Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 531: A Drinking Partner[1,351 words]

Laila, meanwhile, was busy instructing an omega on exactly how Viola wanted the guests settled for the night, though privately, she thought those two particular aunties deserved beds full of nails and a roof left wide open to let the snow pour straight in. Still, she held her tongue, unwilling to risk Viola's reputation over it.

Since losing Zoe, Laila had come to understand the real value of friendship in a way she never had before, and she had no intention of losing this circle of women she'd found herself part of now. She did everything she could to help and support Viola, wherever it was needed.

As she finished giving her instructions, she sensed her mother approaching and dismissed the omega, turning around just in time to receive a sharp slap across the face.

"I don't deserve to be treated that way out there, Laila. How could you humiliate me in front of my friends like that?" Her mother demanded, fully aware that Becky and her sister were still listening in, waiting to hear her properly discipline her daughter.

As much as Agnes loved her daughter, she valued her public image even more and didn't want any more shade cast on their family after all the shade it had suffered over the past month, but Laila was dragging things up again.

Laila, who hadn't seen the slap coming, stared at her mother in complete disbelief. "And did I deserve—"

"Don't you dare say another word to me, young lady. When I speak, you listen, do you understand me?" Agnes warned sternly. "Your father and I have told you time and time again to stay away from the Luna, to stop trailing after her like a shadow and build a life of your own. Do you honestly think any man will want you, carrying on with that attitude? We're only trying to correct you, and all you do is bite the hand trying to help you."

Laila's eyes drifted down the hallway, catching sight of her mother's friend lingering there, and she looked back at her mother, a bitter smile pulling at her lips.

"I see exactly what this is now. Trying to impress your friends, prove you still have some kind of control over me, right?" Laila laughed, even as something sharp twisted in her chest at the thought.

"Do you remember, Mom, back when Uncle was still around, how you handed that control straight over to him? Let him mistreat me, run my whole life? He hit me, beat me,

whenever I didn’t do exactly what he wanted, and not once did you step in and be my mother, because you were too afraid of him. And now, suddenly, today, you want to put on this performance of what a good mother you are." Laila laughed again, the sound bitter and hollow, since she could never forget how completely her uncle had once controlled every part of her, to some extent ruined her childhood with thought of powers and position.

Agnes’s eyes trembled at that, though she refused to let her daughter’s words shake her, telling herself everything she’d ever done had been for the girl’s own good, that her brother had always had his own way of bringing good fortune to the family, even if it hadn’t looked like.

"I am still your mother, Laila. And you will do as I say and apologize to them. Who knows, one of their sons might still want you as a mate, you don’t get to disrespect people like this. You’re twenty-seven, unmated, and you—"

"Mom, you and your friends can go eat shit. I don’t give a fuck. And as for their sons, if every other man on this earth disappeared and theirs were the only ones left, I’d rather stay unfucked for the rest of my life. And next time they talk shit about my friend again, I’ll disrespect them just the same, every single time." Saying that, Laila turned away from her mother and walked off, wiping angry tears from the corners of her eyes.

Laila didn’t care what her words left behind, didn’t care what impression she’d made on anyone in that hallway, who would talk about her. She made her way out of that part of the building entirely, heading toward the other wing, walking down a long corridor until she came to a stop in front of a black door.

Reaching out, she typed in the password, one she’d never expected to need, one that had never had any real reason to be given to her in the first place, and stepped inside his penthouse.

The door closed behind her, and the sound brought the owner of the apartment out from behind the kitchen corner, a bottle of water and a glass in his hands. He was wearing a light brown hoodie and sweatpants that made him look different, giving him a boyish appearance. He looked so surprised to see her that Gilbert blinked before he said,

"Hey." He studied her and saw that she looked upset, but then Laila was always upset in his presence, so it wasn’t anything new. Gilbert smiled a little. "What brought you here? If I remember correctly, someone told me she had no use for my stupid door password."

After Zoe’s death, Gilbert had found himself drinking on nights when he couldn’t bear his guilt, and one night he had ended up drunk in his office, where Laila had found him. After scolding him and calling him every name she could think of for drinking himself stupid, and not knowing his password, she had forced him awake with a glass of cold water poured over his head.

Gilbert had later given the password to her, and she had scoffed, rolling her eyes as she said, "I won't be needing your stupid door password, because you won't find me here."

"Are you in the mood for a drink?" Laila asked now, her voice sounding less harsh to him as she walked into the room without waiting for his invitation.

Gilbert followed her with his eyes. "Drink? I'm not a good drinker, and you were the witness to that a few weeks ago. I quit."

Laila turned to him with a small lift of her lips. "You can't quit something you never made a habit of. Then I hope you won't mind me borrowing a drink from you. I feel like drinking, and I don't want to walk all the way home before I do."

She made her way to his wine cabinet and grabbed the strongest bottle of wine she could find, the kind specially made for werewolves, of which only a few glasses were enough to get them drunk.

Gilbert watched her, setting his water bottle down on the kitchen island, wondering if the sky had bled to bring her to him for a drink when he knew every apartment in the building had its own wine cabinet and she could walk into anyone of them to grab a drink, but she came here instead.

He watched as she kicked off her heels and, without bothering to grab a glass, opened the wine and drank straight from the bottle, perching against the bar-like table of around the cabinet, something the doctor himself would never do.

Her red hair was tied up in a bun, and she wore muted gray like everyone else who had attended the memorial, her face free of makeup. Gilbert was suddenly hit with the realization that Laila Serrano had a prominent, freckled nose and freckled cheeks, pretty cat-like eyes, and fuller lips that closed around the bottle as she drank, her slender throat moving as she swallowed so casually.

The sight was so mesmerizing, so arousing, that he knew he shouldn't be staring. Nonetheless, he couldn't stop himself from admiring her.

One thing was certain: Laila Serrano was a very beautiful she-wolf, whether she was trying to be or not, and Gilbert felt completely disarmed.

"Why are you staring at me like that?" Laila asked, tilting her head to the side, her brows drawn together.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 532: Don't[1,153 words]

Gilbert snapped out of his stare and said, "You're drinking straight from the bottle." He walked over, grabbed a wine glass, and handed it to her as though she didn't know it existed. "Use this."

Laila smirked, and while still looking at him, she drank straight from the bottle again. A thin trail of red wine escaped the corner of her lips, trickling down her jaw and along her throat before disappearing beneath the neckline of her dress.

"I don't want to use the glass. My mom thinks it's uncivilized to drink straight from the bottle, and apparently, the rule is that wine should be drunk from a wine glass. Hmph! I don't want to follow any rules. Rules are boring, you know, just like everyone who doesn't know how to stay out of other people's business. Do you know what just happened out there?" Laila asked, angrily taking a long gulp of wine before wiping her lips with the back of her hand and gesturing toward the door.

Gilbert set the wine glass down on the bar and shook his head, realizing that his mate must have been provoked by someone out there.

"No. What happened that got you so upset?" he asked, glad that, for once, she wasn't upset because of him.

The doctor had been in the middle of work when she arrived. After the memorial, he had come straight to his apartment and missed the big dinner. He had only stepped out to get some water when she showed up at that exact moment, but he put his work aside to attend to her.

