What is it? Make it quick and leave." He snapped.

Matt clenched his fists, disliking the way Sebastian was speaking to him now, even to him, all because of this new mate. "Can we talk privately, Supreme Alpha?"

"No," Victoria answered for him, rising from her seat at the table and walking toward Sebastian. "Whatever you want to say to my mate, you can say in front of me. We promised each other no secrets, didn’t we, my dear?" She looked up at him.

"Right. Whatever you have to say, just say it."

Matt hadn’t wanted to break this particular news in front of the she-wolf, but he understood that if he didn’t say it now, he might never get Sebastian alone again with this woman clinging to him the way she was, before tomorrow. He was aware mate bonds could run intensely hot in the early days, the pull to stay close, to attend to one another constantly, but this she-wolf was pushing well past even that.

"Very well, then," Matt said. "I’m here to tell you that the wife you’ve locked away in that old cell is carrying your child. She’s nearly two months along. I hope you do what’s right, not just because she deserves better, but because you’re about to kill her, and your own child along with her."

Matt watched Sebastian’s expression freeze completely, and he began to feel some small measure of relief, believing this, at least, might actually work bring him out of whatever spell the prophecied mate bond had put him into.

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Viola began losing hope of escaping the dungeon after trying to reach Wave more than ten times, met each time with silence. Though there was no water source nearby for the creature to easily travel through to reach her, she knew enough time had passed since she’d been locked in here that he should have found some way, some other water, to reach her by now. But there was no sign of him.

Worry grew inside her chest, and she slowly released her grip on the rusted bars of the cell, their surface flaking and crumbling against her palm, the smell of rust thick in the air that turned her stomach. She sank back down onto the muddy ground, feeling even more defeated, as though there truly were no way out of this nightmare.

Viola heard her stomach growl loudly in the silence, reminding her she hadn’t eaten since yesterday. Even after trying so hard to stop skipping meals, to keep herself healthy, everything happening around her had made it impossible to maintain that routine, and worse, it was beginning to look like there was truly no way out of any of this.

She’d tried using her abilities, but none of them had helped in any real way, since she couldn’t even sing, not with the guards stationed too far from the cell to reach.

She was hungry, exhausted, heartbroken. Over and over, the thought crept back that Sebastian himself had been the one to lock her here, and over and over, she tried to console herself with the possibility that maybe he was only bluffing, that he wouldn’t actually kill her tomorrow.

Where was the husband who had once stood as her protector? Her choice to free Yasmin had brought consequences far darker and far greater than she’d ever anticipated, and she couldn’t help but wonder now whether, if she’d never freed the mermaid at all, none of this would have happened to either of them and it wouldn’t have pushed him into finding his prophecy.

She longed for that tender Sebastian, her loving husband, the way an addict longed for a drug. She yearned for his touch so fiercely it sent needles straight into her throat, at the thought that it might never come again, now that she'd lost him to someone else.

Viola was still sitting there in the dark, turning over ways to escape, when she heard footsteps echoing through the silent dungeon corridors. She turned her head toward the sound, her heart suddenly leaping in her chest, as though it recognized the weight of those particular footsteps.

She moved closer to the bars, wrapping her fingers around the cold metal as the footsteps drew nearer, and true to the electric pull that had always answered his presence, she saw her husband emerge through the darkness, and something inside her danced with delight despite everything.

She watched him step closer to the cell, and Viola couldn't contain her joy when she heard the lock turn, watched him step inside, standing tall in front of her.

"Sebastian..." She whispered softly, when he stopped, watching her without blinking, his face blank, his lips pressed into a thin line.

"Is it true?" He asked her.

Viola was confused for a moment, until he continued. "Are you really pregnant with my child?"

Viola's hands flew instinctively to her stomach at his words. So he'd found out? Was that why he was here? Had he come to let her go, now that he knew she was carrying his child?

Though Viola had hoped, foolishly, for some kind of miracle, that Victoria had simply vanished back to wherever she'd come from, and Sebastian had come to apologize, to take her out of here, she felt a fresh wave of disappointment, realizing this visit was only because he'd found out about their unborn child.

But it didn't matter, not really, not as long as it got her out of this. So she answered, "Yes... it's true." She looked up, trying to gauge his reaction, and if she had hoped to see happiness there, she was deeply disappointed instead by the way his face only hardened further.

"Then we might as well fix that before tomorrow, don't you think?" He tilted his head to the side, a slow smile spreading across his face, one that sent a shiver down Viola's spine far colder than the relief she'd been hoping for.

"What do you mean?"

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 442: An Imposter!_Part 1[1,052 words]

Viola instinctively stepped back away from him the moment she saw the menacing look on his face, fear striking straight into her heart. But the second she tried to retreat, he began advancing toward her slowly, like a predator stalking its prey, and her throat went dry, her eyes darting frantically for any means of escape as she belatedly realized this wasn't her husband anymore, that this man might genuinely hurt her, worse, might hurt their unborn child.

"Sebastian..." She called out in alarm, when her back hit the wall behind her and she had nowhere left to move.

"Didn't I warn you never to say my name again? It seems you keep piling on more offenses, and by the time I'm finished with you, you'll be sorry." Saying that, he closed the distance between them in a flash, gripping her cheeks between his thumb and index finger, forcing her mouth open.

At first, Viola was confused about what he was doing, until she noticed the small bottle clutched in his other hand, and watched him bring it toward her mouth.

"You're carrying my child, aren't you? Take this. Free yourself of it, so you can die in peace tomorrow, with nothing left tying you to me by the time you go." He gritted out, forcing the bottle toward her tightly sealed lips.

Viola's eyes widened in horror as the meaning of his words hit her, he intended to make her abort their child, using whatever was inside that bottle. A fresh wave of disappointment and hurt gripped her heart, sharper and fiercer than anything before it, and it ignited a fighting spirit inside her, tightening her jaw as she began to push against him, desperate to stop him before he did the unforgivable.

But her strength was nothing compared to his. Her shove had no effect on him whatsoever, and his resentful eyes stayed locked on her, unmoved, as though nothing she did could stop what he'd already decided to do. Viola slammed her fists against his chest, but he only shoved her harder into the wall, gripping her face tighter.

When that failed too, he suddenly shifted their position, cradling her head against his chest, bringing his hand around to pinch her nose shut, knowing she would eventually part her lips just to breathe. He held the bottle against her mouth, gripping her head painfully tight, giving her no way to shake him off.

Viola’s lungs burned as the air ran out, but still, she refused to open her lips. She stopped fighting him outright and looked up into his silver eyes instead, searching desperately for her Sebastian somewhere inside this monster trying to kill their child, but she found nothing of him there, and her eyes burned, tears gathering, pain and heartbreak fusing together as they slid down her cheeks.

The tears rolled down the curve of her face and fell against his arm, right against the spot where the tattoo he’d once written, the one declaring how much he loved her, was inked into his skin.

Was this really how it would end for them? It seemed her life had never truly been meant for complete happiness, that she and Sebastian were always fated to end in hatred, that this, this exact image of him, was the one she would carry with her to her death.

But Viola knew, even now, she would still cherish every good memory they’d shared. Her body began to weaken from lack of air, and her lips curved into a bitter smile, letting him see exactly how much he’d hurt her, how much she still loved the man she knew was still in there somewhere, enough that she refused to let the monster he’d become take their child from her.

