Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 541: Won’t swim away[1,240 words]

Vaelor had been fixing the fish trap he had come up with to help catch a large number of fish at once. He had no idea if his masterpiece was actually a masterpiece at all, so he was trying to secure the rope of the net against the side of their boat when his own foot became caught in it as he threw it into the water. Before he fully understood what was happening, he was pulled straight into the water.

As he tried to swim back to the surface, the trap and net, anchored by a heavy rock, continued dragging him steadily downward instead of allowing him to rise. He cursed himself for not being more careful. It looked like he was going to drown in the very water he knew how to swim in.

As Vaelor struggled to free himself, that was when the mermaid appeared, cutting through the water beside him with startling speed. Before he could even register what was happening or what she was, she sliced through the rope with one sharp fin, freeing him and smoothly pulling him back toward the surface.

It was the first time he had ever laid eyes on a creature like her, yet he scowled at her anyway, even as she effortlessly pushed him back into his boat.

Before Vaelor could say anything, she had already swum away, hiding just beneath the surface. She remained close enough that her face was still visible as she looked up at him, a beautiful smile playing on her lips.

Vaelor tilted his head to the side, studying her through the clear waters. "Goddess, what are you?" he muttered to himself as her smile grew wider before she began to sink deeper into the water, slowly disappearing from his view.

"Did you see that, brother?" Came the words of his twin, Vik, staring into the water where the mermaid had vanished as though she’d never been there at all. "An angel, azure in color, and... magnificent." He said, his voice sounding almost memorized by the sight, which made Vaelor turn to him with a darker scowl, right before Vik noticed his brother’s clothes were soaking wet.

"You took a dip in the water, did you? Did you see the azure angel too?" Vik asked, eager to confirm whether he’d actually glimpsed something real from the deck, since he’d never seen anything so beautiful in his life and thought he could happily stare at it forever.

Vaelor, still processing everything he’d just seen and felt, brushed past his brother. "I didn’t see anything. You’re dreaming while you’re awake."

"Then what nature of creature did I just glimpse?" Vik muttered to himself, unwilling to drop the subject entirely, not realizing that somewhere deep in his brother's heart, Vaelor had already claimed whatever that creature was as his own, and didn't think his brother should even dare think of her.

That day, after they had returned home with the day's catch, Vaelor went back out onto the water alone to fish. Since Alphas were expected to provide for their packs, he had to ensure they had enough food. But this time, he had another reason for going back.

He threw himself straight into the water, hoping to lure the creature out. He was certain she had been watching him from somewhere nearby the entire time he had been fixing his net on the boat. He had felt that strange sensation of being watched, and there was no doubt in his mind that it had been the blue creature lurking nearby. This time, he was going to catch her.

Just as he had suspected, the moment he fell into the water, pretending not to know how to swim, she emerged. All blue and beautiful, she immediately grabbed his arm and tried to pull him back to the surface, assuming he was unable to swim.

But Vaelor caught hold of her instead.

He quickly realized that she was as slippery as a fish beneath his grip. She twisted and tried to escape, but he grabbed the only thing he could manage, her hair, and held on tightly to keep her from getting away as she hauled him back toward the surface.

"Ouch! Let go!" She yelped, splashing water at his face, but Vaelor knew that if he let go now, she'd simply vanish again to the depth of the waters.

"So you do have words in you, little fish girl. If you promise not to run, I'll let you go." He bargained, and she glared at him but nodded anyway.

Looking at her up close, blue instantly became Vaelor's favorite color. Something unfamiliar stirred deep within his chest as he stared at her, a strange warmth spreading through him that he couldn't quite understand.

Vaelor, above all others, was known to be ruthless, a werewolf with no sympathy, no softness, and seemingly not a single seed of love within him. Nothing could hold his attention or captivate him for more than a mere second. He had his fun with every woman who threw herself at him, but he was never captivated by any of them. He would often forget their names by morning, which was why his pack members believed there was nothing in this world capable of stirring his heart.

Yet somehow, his heart was stirring for a fish.

"I won't swim away. Let go," she said.

Vaelor slowly released her long hair, crouching down at the edge of his boat to study her as she floated on the surface of the water. There was still a small glare in those azure eyes as she ran her fingers through her hair, carefully arranging the long strands and the pearls adorning them.

He found himself unable to look away.

"What exactly are you? Not quite fish, not quite human. What are you?" He scowled at her, and she flushed a deep scarlet across her cheeks and neck, where faint blue scales turned a soft shade of pink. Was she shy? Fascinating.

"Mermaid," she told him. "Don’t fall into the water again. You’re distracting me."

"Why?" He arched a brow. "If I fall, will you catch me... little mermaid?" He asked, the corner of his mouth lifting, but rather than answer, she dove back under the water and swam off, flashing her tail at him and splashing him soundly on her way out.

"Aren’t you something? I’ll get you for that, little mermaid!"

Sebastian, still reading, turned the page to find Vaelor had written:

[I came to the waters to find my mermaid every day after that, but she only ever came out once more, and then I didn’t see her again until the night we celebrated the moon. I saw her there too, only this time she had no tail at all. She came with legs instead, unclothed. I felt rage seeing her lose the blue, standing unclothed in front of our entire pack, but before I could even reach her, my brother had already claimed her for himself, and she smiled at him with a familiarity that suggested she knew him too. How could she smile at Vik like that? I thought we’d shared something together.]

[But if I had known how our fate would end, I would have thrown her right back into the water myself, or I would have claimed her in front of everyone, the very same day Vik did. That was my mistake.]

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 542: Little mermaid[1,425 words]

(Music Recommendation: Until All Light Fades by Timothy Robert Shortell.)

Vaelor stalked away into the night, kicking stones as he went, anger boiling in his blood at the thought that the little fish had tricked him, and his brother too. All that time he'd lain awake thinking about her eyes, her smile, her voice, and it turned out she'd known his twin all along as well. He should have caught the little fish and fed her straight to his pack, maybe that would have taught her a lesson about playing with two hearts at once!

Vaelor was so furious he left the moon festival entirely to cool off among the trees, climbing up to his favorite one, settling against it to watch the dancing far ahead around the bonfire and the moon above. How had a fish even grown legs to walk on, anyway? Why would she give up those beautiful scales just to walk among them?

"Because she wants to be with your brother, idiot." His wolf spoke up, which only made him angrier, and while he was still stewing in it, he sensed her presence nearby and looked down through the trees to see her wandering below and looking around, as though searching for something. Vaelor scowled darkly.

"Hasn't anyone taught you not to wander alone at night, little mermaid? Fish don't last long around here, we devour them fresh even without having to cook them." He called down, and she jumped, startled, before looking up at him with big blue eyes that reflected the moonlight.

"H-how did you get up there?" She asked, fascinated wonder in her voice, as though she genuinely couldn't comprehend how a person might climb such a tree, and Vaelor's mouth pressed into a flat line, realizing she probably had no idea what a tree was. Naive little blue fish.

"A little fish who doesn't even know what a tree is, has brought herself to land. Get back to your man before you're missed, or I might decide to devour my fish fresh after all." He warned darkly, uninterested in speaking to her anymore, whatever form she wore, since his blood was still boiling in jealousy he refused to accept.