It was something he'd struggled to do lately, since work was the only thing important enough to distract him from his depressing thoughts about the deceased, the countless ways he could have saved her as a doctor if they had been anywhere near Silver and his medical equipments, the way things were going on in the pack, and his recent discovery that he was related to the Luna.

"Upset is an understatement. They make my blood boil." Laila grumbled, drinking even more, and then, as though remembering something, she looked at Gilbert and slowly lowered the bottle.

"Rodrigo, do you... am I so unlikable that no one understands my view? Am I a terrible person?" She asked in a quiet voice, staring at him.

Laila could feel herself getting drunk, for she would never have asked that question of anyone, or cared what they thought of her, but she suddenly felt small compared to everyone in that hall earlier. She'd never had genuine friends until now, and even now she wasn't sure she wasn't the one forcing herself onto them, leaving them no choice but to include her in their circle.

Maybe they were right, and she was too much. Viola and Tess and Ivy might never have included her in their circle if she hadn't kept coming to them on her own. Maybe something was wrong with her, maybe...

She jumped when she felt Gilbert's hand touch her flushed cheek, and she jerked her head back from it, glaring at him. He only smiled that disarming, handsome smile of his that melted her stomach as he said,

"You're not a terrible person, not really. I don't think so at all. You have your own way of expressing things, and some people take offense because they don't understand it. People are so quick to be offended by what they don't understand. Did someone say something to you?" He asked, looking into her emerald eyes, which looked more vulnerable than usual.

She looked away from him, shaking her head. "People like to say things to me all the time. It's not new. It's not like it's the first time." She looked at him warily when she felt herself going soft, and Laila immediately knew it was time for her to leave the place because some mate-crazy bond was making her melt like butter.

"Do you want to talk about it?" Gilbert asked her gently.

"No, I'll be fine once I've had a drink. I'll replace the wine when I'm done, and you can go back to your work. I don't even know why I came here," she whispered, gulping down the wine until the very last drop before setting the empty bottle on the counter.

She bent down to grab her shoes and leave, but she swayed slightly, and Gilbert caught her hand and pulled her back.

"You don't have to go right now. Sit for a little while, and I'll walk you back myself before you stumble and hit your head." He began leading her toward his living room, and she followed him on unsteady legs, sitting down with her shoes still in her hand.

Gilbert handed her the water bottle, and Laila took a sip before lowering it, her eyes drifting past him to the glass wall, where the snow was still falling softly through the night.

"You can never please people... so I stopped trying to please them, and they still have a problem with me. They were offering me their scraps of sons as if I'd spare any of them a second look. What do they take me for?" Came her quiet complaint as she wiped at her eyes aggressively.

She wasn't looking at him as she spoke, only staring out through the glass, and Gilbert, hearing her words, was overtaken by his mate's possessiveness at the fact that someone was offering her their son. He went down on his knees in front of her and wiped at her eyes with his fingertips.

"I’m sorry," Gilbert said softly, his voice thick with regret as he watched her emerald eyes tremble and her cheeks grow redder. A pang of guilt twisted painfully in his chest. He should have stepped forward that day to claim her openly, stood beside her without hesitation, and made it clear to everyone that she was his.

If he had done that, no one would have dared look down on her enough to offer their sons.

"For what? Why are you apologizing? It’s not like you’re the one who upset me, which is a first..." She allowed him to wipe away her tears with those beautiful hands she secretly admired and wanted all over her body more than once.

"I feel like I’ve never said that to you, after all the complications I caused when I realized you were my fated mate, and..."

"Don’t." Laila said, lowering her long lashes. "I understand. I understand why you’d choose her over me. I’m not someone you take home, and you don’t owe me any explanations, because my own thoughts back then weren’t noble either. I was only trying to make my uncle shit eggs by getting you." She said, and then she suddenly chuckled softly.

"What’s so funny, Serrano?" Gilbert asked, resting his hands on her knees and searching her eyes.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 533: No Good Elders[1,128 words]

Laila shook her head. "I just realized my parents would shit themselves if they knew you were my fated mate and so will your mother. Oh, and congratulations, I heard the news today."

Gilbert’s smile faded as he realized what she was congratulating him for. His mother was already announcing to her friends that once the grief over Zoe’s death settled, they planned to find him a wife to mate with, since he was too busy to find one himself and had been looking too depressed lately.

Gilbert hadn’t said anything back to her about it, because his mother had looked so excited talking about his marriage with his sisters that he’d excused himself today from the hall full of guests.

It was surprising how quickly people moved on from the death of someone they hadn’t known personally, talking about mating at a memorial ceremony, but then it wasn’t entirely their fault. None of them had known the deceased well enough to put their own life plans on hold for her.

But Gilbert knew her. He had treated her for years and saw her almost every day walking into his office. She gave him random gifts he had never asked for, and she had become a real friend to him. Because of that, he didn't think it was right to suddenly start talking about another relationship or marriage so soon. That was why he hadn't gone after Laila or tried to pursue their relationship again. He wanted to give it time out of respect for Zoe, even though their relationship had been short.

"I'm not mating with anyone. My mom is just making her own plans." He told Laila.

"Last I heard, she's matchmaking you with one of the guests. You'll be mated before you know it. But before then, come here."

Saying that, she took his hand and pulled him up to sit on the couch, and once he was seated, Laila pushed him down onto his back. He didn't protest. Slowly she lay down next to him as the couch was wide, placing her head against his chest, where his heart was beating so fast.

"By lying on me, are you perhaps giving me a chance to pursue you?" Gilbert asked her, slowly lowering his hand to her back.

"No." She said with a sigh, adjusting her head against his chest. "I never understood what other women see in lying with a man without doing anything, but it's not that bad. You feel nice. But don't you dare tell anyone I lay against you, Rodrigo, or I'll have your balls." She threatened, poking his chest with her finger for emphasis.

Gilbert laughed a little, daring to lower his nose to her hair and inhaling the scent that stirred him up in places. "I wouldn't dare spoil your reputation, Serrano, by telling anyone you liked lying on your mate's chest. And about my balls," he cleared his throat, "in what sense will you have them?" He whispered softly.

Laila smiled, realizing the doctor knew how to talk dirty too, and she mused, "In every sense, as long as I make them stop working and put an end to your mother's idea of getting you mated. Can I ask you something?"

"Shoot." He said, laughing a little in amusement.

Laila batted her lashes. "Are you really a virgin?"

"I'm not answering that." Came his brisk reply, a little color creeping into his skin, and Laila chuckled, laying her head back on him and closing her eyes, even though she knew there was no way his family would accept her, and there was no chance of a relationship building between them in the future, because everyone knew how much Gilbert loved and cherished his family and every word they say was what he did.

As the two of them lay there like that, talking and whispering, the drink having stripped away every last bit of Laila's guard, in another part of Silver, Alex could be seen walking

his grandmother back to her apartment, her arm tucked snugly through his. Though Eleanor was ninety-eight years old, she didn't look a day past thirty-eight, her short hair a light, pale blonde, her low heeled shoe clicking against the smooth polished floor.

