Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 491: Wolf race[1,312 words]

"Why are we here?" Viola asked, as Sebastian set her down, keeping a hand around her waist to steady her, as though afraid she'd fall if he let go.

She'd rested against him the entire walk out of the building with her eyes closed, and the walk coupled with cool breeze outside had nearly lulled her to sleep, until he announced they'd arrived and she opened her eyes to the forested edge of Silver at the back of the city, where werewolves used the woods to hunt and run in their wolf forms.

She turned to look at him and found him already pulling off his shirt as he said, "My wolf wants to meet yours. I want us to go up that cliff I once took you to, but we'll race there."

Even before Viola could reply, her wolf surged up in excitement at the suggestion, and she could almost feel her wagging her tail. "What about your meeting?" She asked, as he tossed his shirt aside so he could put it back on after transforming later.

"I'll get to it right after this, but for now, I think it's time we let our wolves meet each other, don't you? Are you feeling up to it?" He stopped unbuttoning his trousers to turn to her, reaching out to cup her neck with one hand and tucking strands of wind-blown hair behind her ear with the other.

Muffin had been sulking, and Viola hadn't been feeling well either, and the best remedy for both was to run in their other forms, letting the exertion restore some of their energy.

If it meant borrowing a few minutes from his work schedule to help her feel recharged, so be it, Sebastian would let Muffin out. Beyond that, he genuinely wanted to see his wife in her other form as he hadn't gotten to see her well yesterday, though if she wasn't up for it, he'd never push her.

Viola smiled. "I'd love that. I've always dreamed of running through these woods someday, with my wolf." She said, excitement creeping into her voice as she began undoing her clothes, but Sebastian placed his hand over hers.

"Allow me." And then he began helping her out of the yellow house dress she wore.

Viola couldn't help but think they'd spent an awful lot of the last twenty-four hours undressing each other. When her dress fell away, she was left in just her bra and panties, and the breeze suddenly felt chilly against her bare skin, prompting her to turn to her husband, only to find him standing there, staring down at her stomach.

Viola pursed her lips and followed his gaze to the small bump below her abdomen, and self-consciously placed her hand over it. "I didn't even notice it growing, until yesterday."

She watched his expression turn sober as he stepped forward and pressed his own hand over hers, against her belly. "Will the sickness get worse, the more it grows?" He asked quietly, worry plain in his silver eyes.

Every werewolf knew that when two Alpha werewolves conceived, pregnancy tended to be harder on the female the further along she got, especially without knowing yet if she carried twins, since the odds ran high. Sebastian wanted children with her, but watching her throw up for the first time that morning had given him a hard reality check about just how much pregnancy could take out of her.

She had looked like she would throw up her entire stomach and had looked so sick for a moment. Something like that was bound to happen again.

He didn't want his wife suffering for any reason, not if he could help it, and if there was any way to shoulder more of the struggle himself so she could bear less, he would do it without hesitation.

Viola smiled up at him. "I'm ready for whatever struggles come, as long as I have you beside me. I won't sugarcoat it, there will be plenty of hard days the further along I get, but I know you'll be there to support me, and our baby will be here before we know it. Now stop looking like you're about to faint from worry, and let's have our race." She said, injecting some humor to ease his mind.

Viola already understood what she was getting into with this pregnancy, and though everything she'd read about it had scared her at first, she felt stronger with him beside her, even more so now that she was no longer wolfless, with the strength to heal from whatever damage giving birth might do to her body afterward.

Sebastian traced her cheek, looking down at her with a love and respect that made her flush. "I am the luckiest man alive, to have you. You know that?" He told her, then leaned down to press a gentle kiss to her forehead before stepping back. "Go ahead and shift, sweetheart. I want to see you before I take my own form. I need to make sure your bones are adjusting properly and that you're not pushing yourself too hard."

Viola, who'd shifted once already and knew the pain of it, swallowed hard. It was said that the more one shifted, the more the bones adjusted to it, but she needed no one to tell her that Sebastian was trying to help ease her through this.

She suddenly felt nervous, almost as though she were about to be seen naked for the first time by him, since this would be his first time meeting her wolf, who was a little bit difficult to keep down sometimes.

She closed her eyes, took a deep breath, and heard Sebastian say, "Take your time. To make it hurt less, try to shift all at once, rather than letting it happen limb by limb."

Viola peeked at him from beneath her lashes. "Any advice on how to do that?"

Sebastian smiled. "Picture butterflies flying around you, then hand your wolf the reins while you do it. Don't think about the shifting itself at all. When I first shifted, I used to picture water flowing through a creek."

He instructed her, and Viola couldn't help the small smile that tugged at her lips. He still remembered how much she loved butterflies. Of all the things he could have told her to picture, he had remembered that little detail about her and used it to help her now. The thought warmed something inside her.

She followed his instructions, picturing colorful butterflies, and before she knew it, felt her body flowing smoothly through the change, the pain barely half of what she'd felt the first time. The shift was complete in no time, and her body settled into its wolf form, pulsing with her aura.

Sebastian, who'd been watching, took an involuntary step back as she transformed, staring at his wife with fascination at how graceful she looked.

Though her wolf wasn't as large as his, she was still bigger than the average female wolf, with a powerful, well-built frame that carried an undeniable presence. Her coat gleamed beneath the light, every movement revealing the strength packed beneath her fur. The crescent mark rested visibly on her shoulder, glowing against her coat even though it had yet to appear on her human skin.

Unlike his wolf, whose presence carried a chilling aura, hers radiated a fierce, almost scorching heat. Anyone standing before her would feel it rolling off her body and would probably be sweating buckets within moments.

There was something wild and alluring about her that made it difficult to look away. She was magnificently beautiful, and Sebastian couldn't help but stare at her with fascinated pride. She was his woman, his mate, and he would have loved nothing more than to show her off to the entire pack and the whole world.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 492: Deeper connection[1,245 words]

The magnificent wolf walked up to him and began sniffing at him, rubbing her nose against his face and neck. He smiled, running his fingers through her thick fur.

"Aren’t you a beauty, my love? You have green eyes," he mused, looking into them. He knew his wife had blue eyes, so seeing this difference fascinated him.

’Must be from my father’s side. He had green eyes. Your turn to shift,’ her voice came into his head.

Sebastian froze. The sound of her voice in his mind stunned him, because that link wasn’t supposed to exist before the mark.

"You just spoke into my head," he said, staring at her in surprise.

She looked back at him with almost puppy-like eyes.

’Isn’t that supposed to happen?’

Sebastian shook his head. "Not at all. It’s not supposed to happen before I officially mark you. For now, we can share some emotions and feelings because we’re fated, but the mind link shouldn’t exist yet."

’Maybe we’re different?’ she suggested, not knowing why that would be possible.

The corner of Sebastian’s lips curled upward at her words. "You’re different in so many ways. We’re going to have to find out what else we’re capable of together," he muttered.

He kicked off his shoes before shifting into his own wolf, towering slightly over hers. The two wolves began circling each other, their auras bleeding into the surrounding trees as they moved.