As her nose burned, fighting instinctively for air, her stomach beginning to heave weakly, her hands still fighting in some last natural bid for survival, she saw something flicker in his silver eyes, as though her Sebastian were fighting to surface.

His fingers suddenly released her nose when her eyes began to close and he cupped her cheek instead in panic.

"Breathe." He whispered fiercely. "Breathe, damn it!" He yelled, when she still refused to breathe even after he’d freed her nose, watching his eyes instead, watching and waiting for him to claw his way back to awareness.

And if it took holding her breath a little longer to fully break him free of whatever held him, she was willing to do it, and so she did that.

"Come on, baby, breathe for me. Please..." He suddenly pleaded, anguish cracking through his voice, the bottle slipping from his hand and falling to the floor, shattering.

But just before Viola could push this further, before whatever was wrong with him could fully break, perhaps it was seeing her on the verge of death that had triggered his bond with her to resurface, though she couldn’t be certain, the cell door clanged open, and Victoria strode inside.

"My darling, what’s going on in here? Have you given her the medicine yet?"

The instant Victoria’s voice cut through the room, Viola watched his eyes turn cold and hateful again, and he released her entirely. She dropped hard to the floor, finally gasping

in the air she'd deprived herself of, looking up at the two of them now standing side by side inside the cell.

Victoria's eyes landed on the broken bottle on the floor, and she clicked her tongue. "You didn't give it to her, did you?" She placed her hand on his shoulder, and he turned to look at her as she smiled up at his eyes.

"She fucking kept her lips sealed," he gritted out, rubbing his fingers against his temple as though fighting off a headache, and Viola, watching closely, took note of that just before she heard Victoria say,

"Don't worry, I'll teach her a lesson that will make her open her mouth next time."

As Viola's eyes turned away from Sebastian to look toward the woman at her words, a hard kick came flying from Victoria's foot, straight into her face, breaking her nose. Blood immediately poured from her nose, and before she could even recover, the she-wolf grabbed a fistful of her hair and slammed her down against the ground.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 443: An Imposter!_Part 2[1,636 words]

"You don't actually think I'll let you keep my mate's child, do you? You were never even supposed to be in his life in the first place, and I intend to fix that." She said, her voice deceptively soft, as she began striking Viola across the face, pressing her head hard into the ground as though she planned to make her one with the ground.

Victoria was unbelievable so strong that Viola could hear the ground cracking against her ear.

Through all of it, Viola's eyes kept drifting back to Sebastian, who watched with soulless eyes, as though nothing lived behind them anymore, or perhaps he simply no longer cared what happened to her to stop this crazy woman.

However, Viola had a feeling it was more than that, because moments ago, he had looked so much like her Sebastian again, holding her face with such care and pleading for her to breath, right up until Victoria walked in and he turned into this heartless person.

When Viola noticed Victoria's hits shifting toward her stomach, she curled herself into a protective ball, refusing to let them land where they could do the worst damage, all while still watching him, silently pleading.

Do something, she thought desperately, stop her. But he never did, not once, not until Viola thought she truly couldn't take any more. Finally, Victoria seemed to have had her fill and stepped back with a kind, satisfied smile on her beautiful face. She delicately tucked her hair behind her ears, looking as though she had just finished sampling a meal that had left her thoroughly pleased.

"What a stubborn girl. Take the medicine or not, you'll die tomorrow either way, and it right along with you. Let's get out of this filthy place, mate." She grabbed Sebastian's hand and pulled him from the cell. He never once turned to look back at her.

Viola groaned in pain. She hadn't fought back against a single one of Victoria's blows, believing her suffering alone might be enough to break Sebastian free again, but it hadn't worked.

Her entire body ached so badly that she genuinely doubted whether the pregnancy could survive this. But rather than let herself sink into self-pity, she pushed herself upright, biting back a groan as another set of footsteps suddenly echoed toward her cell, making her tense with alarm once again.

She quickly curled into the corner for protection, bracing in case they'd come back to hurt her again, but this time, she recognized the voices as the cell door creaked open.

"I hope she's okay." Came Laila's voice. "I told you both to follow my plan, but you didn't listen, and now look what happened."

Viola relaxed the moment she realized it was Laila and Matt, letting her head fall back against the wall behind her as they rushed toward her, both dropping to their knees.

"Supreme Luna? Are you all right?" Matt asked, seeing the blood streaked across her face.

Viola looked up at him, the torchlight in his hand illuminating the bruises across his own face, and nodded. "I'm fine..." She said, though her voice sounded weak. She felt as though her heart were breaking, her throat closing with unshed emotion. "What happened to you?" She asked him.

Matt let out a short, humorless laugh. "I got punched for announcing your pregnancy to the Alpha, and again when I tried to stop him from forcing Gilbert to hand over something meant to kill the child, all on Victoria's word. Did he feed you the medicine?" He asked worriedly.

Viola shook her head. "I didn't let him, but I am not sure I am still with the child..." She let him know her concerns.

"We will find that out later. We need to get you out of Silver, it's not safe for you here anymore. Sebastian is never going to be the same again."

Matt said, already beginning to help her up, intending to carry her out, but Viola put a hand out to stop him. "I can’t leave him."

Laila, still helping steady her, scoffed. "Don’t be a fool, girl, he’ll kill you without blinking an eye, all for that bitch. I know love can blind a person, but he’s not your mate. You can find your real mate someday, rather than clinging to a man who’s already found his and turned a blind eye to everyone else."

It wasn’t the first time something like this had happened, someone finding their fated mate and turning into an entirely different person overnight, especially when the bond hit that hard. Laila had learned, through her own painful experience, to force herself to move on faster than most, and she believed Viola could do the same, if only she’d let him go, because for some reason the wolfless woman was braver than she was.

But Viola shook her head. "You don’t understand. My Sebastian is still in there. Something is wrong with him, he’s not himself. I can’t leave him with her. She’ll destroy him, destroy his entire world. We need to help him."

"He doesn’t exactly look like someone who needs help, considering he nearly killed Gilbert a little while ago just to get his hands on that bottle he tried to force down your throat. You’re not safe here, I don’t even know why I’m bothering to stress myself over this so much, but you need to leave."

"I never thought I’d say this, but I actually agree with Laila," Matt said. "Staying here is far too dangerous."

Viola, who had witnessed with her own eyes how soulless Sebastian had looked while she was being beaten, and how he’d seemed to fight something the moment he’d seen her crying, unable to breathe, refused to leave him behind.

Maybe she was only giving herself an excuse, because loving him so deeply made a life without him feel unbearable, unbearable enough that she was grasping at any reason to stay and fight for him, to at least try.

"Help me get away from here, but not away from Silver. Matt, he’s your friend, you can tell this isn’t really him. You know him better than anyone. Haven’t you noticed something out of the ordinary too?" She said, as they helped her out of the cell, Matt lifting her into his arms.

"When he tried to force it into my mouth, he... he came back to himself for a moment, looked so devastated by what he’d done to me. But the second she walked in, he became someone else entirely again. We need to get her away from him and test that theory again. She’s doing something to him. I know it." Viola said desperately, looking up at Matt’s thoughtful expression.