"What exactly do you two plan to do now? The pair of you played a cruel trick on many of us. Do you have any idea how much I cried, believing you'd died the way you supposedly had? I thought I'd never be able to look Sebastian in the face again for killing you, and I never once tried to reach him after he cut us all off. You can imagine my shock when I learned you were alive after all." Eleanor said, walking beside the tall young man, who offered her an apologetic smile.

"I'm sorry, Abuela. It was never my intention to lie to you, but at the time, it seemed like the only way, especially with Seb being forced into the position and having no other option but to get rid of me." Alex mused calmly, and the elder she-wolf's face turned stern as she said,

"Those no-good Elders. They see you as nothing but your brother's weakness. I should have come myself and taken you straight back to Steel Pack with my granddaughter." Said the she-wolf, frustration coloring her voice, since the Elders her daughter's husband had left behind to guide and protect his children had done nothing but a lousy job of it.

Her tone softened as she turned to her grandson and asked,

"Now that you're back out in the open, what's your plan for the future? Would you consider coming back to Steel Pack with us? I don't think it's safe for you here, not with everyone knowing now that whatever happens to you happens to your brother as well."

Alex had thought about it more than once, but every time he circled back to the same realization: he didn't have a life of his own to return to, and he couldn't stay here either, hidden away by a brother who'd sacrificed so much just to keep them all safe. And yet, Alex didn't want to be the coward who ran. He wanted to stay and fight for their home, especially with their sister's killer still unconfirmed, dead or alive.

He wouldn't find any real peace until that man was found and properly declared dead, one way or the other. And beyond that, since arriving here and finally learning the truth about his late wife's death, he still hadn't exchanged a single word with Sebastian. Whenever their paths crossed, his brother simply walked past him, as though he didn't exist at all, and Alex wanted, badly, to finally clear the air between them.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 534: The Corruption[1,164 words]

"I haven't decided yet, Abuela. Once I make up my mind, I'll let you know." He told his grandmother, who studied him for a moment before patting his arm affectionately.

"You’re still young. I know you lost your wife, I heard you were the one who’d married Natalie, but that’s not the end of the world for you. You can start over, build a new life. That brother of yours, insensitive as he is, has his future already underway, his wife’s expecting, and very soon my great-grandchildren will be running through this building. This time, I intend to actually be present for it, whether he likes it or not. And you—"

"Abuela, I’ll let you know when I find someone I like. Right now, I don’t want anyone, I swear," Alex said with a smile, trying not to offend her. It was something his brother would never have done, as he would have bluntly told her to get off his back with just a single word, thought Eleanor.

But just as she opened her mouth to press him further about his life decisions, they both caught sight of Ivy approaching from the opposite direction.

"If not for the pregnancy, I wouldn’t be able to tell that one apart from the Luna. What a remarkable coincidence, all of you being twins." His grandmother whispered, as though sharing some great secret, watching Ivy draw closer. "She’s so reserved, and lovely, don’t you think?"

Before Alex could explain that this was simply Ivy’s nature and why he treasured her friendship, the woman herself was already within earshot, smiling as she approached and turned to greet his grandmother first.

"Good evening, Mrs.—Grandma Eleanor," Ivy corrected herself, having initially addressed the elder she-wolf formally. Eleanor had only told her that evening to call her Grandma Eleanor or Abuela, just as she had told Viola to do. Although Ivy found it uncomfortable since she wasn’t part of their family, she didn’t want to upset the older she-wolf.

Eleanor beamed. "Good evening, dear. You did well arranging the ceremony with the Serrano girl today. It’s good to see sisters helping each other," the older she-wolf praised, admiring Ivy, who smiled.

"It’s nothing. Alex here helped too. Actually, he did most of the work," Ivy said, looking at Alex, who wrinkled his nose at her for giving him credit. However, his grandmother turned to him with a bittersweet smile and added,

"I’m glad to see that you’re moving on with life even after losing your little sister. It hard to move on from such thing. May her soul rest in peace." She sighed, making Alex’s smile falter a little, but he quickly put it back on as though nothing had happened.

"Where are you off to, dear?" Eleanor asked, pulling Ivy against her other side and hooking their arms together. Ivy blushed at the warmth of the gesture as Eleanor drew her into their walk.

"I was actually looking for Alex." Ivy said, and immediately the elder she-wolf stopped walking, unhooking her arm from the younger woman’s. "Oh, then I shouldn’t be playing

third wheel here. I'll leave you two to talk. I still have a few things to sort out with your aunties, Alex, make sure you walk Ivy safely back to her room, the building is filled with unmated men." She told her grandson, before retracing her steps and leaving the two of them alone in the hallway, Alex smiling a little awkwardly in her wake.

"Don't mind my grandmother, she doesn't mean it the way it sounds." Alex clarified, and Ivy smiled in understanding, knowing full well there was nothing between them but friendship.

"It's alright. I'm just glad the air around this building feels a little lighter tonight, not so thick with grief anymore," she said, falling into step beside him as he walked at an unhurried pace, his hands tucked into his trouser pockets.

"Merfolks don't hold on to grief for that long in Aquaville. They move on so quickly because they don't believe in everlasting death. They hold the belief that every soul will return once they find their Life Root again," Ivy said conversationally, to which Alex, who was now well-versed in mermaid lore, turned to look at her.

"The Child of the Sea," he said with a sigh. "Actually, that belief gives one hope. When you explained it to me, I found myself looking forward to that day," he told her.

"Why were you looking for me?" he asked, and Ivy recalled exactly why she'd come looking for him in the first place.

"My sister just contacted me, asked me to come to their penthouse. She wants me to check her husband's corruption progression, and she wanted to ask me something." Ivy told him, and she saw him arch a brow at her, his lips curving into a small smile.

"Then you should go. She's your sister, you don't need my permission to go see her." He teased, and Ivy nudged his arm, pursing her lips.

"Alexander, you know exactly why I came looking for you. Your brother makes me anxious, and apart from that, it's long past time you two spoke and stopped making everything so awkward between you. And just so you know, my sister wants you to come along too. We need to study both your hearts." She told him, as they stepped into the elevator, pressing the button for Sebastian and Viola's floor, and Alex turned to her, frowning.

"Study our hearts? Why? Isn't mine cured?"

Ivy had wanted to find the right moment to tell him this, but hadn't found the chance until now, so this seemed as good a time as any.

"Corruption doesn't happen to young werewolves, and you and Sebastian are still far too young for it to have set in this fast, even heartbroken as you both are. Corruption is a slow disease, something that builds over time, decades usually, closer to thirty years

before it even shows itself. Neither of you is past your thirties. So tell me, how could it have happened this quickly to either of you?"

Alex's frown deepened at her words. "So you're saying whatever happened to us might not actually be corruption at all?" He asked, still not fully grasping what she meant.

"That's not quite what I'm saying either. Your corruption still needs to be properly studied, and I haven't examined yours again since I cured you the first time, so this might be the perfect chance to do that alongside your brother's case and figure out what's actually wrong. I still don't have any real answer for why both your hearts were affected so fast."