’Hmm. I can finally feel you.’ Muffin said to their mate, who rubbed her nose against his and then lick down his fur. ’Do you have a name?’

’My name is Cyan. You smell nice, I want to lick you.’ Cyan purred to Muffin, shamelessly moving to lick him all over.

"No mating out here. We’re here to race." Viola quickly reined her wolf in before things could go any further between them in this form, knowing full well that their instincts were much harder to control when they were wolves.

The two wolves moved around each other, sniffing and investigating one another with obvious curiosity. Viola sniffed along Sebastian’s neck and shoulder while he nudged his muzzle against hers, their tails wagging as they circled each other. Every now and then, one would bump against the other or give a playful lick before they finally settled into a playful stance, their bodies tensing with anticipation.

Then Viola suddenly bolted through the trees.

"Last one there is a rotten tomato!" she called back through their mind link.

Sebastian let out a loud howl and took off after her, his paws pounding against the earth as he chased after his mate.

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In the new pack being built, Zoe could be seen sneaking down a long corridor, glancing back over her shoulder as she went, trying to avoid being spotted. Once she reached the spot she was aiming for, she crouched down and pulled her phone out of her pocket.

There hadn't been any signal since she'd arrived here, but she'd noticed that the last time she'd gone near Nick's floor, there had been signal, and the bar hadn't been empty.

Nick was planning something evil against her family, and Zoe needed to let someone know where she was before it was too late.

Thankfully, she wasn't locked in her room and was allowed outside of it, the only place off-limits was outside the building itself.

Zoe was startled to see her fingers trembling, but she took a deep breath, pushing silver hair away from her face as she dialed Viola's number. It rang without anyone picking up, and so did her brother's, and she bit down on her lip in despair before dialing the only other person she knew never ignored her calls, not since she was a little girl.

Zoe held her breath as the line connected, and true to her expectation, he picked up on the second ring, his worried voice coming through immediately and without hesitation.

"Oh, for the love of the moon, where have you been, little brat!" Came Matt's worried voice, laced with a hint of scolding that somehow made her smile even through the tears of relief now sliding down her cheeks, normally his teasing nicknames would only annoy her, but right now they sounded like home.

"Do you have any idea how worried everyone's been about you? I haven't slept a wink these past several days, running around with the search team from morning until night. You are going to get an earful over this once you're back, young lady, because that was completely—"

"Matt," she called his name gently, cutting him off, and immediately his scolding came to a halt, the unmistakable tremble in her voice cutting straight through his frustration.

"What happened? Did someone bully you? Where are you?" he asked urgently, already stepping out of his car. He had been on his way to check one of the last places he knew she liked to shop for her supplies when he received her call. Hearing her trembling voice immediately put Matt on edge.

"I’m at the new pack. Nick... Nick lured me here, and now he’s refusing to let me go home. He’s changed so much, Matt, I don’t even recognize who he is anymore, and it’s honestly terrifying. He... he killed a mother and her daughter, right in front of me, so heartlessly, like it meant nothing at all to him..."

Came her voice, breaking as fresh tears slid down her cheeks, though Zoe quickly scrubbed them away with the back of her hand, having promised herself long ago that she would try to be braver, the way Vee always seemed to be, even if bravery had never come naturally to her own nature.

"I’m going to fucking kill that bastard with my bare hands!" Came Matt’s hardened voice, fury bleeding into every word. "I’ll get you out of there, I swear it. Don’t do anything reckless in the meantime, you will be home before tomorrow, if it’s the very last thing I do." He assured her gently, and Zoe found herself nodding along, as though he were standing right there in front of her instead of miles away.

"You promise me that?" She asked, needing to hear it again, because Matt always kept his promises without fail, had never once gone back on his word since the very first promise he’d made her as a little girl, unlike her own brother, who had disappointed her more than once, Matt had never let her down.

"I promise you, Zoe. Is he torturing you in any way?" He asked, his fists clenching hard at his sides as an inexplicable, burning heat of rage rose up in his stomach at even the thought of it, but Zoe was quick to reassure him before his mind could spiral further,

"No, nothing like that. But I think he’s planning something terrible against my brother. How is he doing? Is Vee all right?" She asked anxiously, her fingers twisting tighter around the fabric of her dress as she glanced warily around herself, checking that no one had followed her.

"I haven’t been able to check on them myself today, but I believe they’re doing fine, probably back together again by now, knowing them." He said. "Zoe..." He called her name softly, and she hummed in response, waiting. Matt added, his voice firm with promise, "I will never let him hurt you again. Not while I’m still breathing. Stay strong for me, okay?"

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 493: Bury you both under[1,075 words]

Zoe pursed her lips, trying to steady herself. "I’m always strong, you know that. I’ll wait right here for you to come get me, and once I’m back, I’ll treat you to the best meal you’ve ever had, and design you a very limited-edition suit, made just for you and no one else."

She told him, feeling her racing heart ease slightly now that she was certain at least one person in the world knew exactly where she was, blissfully unaware of everything that was about to unfold.

Matt smiled despite himself, his fingers tightening around the phone as he realized that even after all these years, this troublesome little woman they had helped raise from childhood still meant more to him than he often let himself admit. "I'll hold you to every word of that. And make it green, while you're at it."

Zoe made a disgusted face at that, wrinkling her nose. "Ew, green? I honestly can't believe you still like that color after all this time, you are such a boring person, Matt, truly. Maybe that's exactly why Mrs. Right still hasn't found you yet."

"I don't need a Mrs. Right in my life when I've already got a troublesome little brat who goes out of her way just to annoy me half the time, and her equally exhausting brother who somehow manages to keep the rest of my life plenty busy on his own."

He said, climbing back into his car and signaling sharply to his men to turn the convoy around, they would head straight back now, to gather Sebastian and as many fighting men as they could possibly assemble, before returning to bring her home safely.

Still, even with all of that urgency pressing on him, he found he didn't want to be the one to end the call first, wanting instead to keep that thin thread of connection to her alive for as long as the conversation could possibly last.

Zoe pursed her lips again, looking down at her own fingers as they picked absently at a loose thread on the hem of her dress. "Don't hang up yet, Matt, please. I don't get any signal at all in the room they've put me in, so I might not get another chance to call you again for a while."

Matt didn't hesitate for even a second. "I won't hang up, I promise you that. Just keep talking to me."

Zoe bite the inside of her cheek as she was suddenly out of words to talk about. "I don't know what to say now..."

Matt smiled, "That's okay, tell me about anything at all, tell me how many men he's got stationed there with him."

"I honestly can't say for certain, there are so many of them, more than I expected, and he has weapons on hand that I've genuinely never seen in my entire life. And he—" Zoe didn't get the chance to finish her sentence before the phone was suddenly snatched clean out of her hands, and she spun around to find Nick standing there, smiling down at her with a coldness that chilled her to the bone, as he brought the phone up to his own ear to address Matt directly.

"Well, well, if it isn't the Alpha's loyal little pet dog, the one who feasts on his master's leftover bones like some pathetic, spineless fool with nothing better to do. Tsk, tsk. Calling my dear cousin behind my back now, are we?" He taunted, a wide grin spreading across his face, and on the other end of the line, Matt's grip tightened dangerously around the steering wheel.