"I want to come up there too. Can you bring me up?" she asked, with such innocent wonder on her face that Vaelor found himself momentarily at a loss, staring down at her.

Did she have any idea that by climbing up to him, she was bringing herself into his den? He would have to be dense to let her anywhere near him. The foolish little thing.

He glared down at her with all the heat in his eyes, but she continued to stare up at him.

He was just parting his lips to tell her to leave him alone when he sensed his brother approaching from the other direction. Without fully thinking it through, he shifted his position, dropping one hand to hold himself steady while reaching down with the other, swiftly catching her waist and pulling her up beside him on the tree.

He sat her down on his lap and pressed a hand over her mouth just as his brother came into view, calling out, "Azmira?!"

She looked down and spotted Vik, and then, as though not wanting to be found, she dropped her head against Vaelor's chest instead, holding onto him, and Vaelor felt his blood run hot and cold at once, at her closeness and the feeling of her breath on his bare chest.

Before long, his brother had moved on, still searching, but further away now, and Vaelor finally removed his hand from her mouth, ready to push her off his lap entirely, thinking maybe breaking her leg would send her right back wherever she'd come from, but her words stopped him cold.

"I didn't know there were two of you. I thought he was you..." She murmured softly, pulling back to look at him, his brows furrowing together as she added, "I came here for you. I want to know you more..."

Vaelor was stunned by her admission, unable to stop the smile that broke across his face. His hand rose almost instinctively to tuck her damp hair behind her ears, wanting to see her face clearly in the moonlight. But his smile soon faded just as quickly.

She might have come for him, but Vik had already claimed her in front of everyone, and brothers did not take each other's women in their land, especially not a woman who had already been recognized as Vik's by the pack members.

"It's too late, my little mermaid. You can only have my brother now..."

Back where Sebastian sat reading, he skipped over the parts he still couldn't fully understand, the missing pieces of Vaelor's story scattered throughout the diary. Yet certain things were finally beginning to click into place for him, and he was starting to believe that, if he could piece everything together, he might finally understand what had caused the mermaid's death.

Because his brother had claimed her first, Vaelor had been forced to let her go, to let his brother have her instead.

[I tried to forget her. By the moon, I did everything a man could possibly do to forget a woman, but it was impossible. I whored around like a wolf in heat, but never found any real satisfaction in it, and I kept seeing her with my brother, and every time she laughed with him, it hurt. I hurt so badly I wanted her desperately. I saw her first, but he claimed her first.]

[My life became a gloom I couldn't shake, I spent mornings until evenings just avoiding her, but my damn fish, she kept bringing herself right back to me. Until I lost the battle one night and kissed her, and I became a fallen man to that kiss. I became hers that night, and may hell freeze over, I couldn't fight it anymore.]

[I betrayed my brother and began a secret affair with his wife-to-be, right behind his back. We'd sneak away together whenever he was occupied, I'd pull her behind trees just to steal kisses, I'd carry her on my back just to watch the moon with her. Slowly... she became everything to me, and the very thing that would destroy my life.]

"I don't like lying to Vik. We need to tell him the truth." Vaelor said, kissing her hungrily after days apart, having traveled to fight alongside his brother in some battle, leaving her behind. He kissed her neck, her whole face. "I want to wake up with you in my arms every morning, in my bed, in my house. I can't stand being away from you, little mermaid. I need you in my life."

Azmira melted into every kiss, every touch, moaning softly, nodding along. "We should tell him the truth. I hate pretending too." She whispered, and Vaelor cupped her face, looking at her with eyes that shone, danced with affection. "You don't have to be the one to tell him. Let me. Vik might seem calm on the surface, but he has quite a temper underneath it, and he's deadly serious about you and talks to me about how he wants a home with you. Let me carry the burden of telling him, all right?"

She nodded, and he pulled her into a tight hug. "Everything will be fine. I'll make sure of it, and by this time next month, you'll be my woman, and we won't ever have to be apart again."

Sebastian, still reading and picturing everything as it unfolded, reached a point where several pages were clearly missing, and the next entry he found picked up sometime after Azmira's death, where Vaelor had written:

[I shouldn't have done it. I shouldn't have killed her. There should have been another way out. Why did I choose that path? I hate her for it, why did she put me through this?! Everything is falling apart...!]

The diary didn't seem to have been written on a day-to-day basis like an ordinary journal. Instead, Vaelor appeared to have written it after everything had fallen apart for him, as though he wanted to document everything that had happened.

Sebastian read what followed and realized Vaelor had simply stopped writing about her entirely after that, turning the diary instead into a record of pack strategy and his growing hatred for his brother without explanation, which only left Sebastian more confused, more desperate to understand this past life than before.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 543: The missing part[1,532 words]

"What did you do, Vaelor?" Sebastian muttered to himself, massaging his temple. "Did you kill her for her powers, just to be stronger than your brother, just to take the pack for yourself?"

Was that the reason Sebastian had always been stronger than Alex? The reason the Alpha blood ran thicker in him, despite being twins, because somewhere back in their bloodline, one brother had killed a mermaid and forged a Supreme Alpha line, something entirely separate from the regular Alpha blood everyone else carried?

Sebastian had hoped to find a clear answer for why Vaelor had stabbed Azmira, but all he'd found instead was a man hopelessly in love, and a man insane enough to kill her with his own two hands regardless.

Sebastian flipped through Vik's diary next, but unlike Vaelor's, this one he couldn't read at all, the language entirely incomprehensible to him. Unwilling to give up there, he moved on to the official history books, but what was recorded in those was impersonal, formal, none of it revealing anything close to Vaelor's private thoughts.

Sebastian found himself wondering how the diary's missing pages had been lost in the first place, and at what point, which generation, they'd disappeared. He rubbed at his temple and glanced toward the window, where the sky had already begun brightening into morning, and realized he needed to head home to his wife before she woke up to an empty bed.

As Sebastian rose to his feet, gathering the diary to return it to its proper place, a half-torn page slipped loose from the pile, fluttering to the floor. He bent down and picked it up, finding a single line written across it.

[The love of my life made me kill her...] Sebastian's eyes narrowed down at the note.

In the High Tower, in a part of the building opposite from where Viola was just waking to an empty bed, Gilbert, who had an appointment to check on the Luna every morning now, since Sebastian had assigned him to it, stirred awake to a weight pressing against his chest and the faint scent of roses, something that made him smile and want to drift back to sleep, until the chime of his door reached him.

The woman sleeping against his chest stirred at the sound too, just as he opened his eyes to find himself face to face with Laila's sleepy gaze, her hair rumpled from sleep. For a moment she stared at him in open confusion before realization slowly dawned on her.

"Shit, I fell asleep here." She muttered, trying to push herself up off his chest, the two of them still cramped together on the couch, but Gilbert's hand at her waist didn't loosen, holding her steady against him, and she shot him a soft glare for it.

"Someone's at your door, Rodrigo. I can't be seen here, or you'll be the next person caught up in rumors." She mused, well aware that most people had already distanced themselves from her lately, and the doctor's reputation had stayed clean up until now, his girlfriend only having died a few months ago.

People knew Laila well enough, she didn't exactly sleep innocently beside a man without something wild following it, even though it had been an innocent sleep this time around.

"I know." He smiled, his voice so thick and deep with sleep that Laila felt herself melting a little, the hand still pressing weakly against his chest losing its resolve entirely. His morning voice alone was far too lovely for her own good that her heart shuddered down to her lower abdomen.