Alex fell into thoughtful silence, since he hadn't put much thought into his own corruption before, but now that she'd pointed it out, he realized she was right, werewolves their age almost never suffered from something like this. Something like this was more to happen to werewolves the age of the elders.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 535: Corrupted heart_Part 1[1,097 words]

Back in Viola and Sebastian's penthouse, the two of them were in the kitchen, Sebastian heating up his dinner while Viola insisted he actually eat it before her sister arrived to examine his heart and confirm whether the corruption was truly gone, since he claimed he hadn't noticed any symptoms since, expert the stain on his fur that hasn't gone away completely.

After what he'd asked of her earlier, they needed to be certain he was healthy before Viola would even consider bringing his request to her sister.

Once the food was heated, he brought it out, and his wife reached for a tray to help carry everything, but he took it from her hands smoothly, balancing it in one arm before reaching for her hand with the other and walking with her toward the dining area.

When they reached the table, he set the food down and first pulled out a chair for her, helping her settle comfortably so her stomach wouldn't press against the table. She looked up at him and smiled, and Sebastian couldn't resist leaning down to peck the corner of her lips before walking over to his own chair and sitting down.

"Are you sure you don't want to eat with me?" Sebastian asked as he settled into the seat across from her.

Viola rested her elbows on the table, lacing her fingers together and tucking them beneath her chin as she watched him. At his question, she shook her head.

"I already eat something before I came to find you earlier. I'll just watch you eat and have the grapes here. Go ahead, before Ivy gets here," she urged, reaching out to pour him a glass of juice.

He thanked her and took a sip before beginning to eat, trying to find the appetite he'd lost somewhere along with his sister.

Viola watched him eat, and as she noticed him stuffing food into his mouth before he'd even finished chewing the last bite, she realized he was only eating because she'd asked him to, not because he was actually hungry. He'd lost weight, and his eyes now carried near-permanent dark circles and shadows beneath them, exhaustion written plainly across his face.

Werewolves might be supernatural creatures, but they still needed sleep, just as much as humans did, and going without it showed, eventually, in every visible way. Her husband had neglected his rest for two straight months, barely eating, barely sleeping, and Viola hated seeing him this way. If it came down to singing him to sleep tonight just to force that exhaustion out of him, she made a quiet mental note to do exactly that. But first, she needed reassurance about the corruption.

Earlier, he'd worked so hard to reassure her own insecurities, made her feel steadier in her own body, laughed and joked with her freely. But now, sharing his own feelings again, she understood there was still so much locked away inside him, things that would take real time to surface. Still, she intended to stand beside him through every bit of it.

"You're staring, amor," He said, without even glancing up, chewing his food and washing it down with a sip of juice.

Viola didn't bother denying it, sighing instead. "Yes, I am. I find you even more handsome when you're eating."

He lifted his eyes to her, a small smile tugging at his mouth. "Is my wife flirting with me?" He teased.

Viola laughed before answering, "It's not a crime to flirt with one's own mate, is it?" She winked at him, and a smile broke across his face as he shook his head in amusement before asking,

"Are the guests from Steel Pack giving you any trouble? You shouldn't have invited my aunties, they've always been a pain in the neck." Sebastian remarked, since they were exactly the kind of relatives he'd have cut off entirely, even if they didn't remind him so sharply of his late mother, who used to take them to Steel Pack for weekend visits.

Those aunties would gossip about his mother and father right in front of them and Sebastian had always found them unlikeable but tried not to show it because of his mother.

Viola scrunched her nose, popping a grape from the table into her mouth. "Too late for that, I invited them before I realized they had such a different personality from your grandmother. You never once mentioned you had a living grandmother, and a lovely one at that." Viola mused, and watched him shrug, resuming his eating without much reaction.

"I'd forgotten she existed. If you look closely, she looks a lot like my mother did." He said, and Viola understood immediately, he'd deliberately pushed her existence out of his own mind for years. If she didn't love him so much, she might have thought him a genuinely strange man for it, which he was.

"If any of those aunties give you trouble, let me know, and I'll have them packing and gone within the hour."

Viola hadn't run into any real problems with his aunties yet, nothing she couldn't handle on her own, so she let the topic drop as a different thought crossed her mind.

"I was thinking, what if we finally went on that vacation we planned?"

Sebastian paused mid-bite, staring down at his food for a long moment before lifting his eyes back to her. "We still haven't found Nick. It's too dangerous right now." He told her, his gaze dropping back to his plate. "Besides, you're almost due. It's best we stay close to home, for the babies, we don't want to risk having them in a foreign land."

Viola knew Nick would always linger somewhere in the shadows of their lives, especially her husband's, who had made hunting him down, dead or alive, into something close to a personal mission. As much as she wanted that resolved too, more than anything, she didn't want their entire lives put on hold because of him, didn't want to let him hover over everything indefinitely, when they could still stay cautious and vigilant while actually living their lives in the meantime.

She didn't want their children born into a world still shadowed by him, and she murmured, "My aunt said there's a strong chance he was eaten by sharks, since he went into the water already bleeding, and no body has ever surfaced. What if he's already dead?"

Sebastian opened his mouth to respond, but their door chimed before swinging open, Ivy already knowing the password, as she and Alex walked in together.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 536: Corrupted Heart_Part 2[1,547 words]

Sebastian’s eyes landed on his brother, and on his sister-in-law, who greeted him with a bow, and he answered with a curt nod of his head before looking to his brother, who nodded back at him.

"How have you been?" Alex asked, to which Sebastian answered curtly, "Fine." He rose from the table, his meal only half eaten, and asked, "Where should we do this?" He directed the question at the twin women, who both pointed toward the living room, and the two brothers walked over together, each settling onto the couch, facing one another, in the same room for the first time in months.

"I thought you said he was better now?" Ivy whispered to her sister, cold sweat prickling down her spine. She was still unused to Sebastian’s aura and the sheer intensity of his presence.

Viola had told her during their phone call a while ago that her husband had spoken to her and was doing fine, and that he was easy to be around again. But to Ivy, who was more familiar with his brother, Sebastian didn’t look any different from how he had been yesterday. If anything, his aura seemed even denser and sharper than before. Had her twin forgotten what normal was supposed to look like? Ivy gulped, dreading having to remain in his presence.

"He is," Viola whispered softly. "Can’t you see the difference in his eyes?"

She glanced at her husband, who sat with his elbows braced on his knees, looking anything but relaxed. He seemed impatient, or perhaps anxious; she couldn’t quite tell. But Viola could see the difference in his eyes. And as if sensing her gaze, Sebastian turned toward her, his expression softening a little.

"I think it’s only you he acts that way around, Viola," Ivy muttered.

Viola pulled her sister into the living room before letting her go and moving to sit beside Sebastian. She rested a hand on his broad shoulder, and he offered her a small smile in response to her touch.

"Are you nervous?" She asked him.

He shook his head. "You’re treating me like a terrified child about to get a shot, needing to be held through it." Sebastian whispered to her, though secretly he liked how closely she’d been paying attention to him, how she’d stayed near him this past hour, keeping his mind steady, keeping him from shutting down again.