"You absolute bastard. You've got some nerve running your mouth like that, at least I'm not some pathetic piece of shit scrabbling desperately for attention by forcing someone to stay somewhere against their will." Matt shot back without missing a beat, and his words landed exactly where they were meant to, striking true, Nick's grin fell away instantly, replaced by a dark, simmering scowl.

"I never really had anything personal against you before today, Matteo, truly. But you've just gone and dug yourself a very deep grave with that mouth of yours, and I promise you, I will have your blood for it." Nick vowed coldly, and Matt let out a sharp snort of derision in response.

"We'll see whose blood ends up soaking into the ground, in the end. And mark my words, you will pay in full for every single ounce of pain you've put Zoe through years ago by shooting her." Matt swore darkly, feeling a rage toward this one particular man that he could honestly say he'd rarely felt toward anyone else in his life, and Nick only laughed harder at the threat, clearly unbothered.

"I'm not Javier, some spineless fool who doesn't know how to properly use his own brain. By the way, since you already know exactly where she is now, make absolutely sure that when you decide to come, you bring that fucker Sebastian along with you as well, so I can finish the both of you off together, once and for all. Killing two birds with one stone, I'll bury you both under my own soil, as a lovely little housewarming gift to my brand new pack."

Nick added, still grinning ear to ear. "Oh, and one more thing, do tell my darling Luna that I love her dearly, and that very, very soon, she'll be coming to live here with me permanently."

With that final, taunting word, Nick ended the call abruptly, before the bastard on the other end could get so much as another syllable in to insult him further, not that it would have mattered anyway, when the man stood absolutely no chance against someone who wielded the full power of a Supreme Alpha in his hands.

He had been genuinely furious to catch Zoe making secret calls behind his back through the CCTV cameras scattered around the property, but in the end, she had only gone and made things easier for him. Her brother would come looking for her now without a shadow of a doubt, and when he did, Nick would end him for good, along with his loyal, foul-mouthed Beta, once and for all.

Nick patted Zoe’s head, "That’s why I say we will work together just fine, cousin, just like we have always been doing. Do you want to take a walk around?"

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 494: Preparing For Parenthood[1,108 words]

"Where are we going?" Viola asked her husband through the mind link, as he’d changed direction after they’d visited the cliff and howled together at its top, his wolf had embarrassingly chased after butterflies while Sebastian tried in vain to stop him, since it was a humiliating thing for an Alpha to be seen doing, but seeing that her wolf was happily chasing them too, he’d given in, and the two of them had spent a while playing among the butterflies drifting around the sunflowers at the top.

Now that they’d left the place, she’d expected them to head home, but Sebastian was leading them in another direction entirely, one that was taking them further and further beyond Silver’s territory. They passed through another stretch of woods, and beyond that, came upon a massive, imposing gate, set into the tallest fence she’d ever seen.

This part of the woods felt entirely desolate, no birds sang here, and none of the plants looked fresh or alive. It almost looked as though autumn had settled permanently over the place, with dry, crunching yellow leaves blanketing the ground, more of them drifting down from the trees to settle over her fur as they passed beneath.

The gate had grown thick with vines, as though no one had opened it in a very long time, and as Viola looked around, her eyes fell on a rusted, vine-covered sign that read, "Mooncreek Pack."

She turned to her husband, who had already moved ahead and pressed his paw against a panel that scanned it, letting out a loud chime before the vines began to break away and the gate swung slowly inward, revealing the old, dead pack that had once belonged to her father’s family.

"Sebastian..." She called to him, hanging back as he made his way onto the pack grounds, where the earth had split apart in several places, choked with overgrown vines, as though an earthquake had once torn through the place and left it fragile ever since.

Sebastian stopped and turned back to his wife, whose wolf looked, in that moment, like a nervous puppy.

"Come on. Don’t you want to see your father’s homeland? Now that we’re certain the flood won’t happen again, we can leave the gate open and rebuild this place the way it once was, it’ll be like preserving a piece of him."

He’d seen the guilt in her eyes, guilt over not having been able to save her parents alongside him, and Sebastian didn’t want her carrying that weight forever. If there was anything that might ease it, even a little, it was preserving her father’s and mother’s memory here, along with the home Vincent had once known.

He saw her eyes glisten as they met his, and Sebastian said gently, "Come here."

She walked up to him, and he rubbed his head along the fur of her neck in comfort as he asked, "Do you want to see where your father lived, all those years ago, and where your mother must have worked and fallen in love with him? Before they went to the island, they had spent a lot of time here."

Viola nodded, wanting to see it, even knowing it wouldn’t be the real thing, only the remnants of what it had once been, the buildings all lying in crumbled ruin, thick with dust and yellow vines, without a single living plant left standing anywhere around.

"I just realized something, honey," Sebastian’s words came into her head as she followed him into the heart of the old pack, picking her way over half-collapsed buildings and the cracked, uneven ground.

"What?" she asked him, looking up at the long fence that looked like the one used on a dam before looking back at him when he slowed down so she could catch up.

"I realized that ever since we got married, we’ve lived in a way no couple should. We don’t have one permanent place to call our home, or our married home, and now that... we’re having children, I think we should pick one place and stop moving from here to there," he told her, sharing the thought that immediately made Viola reflect on it.

She hadn’t really thought about that before, but now that he mentioned it, she realized that since their marriage, they had moved from her penthouse to his, and then to his main quarters, which should have been their permanent home as the rulers of the pack.

"So what do you suggest we do?" she asked him, looking into his silver eyes.

"I want you to decide where you want us to stay and raise our child. Should we make your penthouse our permanent home, where I move all my things in, or should we make the main quarters our home?" Sebastian asked.

To him, he was alright with either choice as long as she was there, but thinking about it, he didn't think constantly moving around was healthy for a child who wouldn't know where to call home.

He saw a thoughtful look in his wife's eyes for a moment as they leaped together over a cracked section of ground before she said,

"If we move to your quarters, it will be a hassle to always wake up in the morning and drive an hour to the High Tower, which is in the center of the pack, to work. Though I would love to have our baby in the main quarters since it's away from the noise of the city, I think we should pick my penthouse as our home. When I'm close to giving birth, we can live in the main quarters and then return after some time."

Viola watched his eyes for any sign of disapproval, but instead, she saw a quick agreement as he replied, "I thought about that too. We've made more memories in your penthouse than anywhere else, and I kind of picture our life mostly there. Once we return, I'll have all my things packed and moved there."

He lowered his head and rubbed his muzzle gently against the side of her neck, brushing his nose through her thick fur. Viola's wolf responded with a pleased purr, leaning into the affectionate touch.

"And we can use the main quarters as an escape vacation home once in a while," Viola added, feeling so excited about their future that her tail began to wag as they walked deeper into the territory.

But as though the thought of their unborn child and their future reminded her of something, she said, "Seb, there is something I've wanted to tell you, but it keeps slipping my mind."