"Are you worried about me, Serrano?" He asked, sliding his hand to the small of her back, knowing full well that courting a she-wolf like Laila meant he'd have to be just as bold as she was, or she'd never give him the chance with her.

Of course, she was worried about his clean reputation, but she would be dead before she ever admitted it.

"Fat chance. I'm not worried about you; I'm worried about myself. I don't want to be seen with you. You're far too boring for my type." She flashed him a teasing smile, but it faded the moment his own smile fell away and his hand released her, as though her words had genuinely hurt him.

She quickly pushed herself up from him and stood, but before she could move any farther away, he caught her wrist, stopping her.

"Serrano..." he murmured, looking up at her with an unusual seriousness that Laila rarely saw on his gorgeous face.

She glanced down at him, still lying on the couch with one leg bent and the other sprawled straight. His eyes were heavy-lidded as she let her gaze trail over the length of him, until it caught on the obvious evidence of his morning arousal beneath his trousers.

She realized, with some surprise, that simply sleeping against him had been enough to affect him like that. Yet he hadn't tried to use it to seduce her, the way most men would have if her closeness had aroused them. That alone was something entirely new to Laila.

Normally, with any man she was with, the moment she so much as made him aroused, he would try to use it to his advantage somehow, even if it meant resorting to manipulative tactics. Her eyes drifted back up to his face, where his gaze had never left hers.

"I'm serious about you, this time. Will you let me try again, once a proper mourning period has passed? I want to court and date you properly."

Before Laila could answer, the door chimed again, pulling her attention away from him toward the sound, then back to him. He sat up, still holding her wrist, running his free hand through his deep brown hair before standing, gently guiding her back down onto the couch.

"Don't leave yet. We'll talk, once I see who's at the door, okay? Will you wait for me?" He asked, and Laila, who was rarely treated with this kind of gentleness by any man, found herself nodding along almost mindlessly, like some obedient doll, the moment he used that same gentle tone on her. His face broke into a wide smile, and he released her wrist to answer the door.

Gilbert was still smiling to himself as he padded barefoot across the cold winter floor toward the door, though his smile fell away the instant he saw who was standing there.

"Oh, for goodness' sake, Gil, I've been standing out here for over five minutes." Came the complaint of his mother, already making her way inside before he could even think to stop her, which, honestly, was just how she operated, always arriving whenever she pleased.

His mother, the strawberry-blonde Quinn Rodrigo, bundled up in her winter coat, stepped into his apartment and said, "Your sister tells me you've been sulking alone in here far too much lately. I understand losing a girlfriend is hard, son, but life moves on, you know. You—"

Her words trailed off as she walked farther into the dim living room, pulling the curtains apart to reveal the fat snowflakes falling steadily outside and allowing the natural light to wash into the room.

"Even your room is depressingly dark," she complained.

Gilbert closed his door and followed her into the living room, just as his mother turned around and finally noticed the she-wolf sitting there. She arched a brow at the unexpected woman she had somehow failed to notice until then.

"Good morning, Mrs. Rodrigo," Laila greeted the woman, suddenly feeling a cold sweat prickling along her back.

There had been a time, not so long ago, when Laila would have treated her as though she were nothing but air. She had been raised by her uncle to hold no respect for any Rodrigo

whatsoever, and yet now, standing in front of Quinn, she felt a flicker of genuine shame and nervousness. This was the first time she had ever greeted Gilbert's mother.

There had even been a time when Laila had shoved past the woman's shoulder while openly mocking her with her friends. And it hadn't been just Quinn, either. She had made fun of both of Quinn's daughters too, more than once, on more occasions than she cared to count now.

Laila wouldn't have been surprised if the woman had simply ignored her greeting entirely, but Quinn merely gave her a nod in response.

"Morning. What exactly brings you to my son's apartment, Miss Serrano? Last I recall, you called our family name trash, people who took a position they didn't deserve." Quinn remarked, a smile on her face that never once reached her eyes, since she had absolutely no interest in this disrespectful she-wolf being anywhere near her son.

Laila flushed with shame, finding herself, for the very first time in a long while, genuinely at a loss for words, until Gilbert stepped in, taking his mother's hand and gently guiding her to sit.

"Would you like some tea, Ma? Your hands are freezing." He said, steering her attention away from making Laila any more uncomfortable than she already was.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 544: The Talk With The Alpha_Part 1[1,079 words]

Quinn looked away from the she-wolf, brushing off her presence entirely, assuming she must have come for some kind of checkup, since her son was a doctor who treated everyone fairly, and she trusted Gilbert would never bring their family name down by pursuing any kind of relationship with that ill-mannered she-wolf.

"I'll have hot coffee later, but I came here to talk to you about something urgent, Gil. Sit with me." She pulled him down onto the couch, ignoring Laila entirely, clearly expecting her to leave, and Laila picked up on the hint, saying,

"I... I'll head out first, if—"

"No, stay. You can sit down, I'll just talk with my mom." Gilbert cut in quickly, and his mother looked visibly displeased, but since what she was about to say wasn't exactly a secret, she let it go.

"Yes, Ma?" He gave his mother his full attention.

"Do you remember my friend from Steel Pack, the one I told you was responsible for me meeting your father in the first place?" She said, and Gilbert nodded, suddenly knowing exactly where this conversation was heading, and dreading it, wishing now he hadn't stopped Laila from leaving, since he hadn't wanted her to hear any of this.

"What about her?" He asked, sneaking a glance at his fated mate, who hadn't joined them on the couch, standing instead in the kitchen now, looking out the window, though he knew perfectly well she was listening to every word.

"Do you recall, back when you were fifteen, I told you she and I made a promise, that if her daughter came of age and neither of you had found your mate yet, we'd arrange a marriage between the two of you? Do you remember agreeing to that? Well, she's brought her daughter to meet you now, so can you make time to come for dinner this evening?" Quinn asked her son, hope plain in her eyes.

"Doctor Gilbert," Laila called out, already slipping her shoes on. "I'll head out, I just remembered I promised the Supreme Luna I'd help her sort out the guest arrangements this morning." She smiled, then offered a quick greeting to his mother, who didn't bother answering this time, before hurrying out the door before Gilbert could stop her again and make her listen to their conversation.

The moment the door shut behind her, Quinn turned to her son. "I don't like you associating with that she-wolf. I honestly can't recall a single pleasant encounter with her, and all the names she called your sisters, over the years." She shuddered at the mere thought, certain whoever ended up fated-bonded to that she-wolf must be cursed somehow.

"She's changed, Ma. She's not like—" Gilbert began, trying to put in a good word for Laila before telling his mother anything further, but Quinn waved a hand, dismissing it entirely.

"That's her own problem to deal with, not ours. Her changing doesn't erase all her past bad behavior and arrogance. Wear something nice tonight, Gil. Annie is such a lovely girl, and I just know you'll like her. I'll see you this evening." Quinn leaned down, kissed her son's cheek, then pulled her coat closed and rose to leave.

"Ma, you know it isn't exactly proper to be meeting someone, with my... my girlfriend only having died a few months ago. It's—" Gilbert began, but Quinn sighed.