She traced her fingers along his jaw, leaving a warm trail of her touch as they moved down toward his tattooed neck. "Who knows? It might hurt, and you might need my support."

She turned to her sister. "Is it painful, Ivy?"

Ivy, who was crouched in front of Alex and ready to begin, replied,

"It shouldn’t be, unless there’s still some remnant of it lingering. Alexander’s heartbeat is steady, but I’ll sing a song meant to draw out any hidden illness. If it hurts, that means it’s not fully gone."

Saying that, Ivy rose from in front of Alex and began to sing softly, not daring to check the other brother’s heartbeat. Both men watched her closely, along with her sister.

Ivy sang for a while without either man reacting, and Viola was just about to ask her husband if he felt anything, when she felt an uncomfortable prick in her own chest, right before Sebastian grabbed at his own chest, brows furrowing as he turned aside to cough. Almost instantly, Alex reacted the same way, and Ivy stopped singing, sensing their shared discomfort.

"That hurt, a little..." Alex remarked, frowning in confusion, since he’d genuinely believed himself cured until now.

"Are you all right?" Sebastian asked his wife, who was now rubbing at her own chest, a deep frown on her face. He turned to her, ignoring his own discomfort entirely, and pressed a hand just above her breast, rubbing gently as though to soothe her as she said,

"I felt a prick too, but it might just be your pain, transmitting through to me." Viola murmured, growing more confused by the second, since mate pain-transfer wasn’t supposed to happen until after the marking, just like the mind link they already shared, unmarked. As though reading her thoughts, Sebastian pulled her closer, trying to ease both her discomfort and his own at once.

"We share a lot of things we shouldn’t be able to share, without the mark," Sebastian murmured quietly, still rubbing her chest gently, pulling her head to rest against his own chest, before turning to Ivy.

"So my corruption isn’t fully cured, I take it?" He asked, and she shook her head.

"It’s not currently in danger of turning you rogue, the way normal corruption would. It’s cured, to some extent, but not fully, completely gone. It shouldn’t have reacted at all to the songs I sang to draw out hidden illness. It’s strange." Ivy muttered. Having once lived in an orphanage where their caretaker had been a healer, well-versed in medicine, Ivy had picked up plenty of knowledge over the years about corruption and exactly how it affected werewolves.

"Can you explain, as best you understand it, why you think it’s strange?" Sebastian asked.

Ivy sat down beside Alex when he tugged at her wrist, pulling her closer so that his own aura would be beside her and hopefully keep his brother’s intimidating presence from overwhelming her.

"It almost feels as though you both must have carried a dormant corruption your whole lives, and the grief you suffered simply triggered it awake. When I used my song to cure it, it went back to being dormant again, only this time, the residue it left behind isn’t fully cured, and any sufficiently deep emotional shock could trigger it awake once more. I’ve never seen or heard of anything quite like this before."

Viola, still resting against her husband, didn’t like the sound of that at all. "People aren’t born with corruption."

"But that’s exactly what it looks like, in both their cases. For it to have developed enough to already be triggerable by emotion this early, it’s really the only explanation that fits." Ivy said, glancing between the two brothers, both wearing identical, thoughtful expressions.

"Is there no way to cure it permanently?" Viola asked, pulling back slightly from Sebastian’s chest to study his face, his hand having stilled against her chest.

"None that I know of. What we can do now, I believe, is make absolutely sure neither of you falls into an emotion deep enough to touch the heart directly. It’s time you two started practicing happiness, deliberately." Ivy suggested, since the matter was out of her hands now, though privately, she couldn’t help wondering how something like this was even remotely possible. Was there something about these twins specifically that she wasn’t putting together yet?

Ivy watched her sister’s husband still rubbing at her chest and found herself thinking it was strange, too, how oddly their mate bond seemed to function. Perhaps something else was missing from the picture entirely.

Once the examination ended, Ivy and Viola excused themselves from the living room, leaving the brothers together, and made their way to the bedroom, where Viola turned to her sister.

"Ivy, I’m worried something strong enough might happen and trigger it in either of them again. I don’t want to lose anyone else, not if I can help it." Viola said, worry plain in her voice, and her sister reassured her,

"Don’t worry. It’s not something to panic over, as long as you keep watching his emotions closely through whatever connection you two share, which, honestly, I still find strange, given you don’t even have his mark yet."

Viola bit at her nails. "Could it be because I was his prophecy? The mark on my wolf?" She asked uncertainly, since she already carried a mark that had never shown up on her human form.

"Hmm, that could very well be it, but how did the mark even reach your wolf and not your human body in the first place? If you weren’t pregnant, I’d suggest we move up your marking ceremony, but we can’t risk his venom reaching the babies, that would be disastrous. Relax, I believe everything will settle once we understand the full pattern here." Ivy assured her, squeezing Viola’s shoulders gently, and Viola pulled her into a tight hug, murmuring,

"Waiting for two more months until the babies are born seems too far away. I need answers." Viola murmured and her sister patted her back.

"I will see what I can research and find for you as long as you promise you won’t stress about it." Ivy said.

"I don’t know what I’d do without you. Thank you."

Ivy smiled, holding her sister close. "You’d manage just fine, you have so many people who love you around you now. I’ll do some research into Silver’s prophesied mates, into their history in the sea, and figure out why they were born carrying corruption in the first place, so you never have to worry over it again. How does that sound?"

"Have I ever told you how much I love you, Ivy?" Viola asked, tightening her arms around her sister, who laughed softly.

"Not in so many words. But in plenty of other ways."

"I love you, dear sister."

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 537: Stabbing his wife[1,342 words]

Viola felt it even before she was fully awake. She was deep in her usual dream, one she knew the whole pattern of by now, but this time the whimpering and groaning she heard wasn't coming from inside the dream at all. She slowly opened her eyes to their dim room and realized, with a jolt, that the sound was coming from right beside her.

Still a little disoriented from being pulled out of sleep, she turned toward her husband and sat up to find him twisted up in the sheets, his fingers gripping the fabric tight, forehead damp with sweat, eyes squeezed shut as though trapped mid-struggle. He was whimpering, moaning out broken words.

"...forgive me... I'm sorry..."

Viola didn't waste a second looking. She moved and hovered over him, gently patting his arm to wake him, but her touch only seemed to torment him further in his sleep, and he began thrashing against the bed, his lips pressed into a tight, pained line, breathing harsh and ragged that her heart broke at the sight of his torment.

"Sebastian..." She whispered his name urgently, pinning his hands down at his sides so he wouldn't thrash hard enough to strike her by accident.

When he finally began to calm down, she let go of his hands and cupped his face instead. Almost at once, his gray eyes flew open, red-rimmed and haunted, meeting hers directly. Viola saw a side of Sebastian she'd never witnessed before: the version of him relentlessly hunted by his own nightmares, with every raw emotion laid bare on his face. He looked so lost and pained, and the intensity of his feelings was so overwhelming that she felt as though she were being torn apart from the inside.