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 495: Viola![1,142 words]

At her words, Sebastian stopped walking. His ears perked forward, and he turned his large head toward her, giving her his full attention as though he sensed she was about to tell him something grave. For a moment, he felt his chest tighten as Sebastian couldn't help but become more negative lately, that every little thing made him think of the worst.

"What is it? Are there complications about the pregnancy that you haven't told me yet? Does it have anything to do with the vomiting? Do you want to rest before we proceed?" came his questions, making Cyan roll her eyes while Viola laughed from the inside.

'He sure runs miles of negativity,' Cyan remarked, but Viola was quick to assure her husband.

"None of that. Now listen to me. It’s about your twin brother," she said.

Sebastian froze, his paws coming to a complete stop beneath him. His ears shifted back as he stared at her. "Alex. He isn’t responding to me, even though I felt this morning that he is still alive, but I don’t know for how long."

Viola moved closer to him. "Well, I just want to tell you not to worry about his health anymore, because my sister cured him, and she goes to see him sometimes. Now the only thing left is for you to bring him back here and make things right with your brother about Natalie’s death. He deserves to know..." She trailed off at the look in his silver eyes.

Coming into this pack to see where her parents had been before seemed like a way to bring out things and fix matters that had been left pending in their lives. Just like how they had talked about where to live, she thought Sebastian needed to include his brother in their future too, but the look in his eyes was confusing her.

Viola began to speak again, but Sebastian stepped closer and pressed his large body against hers. He lowered his head beneath her neck and rested it against her side, burying his muzzle into the fur along her ribs as he hugged her in the only way their wolf forms allowed.

Sebastian had no words to express the feeling that came over him at her words. Alex was out of danger, and he could finally fix their relationship and make things right with his brother.

"Thank you," he told her sincerely, another grave burden lifted off him by her.

"Don’t thank me. It was Ivy’s doing, and she did it without my asking. How about we invite her over for dinner when you let Alex out? We can have a family dinner."

"That sounds like a plan."

The couple made the plan and then resumed their tour of the Mooncreek territory, with Viola looking around and trying to picture her mother walking down these roads and her father coming to save her when she was in trouble that one time.

She couldn’t help but picture it exactly as she had seen it in her mother’s memories.

"It used to be such a beautiful place, Seb. Do you think we could ever rebuild it?" She asked, following him toward one particular building still standing in the middle of the grounds.

"Maybe not every part of it, some of the ground’s grown too fragile to hold a structure again, but there’s still solid ground here too. Even if no one lives here, we can rebuild parts of it, just to preserve the memory. Like this one building here, the one Gilbert had people construct to hold his family’s history, everything he managed to gather after the

flood." Sebastian said, pressing his paw against a panel that opened the door of the only building left fully intact and was kept in memory of the Alpha's family.

Gilbert had collected everything he could find that belonged to his family and kept it here years later after the flood. Since he and Viola were related, Sebastian thought she might find pictures and other memories of her family, especially her mother, since Mooncreek was known to keep records containing pictures of every single person who had joined their pack. She could keep them as memories of her family and one day show them to their children.

But as Sebastian stepped forward to enter, he realized his wife hadn't followed. She'd stopped short, staring at the building with a distant, unsettled look, and she was already taking small steps backward.

"What's wrong?" Sebastian asked, and her voice came back to him, thin with fear.

"I don't know. Cyan doesn't want to go in. There's something in there we shouldn't touch. Cyan's afraid of it..."

Sebastian, who had stopped right at the threshold between the inside and outside, immediately stepped back out, but his wife kept backing away, her wolf's body low to the ground as fear took over every instinct in her. Her ears were pinned flat against her head, her tail tucked tightly between her legs, and her paws shifted backward with each step as though every part of her was screaming at her to get as far away from the building as possible.

"Then let's get out of here," he told her.

But almost as soon as the words left his mouth, the ground began to tremble. Thick, fog-like smoke rose from the cracks in the earth, quickly spreading between them and cutting him off from her completely.

"Viola!" he called, his voice tense as he squinted through the smoke, but he couldn't make out anything at all. The darkness within it seemed to swallow even the faintest outline, and a prickling sense of danger crawled over him. Frustration and fear flared inside him as he broke into a run toward the last direction he had seen her go, forced to move blindly through the suffocating smoke.

"Seb..." Came her voice, sounding distant, farther away than it should have been, and it made his chest tighten. He tried to track her by scent, but it was no use, the smoke had grown hot and thick, almost like steam rising off boiling water.

Cursing under his breath, Sebastian leapt up onto a boulder from a collapsed building and scrambled to the top, trying to spot his wife, and soon caught sight of her in the thickest part of the smoke, turning in circles as though she'd lost all sense of direction.

"Viola!" he called, and she looked up at him.

The moment their eyes met, the smoke began to thin, slowly curling away from them before sinking back into the cracks in the earth. As the last wisps disappeared and the ground became visible again, Sebastian's eyes fell on the exact spot where she stood, and his expression immediately turned sharply anxious.

"Don't move, love! You're standing right in the middle of the most fragile ground here."

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 496: The breaking grounds[1,167 words]

The instant he said it, Viola became aware of the ground beneath her feet, feeling it begin to crack like the surface of a frozen river giving way. Fear seized her chest as the earth around her splintered further and began to feel like it would give way underneath her paws.

'Cyan, why did you lead us into this part?!' Viola demanded of her wolf.

'I didn't mean to. I was killed in this pack before I was ever reborn inside you. The witch placed a killing mark on the exact spot where that building stood during the flood. It's where she took my last human's life. I didn't remember it until we were already there, standing right where she killed my human... It's happening again. The ground is going to swallow us whole and bury us alive deep beneath it.'

Viola realized something at those words. Cyan's last human had been killed in this very ground in the flood at the same moment Viola was being born in the sea. And now, they had come to the place of her death, where the ground must have swallowed her.

Viola turned toward her husband. "Sebastian..."

"Don't move, honey. I'm going to get you out of there."

Meanwhile, back in Viola's penthouse, Matt had only just arrived, after hours of driving straight through, running up toward the building the moment he knew Sebastian would likely be there.

Though he doubted Nick would actually hurt Zoe outright, there was no way to be entirely certain when it came to a psychopath who'd already proven himself capable of killing his own brother, and Sebastian needed to know what had happened, immediately.

But Matt soon discovered that neither Sebastian nor his Luna were anywhere in the penthouse, and he cursed under his breath, knowing he'd have to track him down before he could act on anything at all, the last thing he wanted was for either of them to walk unknowingly into whatever trap Nick was setting for them.

"Let's track down the Alpha's whereabouts." He ordered the warriors behind him as they all flared out.

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Sebastian racked his brain, trying to figure out how to get his wife out of there, where it seemed like any small step she took might make the ground split further and swallow her whole. If he went to her himself, their combined weight would likely accomplish what her weight alone hadn't yet. The ground for at least two miles around her appeared to be in the same fragile condition, meaning even a leap might not help at all.

"Honey, has your wolf mastered the leaping trace of Alphas?" he asked, keeping his eyes fixed on her paws and the cracking ground beneath them.