"That's precisely why I told my friend that if the two of you hit it off, we won't hold any ceremony until at least six months have passed. You're not getting any younger, Gilbert, and you need a mate to support you, we've already discussed all of this before." Quinn said, walking toward his door, and when she reached it, she turned back to look at him.

"Seeing you married to my best friend's daughter would make me, and everyone, so proud. I'll see you tonight?" She asked, a little uncertain.

Quinn knew perfectly well that if she didn't step in and manage his life herself, the boy would never know when it was time to bring a girl home, and might stay single his entire life, since here he was, thirty-two years old, and had never once brought a girl home to meet them.

Gilbert nodded. "I'll clear my schedule for tonight. But, Ma, no promises about marrying her." He said, hugging her briefly before walking her out.

After his mother left, Gilbert rubbed at his forehead, feeling a headache building already, knowing that getting Laila accepted by his family wasn't going to be anywhere near easy, not after every single one of them had had bad experiences with her in the past, experiences that had made him want absolutely nothing to do with her, once upon a time.

Before he could even think about introducing her to them properly, he needed them to see who she'd become now, needed to give her a real chance first.

Gilbert checked the time and realized he still needed to go check on the Luna, as he'd been instructed, before thinking any further about what to do next.

The doctor left his apartment thirty minutes later, after showering, and headed toward the Alpha and Luna's penthouse. On his way there, he spotted Sebastian walking toward the elevator and slowed to a stop.

The Alpha's expression looked dark and gloomy. He was still dressed in his nightwear, with a coat thrown over it, and house slippers on his feet that were drenched from the melted snow. The sight made Gilbert wonder if the Alpha had been drunk or had simply gone out dressed like that in this weather. One hand was buried deep in his pocket as he walked.

He nearly walked straight past Gilbert until the doctor greeted him.

"Good morning, Supreme Alpha."

Sebastian, deep in thought and barely looking where he was going, was still working through the theories forming in his mind around everything he had just uncovered. He heard the doctor's greeting and turned toward him with a scowl that quickly shifted into an arched brow.

"Gilbert. Heading up to see my wife?" he asked.

The doctor nodded. "Yes, I brought the cold ointment you requested, for her hands and feet. Like you said, it's only going to get colder over the next few days." Gilbert said, stepping into the elevator alongside him as Sebastian pressed the button for their floor.

"Good. I wanted to speak with you about something else, as well."

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 545: The Talk With The Alpha_Part 2[1,231 words]

Hearing Sebastian’s words, Gilbert turned to him, curious. "About what? Is it about the Luna?" He asked, since lately, whenever Sebastian spoke to him at all, it had always been to ask about his wife and nothing else.

In fact, this was the first time the two of them had met face to face in months, not since Zoe’s death, and the doctor understood well enough by now not to push conversation with the Alpha unless spoken to first.

Sebastian turned to the doctor. "It’s not about her. It’s about Nickolas." He began. "Can a werewolf survive a torn neck in water, along with deep bruising?"

Sebastian had been meaning to ask the doctor this for a while now, since no matter what he did, he couldn’t get his cousin out of his head, couldn’t stop wondering why no body had turned up if the man really was dead. With everything else piling up around them, including the recent discoveries tying their lives to a far older story, Sebastian didn’t want to keep carrying the weight of Nick’s unresolved fate on top of everything else.

There was already too much on his plate as it was. With so much competing for his attention, Sebastian genuinely didn’t know what to focus on first anymore.

"How deep was the tear in his flesh?" Gilbert asked, curious since he hadn’t been present for the fight itself.

"Not as deep as I would have fucking liked, but I tore through part of a major vein, enough to make him bleed heavily. He also had two bullet wounds already in his shoulder, I believe... my sister shot him."

At the mention of his sister, Gilbert belatedly noticed the way the Alpha’s face hardened and his voice became almost emotionless, as though he were talking about the weather.

"I taught her once how to use a gun, but she never took it seriously because she thought she would never need it. But she shot him, missing his fucking black heart," Sebastian said flatly, his expression giving away nothing.

Gilbert wasn't sure whether he should offer his personal condolences to the Alpha, but then thought better of it. He had heard that Sebastian had broken a man's head a few weeks ago when the man had offered him condolences.

Sebastian's eyes turned toward the doctor as he continued speaking.

"As you already know we never found his body, but my wife's sister says there's a real possibility the sharks got to him first," he informed him.

The doctor looked thoughtful for a moment before answering.

"If the rumors are true, that he now carries power equal to a Supreme Alpha, his odds of survival would've been higher, if he'd been pulled out and treated immediately. But if he wasn't treated right away, those odds drop sharply, and the bullet wounds would only make it worse. There have been reports of sharks in our waters lately, so it's entirely possible he was eaten."

They reached Sebastian's floor, the elevator doors sliding open as they stepped out together. Sebastian was still unwilling to pin all his hopes on the possibility that a shark had finished the job.

A sudden, almost desperate urge to smoke hit him, even though he wasn't a smoker. The worry gnawing at the edges of his mind over the safety of the family he had left and what he would have to do to make sure no other threat ever touched them again was making him restless, giving him an almost unbearable itch beneath his skin.

Because Sebastian was done losing the people he loved.

"You shouldn't worry so much about him, Supreme Alpha," Gilbert assured him, noticing the look in the Alpha's eyes. "Silver has twice the protection it once had now, with the men Ken sent, all of them possessing sharpened senses and abilities," Gilbert told him.

As they continued walking down the hallway, he cleared his throat before asking, "By the way, I've been meaning to ask you something. How did you discover that the Luna and I are related?"

Sebastian had told him this weeks ago, when he'd ordered him to look after his cousin with everything he had in his absence, to make sure her pregnancy never went wrong, and when the doctor had asked how exactly she was his cousin, Sebastian had given him only a vague answer at the time, mentioning only that his family's records had been lost at Mooncreek Pack.

"Her father was your uncle. Vincent," came Sebastian's brisk, flat reply, enough to make the doctor bite back whatever other questions he had wanted to ask. Sebastian had

already turned away, his walls visibly going back up, his aura flaring around him as though he wanted to shut down any sort of connection or small talk.

Gilbert didn't ask anything else, but he couldn't help thinking about what a small world it was. His uncle Vincent, whom he vaguely remembered from when he was a boy, had daughters, and one of them had turned out to be Viola.

His mother and uncle had been so close back then. His uncle would carry Gilbert on his shoulders and take him on walks, and Gilbert could still remember how his late mother would always conceal his uncle.

'Don't worry. You protected her by letting her go. You two were never meant to be, Vince.'

'How could I ever forget her, Claire? She carries my child and my heart...I can never forget her.'

So it turned out his uncle had fallen in love with a mermaid, the same creature who had later destroyed their world and killed them all. Gilbert didn't know what to do with the information, but as though Sebastian had read his mind, the Alpha spoke.

"Don't blame any of their deaths on my woman or her mother. They had nothing to do with it. It was the mermaid king who flooded your home and killed your family. Whatever misgivings you have in your heart, make sure they don't extend to my wife. I told you about this because I want her to feel close to her real family and to have more people around her who genuinely care about her."

Sebastian stopped and looked at the doctor.

"And I also told you because I want you to share any memories you still have of your family with her, so she can feel close to them too. She gets saddened sometimes, and I hate it."