Matt’s brows knitted together. "I think you might be right. When I went to tell him about your pregnancy and asked to speak with him privately, she refused to allow it. She’s always right there beside him; she never leaves his side," he said. "Furthermore, if he were truly angry with you for releasing the creature, he wouldn’t have asked me to look after you in his absence or told me to take good care of you. He sounded genuinely concerned about your safety before he left, but when he returned...the hatred had come with him, along with Victoria."

"Hmm. Interesting." Laila, deep in thought herself, murmured along with them. "A mate bond doesn’t work that way. It never flickers, never wavers like that. If he had stopped caring about you, he would never have come out to worry about you. If what you’re describing is true, then I think we’re dealing with an imposter!"

Laila exclaimed, her eyes widening as everything suddenly began clicking into place. "Cruella is a fucking imposter!"

"But why would she do that? I mean, impersonate his prophesied mate? Where did she even come from in the first place, and how did she know about what identifies the prophecy?" Matt muttered, as they made their way down the long corridor, climbing the narrow stairs leading out of the underground.

They passed through easily now, since Matt had already knocked out the Gammas guarding the place, along with Laila’s help, the men left sprawled across the ground behind them.

"That’s exactly what we need to find out. Who she really is, what she wants, and how to get her away from him as soon as possible, before she hurts him further, or worse, makes him hurt everyone around him." Viola said, feeling lightheaded, dizzy, as though she might pass out, but she fought against it, knowing she couldn’t afford to lose consciousness now, not when she finally had a real reason behind her husband’s sudden change.

This had nothing to do with the mermaid she’d freed after all. This might be something far bigger, and she needed every bit of her strength left to face it, to fight it properly.

"Can you take me somewhere for treatment first? I think I’m about to pass out." Viola murmured, her head falling weakly against Matt’s shoulder. "But don’t take me away from Silver when I do. Sebastian needs me..."

Everything went black after that, and she lost consciousness completely.

"What are we going to do now?" Laila asked, as they slipped out of High Tower through the back doors and side corners, making their way toward the car Gilbert had waiting outside.

"Let’s get her treated first, then work out a plan to deal with the imposter."

"I like the sound of that. Oh, I am going to enjoy dealing with the Cruella." Laila announced, as they climbed into the car, unaware that the so called Cruella was watching them from a glass wall with her eyes narrowed in displeasure.

"I will kill them all for ruining this for me!"

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 444: The bitch is making things hard[1,269 words]

Viola didn't want to stay unconscious, but she was too exhausted to fight the weight dragging her under, and after being placed on a comfortable bed and receiving treatment, she let herself fall into slumber, a sleep that dragged her into yet another dream, back into that unreal place.

Viola found herself walking through a dark forest, glancing over her shoulder to check whether she was being followed, though by who, she had no idea. The trees stood tall around her, the sky just beginning to break into morning through a dusky haze. Birdsong filled the air, and her bare feet crunched against the dry leaves scattered across the ground.

For some reason, Viola felt an unexplainable happiness rising in her chest, one that made her want to jump for joy, so different from the suffering she'd just endured in the dungeon and the impending storm awaiting her to fight.

She was hurrying deeper into the trees when a hand shot out and caught her wrist, yanking her behind a tree. Before she understood what was happening, an arm wrapped around her waist, pulling her flush against a warm, hard chest, his bare torso radiating a heat that made her feel instantly protected, sending a trail of warmth curling down through her stomach.

She looked up at him in the dim dusk light, and the face staring back down at her was her husband's, though she knew, even as she looked, that it wasn't really him. Before she could react, his head dipped, and his lips crashed against hers, kissing her so fiercely that her arms wound around him instead of pushing him away.

"What took you so long, my mermaid?" He whispered against her mouth, his kiss growing hungrier. His mermaid? Was this some twisted echo of her own reality, replaying itself differently?

"I couldn't get away fast enough, Vaelor." She moaned into his mouth. She was kissing Vaelor...

Viola’s lips parted under the fierce press of his mouth, the hunger in the kiss flooding her senses until the dark forest and the crunch of leaves beneath her bare feet faded into nothing.

His arm locked tighter around her waist, dragging her flush against the hard heat of his bare chest until every line of his body seemed determined to sink into hers, as if he could erase the space between them completely. The contact sent a sharp, delicious ache straight through her core, the same feeling only Sebastian had ever been able to bring to life inside her.

His free hand shoved beneath the rough animal-skin garment covering her, his fingers sliding over the soft curve of her breast without hesitation.

The calloused pad of his thumb found her nipple, circling it, then pinching lightly, drawing a helpless sound from her throat that he swallowed with another deep, claiming kiss. The warmth of his palm against her bare skin made her knees weaken; she clung to him harder, her own arms winding around his neck as the longing swelling in her chest grew until it physically ached.

"When are you going to be mine," he growled against her mouth between kisses, the words rough with barely restrained need. "I can’t wait any longer."

The question vibrated through her, stirring something deep and aching. Viola felt the answer rise from somewhere she didn’t fully understand, her voice soft and breathless against his lips.

"As soon as I make it right and let him know you are the one I want."

A low, frustrated sound rumbled through his chest. His hunger could no longer be contained. He tore his mouth from hers, only to trail hot, open-mouthed kisses down the side of her neck, speaking against her skin as he went.

"I hate meeting you like this, in places like this," he murmured, lips brushing the sensitive spot just beneath her ear, then lower still, licking and nipping along the column of her throat. "Stolen moments in the dark... never enough, and I don’t like it when I see you together with my brother."

Every word was punctuated by the slow drag of his mouth. At the same time, he shifted, pressing her more firmly against him, so the hard ridge of his erection dragged exactly where she ached to be filled. The thick pressure ground against the barrier of her clothing with every subtle roll of his hips, sending sparks of pure need racing through her.

"I want to take you, mate with you, have you beneath me every night in my home." He groaned, rocking against her.

Her breath turned shaky. His did too. The friction was maddening, perfect, and nowhere near enough. Control slipped through her fingers like water.

"Take me now," she whispered, the plea tumbling out before she could stop it, before she even understood what she was saying, as though she had no real control over this Azmira at all. "Vaelor... please. You don’t have to wait anymore."

He stilled instantly. The warm, wet trail of his tongue left her skin as he lifted his head to look down at her. In the dusky light, his eyes burned with a hunger so fierce it sent a flush racing from her cheeks all the way down to the tips of her breasts, still cupped in his hand.

"I will not take my beloved in a place where I might hurt her skin," he said, his voice low, absolute. "I will not let any mark that isn’t mine be left on you. And when I finally take you, my girl, it will be somewhere I don’t fear interruption, somewhere I won’t have to hold myself back from thrusting into your warmth simply because the ground beneath us is too hard. Now put your arms around me, Azmira."

Heat flooded her face and neck at the command, at the way he claimed her even while denying them both what they wanted. Still flushed, still trembling, she obeyed, sliding her arms fully around his neck. The moment she did, his hand moved to cup her backside, strong fingers gripping the soft flesh there as he lifted her effortlessly.

Her legs wrapped around his waist on instinct, locking her against the hard, unmistakable evidence of his desire. The new position pressed that thick length directly against her core, and a soft, needy sound escaped her throat.