The leaping trace was a skill every Alpha eventually mastered, allowing them to cover great distances in a single bound, sometimes as far as three miles from their starting position.

What Sebastian couldn't understand was that he'd walked this ground before, inspecting it himself. Yes, it had looked fragile, but it had never given way under the combined weight of him and his men before, and it had certainly never produced smoke the way it had today. It was as though Viola's presence alone had triggered something buried here.

Viola relayed Sebastian's question to her wolf, and Cyan answered, 'I haven't used this body in years to master the leaping trace, and I don't think now is the time to attempt it for the first time. I could easily leap us straight into a hole instead.'

Viola looked back at Sebastian and shook her head at his question. Realistically, Cyan was still too new a wolf, and had she and Viola had years together already, they might have mastered leaping and much else besides by now.

"That's fine, darling. I'll teach you how to do that another time, but right now, I need you to shift back into your human form. It'll cut down the weight, and I need you ready for what's next." He explained calmly, even as his own heart hammered wildly inside his chest.

"Ready for what?" She asked, and Sebastian answered without missing a beat, "To leap onto my back, in a split second. I've mastered the leaping trace my whole life, I'll land on solid ground for only a moment, and in that instant, you need to get onto my back. Can you do that?"

Viola had never jumped onto a moving wolf's back before, but it was far better than staying where she was, with the ground groaning beneath her feet. She gave him a firm nod, and he praised her,

"That's my girl. Now shift."

Viola shifted forms with a small cry catching in her throat at the pain, standing in her human form afterward, panting, looking up at him, terrified that they might both end up sinking if he didn't time this exactly right.

"Hubby..." She muttered, watching him gather himself to leap toward her.

"You trust me, don't you, love?" He asked, and she nodded without a moment's hesitation.

"With my whole life." She said.

Sebastian felt a surge of warmth at that, and told her he'd jump on the count of three. Viola felt her heart pounding in her ears, her stomach twisting, as she watched her husband's mighty wolf form gather itself, and held her breath as he counted down and leapt.

He landed with a heavy thud that made the ground beneath him give way almost instantly, crumbling apart even as he moved. She clutched at his fur and hauled herself onto his back, gripping tight as the ground sank away and he leapt again.

Viola felt almost as though they were flying, and looking down, she watched the earth splitting apart below them, the hole widening and spreading further across the grounds.

"Hold on tight, love." He told her, just as he began descending toward what looked like solid ground, but the edges gave way the moment his weight landed, and half of Sebastian's body dropped into the hole, his front claws digging desperately into the earth to hold himself steady.

"Climb up, my love, and get to safe ground." He told her, as she began to slide off his back, toward the black hole forming below.

Viola scrambled upward, using his body for leverage, grabbing hold of a root sticking out from the top edge of the ground and hauling herself up and over, out of danger. She immediately spun around, shifted back into her wolf form, and clamped her teeth around his fur, hauling him up and out to safety just as his claws began to lose their grip.

The two of them collapsed onto solid ground, panting, as another section of Mooncreek's earth groaned and crumbled somewhere behind them.

Sebastian didn't stay down for long, pulling himself back up and tugging gently at his wife's fur to help her up as well. "Let's get out of here, before it spreads to this part too."

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 497: Would this end[1,193 words]

The couple ran until they'd cleared the dam gate entirely, the gate locking shut behind them with a loud bang, before they collapsed onto the ground together, dry leaves drifting down over them from the trees above.

Neither of them said anything for a while, until Viola finally broke the silence.

"That was too close. For a moment, I really thought we were going to end up buried underground..." She muttered, still shaking from the adrenaline still coursing through her system.

"Something must have triggered the grounds. They're far more stable than that, I've walked through there more than twice myself, and it's been inspected thoroughly." Sebastian remarked gravely, certain the inspection reports had guaranteed the ground was sound. He never would have brought her there otherwise.

"I'm going to fire every single one of those inspectors for this." Came Sebastian's furious words, their incompetence having nearly cost him everything, especially his pregnant wife's safety.

"It's not their fault," Viola said quietly, listening to the distant groaning of the earth still swallowing everything behind them, including the last remnants of her family's memory she'd wanted to see. "Cyan said it's an aftereffect of the sea witch. She cast a killing spell there, to kill Cyan and her human body in their past life, during the flood. My presence must have triggered years of dormant magic."

Sebastian felt his anger flare toward the sea witch all over again, since every misfortune lately seemed to trace back to her somehow, her list of crimes only growing longer.

"Would this end, if we killed her?" Sebastian asked, since she'd become nothing but a persistent thorn in their lives.

"No one can kill her. It's said her death was prophesied to come only by the hand of the Child of the Sea, and I already gave up that power. Right now, she's only sealed away, kept locked in her cell by the mermaids' songs and the Sea Guardian's power. No one

knows how long that will hold... she’s filled with so much vengeance and rage, toward both of us..."

Viola had wanted to set the witch’s existence aside for now, but this had reminded her of everything all over again, and she no longer knew what to do about the woman. Her vengeance was tied all the way back to the past, and Viola almost thought that unless they knew what had really happened to Azmira and Vaelor, they would never understand the root of her hatred for Sebastian, and now for her, simply because she had chosen him.

What had happened in the past shouldn’t be something that affected them, the innocent victims who didn’t even remember that life, even though it was tied to their bloodlines. And the fact that she couldn’t kill the sea witch now was deeply unsettling.

"Let’s head home, and we can talk there. You’re still shaking." Sebastian observed, and she looked at him.

"Can I ride on your back? Cyan just faced one of her deepest fears and traumas, and she can’t stop shaking right now."

Viola barely had to ask, Sebastian was already lowering himself in front of her the moment she shifted into human form, and she climbed on, gripping his fur, resting against him as she said, "I just caused all of Gilbert’s family memories to get swallowed by the earth..."

"That’s not your fault. It’s that bitch who placed the spell here who’s to blame."

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Matt stopped at the mouth of the forest, where he found the Alpha’s clothes lying beside the Luna’s, and he began looking around, wondering where the couple had gone off to, leaving their clothes behind, when he spotted the mighty wolf approaching them at a speed that made every other warrior with him drop into submission, their Alpha had clearly recovered all his energy and aura, and none of them dared show him anything less than full respect now.

’What are you all doing here?’ Came his words in Matt’s head, their first mind-link exchange since his recovery.

’We’re looking for you. There’s an emergency.’ Matt replied, and received Sebastian’s order in response, ’I need all of you to turn away. I’m carrying my wife, and her clothes are right where you’re standing.’

Matt looked down at the clothes and quickly ordered the men to turn away, knowing full well that anyone foolish enough to look at the Luna unclothed might not live to see tomorrow, not with the possessive Sebastian he knew fully back now.

Sebastian came to a stop where he'd left their clothes and belatedly realized his wife had fallen asleep against his back, still gripping his fur tightly. He couldn't help but think how utterly exhausted she must be, and not wanting to disturb her or risk waking her, he shifted back into his human form, catching her carefully as she slid from his back and turning her gently to rest against his front instead.

Sebastian gathered her clothes and began helping her dress, and while he did, he reached out to Matt through their mind link, so his voice wouldn't wake his wife.

