

## Accidental Surrogate For Alpha By Caroline Above Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Campaign dinner

288 Vouchers

Ella

Where is Sinclair? I think nervously, scanning the room. He promised he wouldn't leave my side. Why did I ever let myself get separated from him. The crowd around me is still bombarding me with questions, and though I think I'm putting up a good front, I can't help but feel overwhelmed. My pulse is racing, and the blood is rushing in my ears. I'm not ready for this. I've only had two days to prepare, surely they're going to see right through my act!

I'm getting more and more light headed by the minute, and my stomach is beginning to churn. I think I'm going to be sick, but I'm not sure if it's morning sickness, or my nerves. I might be excited about the idea of the baby making it's presence known, but this is the last place I want to get sick.

I turn in place, searching the room for any kind of restroom. I can't ask any of the aristocrats around me, speaking about such a private matter with people of this stature would be considered incredibly inappropriate. However before I can figure out a possible retreat, I see Sinclair striding through the crush of shifters, his brow furrowed as he watches me.

The people around me disappear when he finally closes the distance between us, and I'm amazed to feel my nausea and my nerves settle as soon as I breathe in his scent and feel his warm presence. "Are you alright?" He asks with concern, brushing the hair out of my face.

Though I feel far better than I did a moment ago, I'm still terribly overwhelmed. My lower lip trembles, and I wonder if I'm really so stressed that I might cry, or if it's just my pregnancy hormones spinning out of control. I don't want to show weakness in front of Sinclair, I don't want him to think I'm not up to playing this role. I not only have to prove myself to all these strangers, but to the father of my child. I plaster a wide smile across my face. "I'm fine."

He narrows his eyes, sidling closer and dipping his head to my ear. "Are you being honest, sweet Ella?"

I bristle at this prompt. Who is he to demand honesty about my feelings? If I don't want to talk about them, that's my choice. I'm about to tell him as much, when his low growl ricochets through my body, and the words spill unwillingly from my lips. "It's just a bit of morning sickness." I explain in a whisper, "I think the crowd made me overheat."  
"And?" He presses, clearly sensing that there's more to the story.

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I don't not like how easily he can read me. Either that means I'm failing in my act, or his connection to our pup is giving him an unfair advantage sensing my emotions. To be honest, I'm not sure which possibility frightens me more. Still, I can't stop myself from speaking, though I refuse to look him in the eyes. "I got nervous." I can feel myself flushing at the admission, "you promised you wouldn't leave my side." I add petulantly, glaring up at him from beneath my lashes

Sinclair's demanding growls soften to a purr, and the next thing I know, he's tucking me to his chest, stroking his hand down my spine in a soothing caress. "Poor little mate." He murmurs, no doubt for the people around us who might overhear. "I'm sorry I've been neglecting you."

I can hear the crowd oohing and ahing at the display, an Alpha caring for his mate. Is that why he's doing this? Does he actually care about my feelings, or is he just putting on a show? It must be the latter, I decide, otherwise he wouldn't ever call me his mate.

"How sweet." I recognize the voice immediately. It belongs to the same man who was questioning me with such suspicion a little while ago.

"Breeding women can be so needy, can't they, Alpha Dominic?"

A growl rises in my defense, but to my surprise, it doesn't come from Sinclair – it comes from me! I don't think I've ever growled in my life.

Is that the pup's influence? Sinclair probably thinks it's part of my act, trying to pass myself off as a she-wolf, but I didn't intend to do it at all!

A few chuckles pass through the crowd, though I don't know why. I feel completely serious, but I hear murmurs describing my cuteness. The other man blinks, looking up at Sinclair as if he expects him to chastise me. "My apologies, your highness." Sinclair states simply. "She's a fierce little thing at the best of times." The words sound like an excuse for my behavior, but his tone is full of praise and his arms tighten around

me affectionately.

Too late, his address for the other man filters through my brain. Your Highness. That must mean this is the prince, and Sinclair's main opponent in the election. It's no wonder I found him so imposing, or why he resembles the King so much.

"Well, what more could we want in a Luna." The Prince remarks, not sounding like he means a single word of this. "In fact, your loving display has inspired me! What's say we play a game, to celebrate your new family?"

"What kind of game do you have in mind?" Sinclair's muscles tensed, but his reply tells me saying no isn't really an option here. After all, the entire point of this evening is to sell our relationship to the Alpha council. They're supposed to believe we're madly in love and overjoyed to be starting our family. We're being tested now, and backing down from the challenge would be a mistake.

"My own special version of the newlywed game." The Prince gives us a sly grin. "To test the mating bond."

I try to stay calm, but inside I'm panicking. We don't have a mating bond, how on earth are they going to test it? We're sure to fail, and at the very first hurdle! I look up at Sinclair for guidance, but he's smiling at the Prince, calling his bluff. "As you wish."

The Prince guides us towards the dais before the king and queen, placing me on one side, and Sinclair on the other. "Now the object of the game is simple." The Prince explains, raising his voice so the entire audience can hear. "Ella and Dominic will communicate with each other through their bond, and afterwards they'll both have to write out what the other expressed without consulting one another verbally. If their responses match perfectly, we'll know they're a strong couple."

The implications are obvious, if our responses don't match, we'll look like a disconnected, weak couple – not the united Alpha and Luna we should be. Oh g\*d, we're going to fail! I think anxiously. Sinclair's bond to the baby is strong, but the baby is so little that their m\*ntal link is still dependent on him touching me. I could hear Sinclair's voice when I was passed

out in his arms, and he could hear the pup's craving when his hand was on my belly. Otherwise it hasn't happened.

I look to Sinclair, but he seems completely unconcerned. Then again, I have no doubt he's very good at hiding his emotions after spending so long in the public eye. Indeed, his face is a perfect mask, and as our eyes meet, I try to listen with all my might, praying that somehow his bond to the pup will spark to life even at this distance.

After a moment I realize it's no use. I don't have the first idea what he's trying to communicate to me, so I do the only thing I can think of. I cross the dais swiftly and throw myself into the huge Alpha's arms. I slide my arms around his neck as he catches me, and press my lips to his.

Sinclair purrs, locking me to him with one strong arm and catching the back of my head with the other, holding me in place so his talented lips can plunder my mouth. I might have instigated the kiss, but he takes charge immediately, drawing tiny whimpers from me as his tongue teases my lips and then delves inside. Fireworks explode behind my eyes as butterflies burst to life in my tummy.

I've never been kissed like this before, with so much skill and dominance that it feels as though he's reaching inside me and touching my very soul. I've also never felt this kind of electricity with any partner. It's as if my entire body is on fire, and he's barely even begun. My feet are hovering around his knees, and I remember Sinclair's remark about humans being prudish, so I wrap my legs around his waist as best I can through my voluminous skirts. It's not until he pulls back, finally snapping me out of my daze, that I remember we're not alone. While his lips were on mine I wasn't aware of anything but the two of us, but now I realize cheers and wolf whistles are egging us on all sides. The crowd seems to love our display, but when I open my eyes again I find Sinclair's dark gaze boring into me so forcefully my heart stops beating completely. Uh-oh, I think I might have just made a huge mistake.