Gilbert looked at the Alpha. Even if he had wanted to blame the mermaids for his real family's deaths, he would never have chosen the Luna as someone to hate. She was kind, and now that he had learned he had cousins, especially the twin daughters of his favorite uncle, he could never hold anything against them.

"I have some picture frames of my uncle in my apartment, along with some of our family heirlooms I kept. I'll give the box to her and her sister," Gilbert said. "Don't worry. Now that I know who was responsible for the flood, I won't extend my dislike to the twin sisters."

Sebastian nodded before turning and resuming his walk, glad that he had made things clear with his wife's cousin. At least now, he didn't have to worry about another villain building resentment and hiding it beneath the surface like his own cousin had.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 546: What did you find?[1,083 words]

They soon reached the penthouse and stepped inside, finding the Luna in the kitchen, making herself tea and toast.

Sebastian looked at his wife, who turned toward him the moment they entered. She was dressed in his hoodie and sweatpants, the legs of the pants folded up and the sleeves rolled to her elbows. The oversized hoodie swallowed half her frame, hiding the curve of her belly entirely and almost seeming to hide her in it, making her look even smaller.

The sight of her, as always, softened something instantly in his chest. But almost immediately, he realized she wasn’t pleased with him when her eyes met his.

Viola turned toward her husband and shot him an annoyed look as she poured her tea before pointedly looking away. She had told him to sleep, but he had waited until she was asleep and then snuck out anyway. And if she had thought he looked tired yesterday, the dark circles beneath his eyes looked even worse now, his eyes swollen from another night of barely sleeping.

She knew he was carrying too much on his shoulders, but that didn’t make it any less frustrating to see him pushing himself like this.

Did he really think she liked waking up to find him gone, only to see him looking even more exhausted when he finally returned? She wanted him to take care of himself too, not just everyone else.

Sebastian caught the look immediately. He crossed to her anyway and pulled her against his chest, pressing a kiss to the top of her head. But she tried to move out of his hold so she could continue making her toast, which was already half-burnt, as he realized she had been eating it now.

"Angry with me?" he whispered, bending down to kiss her cheek.

Viola immediately turned her face away, refusing to let his lips touch her. The small gesture carried more hurt than anger, and Sebastian’s expression softened. She wasn’t simply annoyed that he had left while she slept. She had been worried about him, and now that worry had settled into a quiet hurt because he had ignored her plea to rest.

"My sunshine..." he murmured, but she kept her eyes lowered, stubbornly focusing on her toast rather than looking at him.

"You didn’t sleep at all last night, did you?" She questioned, holding her tea.

Sebastian took the cup of tea from her hands and took a small sip before wrapping an arm around her and gently tucking her head against his chest.

"I couldn’t sleep, honey. I went to the pack’s history library to dig up some things about our past."

Hearing that, Viola’s displeasure dissolved almost instantly, and she looked up at his face, noticeably paler from having gone out in the cold without proper clothing. This husband of hers needed even more scolding for neglecting himself. Was he trying to age himself before her? she thought, but she put the thought aside for now.

"What did you find?"

"We’ll talk after your checkup with the doctor. Come on," He took her hand and pulled her toward the living room, where Gilbert waited, even though Viola wanted to protest that she didn’t need a checkup every single day, that she was perfectly fine and healthy.

But she knew Sebastian had grown a little paranoid lately, and wouldn’t fully settle until he heard directly from a doctor that nothing was wrong, so she didn’t argue, letting the usual morning examination run its course.

A few minutes later, it was finished.

"Nothing to worry about, Supreme Alpha. Both babies, and the mother, are healthy and in perfect condition." Gilbert assured him with a smile, and Sebastian, who’d been sitting beside his wife visibly tense, let out a slow breath of relief.

Gilbert couldn’t help but privately wonder, if he was already this on edge now, what he’d be like once she actually went into labor.

"You may leave," Sebastian said to the doctor, who was already packing his things even before being rudely sent away. But as Gilbert began to leave, Sebastian reminded him, "Don’t forget to send the box to her."

"I won’t." Gilbert said with a small smile.

"What box?" Viola asked after Gilbert left, pulling the hoodie down to cover her stomach, which had just been examined.

"Your father’s picture frames and family heirlooms," he said, standing up to get her the tea and toast she made so she could eat while they talked. He returned a moment later with her breakfast, setting the plate in front of her and keeping the hot cup of tea in his hand so he could help her with it.

"I told him about you two being related, so you don’t have to worry about how to tell him," he added.

"You did?" Viola asked, looking at her mate.

Sebastian nodded curtly before sitting beside her. He picked up a piece of toast and brought it to her lips, quietly urging her to eat as he fed her himself.

"He understood, and everything is clear now. Are you relieved?" he asked, watching her face soften with emotion.

Viola nodded through a mouthful.

"I am. You have no idea how much I’ve been wondering how to tell him about it and explain the fact that I destroyed the place he built in Mooncreek," she said, chewing the toast and washing it down with her tea.

"You didn’t destroy it. The sea witch bitch did," Sebastian said, wiping a few breadcrumbs from the corner of her lips before licking them from his own thumb without blinking an eye.

"Thank you," Viola muttered.

He pinched her nose affectionately. "I haven’t done half of what you’ve done for me. No thanks needed. Eat up before it dries out. The toast is already burnt enough."

Viola tried to share her breakfast with him, but he refused, not wanting to take any of her portion. He told her he would make his own breakfast once she was finished.

After she finished eating, Viola turned to Sebastian, placing her teacup on her empty plate.

"Tell me what you found. I mean, in the library, about the past," she asked, watching as he reached into his pocket and pulled out a thick, brown sheet of paper before handing it to her.

Viola took it from his hand, settling properly onto the couch, staring at the strange writing she couldn’t make any sense of. "What is this?" She looked up at him.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 547: Pack Invasion[1,105 words]

"You can’t read it?" He asked, and when she shook her head, his mouth settled into a flat line. "That’s Vaelor’s cavemen handwriting. I wasn’t even supposed to take anything from

his diary, but this page had already come loose, fallen out. It says, the love of my life made me kill her."

Viola's brows pulled together, staring hard at the writing as though sheer focus might make it suddenly legible, before she looked back up at her husband.

"What does that even mean? Did she do something he believed made her deserve to die? Or did she ask him to do it? Why would she ever ask for that?" She whispered, none of it making any real sense to her, why would any woman ask for her own death, knowing full well what it would unleash, especially the feud it would spark between mermaids and werewolves for generations after?

And if Vaelor truly loved her, why would he have listened to her, agreed to kill her? None of it added up for Viola, and she frowned down at the paper in her hands.

Sebastian took it back from her, seeing how intently she was staring at it, folding it carefully before continuing with everything else he'd learned. He told her everything he'd read in the diary, every image of it that had formed so vividly in his mind.

"One thing's certain, he genuinely loved her once. The resentment only started after he killed her, which, honestly, doesn't make much sense to me either." Sebastian said, dragging his fingers through his silver hair, leaving it disheveled as he settled back against the couch, turning to his thoughtful wife.

"Maybe we should ask your sister if Azmira left anything of her own behind. Maybe she kept a diary too." Sebastian suggested, since there seemed to be no other way to know what the mermaid herself had actually been thinking at the time.