"What's the emergency? Keep your back turned while you answer."

"Zoe called me. She's being held captive in Nick's territory, and he won't let her come home." Matt said, and went on to explain everything else Nick had said to him.

Sebastian's eyes darkened, his jaw hardening at the words. The bastard. For a while now, caught up in all the chaos of their lives, Sebastian had genuinely let his cousin's existence slip from his mind entirely, until this moment. Hearing that he had his sister, who had gone missing was the final straw.

"I believe it's time we face that fucker head-on and get rid of him once and for all. That whole pack goes down with him." Sebastian said, gathering his wife into his arms as he rose back to his feet, having only pulled on his trousers and leaving the shirt behind.

"Should I start gathering the men to head out, then?" Matt asked, finally allowed to turn back around, his eyes landing on the sleeping Luna cradled in Sebastian's arms.

"No. He's set a trap for us, and we can't afford to walk straight into it. I need you to reach out to Kenny first, we need every man he can spare, especially those with abilities. If we're going after him, we need to go in fully prepared this time." He started walking ahead, and Matt quickly fell into step beside him, a deep frown creasing his face.

"What about Zoe? I promised her she'd be home by tomorrow, man. How are we supposed to gather this many men before then?" He asked, not wanting to be the reason she lost her trust in him.

"One thing I'm certain of, Matt, that son of a bitch won't hurt her. And if we move on this right now, we might still get her home by tomorrow. Now hurry and call Kenny, it's time our alliance actually earned its keep." He walked past the beta, adding, "I'll get my wife into bed, then start gathering the rest of our warriors."

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 498: Mother's Killer[1,099 words]

Sebastian went to their now-permanent home, her penthouse, the place they'd live together from now on without ever being separated the way they had been in the past. He climbed the stairs into the room they would now share every night, carefully laying his wife down on the bed and pulling the blanket over her, knowing she was far more prone to cold than the average she-wolf.

Once he had her settled comfortably, he sank to his knees beside the bed, resting his elbows on the mattress as he reached out to tuck a strand of hair delicately behind her ear. She must have been shaken by what had happened in Mooncreek, and he suspected she was already silently blaming herself for destroying what little remained of her parents' history.

"It's not your fault. Not everything bad has to be your fault, mi amor. Some things happen for reasons we can't always see, and sometimes... a misfortune can turn into a blessing." He whispered to her, brushing his thumb along her cheek. She needed all the rest she could get, and if it were up to him, Sebastian wouldn't have woken her just to tell her he was planning to go to war against his cousin, to end that pathetic pack before it grew any larger.

After everything she'd already been through these past days, he didn't want to add more to her plate. He thought, bending down to press a kiss to the corner of her lips, but as he began to pull back, her eyes opened.

"You're planning to go to war without telling me again, aren't you?" She said, catching him off guard, since he'd assumed she was still asleep. He looked down and met her blue eyes.

"You're awake." Sebastian muttered, still tracing her cheek gently. "You weren't actually asleep this whole time, were you?" He narrowed his eyes at her, and she shook her head, lips pursed.

"I was asleep, until your voice and Matt's woke me up." She said, and watched understanding dawn on his face as he realized she now shared the mind link with him, meaning that unless he specifically blocked her side of it, she'd overhear every conversation he had in it with anyone.

"I see. You heard everything, then." He mused, and she nodded, reaching for his hand and holding it in hers.

"I want to come with you, to bring Zoe home." Viola announced, knowing she wouldn't be able to rest easy staying behind when she could actually help, both as his Luna, and as a friend who wanted to be there for someone she cared about.

But before she could even finish reasoning it through, her husband was already shaking his head. "Absolutely not. It's best if you stay home. Kenny's on his way, and I told him to

bring Tess, you can keep her company, talk about the baby. You could go baby clothes shopping, or find something to occupy yourself, anything that will—"

Viola sat up on the bed, glaring at him. "I don't want to shop. When it's time for baby shopping, I'm doing that with you, and Tess can spend time with Laila instead. But I am not staying behind. If you're worried I'll slow you down or drag you back don't be, don't forget, I have my wolf now. I can fight, and I can heal myself."

Viola carried a deep personal grudge against Nick, one she knew no amount of talking herself down would erase, not after what she'd uncovered about him. Realizing she still hadn't told her husband, she finally said it.

"I think...no, I believe, he killed my mother, Seb. Haven't you ever wondered where he got the ability to cover his tracks so completely in Silver? That day I was in the sea, Aunt Natasha tried to insist I stay with them, saying you were my mother's killer. When I asked her if she'd actually seen your face in my mother's death memory, she said no, but—"

Viola recalled the conversation she'd had with her aunt, after Natasha had urged her to pick a side and tried to convince her to choose the mermaids with the false fact that Sebastian was her mother's killer.

"She didn't see his face clearly, but she told me he had silver hair, and eyes that flashed with something intense, and that he wore a silver chain around his neck. Nick wears a chain he never takes off, he told me once it belonged to his father."

Viola hadn't put it together right away, but eventually it had all clicked into place, it had to be him. Now she had every more reason to hate him, and even more reason to be there when he finally get caught, because she intended to make sure he suffered exactly the way he'd made her mother suffer, and her, too.

She'd long made herself believe that her best friend, Nick was gone, and this person was someone who should be brought down no matter what.

Sebastian saw the murderous look in his wife's eyes and knew there was nothing he could say to keep her home, not when she was going after her own mother's killer. He realized the only thing left in his power was to shoulder as much of the danger himself as he could, while keeping her close by his side.

He cupped her cheeks, and the murderous look in her eyes softened at once as she turned to him. "Fine. You can come along, but if you start feeling unwell on the way, you're staying in the car. Pregnant women should be resting, not fighting." He said with a sigh, and his wife rolled her eyes.

"But this one wants to fight alongside her husband, and our baby will be fine, I'll make sure to protect it too." She said, pressing a quick kiss to his lips.

"Don’t overdo anything, love." He warned her, then added, "Matt says Kenny’s on his way to Silver. Before they arrive, I might as well have a quick meeting with the elders. Get some rest while I’m gone, okay? I’ll let you know when our guests arrive."

Knowing he’d agreed to let her come along was enough to settle Viola, and she nodded, letting herself relax. After making sure she was comfortable, he kissed her and left the room. But sleep was the last thing on Viola’s mind, she couldn’t stop worrying about Zoe, who by now must have discovered exactly what kind of monster Nick was and that he was responsible for her weakened wolf.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 499: The guests[1,818 words]

The meeting room was so silent that even the sound of a feather falling would have been loud. The sound of people swallowing could be heard, and the cold in the room felt as though the air conditioner had been turned to its highest setting in the middle of winter. A pair of cold, silver eyes kept everyone in check.

"A-are you really back to normal now, Supreme Alpha?" Elder Calum finally broke the silence with his question, but the look Sebastian gave him made the man quickly bow his head and keep it lowered. It was clear now that they would all pay, in one form or another, for the lack of trust they had shown his Luna, for urging him toward execution instead of giving her the time to cure him, as she had asked.