Without a word, she pulled his head against her chest, wrapping her arms around him in a tight embrace. He turned onto his side, holding her tightly as his ragged breathing warmed her neck. Viola slowly ran her hand up and down his back, trying to soothe the turmoil of emotions raging inside him.

Neither of them spoke, only held on and comforted each other, and after what felt like a long while, his hoarse voice finally broke the silence. "Nightmare... that's why I didn't want to sleep tonight. I can't get it out of my head." He told her.

Last night, after her sister had finished checking his heart, Viola had stayed behind in the living room with Ivy to give the brothers space to talk, if they'd exchanged any words at all. When she and her sister returned, they'd found the two men standing by the glass wall, mirroring each other's stance, hands buried deep in their pockets, neither speaking, both simply staring out into the winter night, only turning around once the women came back down.

Ivy had left with Alex afterward, and Viola hadn't asked whether Sebastian had actually spoken to his brother, or what, if anything, had passed between them, since she'd noticed neither man had even wished the other goodnight, the way she and her sister had.

They'd returned to their own room, and Sebastian had gone to shower, taking far longer than usual, while Viola changed into her pajamas to wait for him. But by the time he finally emerged, exhaustion had already pulled her under too far to ask him everything she'd wanted to, her condition making it nearly impossible to stay awake long into the night anymore.

The only thing she remembered clearly was pulling him into bed when he insisted he wasn't tired, that he still had work to finish in the office and a meeting with elders. Viola hadn't allowed it, pulling him down anyway, resting her head against his chest, tangling her legs with his beneath the sheets.

"You can work tomorrow. Let's sleep, for now. And if you dare try to move or slip away from me in the middle of the night, I will never sleep again, and you know exactly what that will do to my health, don't you?" She'd threatened, just to get him settled and away from thoughts of work, and her husband hadn't protested at all, holding her as close as her belly would allow.

Viola had smiled, victorious, and had fallen asleep soon after, only to be woken now by his whimpering.

"I hate these nightmares. They won't fucking leave me alone..." He whispered, anguish thick in his voice, his breathing steadying slightly even as his heart still raced. He pressed his head against her chest, and she stroked his hair, then down his back, damp with sweat.

"What's it about?" Viola asked quietly.

He was silent for a long moment before answering. "Everything horrible. I see myself stabbing you, and... I watch my sister die, over and over, and I can't help her. I see my whole pack crumbling in front of me, and I can't save anyone. I dream this every single time I close my eyes now, ever since her death. It's like some kind of curse."

Whenever Sebastian let himself drift toward sleep, the nightmares seemed to be waiting behind his eyelids already, hunting him down, making him feel like a pathetic failure, incapable of protecting his own family, destined to lose even more in the future.

People had always said that the Silver bloodline carried too many curses, that its Alphas were never meant to find lasting happiness. Sebastian couldn't help but wonder if losing the people closest to his heart was exactly that curse playing out, something he had no idea how to fight against, just as he struggled against the full moon that turned him into a ravaging beast.

The nightmares terrified him, especially now, with his wife due to give birth soon and their family about to grow. With that came an even greater fear of everything he still couldn't control.

"Amor, there’s an old saying, that Silver’s Alphas are never destined to find real happiness, that the curse always finds a way to ruin everything... I found you, somehow, despite all of it, but why do I keep dreaming of losing everyone anyway? Is it so wrong to want my family around me, safe and unharmed? Why do I keep seeing myself stab you, of all things?" He asked quietly, lifting his head from her chest to look at her face, her blue eyes staring steadily back at him.

Slowly, Sebastian raised a hand to cup her cheek. "Even surrounded by others, by family, I still feel like you’re the only thing I actually have and need the most. Why can’t I just have you, and finally be free of this haunted feeling?" He whispered, his thumb tracing her cheek, and Viola lifted her own hand to rest over his.

"You said you stab me, in these nightmares?" She asked, watching the anguish return to his expression as he nodded.

"Do you remember anything about where it happens? The setting?" She pressed gently, and Sebastian turned his eyes toward the ceiling, shaking his head. "The setting never really registers, only the thought of doing it does. I stab you, and it feels like part of me tears away with it every single time. I hate every second of that dream." He groaned, falling back against his pillow, pulling his hand away from her face to cover his own eyes with an elbow.

"I don’t know what’s wrong with me lately." He added hoarsely, and Viola pushed herself up onto one elbow, gently pulling his hand away from his eyes.

"You didn’t stab me. That wasn’t you at all. That was Vaelor, stabbing Azmira. I’ve been having these same dreams too lately, along with ones of Zoe, and my parents, down in the sea. Almost every night now." She confessed, and watched his brows pull together as he turned to look at her.

"Vaelor stabbing Azmira? But it was your face I saw..." He said, and Viola nodded, realizing the time had finally come to tell him everything about her own recurring dreams.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 538: Missing puzzle pieces[1,033 words]

"Vaelor has your face, and Azmira, I believe, has mine, or at least I know Nerissa looked exactly like me, and if they’re twins, then she carries my face too. It was like us, in another lifetime, but also not quite us. He marked her, and then he killed her." Viola remarked, and she watched Sebastian begin working to piece everything together in his mind.

"Could the mark be... the same mark on your wolf, the one tied to the prophecy?" He asked, bringing his hand up to her neck, where no mark showed, even though one existed plainly on her wolf form.

Viola hadn't considered it that way before, but now that he'd said it aloud, she found herself unable to dismiss it, since a mark never simply appears on its own, someone has to place it there. If the mark on her wolf was the very same one Vaelor had left on Azmira before killing her, that would mean it bound her to him in some lingering way, even now. Her eyes widened as she looked at her husband.

"Could that be the reason we can feel each other's pain? The reason we've had the mind link all this time, without any mark at all? Were we them, in another life?" She couldn't help but feel it fit the missing pieces too perfectly to be coincidence, since only a mark like that could explain why, after awakening her wolf, she suddenly felt so many things that should have only been possible after an actual marking.

"Why would he mark her at all, only to kill her right after? Why didn't she fight back, being the Child of the Sea?" Sebastian asked, unable to understand why he'd have any connection to, or nightmares about what Vaelor, the very bastard who'd cursed his entire bloodline, had done to his own woman when Sebastian himself would never, not in a million years, stab and kill his own wife for power, no matter how weak he might someday become, no matter if her heart was truly the only path left to him.

Vaelor had never been anything close to a role model to Sebastian, not since he understood what the man had actually done, and the thought of having been him in some other lifetime offered Sebastian no comfort at all since it would mean he'd once killed the very woman he loved, purely for power.

"She didn't have access to her Child of the Sea powers on land, remember? So she couldn't have defended herself even if she'd wanted to. But the truth is, she wasn't trying to defend herself at all. She knew he meant to kill her, and she let it happen. Nerissa warned her to leave, told her once that Vaelor's behavior had started frightening her, and still Azmira stayed, for that exact reason. Now we're the ones left to untangle what actually happened between them, so I can know whether I'm even able to awaken that other side of myself." Viola told him.

Sebastian sat up, settling his back against the headboard, and Viola sat up beside him as he looked at her. "You want to awaken that other part of yourself?" He asked, his tone noticeably less pleased than Viola had expected.