Vaelor’s mouth found hers again at once, the kiss deeper, hungrier than before, holding her suspended against him in the quiet of the awakening forest. For a moment, Viola felt safer there than anywhere else, not wanting to wake, because it felt like being with Sebastian again, and waking from this dream meant returning to a world without him beside her.

She tried to prolong the dream for as long as she could, but soon felt everything drifting away as other voices seeped into her subconscious.

"...how can we keep her here after this?"

"The bitch is making things harder and more complicated for us!"

At first, Viola couldn’t make sense of the words, but they soon became clear once she recognized the voices, and opened her eyes to the light of day, Matt, Gilbert, and Laila hovering above her.

The moment they noticed her eyes had opened, they crowded around the bed. "Thank goodness you’re awake. How are you feeling now?" Gilbert asked, frowning down at her.

Viola felt as though a large part of herself were missing, her body still warm, as though she'd just been pulled away from Sebastian's arms, but it had only been a dream, and she reassured them. "I feel much better. Just hungry, and thirsty."

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 445: A Plan[1,361 words]

"Here, I got you some food and plenty of fluids." Laila said, helping her sit up, sliding a bed tray across her lap before setting out takeout containers of nutritious food, then handing her a spoon to eat.

Viola thanked the she-wolf, someone she never would have expected to look out for her, before a thought suddenly ran through her mind, and she asked, "Am I still pregnant?" She looked at Gilbert, her fingers gripping the spoon tightly as her eyes remained unblinking, her breath catching in her lungs for a moment.

"You still are, but I'm afraid you've been in enough dangerous situations lately that you could still lose it." He told her, watching her nod before she bowed her head and began to eat silently.

Viola ate, even without much appetite, because she believed it was the least she could do, for the unborn child, for staying strong, for Sebastian, for helping him against the imposter keeping him trap. She didn't speak again until she'd finished everything in front of her, even with her jaw still swollen from what Victoria had done to her and chewing was a little bit hard for her.

Once she finished, she lifted her head to look at the people watching her carefully, and asked, "I heard you all talking before I woke up. What happened?"

The three of them exchanged glances, seeming to weigh whether to tell her, until Viola reminded them, "We're all working together here, and I don't think we should hide anything from each other, no matter how bad it is. What happened?"

Laila was the one who spoke, rising from where she'd been perched at the edge of the bed. "The moment we took you out of the packhouse yesterday, an announcement went up across every screen in Silver, declaring that Matt was no longer Beta because he'd helped a traitor. Gilbert, me, and Matt have all been banished from the pack..." Laila trailed off for a moment, allowing Viola time to digest the information.

Viola couldn't believe Sebastian himself would have gone that far as to banish his childhood best friend, whose family had embraced him when he'd lost his own. It made it all the more obvious that he wasn't himself, and something inside her tightened at the thought that he was being made to destroy his own life and sever the bonds he'd once treasured.

"Did Victoria made the announcement?" Viola asked.

Laila shook her head.

"The Supreme Alpha announced it himself. If you, or any of us, are spotted by pack members, we're to be killed on sight. He's handing out weapons specifically designed to kill you, and he told everyone..." Laila hesitated, watching Viola carefully before continuing. "He told them that you're a mermaid, that that's why you're wolfless, and that you can never be allowed to remain among his people. But don't worry. We didn't buy any of it," she assured her when she noticed a flicker of worry in Viola's blue eyes.

Laila had never actually seen a mermaid before, and she didn't fully believe that Viola was one either. Mermaids weren't supposed to be able to survive on land, so they all assumed this was Cruella's doing once again.

"The Cruella has turned everyone against all of us now, and if we don't act soon, our families will get pulled into this too, banished right along with us."

Viola couldn't help but feel that all of this was her fault, that she'd dragged innocent people straight into this mess with her. "I'm so sorry for putting all of you through this."

Matt waved off her apology. "What do you mean, sorry? If it weren't for you, we never would have pieced any of this together, never would have known Victoria is nothing but a fake. And now that she knows we suspect her, she's made it nearly impossible for us to go back. So now we just need to come up with a plan, fast, before it's too late for all of us."

Viola's fingers clenched against the sheets as she realized there was no easy way to get close to Sebastian again, not with everything having spiraled this far out of control. Who was Victoria, really? What did she want? Why was she doing any of this? Was she some past mate of Sebastian's, seeking revenge?

If she were, Matt would have recognized her.

"Where are we now, since Silver isn't safe anymore?" She asked them.

"Still in Silver, technically, just on my family's property, a place that hasn't been used in years." Gilbert replied. "But we can't stay here much longer, Luna. We need to move fast."

Viola frowned, something suddenly occurring to her. "What about Zoe? Where is she?"

Matt sighed, exasperated. "Last I checked, she's out of Silver on business, and now I have no way of reaching her, since the phones are all being monitored."

Viola, who hadn't seen Zoe since they returned from the Grim Pack, was almost grateful that she wasn't here while all of this was happening. She needed to do something before

Zoe returned, only to be met with the disappointment of finding out what had happened to her brother.

"I have a plan," Viola said, and all three of them turned to her expectantly. "I need to sneak back in and see what she's doing to him to know how to help him."

"How exactly are you going to do that, when your face is plastered across the entire pack and people are actively looking to kill you, cut out your heart, believing you're a mermaid?" Laila asked.

Viola smiled carefully. "It's simple. I need a disguise. I don't carry any aura, so if I dress as an omega, no one will look twice. I'll need a few things to pull it off, will you all help me?" She looked at them pleading, knowing she couldn't pull this off without them.

"What do you need?" Matt asked, all of them ready to help, since whether they liked it or not, Viola's success meant their own survival too. If she failed, none of them would have homes left to return to, they'd all be packless now, cut off entirely from their own homes and family.

In a single night, they had all been stripped of their positions, cast out by the very man they had once trusted completely, a man now trapped under some kind of spell, controlled by an imposter pretending to be his mate.

Viola told them everything she would need to pull this off.

When they left to gather what she needed, they left her alone with Laila, who looked utterly exhausted, clearly having gone without enough sleep. Seeing how tired she was, Viola made room on the bed for her to lie down.

"I hope you don't mind if I sleep for a little while..." Laila muttered, yawning.

"Of course not. Sleep and get some rest," Viola told her.

Laila didn't need to be told twice. She settled onto the bed and soon drifted off.

Viola, however, couldn't sleep. Instead, she got up to freshen herself up while she waited for the others to return with everything they needed for her disguise.

She was nervous as hell, because if this failed, there would be no second chance, but she'd thought it through carefully, and facing Sebastian without Victoria hovering nearby seemed like the only real option left. And she knew exactly how she planned to make that happen.

Viola stepped into the bathroom and turned on the bathtub faucet, feeling like she needed a good soak, something to calm her frayed nerves before the moment ahead.

But as the tub filled and she began carefully undressing, she noticed the surface of the water start to swirl, forming a dark hole she immediately recognized as a portal. Before Viola could react, the water stretched outward, wrapped around her, and yanked her straight into the tub, pulling her down through the center of the swirling hole.

She vanished into it completely, and the tub stopped swirling as though nothing had happened at all, the water's surface settling back to normal.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 446: The real prophecied mate[1,348 words]

Viola was too shocked by what had happened to even react in time. By the time she realized what was going on, she was already drowning in an endless expanse of water, something pulling her downward at a speed that sent panic surging through her entire body.