"I'll ask her, the moment she's back. She still hasn't returned from the sea yet." She paused. "If you're the only one who can actually read Vaelor's handwriting, that makes it fairly clear... you might really have been him, in another life." She whispered, watching him grimace at the thought.

"As much as I hate the idea of being a man who killed his own wife for powers, it does seem that way," he mused, reaching out to gently smooth her hair back, staring into her luminous blue eyes as he added, "I would never do that to you, amor. I might share some kind of connection to him, but I refuse to claim what he did as my own action." He trailed his hand down to her neck, stroking it gently with his thumb, and she leaned into his touch instinctively.

"I know. We'll figure it out together. But first, go take a shower, and I'll put something quick together for you." Viola said, already standing before he could stop her, making her way toward the kitchen, wanting to take care of him too and make breakfast.

While she stood in the kitchen, she couldn't stop turning over everything he'd told her, how Vaelor hadn't only killed Azmira, but had gone on to hate his own brother afterward

too along with the mermaid herself. Something about all of it still didn't sit right and it was like there were still missing pieces.

A few minutes later, Sebastian came downstairs, freshly showered. He came up behind her at the stove, where she stood turning bacon with a fork, and wrapped his arms around her waist, pressing a kiss to the top of her head before resting his chin there. His scent wrapped around her entirely, so good her wolf stirred awake inside her like a starving beast, and she melted back against him.

"What are you thinking about?" He asked, and Viola shook her head.

"Nothing. Just making your breakfast." She said lightly.

He glanced down at the sizzling bacon. "I honestly don't know what smells best right now, the coffee, the bacon, or my wife whose scent is getting stronger by the second. You're getting aroused and it's enticing." He licked slowly along her neck, his warm tongue trailing over her skin sending shivers down her spin.

"Wow, I'm flattered. I must smell pretty good, if I'm ranking right up there with coffee and bacon." She said, a small moan threading through her teasing tone, since it had been months since she and her husband had been together like this, and she'd missed it, even with everything else weighing on her mind, she still wanted him touching her.

She felt him grin against the top of her head. "I could eat you right up." His tone carried both teasing and something far more serious, sensual, and heat swept through her that had nothing to do with embarrassment. She leaned back into him, her knees suddenly weak. She could feel him hard and swollen against her, and she rubbed her bottom slowly against it.

"I think we need to go back to bed." There was no teasing left in his voice at all, this time.

"Now?" She asked. "What about your breakfast?"

"It can wait." He reached around her and switched off the stove.

Ten minutes later, she was completely naked, breathless, trembling right on the edge of climax. Her thighs draped over his shoulders, her husband driving her slowly, deliberately, toward absolute madness with his tongue alone.

She tried to pull him up and over her, but he pinned her wrists to the bed instead and kept going. She surrendered completely, her hips lifting, her whole body shuddering through her release. Only once she'd gone limp did he finally move up over her, covering her body with his, sliding into her with one smooth, deep thrust that took him all the way in, and Viola's eyes rolled back.

She inhaled sharply, having already forgotten just how completely he filled her.

He set a slow, steady rhythm, his hands gripping her shoulders, his eyes fixed on her face, mindful of her belly the whole time.

He loved her so thoroughly that Viola drifted off to sleep afterward in his arms, waking up later to an empty bed, a smile already forming on her face, only to have it fall away the instant she registered what had actually woken her.

The pack-wide alarm system was blaring, red lights flashing everywhere, the unmistakable signal of a pack invasion. For one disoriented second, Viola thought she had to be dreaming, but the red light was unmistakably real, and her heart gave one heavy, lurching thud.

"Pack invasion..."

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 548: How did they get in?[1,264 words]

Viola stumbled out of bed, searching for her clothes on the floor, but found her husband's hoodie and sweatpants folded neatly on the couch, left there for exactly the moment she woke up. She scrambled into them, her heart racing in time with the blaring alarm.

A pack invasion wasn't something that happened often, but when it did, it always meant something serious, territory being seized, a major fight breaking out.

It wasn't unheard of for territory to be seized by stronger, larger packs, but who would possibly dare try that against Silver, being the largest pack in the entire world, a place no one in their right mind would challenge.

Viola hadn't even heard of a successful pack invasion happening in a very long time, the last one she could recall having struck a neighboring pack near Moonwillow, where the Alpha had been killed outright and the entire pack handed over to the attacking group.

Could it be... Nickolas? Had he somehow crawled his way out of death?

Viola's heart pounded the whole time she dressed, then rushed to peer out through the glass wall, where the sky had turned a burnt orange against the winter afternoon, snow beginning to fall harder than usual for this time of day. Below, on the streets, she could see pack members in full panic, people running in every direction, fleeing their buildings.

Just as she started to leave the room, her husband's voice came through the mind link.

"If you're awake, amor, stay exactly where you are. I'll send guards to bring you somewhere safe. We've got a bit of a problem in the pack." He said, his voice so calm it might have fooled anyone into thinking it was nothing serious, but Viola had the distinct feeling he was only sounding that way to keep her steady, since the panic she could see below told a very different story.

"What's going on?" She asked, already hurrying out of the bedroom, grabbing an extra coat on her way.

"We've been invaded by Darkbur Pack." He told her, and Viola frowned at the news.

Darkbur? She'd nearly forgotten about them entirely. But Sebastian, back when he hadn't been himself, had signed a contract handing them a quarter of Silver's territory, and revoking it had dragged on and on, especially once Zoe's death had pulled Sebastian's attention away entirely, leaving the matter in the Elders' hands. It seemed they'd failed to revoke it in time, and now Darkbur had arrived to claim what had been promised to them, or else to fight for the entire pack outright.

"Stay put and don't come out. Their Alpha is barely better than a rogue himself, uneducated bastard, who handles everything the old brutal way. I don't want him getting any ideas when he sees you." Sebastian told her, unwilling to let her come down anywhere near this in her condition, already making his way toward the part of the pack that had been seized, where his people were being held hostage and tormented into leaving that part of the pack.

Right now, before confronting the intruders himself, making sure his wife was somewhere safe mattered more than anything else. Once he'd finished speaking to her, he cut the link and turned to Jace, who was keeping pace beside him, waiting for orders.

"How did they get in?" Sebastian demanded coldly, since he'd given explicit orders that no stranger without proper clearance was to enter their pack, and yet somehow these barbarians had walked straight into Silver.

"They showed the signed contract to the border guards, and once the blood print on it was confirmed as yours, they had no legal choice but to let them through, believing they only wanted a meeting with you. Instead, they went straight to the northern part of the pack and seized it outright, beating down anyone who refused to leave their homes." Jace reported nervously, feeling Sebastian's aura flare dangerously around him, shrinking back instinctively.

"Why in the fuck am I only hearing about this now, hours after it started?" Sebastian demanded. He couldn't entirely blame the border guards, since werewolf law gave them no choice once his blood was confirmed on the contract, but why no one had reached him sooner was still beyond him.

"I-I tried reaching you, but you weren't available," Jace said.

Sebastian cursed under his breath, realizing exactly why he had missed Jace's mindlink. He had been too occupied making love to his wife and had fallen asleep afterward still holding her in his arms, taking the opportunity to get a little shuteye so he wouldn't upset her again by not getting enough sleep.

"Send men to calm the pack members and get the chaos under control." Sebastian ordered, already walking toward the seized section of his pack.