"It's the only way I know of to stop losing people in my life. Imagine being able to bring things, people, back. But I can't do any of that unless I understand what really happened between them, and how. Every single day I see my parents, and Zoe, telling me they're waiting for me. I don't want to let them down, not if there's any way for me to help them." She said quietly, and Sebastian pulled her closer against his chest, stroking her hair and understanding why she wanted to gain her other part back.

"I don’t want us to end up like them, sunshine. Vaelor and Azmira’s story was a disaster, and I’m afraid digging too deep into it might only complicate ours further." He said, resting his chin atop her head, feeling her arm slip around his waist, before adding, "Did you ask your sister?"

Hearing that, Viola remembered what she’d told him, that she’d ask Ivy, and she nodded. Yesterday, Sebastian had asked if he could go down to see where his sister’s body rested, hoping it might help heal the hole still sitting in his chest, and Viola couldn’t have agreed more readily.

But now, as a werewolf with her mermaid side entirely suppressed, that decision was no longer hers alone to make. It was up to the mermaids, and she had no idea whether they would welcome a werewolf, especially the Silver Alpha, into Aquaville to visit his sister’s grave.

"Ivy said she’d go down to the sea and ask our aunt if she agrees. If she does, she’ll get us the concoction we need to breathe underwater and let me know by morning," she told him, her mind wandering back to what she now understood about the mark her wolf carried.

She couldn’t help wondering why Vaelor had killed Azmira when he had loved her. What had happened between them? And why were she and Sebastian reborn as them without any memories of their past lives? Did they have unfinished business that still needed to be resolved?

What if Sebastian was right? What if she dug too deeply into their past lives and uncovered an enmity that eventually resurfaced between her and her husband because of something that had happened before they were even born?

Did she really want that?

But could she live with herself if she knew she might have helped bring people back and chose not to simply because she was afraid of ruining her relationship with her husband? Could she really turn her back on something so important out of fear of what it might cost her?

"What are you thinking?" Sebastian’s voice brought her out of her thoughts.

He looked down at his wife, whose brows had drawn together as she’d drifted off into her own world. At his question, she turned to look at him.

"A penny for your thoughts, my love," he added.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 539: Ordinary things[1,264 words]

Viola tightened her arms around him and sighed.

"I’m just wondering what will happen if you mark me after the babies are born, considering I already carry a mark from another time on my wolf. And what it all means now that we know we’re connected to them and what happened in their lives. Vaelor was the reason mermaids were discovered to possess powers that were useful to werewolves. I’m just thinking about all of it."

She pursed her lips as she looked at him, her thoughts weighing heavily on her.

"I don’t want anything to come between us. I love my life with you just the way it is, you know."

She rubbed her cheek against his chest like a cat seeking affection, and his hand slipped behind her head, gently cradling it.

"We won’t allow it. If we dig into their past and it starts affecting us... then we stop. Do you promise me that?" Sebastian asked.

But when his wife didn’t answer immediately, worry began to creep into his heart. He feared that, in her desire to bring his sister back, she might become willing to sacrifice things she would otherwise never give up.

"Honey?" He gave her a gentle shake, prompting her to respond.

Viola let out a sigh.

"I promise, but I really need to try my best, at least," she murmured.

Not wanting to push the conversation any further or plant unnecessary fears in either of their hearts, Viola decided to change the subject. She lifted her head to look at him before asking, "Did you talk to Alex last night?"

Sebastian stared at the wall ahead of them and let out a slow sigh.

"Yes."

"What did you two talk about?" She asked, curious.

Sebastian knew his wife had deliberately given him space to talk with his brother the night before, but having so recently lost a sister himself, and understanding that particular kind of pain all too well now, Sebastian had felt something fracture in his connection to Alex too, something that made it nearly impossible to speak freely with him, as though staying close to Alex now carried its own quiet danger, a strain he couldn't quite name, or a fear...

'I'm sorry, for all the times I blamed you for Natalie.' Alex had said, and Sebastian had only offered a single nod in return, which prompted his brother to ask,

'Are you still angry at me? I didn't mean to shove your wife to the ground that day. If I had known her half as I do now, I would never have said half the things I said to her that day. Luna Viola...she is not what I thought at all.'

'I know.' Sebastian said curtly.

'Then?' Alex asked, lifting his brows at his brother's clipped, one-word answers, and Sebastian finally turned to face him.

'Then we're good, Alexander. And even.'

Alex had let out a humorless laugh, nodding as though he understood something deeper than the words themselves suggested. 'I see. I hope you pull yourself back together soon, dear brother. You're about to become a father, and you'll have children looking up to you, following your example someday. You know where to find me, if you ever want to actually talk.'

Their conversation had ended there, and Sebastian looked down now at his wife, waiting expectantly for his answer about how the reconciliation had gone. Not wanting to disappoint her, he pinched her nose gently instead, and she swatted his hand away.

"Tell me," she urged, her kissable lips pouting in a way that looked as though they were practically begging for his.

"Have you done any baby shopping yet?" he asked, changing the subject entirely.

He knew full well that he wouldn't be sleeping again tonight, regardless. Talking about his brother was only going to disappoint her, and Sebastian couldn't bear to add to her worries. He couldn't be with Alex the way he used to be, not anymore. Ever since losing Zoe, he found himself seeing danger everywhere, imagining all the ways he could lose Alex too, and the thought alone was enough to make him anxious.

Viola pursed her lips, clearly aware that he was dodging her question, but before she could call him out on it, one of the babies shifted inside her, rolling beneath her skin and creating a visible movement across her belly. Both of their eyes immediately fell to it, and for a moment, they simply stared, fascinated.

Sebastian went completely still, his gray eyes widening as he watched the unmistakable movement. He had felt the babies kick before, but seeing one of them move so visibly beneath Viola's belly was an entirely different experience. It was as though he had just been given a glimpse of the little life growing inside his wife, and he couldn't quite tear his eyes away.

"Does that hurt?" he asked, his brows drawing together as he watched her stomach, his first instinct being to worry about her and if she were in any pain.

Viola let out a soft laugh at his expression and shook her head. "No, it doesn't hurt. Sometimes it feels a little strange, especially when they roll around like that, but I'm used to it."

Sebastian looked back down at her belly, still visibly captivated. His hand hovered for a moment before he gently placed it against the spot where the baby had moved, as though he were hoping to feel it happen again but it didn't.

"Do you want to come baby shopping with me? We could go tomorrow, after we visit Zoe." She suggested, knowing that while they worked through everything else, piecing together the truth about themselves, they still couldn't ignore the practical necessities waiting for them, the babies' needs growing closer by the day.

Even though they could easily send someone else to handle it for them, Viola wanted to experience these ordinary, everyday moments with Sebastian herself, to hold onto each one while she still could right now.

Sebastian, who had been looking at her belly, slowly lifted his gaze to her face. Unable to resist the sight of her anymore, he leaned down and kissed her lips, his mouth settling over hers with a tenderness that quickly turned into something deeper.