She frantically kicked her legs and flailed her arms, desperately trying to swim back toward the surface, but it was useless. Her phobia set in almost instantly, the darkness of the water pressing in around her from every side. Her lungs burned, her eyes burned, and her breathing grew weaker with every passing second as fear overtook whatever reason she had left.

It was right as she thought she was going to die, right as she realized she couldn't fight the current any longer, that the force pulling her downward suddenly stopped.

Then, through the darkness of what looked like the endless depths of the sea, Viola saw a light.

Before she could make sense of it, she found herself surrounded by mermaids, glowing fish swimming alongside them as they moved toward her. Yet she was still slowly sinking deeper into the water, unable to stop herself.

As desperately as Viola wanted to understand what was happening, she couldn't focus enough to make sense of any of it. Her breathing was failing, water beginning to fill her lungs, until someone suddenly grabbed her hand.

She turned and found her sister staring back at her, worry etched across her face.

"Relax, Serena," Ivy instructed. "You can breathe underwater, it's already inside you. Close your eyes and connect with the other part of yourself. Accept it, and you'll be able to breathe. Embrace who you are."

Viola was growing weaker, barely conscious enough to process anything beyond Ivy's words, beyond the realization that her sister wanted her to embrace her mermaid side. She tried to shake her head, refusing. She didn't want that part of herself, not even now.

But then she remembered, if she didn't do something, she would die right here, without ever getting the chance to save her husband from Victoria.

Viola swallowed down every misgiving and closed her eyes, clinging to her sister's hand like a lifeline.

The moment her eyes closed, Viola saw blue instead of darkness. The blue glow intensified, brightening into a brilliant light, and she heard Ivy's voice guiding her through it.

"Reach for the blue light, Serena. Embrace it, and you'll be fine. You'll be safe."

As much as she hated what she was about to do, Viola reached toward the light.

It melted into her hands and flowed into her body, like a spirit taking form, becoming one with her. Only, rather than staying inside her, the light began flowing back out of her almost immediately.

Yet something had changed Inside her body.

Viola suddenly realized she could breathe.

She was no longer gulping down water and no longer fighting desperately for air. She opened her eyes and took a deep breath, stunned when the water around her simply didn't enter her nose and stayed there.

Then she looked down, bracing herself for the sight of a tail where her legs should have been, and dreading the sight that would stop her from going back.

But to her immense relief, her legs were still there, floating beneath her, moving gently back and forth to keep her afloat.

"What happened, Yasmin? She didn't grow a tail, like I did," Ivy asked their cousin, who was staring at Viola in confusion, watching her breathe underwater without any tail at all, something they had never seen before happened.

Yasmin turned toward her mother, who answered the question instead.

"She doesn't have it in her the same way. The light didn't stay inside her, which means she's more wolf than mermaid, unlike her sister. But it's fine, it still gave her the ability to breathe underwater. It also means she can't stay down here forever. The merfolk will see her as an outcast. She'll stand out like a sore thumb with legs," Natasha explained,

studying her niece, who was staring back at all of them strangely, as though she still couldn't quite believe she was surrounded by mermaids and breathing in the depth of the sea.

"Not unless, Mama, we use the old abilities to give her a tail. She could stay then, couldn't she? You have the power to turn legs into a tail, so we wouldn't have to worry at all," Yasmin said, letting out a sigh of relief.

Ivy looked relieved too upon hearing that, but Viola frowned at their words and shook her head firmly, clearly disagreeing with whatever they were suggesting.

"You know you can talk underwater, right?" Yasmin said, suddenly realizing her cousin hadn't discovered that yet.

Viola parted her lips and spoke a single word to test it. To her surprise, the sound came out perfectly clear, bubbling through the water without a single drop entering her mouth like she had feared it would.

"I don't know what's going on here, guys, but you shouldn't have dragged me here right now, of all times. I am not staying here." She declared.

"Serena." Ivy called.

She turned toward her sister.

"Ivy..."

Viola moved toward her immediately, wrapping her arms around her tightly. Ivy hugged her back just as fiercely, and Viola felt her eyes burn with emotion as the reality of finally seeing and holding her sister again truly sank in. It was just like one of those dreams she used to have about meeting her sister.

Only now, it was a reality. But because of everything that had happened so far, she couldn't fully savor the moment, with her worry over Sebastian hanging over her head like an impending storm.

For a moment, while she'd been dragged through the water, Viola had genuinely believed the sea witch had somehow gotten to her.

Never once had she imagined it would be them.

"I am so glad to see you again," Viola whispered, emotion thick in her voice.

But she knew she didn't have time to prolong their reunion, as much as she wanted to. As badly as she wanted to stay, to ask a thousand questions, she had to go back.

"But I have to go back home. I can’t stay here. Now that I can breathe underwater, I can reach you again, properly, from now on."

Ivy pulled back from the embrace to look at her twin sister, grabbing both her hands. "You can’t go back there anymore, Serena. You’re in danger there."

Viola began shaking her head, assuming they meant how Sebastian had cast her aside, and replied, "I’m not in danger. He’s not himself right now, he’ll come back to normal once I help him."

"Who are you trying to help? What do you mean?" Natasha asked, and Viola noticed the confusion spreading across all of their faces. "Aren’t we talking about my husband?" She asked.

"No. We’re talking about Nerissa. The sea witch. She’s on land, and she’s after your life." Natasha said, watching shock spread across Viola’s face. "Have you seen her yet?"

"No, I haven’t."

After the day they’d realized the sea witch had left her cave, Natasha had sent her son-in-law out to track her, and it hadn’t taken long to confirm she’d left the waters entirely for the first time instead of sending her Tidekin like she usually did, which was terrible news, since the one person Nerissa wanted most was up there, on land.

"It’s good you haven’t seen her yet. We tried to reach you, to warn you, but Nerissa blocked every path we had to you. Your Tidekin was attacked and left weakened, we had to combine all our Tidekins together just to pull you here now. You can’t go back there, Serena."

Viola, who had already endured such terrible days since the moment she’d saved Yasmin, looked around at the three mermaids surrounding her, and asked, "Why is she after me? What does she even want from me?"

She was tired of this sea witch everyone was talking about!

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 447: The real Prophecied mate_Part2[1,336 words]

"She’s after the twin born with a crescent mark. It’s said she’s been hunting them down since the very beginning of her time, and she believes you’re one of them." Ivy explained to her seeing her frustration. "But I already told Aunt Natasha you don’t carry that mark,

that the sea witch is wasting her time chasing you, and that we need to clear up this misunderstanding somehow, right aunt?."

Viola's brows drew together at her sister's words and Natasha's firm nod. "The crescent mark?" She asked. Wasn't that the very same mark on Victoria's neck, the one used to identify her as Sebastian's mate? How could it be the same the Sea witch was after?

"Yes. The mark means something enormously important to the sea witch, important enough that she's been hunting for anyone who bears it for over a century. Some rumors say it's something that could help the werewolves, whom she despises more than any other merfolk. Others claim that anyone born with the mark is destined to kill her in the future. I believe many mermaids and mermen have helped her search for people born with the mark, hoping to receive something in return for helping her." Yasmin explained.