"I do believe your wolves are still intact enough to feel my presence, and your unnecessary question is doing nothing but annoying me the more you ask it," Sebastian said irritably to the elder. "If anyone asks me that again, I’ll assume you’re all no longer competent and need to step down from your seats."

He pierced them with a freezing look that made the elders feel it in their very bones, even though they were respected elders three times his age.

Now this was their Alpha. He was back, sitting before them, and the Luna had somehow achieved the impossible, breaking him free of the spell they had all thought she couldn’t break. She had spared them a disaster that could have left Silver crippled for good. Now the only thing left was fixing the mess made while he wasn’t himself.

"Supreme Alpha, we didn’t want to execute you out of any bad intentions. We all believed there was no way out, and delaying it any further was making—" the head elder began, but Sebastian’s silver eyes cut toward her, narrowing.

"I never asked for an explanation," he said. "I signed contracts I never should have signed during the time I wasn’t myself. I gave away some of our most important resources and lands to the Darkbur Pack. I need you to go in my place to the pack and revoke those

contracts, since those resources belong strictly to Silver, and we cannot share our land with them."

Sharing or giving away land to outsider packs, especially the Darkbur Pack, was something no Alpha should ever agree to. There had been cases where that particular pack had seized territory after being given an inch, and Sebastian didn't want to deal with another pack on top of Nick and all the other troubles in their lives.

"But Supreme Alpha, I think it would be wiser if you went yourself, they'll revoke it far faster if it comes from—" Elder Calum began to reason, but Sebastian cut him off.

"I have responsibilities here, and I can't go myself. I have a war to wage against the new pack, and I can't afford any journey right now. If you're too frightened to step foot in Darkbur Pack, then should I assume my elders are no longer competent?" He arched his brow at them, already thinking privately that this set of elders was growing too old for this generation, their approach to fixing problems every bit as outdated as they were.

But that wasn't the most pressing matter on Sebastian's mind. He had a sister to bring home, and a twin brother to introduce once everything settled. These elders hadn't trusted his wife enough when it mattered, he'd deal with that once he returned from bringing Zoe back, since he'd just received word that their guests had arrived, right in the middle of this meeting.

"We... we will do our best, Supreme Alpha. The contract will be revoked before you return with your sister." Said Elder Brenna, who wasn't looking forward in the slightest to traveling to that backward, uncivilized pack known as Darkbur, full of uncouth citizens. How their Alpha had ever signed that contract was beyond her, and now fixing his mistake had fallen squarely onto their shoulders.

Elder Calum cleared his throat and spoke next. "When do you plan to mark the Luna, Supreme Alpha? She's freed you from the spell, but not yet from the curse. You shouldn't waste any more time in marking her."

"Once Zoe is home, there will be a grand ceremony, a renewal of our vows, and the marking will happen then. It will be the biggest ceremony Silver has ever seen, and we'll use the occasion to announce her pregnancy to the pack." Talking about his wife softened his features, before his gaze settled back on the elders and he continued,

"I am back on my feet, fully myself again, and from here on out I want it made clear, if anything like this ever happens again, my wife is the one everyone listens to, not the head elder, not any of you. By the end of this month, new elders will fill the seats of those who were removed, and anyone who has something to say about that can keep it to themselves until I return."

Saying that, Sebastian rose to his feet, his aura bleeding out over the room, and whatever doubts the elders still held about his health vanished beneath the sheer weight of it, the atmosphere leaving no question of who stood before them.

"Yes, Supreme Alpha."

Sebastian left without sparing any of them another glance, his footsteps clicking against the floor as he stepped out to meet one of his Betas, who reported, "The guests are being received by the Luna."

"Good. I'll head there now."

Once the Supreme Alpha's footsteps had faded away entirely, Elder Brenna let out a sigh of relief but her eyes were distressed as she turned to the only male elder left among them.

"Why does it feel like he's punishing us by sending us to Darkbur? That pack is a disaster everyone avoids, especially with their well-known habit of seizing land and territory that isn't theirs. How are we even supposed to get them to revoke that contract?"

The head elder remained calm about the matter, her voice steady as she said, "We already made the mistake of rushing his execution. This is our chance to make it right, and earn our place back. We are Elders of Silver, Darkbur Pack shouldn't intimidate us this much. Before the marking ceremony, we need to get those contracts revoked, before their people start moving in to live alongside us."

Though the head elder tried to reassure the rest, she wasn't looking forward to the trip herself, not after the last time she'd gone there with Sebastian's father, which had ended in complete disaster. "For now, let's pray to the Moon Goddess that this war with Nick doesn't spiral out of control."

Sebastian made his way to their penthouse, where he found Viola already playing host to their guests, seated across from Kenny and Tess with a warmth in her expression as she listened to them. But the conversation stopped the moment he entered, and everyone turned to him, rising to their feet.

Kenny turned to the Supreme Alpha, bowing slightly before straightening and holding out his hand for a comradely handshake. Sebastian looked down at the offered hand for a beat too long, until he caught his wife jerking her head at him, urging him to take it. He finally moved and shook the man's hand.

"You arrived faster than I expected," Sebastian commented, if only to fill the awkward silence between them.

Apart from Matt, Sebastian wasn't particularly good at making friends his age or carrying on long conversations with them, as all the people around him were werewolves twice or more his aga.

Matt had been with him since his toddler years, and after knowing him for so long, he understood that even when Sebastian said something rude or mean, he rarely meant it in his heart and would simply brush it off.

With Kenny, however, Sebastian wasn't sure how to behave. The man had come all the way to assist him with a problem, and Sebastian didn't want his usual cold expression or blunt manner to make him feel unwelcome. So he made an effort to appear at ease, keeping his face neutral rather than allowing the natural hardness carved into his features to intimidate the Alpha heir.

"I came as soon as I heard the news," said the Alpha heir, pulling his hand back and searching for what to say next.

"Congratulations on the pregnancy, by the way," Kenny added, his tone warming slightly as he addressed the couple, watching as Sebastian crossed to his wife, wrapping a protective arm around her waist and pressing a kiss to her temple.

"Thank you," Sebastian said to the Alpha heir, before turning to ask his wife in a softer voice, "Did you get any sleep at all?"

Viola nodded. "A little. I'll be fine."

He narrowed his eyes at her. "Have you eaten yet? I left food in the fridge for you to heat up. Did you see it?" He asked, glancing toward the kitchen and finding no dishes out, no sign that any food had been touched, and turned back to her with displeasure written across his face.

Viola nudged his chest lightly. "We have guests, Seb. There are more pressing matters right now, I will eat after we come back." She said, and he let the matter drop without pushing further, as Viola turned back to accept Kenny's congratulations properly.

She received their congratulations, with Tess saying that if she had known before coming, she would have arrived with gifts in hand. However, they had only heard the news after arriving in Silver, through the whispers of the workers.

"There's no need for gifts, Tess, but if it will put you at ease, you can always bring something when the baby is here, which is still months away," Viola said, trying to reassure the she-wolf. The moment Sebastian released her, Tess crossed the room and pulled Viola into a tight hug.