It didn't take long to reach it. Even before arriving, he could smell the foul stench of Darkbur Pack members, a smell they were infamously known for among werewolves everywhere. Darkbur had built its entire reputation on seizing territory since its earliest days, so many packs claimed by them now that Sebastian had long since lost count.

The werewolf world had always operated on a strict hierarchy, where seizing weaker packs was never technically against their laws. If an Alpha wasn't strong enough to protect his own people from invasion, then he didn't deserve to keep his pack at all. Darkbur, acting like the barbarians they were, had thrived under exactly that loophole, though Sebastian had never once imagined they'd dare come after him directly. But then, signing that contract had been his own mistake, and this was its price.

Sebastian saw smoke rising from one of the largest buildings, the one that housed most of the omegas of Silver, and his expression darkened further as he spotted pack members forced to kneel in the middle of the street, others being beaten and shoved violently out of buildings by force.

"Throw them all out of my building! I want this side of Silver cleared of every single one of these entitled motherfuckers!" came the order from Alpha Price, the Alpha of Darkbur Pack, who stood atop a car with a cigar clenched between his teeth as he barked out commands.

The man stood shirtless, revealing a chest covered entirely in tattoos that ran from his neck down to his waist.

Alpha Price had tattooed his body with the names and symbols of every pack he had ever fought or seized, and he never bothered to cover them. He seemed to enjoy showing them off to anyone willing to look.

Apparently, the cold meant nothing to him either. He stood there with gooseflesh raised across his bare skin, without a coat in sight, his long black hair falling down his broad back. Worst of all, he wore ripped skinny jeans, which made Sebastian even less eager to meet the barbarian.

The moment he sensed the Silver Alpha's aura, the man turned to look at him directly, grinning wide enough to show off a mouth full of gold teeth.

"Well, well, well, if it isn't our ever-young, prestigious Alpha Sebastian Kade," Alpha Price said, jumping down off the car, leaving a visible dent behind, and walking straight toward Sebastian, who looked anything but welcoming.

"Long time no see. You never once asked after me, never invited me to a single one of your pack events, if that isn't rude, Alpha Sebastian, I don't know what is. But no worries, we're about to be partners forever." He grinned, reaching out a hand to shake Sebastian's.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 549: The little Luna[1,332 words]

Sebastian didn't so much as glance at the hand full of gold rings offered to him, keeping his own hands tucked deep in his pockets as he studied Price.

"The audacity of you, Price. You didn't just walk into my pack, you're laying hands on my people." Came Sebastian's brisk reply, meeting the man's dark eyes, eyes that glittered with amusement as he glanced back toward the kneeling pack members.

"Oh, you mean those lunatics on their knees? They're being stubborn, acting like we Darkbur are somehow beneath them. I'm just teaching them a little lesson, nothing serious. Oh, come now, don't tell me you're offended?" Price said, resting a hand on Sebastian's shoulder, only for the look the Silver Alpha gave him to make him snatch it right back, hands raised in mock surrender.

"Okay, grumpy, no touching. I refused to revoke the contract when your elders came calling, I sent them back saying I'd think it over, and I did think it over, and I decided Silver is exactly where I want to be now. What better way to eventually own the whole thing than starting with a quarter of it first? My father always taught me to dream big." He said, taking a long drag from his thick cigar, blowing the smoke straight into Sebastian's face, perfectly confident the binding contract meant Sebastian couldn't retaliate.

"That'll happen over my dead body, Price. I'll give you and your barbarians a chance to walk yourselves out of my pack, or—" Sebastian was saying, but Price threw his head back and laughed, snow falling across his face, which he wiped away carelessly.

"I'd gladly kill you for it, you know, but let me share a little secret with you, Alpha Sebastian. Before I even came here, I sent a copy of that contract to every pack in our world to stand witness, and you know exactly what happens to Alphas who don't honor what they've signed, don't you?" Price asked, stepping right into Sebastian's space, his hot breath, which smelled like rotten milk, fanning across his face.

Of course Sebastian knew exactly what happened to Alphas who signed contracts and then tried to walk them back, the other packs united to tear them down, or forced them to make good on their word regardless.

Sebastian's lips curled faintly at the corner. "I see you've got this all figured out, Price. You came prepared to take a quarter of Silver."

Price nodded, clearly pleased with himself for having cornered the mighty Sebastian Kade so completely, with nothing left for him to do now but concede the territory to Darkbur, or face the combined wrath of every other pack out there.

Smiling, Price said, "Now, tell your people to clear out of my part of the building, before I set the whole thing on fire to drive them out like ants." He looked at Sebastian with open challenge, since if this went the way he wanted, he'd be the first to ever bring down Sebastian Kade, and every other pack would learn to fear him for it.

Sebastian's eyes moved over his people kneeling in the street, the smoke still rising from the burning building, his fingers curling into fists inside his pockets, his men standing ready at the sides, waiting only for his word.

One word from him and he could ignite full war between Darkbur and Silver, but rather than let his people suffer under Price's occupation any longer, Sebastian could see only one real path forward, a formal challenge to reclaim the contract. He was already turning to issue it when—

"I think Alpha Price is forgetting that we're the biggest pack in the world, and he still dares to challenge the Supreme Alpha," Came Viola's voice, as she pushed her way through the gathered crowd to stand beside her husband, and Sebastian's displeased eyes landed on her instantly, hardening into stone at the sight of her out here at all.

But Viola ignored both him and his displeasure, knowing full well they'd talk about it later. For now, this man needed to be dealt with and sent out of their pack for good. No doubt Sebastian would be furious with her, but she couldn't bring herself to hide away like a coward while he faced this man alone, not when, as Luna, she belonged right beside him.

Hiding would do nothing for her reputation within the pack, and everyone would talk about it once it was over anyway. Viola didn't want to have to walk on eggshells around her pack members anymore.

Alpha Price's eyes landed on the small woman bundled up in a coat, looking up at him as she addressed him directly, and he let out a laugh.

"You must be the little Luna I've heard about. Aww, how adorable. How old are you again? Sebastian, you never mentioned your Luna looked practically underage. With those round, adorable cheeks and eyes, I never knew you were into small women."

He deliberately bent down and held out a hand for a handshake, the way one might greet a small girl. Viola wasn't nearly as short as he was making her seem, but Price was simply so big and tall that standing beside him made her look much smaller.

His words drew laughter from the men gathered behind him. They began pointing at her and whispering among themselves, clearly entertained by his mockery.

Viola glared at his filthy, outstretched hand, visibly covered in dirt, then looked back at him, refusing to take it. Price turned back to Sebastian.

"You've trained your little wife to be just as mean as you are." He clicked his tongue. "But no worries. Now that we're going to be partners, she'll have to be nice to me."

"Watch how you speak to her, or I'll have you kissing the pavement." Came Sebastian's warning, and Price only smirked wider at it.

"You're not the only one with a wife, you know. I brought mine too, just as pregnant as your little one. Elizabeth!" He called out toward the building, where women were still being forced out, and soon a tall, powerfully built woman emerged, shoving a she-wolf out onto the street ahead of her.

"Yes, my Price Charming!" Elizabeth answered, and Viola turned to study her, a she-wolf who, just like her husband, wore far too little clothing for the cold. Trousers and a cropped top revealing a heavily pregnant belly, a giant of a woman with a weathered tan and tattoos covering nearly every visible inch of skin.