"However, she hasn't found anyone from this generation yet, and I don't know why she's after you when you weren't born with it," Yasmin added. Unlike the older generations of mermaids, none of them had ever been told exactly why the sea witch was so obsessed with the mark. They had only heard so many conflicting rumors over the years that they could no longer tell which ones held any truth.

"Victoria has that mark," Viola said, but before she could continue, Natasha cut in.

"That's impossible. Only one person is destined to bear the mark in each generation, and the sea witch has killed every one of them from every generation before yours. This generation is the only exception because she hasn't found its bearer yet. Whoever you're describing, she isn't the one."

Viola turned toward her aunt, her eyes narrowing. "How do you know Victoria isn't the one? I haven't even told you that part yet."

Natasha realized her slip a beat too late, noticing everyone's eyes now fixed on her, including her own daughter's. She hadn't meant to let that slip, but after carrying the secret all her life, it had become an unbearable burden in her heart, one that was making it increasingly difficult to keep the truth buried. Still, she knew she had to take it to her grave, so she tried to play it off casually.

"We shouldn't be lingering here like this. Let's head back to the royal cave. Ivy, hold your sister's hand. She can't swim against the current without a tail."

As Natasha began swimming ahead, Viola reached out and caught her hand. "I'm not going anywhere. Tell me how you knew Victoria is an imposter. What makes you come to that conclusion when I said she has the mark?"

For some reason, Viola sensed this particular mermaid Aunt was hiding something, evident in how quickly, how evasively, she'd turned away from the topic of the mark. And if only one person in each generation was ever meant to carry that mark, she shouldn't

have been so quick to assume Victoria was a fake, not without Viola even confirming that she had found out the shewolf was an imposter.

Natasha felt her niece's grip tighten around her hand, felt her gaze, felt the others waiting silently for whatever she had to say, and knew there was no way out of this now when she had allowed her mouth to speak out those words.

"It's because I know the real person born with the mark. It isn't Victoria, or whatever she's calling herself. Can we please move back now?" She asked, looking anxiously at the kids.

"No. Not until I hear everything. How do you know the real mark bearer? This person matters enormously to my husband, and Victoria is making a mockery of it. The werewolves have a prophecy, someone born with that mark is meant to break the Silver Alpha's curse, end his suffering. If you know who this person really is, you need to tell me right now."

As much as Viola dreaded the idea of the real prophesied mate entering the picture while she was already fighting a fake one, she couldn't help but need to know, especially now that her aunt clearly already did.

"Who is she, Mama?" Yasmin asked, having no idea about any of this until now, since all this time they'd all believed the sea witch was simply searching in the wrong place, not realizing her own mother had known the real person all along and kept it hidden from them.

When every eye turned to Natasha, she swallowed hard. "I made a promise. To keep this to myself and to protect her."

"I'm sorry you have to break that promise to whoever you made it to, but I need to know. Victoria is destroying my world, destroying my husband's life and trying to make him kill our unborn child." Viola said firmly, watching guilt flood her aunt's eyes before she finally parted her lips.

"She was born with the mark on her shoulder, right before me. The moment we saw it, it brought fear into both me and her mother, because we knew what it meant, that she'd be hunted for the rest of her life. So we did something, to protect her..."

Viola felt a sharp sense of dread rising in her chest, but still asked, "What did you do?"

Natasha looked at her, almost apologetically. "We gave her a lifetime suppressant. Something to keep all her powers dormant, to make sure she never woke into her full potential, not in this lifetime. To keep her safe."

All the color drained from Viola’s face as realization slowly dawned on her, and she stared at the mermaid. "You mean... I was born with the mark, and you’re the one who gave me the suppressant. The one that made me wolfless."

Natasha nodded, guilt written across her face as she realized the girl already paced everything together. "But it was only ever to protect you, Serena. Your mother gave birth to the two of you without any support from your father, and our own parents were furious with her for defying them, for falling in love with a werewolf in the first place. She didn’t want anything to happen to you, and—"

"Was that why she wanted me dead? Why she gave us to the orphanage, so no one would ever know she’d given birth to someone carrying the mark?" Viola asked, even as none of it fully made sense, even as other pieces suddenly clicked into place with brutal clarity. Her whole life of being considered a the curse one.

So this whole time, she had been the prophecy. But because her wolf lay dormant, buried beneath the suppressant, nobody had ever known it was her, she had been the only one meant to break his curse, all along, and none of them had ever realized it. Viola felt a storm of mixed emotions rising inside her, because so much time had been wasted, because her own mother had given her away, partly because of this too.

"She didn’t give you away. I did." Natasha announced, shocking Viola even further, forcing her to look up sharply. "Your mother would never have given you away, not even with a knife pressed to her throat. But I did it, believing I was helping her, believing the two of you would bring nothing but pain and danger into her life."

"Mama..." Yasmin said, disbelief thick in her voice.

"Aunt Natasha." Ivy whispered, and Viola only stared at the mermaid, remembering now the pair of blue eyes she’d always mistaken for her mother’s, cold eyes ordering her death, only to realize now it had been her mother’s twin all along.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 448: The descendant[1,404 words]

’Take them away, kill her if you have to, as long as she’s never found.’ said a voice inside Viola’s head that came from memories. ’She’s nothing but a curse, nothing but bad luck and would bring disaster.’

The small eyes of the infant had looked up at the woman speaking those words, looking down at her with disdain, as though she were the worst thing that had ever happened to their lives.

Though Viola had been nothing more than an infant wrapped in cloth at the time, those memories had stayed crystal clear at the back of her mind, all the way into adulthood, kindling a resentment toward her mother she'd carried ever since. Because when they'd been handed over to the orphanage, a note had come with her, describing her as cursed, warning she should be handled carefully and never allowed to leave the orphanage's grounds unless they wanted her to ruin the world.

Viola had never understood what those notes truly meant, or why she'd been treated so differently from every other child there, even from her own twin, who'd always been treated far better than she ever was. It was exactly why she'd grown into such a rebellious girl, building walls to protect herself, and exactly why she'd betrayed Ivy back at the orphanage, believing no one would ever hurt her twin the way they would have hurt her, if she were the one left behind instead.

Her entire life, she had carried a protective shield around herself, believing she was unlovable, all because she'd been branded a curse, but in truth, it had all been to hide who she really was, right up until her death. Her own mother's sister had done all of this to her, and Viola had spent her whole life resenting the wrong person.

A choking feeling rose in her throat, and she had to swallow hard just to speak again, staring at the mermaid who had just confessed something so enormous it would change everything now.

"Why did you do that?" She asked quietly, her throat convulsing as she fought back the emotion rising unbidden through her chest, up into her neck.

Natasha looked at her niece with hurt in her eyes, clasping her hands together against herself, seeing the way the other two were staring at her now, as though they no longer knew who she was.

"You have to understand, I didn't do what I did to be cruel to you. I did it for Madeline. She was going to leave the sea, take both of you to land, and stay there, and I knew it would bring her nothing but trouble staying there. I thought I was freeing her from the burden of raising two half-breeds alone.

"I took you away from her, but I regretted it the moment I saw how broken it left her. I'm sorry. Please, forgive me..." Natasha said, reaching out toward Viola, who swam backward, holding up a hand to stop her from touching her.