"Congratulations!" she said, pulling back and beaming as though they had been close friends for years. But her excitement dimmed as the real reason that had brought them to Silver settled back into her mind.

"Grim Pack didn't want to go to war against the new pack, but Ken took his men behind his father's back because he really knows how much I've come to like Zoe and you, you know. And I can't believe that man, Nick. I met him at my ceremony, and he seemed so nice. He even gave me gifts..." she whispered to Viola. "Who could have thought?"

Viola's blue eyes darkened as she said, "He's not who we all thought he was. He's now a thorn in our lives that needs to be plucked out."

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 500: Laying out the plan[1,394 words]

While Viola and Tess were talking in a whisper, which Sebastian heard completely, he turned to the Alpha heir, who had brought his men against his father's will. Sebastian didn't know what to do with the man who idolized him and wanted to rule like him, when Sebastian didn't really see anything worth idolizing about himself lately, but he kept that to himself.

"How many did you manage to bring?" he asked.

Kenny replied, "A few. It wasn't easy because my father still isn't fond of you, historically speaking, so getting him to agree to lend forces was almost impossible. But I managed to pull together twenty warriors with real abilities, plus a few hundred more with solid wolf strength behind them."

"I won't forget this, Ken," Sebastian said, gripping his shoulder.

"You can repay me later," Kenny said, a small grin tugging at his mouth, seeing this as a rare chance to earn favor with the Supreme Alpha. "When my time comes to take over from my father, I expect you to actually give me some real guidance, instead of vague Alpha wisdom."

Before Sebastian could respond, the doorbell rang, and Viola went to answer it, opening the door.

Laila swept in a moment later, looking faintly exasperated, with Gilbert trailing behind her, as though they had been in the middle of an argument right up until the door opened.

Viola, not expecting either of them, parted her lips to speak, but—

"Don’t even start," Laila said, cutting her off before she could get a word out. "I refuse to be left out of this. I’m coming along to the new pack, who dares think they could build themselves up to us and bring us down."

Laila had been confined to bed this whole time while everything unfolded in Silver, her parents insisting it was safer for her to stay away from the Luna’s business entirely. But once Laila claimed someone as a friend, she stuck by them through anything, and the moment she’d heard Zoe’s whereabouts were known and a rescue was underway, she was out of bed before anyone could stop her.

Gilbert had tried to stop her, and it had nearly turned into a full argument between them.

"Laila, you should be resting," Viola started, glancing at Gilbert for backup, but he only lifted his hands in surrender.

"I’ve tried. She’s about as easy to keep in a healing bed as a horse that’s had too much sugar. I gave up two days ago, Luna. She’s fully healed now, inside and out." He let her know.

"If a pregnant woman gets to come, so do I," Laila said firmly, before her eyes landed on Tess, and her whole face lit up. "Oh my goddess, Tess!" The two women embraced, already falling into easy chatter, and Gilbert took the opportunity to greet Viola properly, his smile warm.

"How are you doing? The Alpha told me you’ve been throwing up, and he’s worried it’ll happen again, he asked if there’s anything that could prevent it." The doctor said, a small chuckle escaping him, which made Viola flush at just how much Sebastian tended to worry over her, even when she’d told him he didn’t need to contact the doctor about the vomiting.

"And what did you tell him?" She asked curiously, studying the doctor’s eyes and noticing, for the first time, just how much he resembled her father, who had, in turn, resembled his own father, their grandfather, the man who had once torn her parents apart and forced her father to marry a shewolf instead of the mermaid he loved.

Learning more about her relatives, piece by piece, gave her a stronger sense of self, of belonging somewhere, of not being just a nobody with no history behind her. She was tied to this man too, blood and all.

"I told him the truth, there’s nothing I can do about it. It’s completely natural to be nauseous. Every new father develops some anxiety about the pregnancy, right alongside the mother. He’ll adjust to it in time. I’ve seen it plenty."

"Are you coming with us?" She asked him, and Gilbert nodded without hesitation, since there was no version of this where he wasn’t going.

"Alright," Sebastian called, his voice cutting through the room. Gilbert and Viola turned toward him before making their way into the living room.

"Men, with me. Let's talk strategy. Ladies, go change into something comfortable. We leave soon," he announced, looking down at his wristwatch, which read 5:46 p.m.

As the women made their way up toward Viola's bedroom, already deep in conversation with each other, Gilbert let out a low sigh, watching them climb the stairs. "I wish we weren't bringing them along. We don't know what we're walking into there."

"Agreed," Kenny muttered, since his own mate, whom he'd brought along specifically to keep the Luna company, had promptly decided she was coming too, the moment she'd learned Viola wasn't staying behind.

Sebastian's jaw tightened, worry flickering behind his eyes even as he said, "I believe they'll be fine." He paused, his eyes thoughtful. "But we keep our strongest men close to them, no matter what. Here's the map of the grounds, I had it made the last time I was in that pack. He knows we're coming, but we need to enter from a direction he least expects and take him by surprise."

Sebastian spread the map across the dining table for the rest to see. "We'll split into four groups. Matt's group is already on the path ahead. His mission is to draw Nick's attention and make him believe we're coming in from the front, walking straight into his damn trap. My group will move in through the back, and I'll have Ken with me."

"What about me?" Gilbert questioned. Though he was a doctor by profession, he'd trained during his teenage years just like every werewolf and could hold his own as well as any male werewolf.

"You'll be with the women's group. I don't want my Luna in the fighting group, since that's where the real engagement will happen, your group will stay back, acting as our eyes and ears from a distance. His pack sits uphill, and once we attack from behind, plenty of his men are bound to scatter and come around trying to flank us. Your group handles the stray fighters. You'll have weapons and snipers, so you can pick them off from a distance. Can you manage that?"

Gilbert felt a flicker of insult at being handed the "easier" job while the others got the real fight, and briefly wondered if it was because he was a doctor. But then, remembering that his mate would be in that same group, the one he was still trying to properly win over, he didn't hesitate to answer.

"You can trust me with your women. What's next?" He asked, looking down at the map Sebastian was marking.

"I want Nick myself. Between our combined forces, we can bring down every one of his lackeys, and I'll deal with him personally." Sebastian promised, jotting notes onto the map he'd hand off to his wife once she came down to walk her through it all.

Meanwhile, up in the bedroom, Viola changed into the comfortable outfit Zoe had made for her, back during the competition to become Luna. It had been ruined that day, but her friend had found a way to repair it and return it to her, and now Viola wore it again, tying her hair back into a ponytail.

"Shit, I should've brought my own suit too." Came Laila's voice as she tied her own hair back, dressed in the skintight black pants and shirt Tess had lent her. She hadn't had time to prepare anything herself, not with that doctor hovering over her like an annoying fly, always appearing out of nowhere to stop her from doing anything the least bit reckless.

"Don't worry, you already look plenty sexy in that." Tess said with a small laugh, and Laila smiled.

"And that's exactly why, once all of this is behind us, I'm leaving Silver and going back to exploring the world, the way I used to. Life was so much more fun back then. Maybe this time I'll let Zoe come along too, what do you think, Viola?"