

## Accidental Surrogate for Alpha

Chapter 181

### 3rd Person

Henry glared at Leon as he injected the antidote for ether into Ella's arm. He was angry with the therapist, but he was also furious with himself for letting the hypnotic state continue for so long. He should have put his foot down the first time, when Ella first began screaming. Listening to her suffering had been horrible beyond belief. She'd started out by explaining the events that happened, but before long she disappeared into the memory, feeling everything that she described so that her story was interrupted by bouts of screaming and crying. She was reliving it all in front of them, and Henry despised himself for helping Leon torment her this way.

It took a moment for the antidote to kick in, but Ella finally went quiet as she was transported back to them. When her lashes parted to reveal bloodshot eyes, her tearstained skin turned grey, and in the next moment she lurched over the side of the couch and was vomiting onto the floor.

Henry pulled her hair back and ran a comforting hand up and down her back, crooning words of comfort to the poor child. "It's okay, dear one ... You're safe, it's over."

Once her stomach was empty and she was reduced to dry heaving, Henry guided her to lie down again. Leon appeared at her side with a wet rag and a glass of water, and Henry gently cleaned her face and helped her drink. "I'm sorry." Ella moaned, fresh tears streaming down her cheeks.

"Nonsense." Henry assured her. "If anyone has a right to be sick, it's you. You should have seen some of the messes I cleaned up when my boys were little. This is nothing."

Ella's hands went to her belly, her face twisted in guilt and pain. "He's upset." Ella whimpered, clearly referring to the baby "I frightened him.. the screaming.."

"Do you want me to call for the doctor?" Henry offered, "Just to be safe?"

Ella's gold eyes widened then clamped shut, and Henry remembered the things she'd confessed in her dream state. Hints about doctors abusing her, things that made his wolf apoplectic with rage.

"Will you stay with me if he comes?" Ella asked in a small voice, worried enough about her unborn child to agree, but not wanting to face an examination alone.

"Of course." Henry promised, not looking at Leon as he gave the orders to the guards hovering in the doorway. They'd crashed into the room when Ella started screaming, and watched in horror as she recounted the priests binding her wolf, cutting her off from her inner animal. In their world such an act was an atrocity, a crime that should not have been possible, and a violation a shifter should not be able to survive. The man nearest the door took off at a run, and Henry turned back to his daughter-in-law. "What can we do for you, Ella? What do you need?"

"We should talk through what just happened."

Leon interjected in his therapist voice. "She needs to process this."

"Not today she doesn't." Henry snapped back, "And not without her mate. We never should have attempted this without Dominic."

"Her mate can't change the past." Leon answered sternly. "This was always going to be terrible."

Henry growled wordlessly, and Ella curled in on herself a little. "I want my nest."

"Of course," Henry agreed, pulling her into his lap and wheeling her out of the sitting room and into the bedroom. He helped her climb into her pillowy sanctuary, purring and stroking her hair as she silently wept.

After a while, Ella blinked at him, seeming to realize what he was doing only after it began to work. "I thought wolves only purred for their mates?" Her voice was still raspy from all the strain of the session, a mere shadow of its usual velvet tone.

"No." Henry corrected her with a sad smile. "We also purr for our children, and you're one of mine now."

Ella's lower lip quivered violently, and she reached for Henry's hand, holding it tightly. "Thank you."

The palace doctor arrived before Henry could tell Ella that she never needed to thank him for taking care of her. The physician checked on the pup and administered a sedative for Ella, advising no more hypnosis for at least a week. After he left, Ella was already teetering on the edge of a drug-induced sleep, but she managed to pin her father in law with a hollow eyed gaze that made his heart ache. "

Why did they do that to me?"

He knew she was talking about the priests who came to the orphanage, and he wished he had an answer for her. "I don't know." He confessed sorrowfully. "Before today, I didn't even know such a thing was possible."