Natasha had never imagined this decision would come back to haunt her this way. She had regretted it the instant she'd seen her sister's devastation, Madeline, who had never forgiven her, who had swum up to the surface searching for her children and never returned, only her body eventually found and the hazy memories of her brutal death. Natasha had sworn to avenge her after that, had tried, in her own way, to make amends by taking in the very children she'd once given away.

But as she tried to explain further, she saw Viola's eyes had already hardened, and Viola said, "I don't want to hear your reasons. Right now, I need to get back to my husband and fix the mess waiting for me there, before it's too late for both of us, and I won't let you stand in my way, Natasha."

Saying that, Viola began swimming upward, though she had no real idea whether that would even lead her to the surface, given how deep they seemed to be. She just needed real air, needed distance from Natasha and her past.

As much as everything she'd believed since childhood had just been proven false, as much as her mother had never actually hated them at all, Viola pushed the emotion down, forced it to the back of her mind, determined to face the trouble waiting for her before she allowed herself to feel any of this properly.

"She can't swim all the way to the surface, she'll kill herself." Natasha said to the two mermaids, who were both looking at her strangely now and she turned to explain to them instead.

"Ivy," she began, turning to her other niece, but Ivy pulled back and swam after her sister instead. Natasha turned to her daughter with a pleading look, and Yasmin reached out, took her mother's hand briefly, before saying,

"I'm sorry, Mama. I have to go after them. I'll be back, and we can talk then. Go home." Saying that, Yasmin followed after the twins as well.

She wasn't as angry with her mother as the twins clearly were, because she believed that whatever her mother had done must have been for the good of her twin sister. However, she couldn't let her two cousins attempt to reach the surface alone in their current state. They would need her there to guide them safely out of the water.

When Yasmin caught up with them, Ivy already holding her sister's hand, swimming upward, she moved to the other side and took Viola's free hand, helping pull her along faster.

"What do you plan to do now?" Yasmin asked Viola, whose face had shut down entirely, closed off from every emotion she felt.

"Tell me everything you know about the sea witch, Yasmin. I think she might have something to do with Victoria." Viola voiced her suspicion about the fake she-wolf currently standing at her husband's side.

"I don't know much about the sea witch, but what I do know is that she wasn't always a witch, she was related to us by bloodline, until she was cast out after taking on dark powers. Rumor has it she was our ancestor Azmira's twin sister, and that she turned into what she is after her twin was killed by the werewolf, Vaelor. And—"

"Did you just say Azmira and Vaelor?" Viola stared at her cousin, shocked, hearing names she recognized instantly from her dreams, names she had convinced herself, until this very moment, were nothing but fabrications her subconscious had invented to fill the ache of missing Sebastian.

"Yes. Azmira was a child of the sea, born with powers that connected her closely to our Sea Goddess. But she let her heart sway her, used those powers to give herself legs, to go find the man she loved. In the end, he killed her brutally, and worse, showed his people exactly what a mermaid's heart could give them, how valuable it truly was. Ever since then, we became creatures they hunted, creatures they wanted for themselves. And ever since then, the sea witch was born, filled with nothing but hatred toward werewolves, especially the Silvers. Some even say she placed a generational curse on Vaelor himself."

Viola took in every piece of information carefully, with a grain of salt, since everything Yasmin described seemed to contradict what she'd seen in her own dreams, because the Vaelor in her dreams had looked madly, hopelessly in love with Azmira, the way he'd kissed her so passionately when she'd snuck away to meet him in the woods.

Viola wanted to say as much, wanted to tell Yasmin everything she'd seen, but decided to keep it to herself for now, at least until she understood the full truth behind why the sea witch was doing any of this. Still, one thing had become undeniably clear through all of this.

"Sebastian is a descendant of Vaelor. And if she really is the one who cursed him, then she'd do anything to stop Sebastian from ever breaking a century-old curse by finding me." Viola said, her lips settling into a grim line as another piece clicked into place. "I think Victoria is the sea witch in disguise. She must have realized Sebastian was close to finding out, close to marking me, and came into our lives to stop it, to make him kill me himself instead."

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 449: The mermaids and werewolves[1,095 words]

"Then I believe you should stay here. If she never sees you, she'll kill him instead, and you'll be free of all of this." Yasmin said, her voice matter-of-fact, making Viola turn to glare at her, and Yasmin added,

"Oh, come on, isn't that exactly what any sensible mermaid should want here? We no longer have the Child of the Sea because his ancestors killed Azmira, never even allowed

her to give birth to a generation of them, and then we became their prey. I'm sorry, but I believe they all deserve to suffer, and we should leave them to whatever mercy the Sea Goddess and Sea Witch sees fit to give."

Viola stopped swimming upward, floating in place, arms and legs stilling as she pulled her hand free from Yasmin's grip. She couldn't help but notice how much her cousin resembled her own mother, Natasha, who had also believed that whatever she thought and did was right, that it was protecting the people she loved, even when it left real damage in its wake.

Viola had been the victim of that mother's actions once already. She wouldn't allow the daughter to stop her now, all in the name of protecting her and wishing suffering on the werewolves.

Sebastian wasn't just any werewolf. He was her mate, her husband, and now that she knew she was truly his prophesied one, she intended to take her place at his side and put an end to his suffering, regardless of what the mermaids believed, regardless of whatever Vaelor had once done to Azmira. That had been their story, generations ago. This was hers, now.

Holding that resolve firmly in her heart and mind, Viola said to Yasmin, "I won't let you stop me from stopping the sea witch. I want your help, if you're willing to give it, but if not, you can swim home right now because nothing you say is going to change my mind from what I am about to do."

"Even though he's responsible for your mother's death?" Yasmin asked, her eyes narrowing down at her cousin.

Viola's fingers curled into fists. Though her feelings about her mother had shifted dramatically, one thing she was still certain of.

"Sebastian would never have lied to me about where his powers came from. And if he really is Vaelor's descendant... then you should already know he'd have inherited the very powers Vaelor gained from killing Azmira in the first place. Whoever killed my mother is out there, somewhere. But it isn't him."

"So you're just... fine with him being Vaelor's descendant?" Yasmin exclaimed, unable to believe Viola could be at peace with something that repulsive and disgusting. Vaelor was disgusting so was his entire bloodline!

"Yasmin," Ivy spoke up this time, sensing her twin's rising frustration at the mermaid. "Can we table this for later and help Serena first? She needs us, and Nerissa is far too dangerous to be left alone with her husband any longer, not carrying the kind of hatred she does for his ancestors."

Ivy felt Viola squeeze her hand gratefully, and she gave her a small, weak smile in return. "Whatever you decide, I'll support you through it. Always, Serena. What do you need us to do? Yasmin will help too, won't you?" Ivy turned to their cousin, who looked like she would rather be anywhere than where they were about to go, but she still grumbled,

"As if I can let you two walk to your deaths. I will be there only to protect you."

"Thank you," Viola whispered softly to both of them, knowing she would need all the help she could get right now to make things right again.

"First, I need your Tidekins."

•••

Meanwhile, back at the house, Matt and Gilbert returned with the disguise equipment only to find Laila fast asleep, and no sign of Viola anywhere in the building. Panic set in almost immediately.

"Why did you have to fall asleep, of all moments, Laila? You were supposed to keep watch!" Matt exclaimed, after they'd searched every corner of the house, only to find her completely vanished, with none of the CCTV footage showing her leaving the building at all.