Elizabeth crossed to her husband after shoving the other she-wolf out of her way, standing nearly as tall as him.

"What'd you call me for, honeycomb? I was enjoying myself, putting these spoiled wolves in their place, dealing with the stubborn ones." Elizabeth said, kissing her husband before turning to face Viola.

"The Alpha of Silver seems to think he's the only one with a pregnant wife, so I wanted you two to meet. And I believe you've always wanted to meet the Supreme Luna, well, here she is." He said, gesturing toward Viola, and his wife looked her over before the two of them burst into laughter together, as though sharing some private joke, their pack members behind them joining in.

"Why's she so small? Or should I say, short?" Elizabeth remarked, unable to stop laughing. Where they came from, short women were practically unheard of, and being tall and well-built was considered the ideal that men admired.

Viola felt her blood begin to boil at being mocked for her height.

"Rather than mocking someone's height, if I were you," Viola said calmly, "I'd focus a little more on personal hygiene, Elizabeth, because you reek so badly I can barely breathe standing here." Viola said, unable to stand being mocked by two people who had plenty to be insulted over themselves, and just as she expected, her words wiped the smiles clean off their faces instantly.

Fated: The Alpha's Unwanted Luna - Chapter 550: A Challenge[1,262 words]

"Oh, I see. She's got a mouth on her," Elizabeth said, stepping away from her husband and closing the distance between them until she stood directly in front of Viola. She looked down at her with a tight, humorless smile.

"We Darkbur know how to maintain our natural scent and body oils, not waste them away like you rich folks do by washing every second of the day. But you know what? I can still beat your ass so badly, you'll be begging for a taste of my strength, hygiene secrets and all."

Viola didn't know whether to laugh outright or simply point out that the woman was dressing up filth with fancy language, or remind her that Darkbur wasn't actually poor, their Alpha simply chose to live that way, despite all the land and natural resources at his disposal. But Viola bit the words back, since right now she didn't want a fight, she only wanted these people gone from their pack and their people left alone.

"Elizabeth, I don't want to fight you, I want—" Viola began, but Elizabeth laughed, running a hand proudly over her own pregnant belly. "Oh, but I want to fight you, bitch. I want that very badly. I'm due next month myself, and I promise you, my son is going to be born right here in Silver, so what's it going to be? Are you packing your people up and getting the fuck out, or do you want to fight us for it?"

Sebastian was already parting his lips to answer when Price beat him to it, clapping his hands together loudly.

"I have an idea!" He called out. "How about a tournament, between our women? If my Elizabeth wins, Alpha Sebastian, all your people clear out of the north side, and my people move in. And if your woman wins..." Price looked at Sebastian with a smirk, already certain there was no way Viola could possibly win against his mighty Elizabeth. "I'll pack my people up and leave your pack entirely. And there are no rules to this fight. They can kill each other, if it comes to that."

Sebastian's face twisted with displeasure almost instantly at those words. He would never allow his wife to fight in her condition, wouldn't even entertain the thought, not in this brutal weather, but as though anticipating exactly that refusal, Price smirked, turning to challenge Sebastian's pack members who'd gathered around them instead.

"Why’s your Alpha hesitating? Is that a sign you’ve got yourselves an incompetent Luna? For a Supreme, a fight with my Liza should be nothing, right? Or is she scared?" He turned to address Viola directly. "It’s not even an unfair fight, you’re both women, both in the same condition. What a disgrace, really, for Silver if you can’t protect your pack."

His words rippled instantly through the gathered Silver Pack members, many of whom, if they were honest, had never fully warmed to the Luna chosen for them, half-mermaid as she was. But the idea that she couldn’t fight for them, that she wouldn’t fight for them, struck a much deeper chord in their hearts. After all, protecting the pack was just as much a Luna’s duty as it was an Alpha’s.

Alpha Price had just handed Silver a way out of the situation, yet their own Luna seemed unwilling to take it. Was she trying to doom Silver to becoming a joint pack with Darkbur?

"I always knew it. The moment it actually came down to doing something real for us, she’d back out. Look at her, she’s probably shaking in her boots right now." Came whispered words from some of the people who’d made it their life’s mission to resent the Supreme Luna.

"The bitch. Oh, if she makes us lose this part of Silver to these barbarians, someone needs to send her out." Came another murmur, sharp with resentment as it was one of Sebastian’s old flames.

"Will you all stop blaming the Luna? She’s carrying the heir to Silver. You can’t seriously expect her to fight in that condition. If it were you, would you want to face that woman built like a tank?" someone else shot back, clearly holding no grudge against their Luna.

"Oh, please! It’s not the first time a she-wolf carrying pups has fought. Last year, during the tournament in Blood Moon Pack, their Luna was pregnant, yet she still won the fight and led her pack to victory. So why should ours be any different?"

Soon, the entire street erupted into an open argument between the two sides, until one look from Sebastian silenced the crowd entirely, bringing everyone to an abrupt standstill.

Sebastian turned back to Price.

"My wife isn’t fighting. If there’s going to be a tournament, let it be between us." He challenged, but clearly Price had already set his sights firmly on Viola and worked out every angle of his plan, and he only laughed.

"I’m not fighting you. If your wife can’t even face mine, then you can all simply pack up and leave right now, and let me settle comfortably into my new place." Said Alpha Price, yawning dramatically, as though the whole exchange bored him.

"You fucking—" Sebastian started, lunging forward as though to strike the man, but Viola grabbed him back, turning instead to Alpha Price, who clearly wasn't backing down from anything short of getting exactly what he wanted.

"Fine. I accept. I'll fight your wife, but I want it written down on paper officially, that if I beat her, you take your people and leave for good." She spoke calmly, and Sebastian's displeased eyes bored into the side of her head for agreeing to this at all, but Viola knew this was the fastest, cleanest way out of the entire mess, the quickest path to sending these people far away from here.

"Then bring the papers forward, I'll sign them right now!" Price said, clapping his hands together with genuine excitement.

A few minutes later, once the papers had been signed, the tournament was scheduled for that evening, shortly after sunset, giving both women time to rest beforehand.

Werewolf pregnancies were different from human pregnancies. A strong enough she-wolf could still hold her own in a fight while pregnant, just as she could when she wasn't. Pregnant werewolves were not automatically considered too fragile to fight, and it wasn't unusual to see them participate in battles in their world, provided they were strong enough to handle the physical demands.

Price and his people settled into one of the large buildings in the northern section of the pack he intended to claim. He watched his wife devour the lavish meal the Silver omegas had prepared for them, consisting of marinated chicken, ham, and plenty of other meat. He kept feeding her more and more, knowing full well that the more Elizabeth ate, the harder she fought, turning into something unleashed straight from hell. He smirked at the thought.

"I am going to beat her ass so badly she won't ever talk smart to me again!" Elizabeth gritted out around a mouthful of food, taking another bite.

She was still fuming that these fancy werewolves thought they could speak to her that way, especially that little bitch who had dared to mock her hygiene as though it were something Elizabeth should be ashamed of. In fact, she was proud of maintaining her body's natural oils, something most she-wolves outside their pack struggled to do, yet that little woman had acted as though it were something disgusting.