"I always thought..." A wide yawn interrupted her, and she closed her eyes as she drowsily continued, "I always thought I lost my strength because they broke me... the doctor and the matron... I believed they broke my spirit. But it was the priests." She shuddered, tears seeping out beneath her closed lashes. "They stole it."

Henry frowned, still petting her hair. "They took your wolf, Ella, but they never broke you. You survived despite everything. You took care of your sister and made a life for yourself. You might have been missing part of yourself, but the woman my son fell in love with – the woman we all fell in love with Was never weak"

To his surprise, the corner of her lip twitched up in a bittersweet tilt, somewhere between a grimace and a smile. "Because Dominic brought her back to me. She started waking up when we met. If you'd known me before him.." Her shoulders trembled and any sense of sweetness disappeared, "I hate them for doing that to me." She murmured, pure anguish heavy on her tongue.

"I do too." Henry shared. "We're going to get to the bottom of this, okay? You have my word." He vowed, overflowing with conviction. "For now, just sleep little mother. When you wake, Dominic will be waiting for your call and you can face it together."

As soon as Ella slipped into unconsciousness, Henry wheeled back into the sitting room. He didn't want to go too far in case she had bad dreams, though the doctor had promised the sedative would send her into such a deep sleep that dreaming would be impossible. He pulled out his phone and dialed his youngest, cold fury coursing through him.

Sinclair answered on the fourth ring, his deep voice filling Henry's ear. "Hi Dad, this isn't really a good time, we're about to reach the FrostFang capital."

"You need to make the time." Henry growled, "Ella just had her first hypnotherapy session and it did not go well."

Sinclair's voice went sharp as a knife, "Put her on."

"She's sedated." Henry explained, unable to quell the hardness in his tone even though it wasn't meant for his son. "But you need to know what happened and you need to be prepared to drop everything for her when she wakes."

"What happened?" Sinclair inquired, concern making his voice every bit as gruff as his father's.

Henry shared the tale in starts and stops, pausing to entertain his son's growls and curses. When the story was finished, Henry added. "She was frightened from the beginning and didn't want to do it, and we made her." He recalled, guilt tying his insides into knots. "She forced herself to do it because she didn't want to disappoint you, and we didn't know how bad.. we had no idea what she'd been through, Dominic. But I have to think you did."

"I knew about the abuse." Sinclair confirmed, his voice raw and thick with emotion. "I had no idea about her wolf. We knew that something like that must have happened to keep it dormant, but I assumed it was when she was an infant – before she was left with the humans. I never would have asked her to do this without me if I'd believed -"

"You shouldn't have asked her to do it without you at all." Henry corrected firmly. "She needed her mate today and I was a sorry substitute."

"She chose you because she felt safe with you."

Sinclair replied, wanting to deny his father's negligence even as he grappled with his guilt. "But you're right. I should have been there." He paused, breathing heavily. "But I should be here too, and I should be back in Moon Valley fighting Damon don't know how to do it all, Dad. I can't be there for Ella without failing the pack, and I can't be there for the pack without failing my mate."

"But why now, why was digging into her past urgent enough to risk this in the first place?"

Henry asked, sympathetic for his son, sharing his pain, but also frustrated.

"Don't you think it's connected?" Sinclair inquired."

I mean, think about what you just told me. Those priests had to have been servants of the Goddess, and they told her she was being hidden, that she couldn't join the shifter world until the time was right. Then someone inseminates her with my sperm just before the election, and her wolf wakes just before the war. Call me crazy but that sounds pretty prophetic from where I stand."

If Henry had still possessed the ability to stand, he would have needed to sit down. He even considered climbing out of his wheelchair and lying down, the unsteady did he feel. He'd been so busy comforting Ella and so aghast by the assault she endured that he hadn't put the pieces together yet. "I think you're right." He gulped, glancing back to the door where his daughter-in-law slept. "I think we're seeing the Goddess's plans in action."

Sinclair agreed with somber gravity. "And they're all about Ella."