He gently caught her lower lip between his, sucking on it slowly before releasing it and giving the same attention to her upper lip. Viola's breath hitched, and she instinctively tilted her face toward his, silently inviting him closer. Sebastian smiled against her mouth before kissing her again, this time opening his lips over hers and deepening the kiss.

His tongue brushed hers gently, coaxing her into responding as he explored her mouth with unhurried affection. Viola melted against him, her body relaxing into his embrace as though she had been waiting for this very moment. She slipped an arm around his neck, drawing him closer, her fingers curling against the back of his head as she returned his kiss with equal longing.

Sebastian's hand settled against her cheek, his thumb stroking her skin as he kissed her until neither seemed particularly interested in being the first to pull away.

When he finally parted their lips, he remained close enough for his breath to mingle with hers, his gray eyes lingering on her face.

"Why not? Let’s go shopping together. Let’s do the ordinary things other couples do," he whispered against her lips.

Before she could answer, he captured her mouth again, kissing her as though he wanted to make the simple words feel like something extraordinary.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 540: Digging into the past[1,359 words]

Sebastian didn’t let the kiss lead anywhere further, knowing his wife needed her sleep, and that if he let himself get carried away, she’d stay up with him the rest of the night instead.

He pulled her against him after awhile and pretended to drift off, until she had no choice but to close her own eyes and finally fall asleep genuinely. Once he was certain she was truly out, Sebastian carefully slipped away from her, easing out from beside her, resting her head gently back against the pillow.

He pulled the covers up, tucking his own pillow in against her in his place for her to hold onto instead, then quietly left the room, grabbing his coat on the way out.

Sebastian left the building and stepped out into the deserted winter night. He got into his car and drove slowly along the snow-covered roads toward the building that housed Silver’s entire history, dating back to its founding and the reign of its very first Alpha.

The streets were eerily quiet, illuminated only by streetlights and the flickering glow of billboards cutting through the hazy darkness. With winter keeping most people tucked safely indoors, the streets were nearly empty, unlike during summer, when people would usually be out and about well into the night.

Few minutes later, Sebastian parked outside the building and stepped out of his car, still wearing his house slippers and sleepwear. Snow continued to fall softly around him, settling on the ground and gathering in the drifts beneath his feet. He lifted his gaze to the two-story building before him, knowing that within its walls lay so much of his people’s history.

Sebastian walked the rest of the way to the front of the building, where his face was scanned and the door opened automatically for him, since his status as Alpha could unlock

any door in the pack. He stepped into the dim, quiet building, greeted by the smell of old wood, books, and musk settled deep into the walls.

Sebastian had actually never had reason to set foot in here before. Whatever history he'd needed had always been handed to him already summarized, already simplified without him searching for originals.

The front desk stood empty, but as though his presence alone had been felt, a short man with a white beard and a thick knitted brown sweater came hurrying down the stairs, flashlight in hand.

"Who is_Supreme Alpha!" came the man's panicked greeting at the sight of such an unexpected guest in the building, since the Alpha had never once stepped foot in this building before, and honestly, hardly anyone did, which left the caretaker visibly rattled that his Alpha had arrived at this hour of the night at all. "H-how m-may I help you?" The man asked, bowing the moment he reached the front desk, his hands trembling.

Sebastian looked at the small man, then up at the long bookshelves lining the wall behind the desk. "Where are the books on our founders stored? I need all of them." He said, his voice flat and emotionless, his eyes drifting back to the man, who nodded quickly.

"R-right away, I-I'll bring them down for you immediately!"

"No need to bring them. Just show me where they're kept, I'll find what I need myself." Sebastian figured he could find the books himself faster than it would take the man to run back and forth retrieving them.

The man nodded. "Follow me, they're on the second floor. Which section are you looking for, Supreme Alpha?" He asked, already leading the way, switching on lights as they climbed the stairs.

"Everything related to Vaelor's history. I was told some time ago this building even holds his personal diary, his and his brother's. I want all of it." He told the man, who gulped but nodded again without question.

They reached a door on the second floor, and once inside, Sebastian noted the man had clearly kept everything in excellent condition. Books ran floor to ceiling, and some pieces were even preserved behind glass, displayed like museum artifacts.

Sebastian sat down at a reading desk in the library while the caretaker brought several books over. "These hold the documented history of how our pack has grown over the years, and—"

"Bring me his diary first." Sebastian cut in, removing his coat and hanging it behind his chair, rolling up his shirtsleeves, fully intending to learn as much as he possibly could about this ancestor of theirs, and exactly why he'd done what he'd done, the act that had cursed their entire bloodline.

Very few people had access to this particular section of Silver's history, let alone the diary itself. But since it was the Supreme Alpha asking for it, the man didn't hesitate. He carefully removed it from its protective glass case and gently placed it on the desk in front of Sebastian.

"Supreme Alpha..." the man said with a bow. "These are written in a language nobody has been able to read. That is why they have been stored away untouched for so long, becoming more of a precious thing to be admired than something to be read. And if anything happens to them... I will be hanged according to Silver law, and—"

Sebastian narrowed his eyes at the small man, who was clearly trying to caution him.

"Who holds the law?" he asked.

The man nervously peeked up at the Supreme Alpha. "You."

"Good that you know."

With that, Sebastian looked away from the man and down at the diary.

The pages had turned brown with age, so fragile that they looked as though they might crumble apart if handled without the utmost care. Sebastian could understand the man's concern. No other Alpha had ever bothered to request this personal item, and he doubted anyone had even taken it out of its glass case since the day it had been placed there.

"You can go. Turn the heat down in here too, it's far too hot." Sebastian said, already beginning to examine the item, which wasn't actually a bound book at all, but a loose stack of parchment, tied together with brown string, worn soft with age.

Holding it in his hands, Sebastian hated the strange sense of familiarity that washed over him, as though he had held this diary countless times before, despite knowing he never had. An unwelcome truth began to settle in, that somehow, he was indeed connected to whoever had once written these pages.

"We're nothing alike. I don't keep a fucking diary." He muttered to himself, carefully untying the string, noting absently that the heat had indeed been turned down, though he found himself still sweating anyway, for reasons he couldn't quite place.

Vaelor's handwriting was so poor it might as well have been scratched out by a caveman, bad enough that Sebastian had to rub and massage his own eyes just to focus. "Is this even

written in a language I can actually read?" He muttered, turning the page. "If I'm supposed to be you, I should at least understand this shit you wrote down."

Sebastian was starting to lose his patience, beginning to think he'd made this trip for nothing, the language entirely indecipherable, until he closed his eyes, took a slow breath, and looked again. This time, something shifted in his mind, and the words suddenly came into sharp, clear focus.

[I met a strange girl by the rivers, while my brother and I were fishing...]

Sebastian relaxed slightly as the words finally made sense, and he began reading silently to himself, though some of the messier handwriting still gave him trouble here and there.

[She was a strange creature, one I'd never seen in all my life. She had the body of a fish and a human at once, and worse still, humiliating really, I was the one saved by her, after getting caught in my own fish trap.]

As Sebastian read through the diary, he found himself picturing the scene almost vividly in his mind, as though it weren't just ink on old parchment, but something closer to a distant memory of his own.