

Accidental Surrogate for Alpha

Chapter 202

#Chapter 202 - A New Dawn

Ella

If I thought the world was going to look different waking up as a princess, I was wrong. Everything is the same, even though I feel like an entirely different person than I was yesterday. I suppose I should be getting used to having my entire identity and sense of self turned upside down and inside out, but it never seems to get any easier. If anything it just becomes more confusing. I still can't believe that I know who my parents are... that my father likely killed Sinclair's mother... that my own mother is out there somewhere. Frankly I can't even contemplate the Goddess's role in all this, it's difficult enough being a princess without also being some sort of demi god.

Above all else, I can't wait until Sinclair is home next week. Yes, we'll be preoccupied with the summit, but with everything that's happening right now I simply don't feel steady without him. I need my mate, and I know he's just as anxious being away. He would barely release me from our dream date last night, making me promise to take it easy today and call him if I got overwhelmed. He could clearly sense my reluctance to agree - but can you blame me? I don't want to interrupt my mate while he's making battle alliances just because I feel a bit weepy.

I force myself to get up and out of bed, even though I feel like I could sleep for a year. I'm almost four months along now, and the baby is more active than ever. He's also creating new challenges for my body - like testing the limits of my bladder, stomach and brain. I move in front of my mirror to marvel at my round belly, running my hands over my stretched skin. I'd been worried that my stretch marks would be gigantic since my body is trying to cram nine months of growth into six, but I see only a few feathers of purple and white around my sides and breasts. It's also difficult to feel self-conscious about them when my mate insists on calling them love marks' and kisses them every chance he gets.

Of course, another challenge is the fact that none of my clothes fit anymore. Luckily Gabriel's tailors have been hard at work designing me a line of maternity dresses and gowns for the summit, but we've still got a week to go before they're ready and I don't want to walk around naked until then. I head for the closet and eye all the pretty outfits I bought when we first arrived here, sighing in resignation as I turn to Sinclair's rack of clothes. I snag one of his t-shirts, which fits snugly on his powerful build, but hangs around my thighs like a dress, even with my baby bump. I find a pair of very stretchy leggings and don't even bother looking at the mirror before leaving the room. I'm extremely comfortable, but I haven't dressed this way in public since I was a teenager.

When Philippe sees me he valiantly attempts to mask his expression, so I give him a big grin. "It's your lucky day, Philippe. We get to go shopping!

Won't that be fun?'

His humor evaporates, and I relish the look of a man who would rather go into battle than spend the morning in a dressing room watching women try on clothes. Ha! My wolf thinks victoriously. All these big bad wolves, scared of a little shopping.

Babies. I agree, deciding to seek out Cora. Of course, I haven't moved three feet before I notice that people are staring at me way more than usual - and I don't think it's my casual outfit. Everyone we come across bows their heads and moves out of my way, rather than saying hello or smiling at me like they usually do. I stop dead in my tracks. "Philippe, why is everybody acting strange?" I have a feeling I already know, but I need to hear it just to be sure.

'You're in a royal palace. Even the walls have ears here, and as loyal as the staff are... when it comes to gods and prophecies... nothing stays secret for long.' He remarks, shrugging in half-hearted apology.

I exhale shakily, So much for the world seeming the same today. My wolf observes.

I can't make myself move, because a new possibility has occurred to me now. "Is it... is it always going to be this way?" I whisper, so only Philippe can hear. "People bowing and scraping wherever I go? Afraid to look me in the eye? Am I never going to have a normal interaction again?'

Philippe steps up beside me, a strong, steady presence. "I think you humans have a saying, you have to teach people how to treat you."

My lip quirks, "thank you for calling me a human."

He nods with a soft smile, "the point is that everyone is in shock and doesn't know what to do... as far as we know there's never been anyone like you before. So if you don't want them to bow and scrape, then tell them not to. Tell them you're the same Ella you were yesterday."

"But then, won't they just be obeying me because of who I am?" I inquire hesitantly.

"Maybe at first." He confirms. "But in time they'll get used to it, and when you go home the people there will see how your inner circle treat you and they'll take the cue."

"Okay." I breathe, placing an appreciative hand on his arm. "Thank you."

"Of course, your highness." He teases, and I narrow my eyes to slits.

Philippe chuckles and returns to his place behind me as I continue down the halls, telling everyone I see not to fawn or grovel. I want to see the pups. My wolf huffs. They're always too curious to have these silly stuck-up manners.

I like that idea. I confirm, First shopping, then the nursery.

When I reach my sister's rooms, I'm surprised to hear her pacing and grumbling before I can even raise my hand to knock. Once I do the door swings open and Cora's livid face greets me. "Good morning sunshine." I say, unsure why she's so on edge and praying I'm not the reason.

She ushers me inside. "Did you know?" Cora hisses, baffling me completely.

"Know what?" I ask, wondering if the rumors have reached her as well. My heart sinks, I'd wanted to break the news to her myself, to let her know that this changes absolutely nothing between us.

"That Roger helped orchestrate the rogue attack the night at the club!" She exclaims, as if the answer is obvious.

"He did?' I question, taken aback by this accusation.

'Yes! It was a plot with the prince from the very beginning. They would attack and he'd rescue you to earn Sinclair's trust. He acted like it was common knowledge." Cora grouses, crossing her arms over her chest.

"I didn't know." I confess, "But that was months ago, before he saw reason and came back to our side."

"How can you be sure he did?" Cora lashes out. "If he was willing to do that then how do you know he's not willing to betray you still? Dominic thought he turned him into a double agent but maybe the Prince turned him back - to a triple agent!"

"Cora," I begin gently. "Dominic trusts his brother, and I trust him too. Roger lost his way for a long time, but I genuinely believe he turned over a new leaf. I can guess why my mate didn't tell me this particular detail, but honestly - I can't bring myself to care after everything that has happened."

"How can you say that!" Cora bursts. They might have killed you!"

"Because millions of people are dying because of Damon at this very moment, and I know Roger well enough to understand he would never let a personal feud with his brother overpower his duty to his pack. He wouldn't help Damon do this." I explain.

"Besides in the grand scheme of things, that incident was nothing."

"Well, you might not be able to be angry for yourself, but I sure as hell can be!" She declares fiercely. "I've told the rat that I'm never speaking to him again and if he comes near either of us I'll rip his head off."

"How did you even find out?" I inquire curiously.

Cora sneaks a furtive look in my direction, and I can see guilt written clearly on her face. "I was confiding in him... I heard about your last session." She admits, not quite meeting my gaze. "I know you found your parents and look, I'm not proud of it, but I was really jealous and angry that your dreams are coming true and mine never will." The words come out in a rush, and then her shoulders sag. "I think he was trying to comfort me by telling me he was an even worse person than I am - which sort of worked but it didn't actually fix anything." Her lower lip quivers as she glances over at me again. "I want to be happy for you Ella, I really do... I'm just not there yet."

Before she can blink, I have my sister wrapped in a rib-crushing hug. "Thank you!"

'What are you doing? Didn't you hear what I said?' Cora questions stiffly.

"I did." I confirm, cuddling closer to her. "Everyone has been treating me like some sort of magical china doll and it's driving me fucking crazy." I confess. "I need some normal. I need my sister - more than anyone else - to keep treating me like I'm the same person as before."

"Even if I'm being a horrible, ungrateful brat?' Cora asks against my neck, her arms coming around my back.

"Especially then." I confirm.

She snuffles and squeezes me, "I can do that." Cora agrees, her voice thick with emotion. "Now what the hell are you wearing?"