"It's not her fault, Beta Matt. No one can fully control when sleep takes them," Gilbert said, noticing the Beta's frustration aimed squarely at Laila, who already looked guilty enough for having dozed off and Gilbert didn't like that he was raising his voice at her.

"Yeah, sure. Fine. So what are we supposed to do now, and where do we even start searching for the Luna, when we can't step outside this building without risking a bullet through our skulls? We almost died getting these things here."

Gilbert was about to respond when they heard the sound of water rushing somewhere in the bathroom, and he turned to Laila.

"Did you leave the tap running?"

Laila shook her head. "No, I turned it off earlier when I found it running while I was looking for Viola. Let me go check again." She walked off to look, and moments later they heard her scream from inside the bathroom. Both men bolted toward the sound, desperate to know what could make Laila scream like that.

Gilbert and Matt rushed in and both stopped dead in their tracks, eyes widening as they stared into the tub, where Viola emerged, drenched, her clothes soaked through, two

heads surfacing beside her, watching them, one belonging to the mermaid who had escaped Sebastian's sacrifice, the other bearing Viola's exact face.

"What the hell is going on?" Laila asked, staring at the creatures in the tub in horror. Mermaids. She was staring at actual, freaking mermaids!

Gilbert and Matt, meanwhile, turned their attention to Viola, who said,

"I know this is a lot to take in, but if you can all just bear with me until I save Sebastian, I promise I'll explain everything. Meet my twin sister, Ivy, and my cousin, Yasmin. They're both here to help us take down the sea witch."

Viola didn't have time to explain everything to them properly, but she hoped they would cooperate with her anyway, no matter how deeply they distrusted mermaids, and since she'd already managed to get mermaids and Tidekins working together with her on this, she believed she could get the werewolves on board too.

"The sea witch?" Matt asked, confused, and Viola nodded.

"Victoria is the sea witch, in disguise. She's going to destroy Sebastian's entire life before she finally kills him. We have to stop her."

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 450: Don't come close[1,148 words]

The High Tower skyscraper stood tall against the evening sky, silhouetted in the twilight, the sky itself looking dull and heavy, as though it already sensed something enormous was about to happen that night.

Inside the building, many had already fled, since the Supreme Alpha had been killing people as casually as filing paperwork, all at Victoria's word, who seemed to be controlling him almost completely.

Nearly quarter the men guarding High Tower had already been killed, simply because Victoria complained they'd looked at her wrong, made her uncomfortable. Even the Elders hadn't been spared, one had been punched in the face because Victoria didn't like the tone he used with her.

That fear alone was enough to make most people fall in line, obeying every order given, especially those handed weapons and told to kill Viola on sight if she were ever spotted trying to get back in.

Nerrisa in disguise of Victoria could be seen in Sebastian's penthouse, humming a tune as she walked into the bathroom, swaying to her own song, peeling off her clothes as she prepared to climb into the bathtub.

She paused before the mirror, studying her reflection, her lustrous brown hair was beginning to streak with gray, faint wrinkles creeping in at the edges of her face, and grimaced, realizing her disguise was starting to fade, since she hadn't soaked in water long enough to maintain her youthful appearance as Victoria.

"Nerissa, you look nasty. I need a long soak." She sang to herself, still swaying along to her own tune.

Just because she ruled the entirety of the oceans and seas didn't mean she could stay out of water indefinitely, just like every creature of the sea, Nerrisa lived on water and couldn't be out of it forever.

She slipped off her dress and stepped into the tub, settling down comfortably. With a slow movement of her fingers as she stroked along her legs, they began fusing together at the thighs, darkening as black scales rippled into view and spread across her skin.

Still humming as she watched herself transform, her legs finished merging into the darkest tail that had ever existed. It flicked out over the edge of the tub as she threw her head back and chuckled softly.

"I used to hate how dark you were, tail of mine, but I've grown to love you. I can't go a day without seeing you. Let's get you nice and moist before I get back to business," Nerrisa said in a singsong voice, reaching over to turn on the tap. She had always preferred the feel of water dripping directly onto her tail rather than simply filling the tub around it.

Tonight was her big day. She would finally be marked by the disgusting land-dweller, a marking that would eventually kill him by releasing her venom directly into his bloodstream.

Nerrisa wouldn't have succeeded in getting the boy under her spell if he hadn't been so weakened by his curse that night. And if he hadn't loved the useless half-breed he was stupid enough to fall for, he might have seen through her disguise.

A smile climbed onto her face as she remembered the night she had succeeded in carrying out her plan. The fool had been suffering, desperately wanting to fight the transformation brought on by the full moon, but Nerrisa had gone to him at first in his wife's form.

"Don’t come close, Amor. I... I don’t want to hurt you. Ugh!" he had groaned in pain as his bones began to break and shift into the cursed wolf that overtook his own wolf. Nerrisa had gone to him without hesitation.

"Stay calm, and I will stop the pain for you," Nerrisa had said.

Before he could finish transforming, he tried to move away from her, but she held him in place with her powers.

Had she been any normal mermaid or werewolf, he would have injured her. But this was her, Nerrisa, the nightmare of the sea and the very person responsible for his curse. She had more control over him in that state than she did when he was in his right mind.

"Who the fuck are you?!" he had demanded the moment she suspended his transformation and a black light began moving around her palm.

He had realized she wasn’t his wife, but it was already too late. He was already falling under her control.

"I am your nightmare, little Vaelor. This will be the last night you will ever be yourself before your death. Let’s go on a journey."

Saying that, she slammed the black light into his chest, sealing him under her spell.

Nerrisa chuckled at the memories, especially at how being more ancient and more powerful than him had worked to her advantage. The so called Supreme Alpha had been put under her and right now he was nothing but a puppet she could control.

But before she would end his world, the sea witch needed her powers fully charged with water, so that once he died, she could flood the entire werewolf world, wipe them out completely, exactly as she’d sworn she would, all those many years ago, the moment she’d held Azmira’s lifeless body in her arms.

Tonight, she would end Vaelor’s bloodline for good, before he could father more of his cursed line, before she’d have to keep hunting down curse-breakers for another generation, just to stop them from ever fulfilling their prophecy.

As much as she relished the chase, the hunt itself, Nerissa despised the part where she had to pretend to love these disgusting creatures, especially the one she currently had under her control and was constantly breaking whenever he saw the half-breed.

She needed to end all of them tonight and get her hands on that stupid girl who’d gone and gotten herself pregnant. She couldn’t destroy the root without destroying its seed too,

which meant the half-breed needed to die, along with whatever she was carrying in her womb.

The fact that they'd let the girl escape her prison before Nerissa could finish her off still burned, but she reassured herself she'd get her hands on the girl soon enough, right after she finished off the man. But right now, she desperately needed her soak.

However, as she turned the tap, expecting the familiar rush of water, she was met instead with a hissing sound and barely a drop, and her brows furrowed as she smacked the head of the tap, as if that alone might force water out.

Furious that it wasn't spilling out the way it did every single night for her, she slapped the tap head clean off and shouted for her Tidekin. "Edge! Get me water, right now!"

Nerissa wasn't a patient mermaid, and when a second passed with no sign of her Tidekin, angry veins began pulsing at her temple.