

Accidental Surrogate for Alpha

Chapter 206

#Chapter 206 – Panic

Ella

I stare at the black phone screen in shock and confusion, trying not to jump to the wrong conclusion. One moment Sinclair was there, talking to me as if everything was normal, and the next I heard a terrible boom and saw a blinding light. Then the line disconnected. It didn't look or sound like a car crash... it seemed... it seemed like some sort of explosion.

Maybe it was just the call getting interrupted, some sort of weird static... or a sound on the radio. My wolf suggests, even as I frantically attempt to call him back. The line doesn't even ring, I simply hear an error tone and a voice telling me the call can't be completed.

I untangle myself from the sleeping pups, waking a few of them but too alarmed to pause and apologize. My heart stops beating, and my lungs stop pumping. This isn't happening. This can't be happening. It's just a problem with the phone. I think desperately, stumbling out of the blanket fort, gasping for air. Isabel looks over when she hears one of the rudely awoken pups emit a cranky cry, her attention quickly zeroing in on me.

"Ella, what is it?" She asks, looking between me and the pups. "Is it the baby? Are you sick?"

"I ca... I can't breathe." I wheeze, pressing my hands to my breast in a feeble attempt to make my body start working again.

Isabel tries to guide me to a chair but I push her off, gasping. "Get the King." I beg, "Henry... get everyone." The room is spinning before my eyes, and I reach out to the she-wolf to steady myself, certain I'll topple over at any moment. Isabel shouts an order to one of the guards and he takes off at a run.

"You've got to calm down, Ella." Isabel says sternly, pushing me into a chair and forcing my head between my knees. "You're alright, you're just having a panic attack." Though her voice is cold, warm hands rub my back.

I shake my head violently. "No... you don't understand." I hiss, between gulps of air. "It's Dominic... I think... I think something happened."

She goes very still, "what do you feel?"

"Nothing," I reply hurriedly, trying to feel him through our bond even though I know he's too far away to sense. "I mean, not... not different." Tears are spilling from my eyes, and my voice is shaking over every syllable. "We were on the phone and then there was this huge boom and a flash of light... like an explosion and the call dropped, I can't get him back. It says the line is dead."

Isabel exhales a breath I hadn't realized she was holding. "That could be nothing. And when my mate died, I felt like my soul had been ripped out of my body and torn to pieces."

"Were you together, when it happened?" I ask urgently, "were you chosen or fated?"

"We were together." Isabel admits reluctantly, as if I'm forcing her to remember things she'd rather not. "I saw it happen, and yes, we were fated."

"I'm sorry." I hiccup, "I didn't mean... I'm just trying to figure this out."

"It's okay." Isabel answers, though her shoulders are rigid. "I understand."

A few minutes later Gabriel comes rushing into the nursery, followed closely by Roger. "Ella what's wrong?"

I'm still heaving and gasping, worse now that my tears have taken hold, so Isabel explains for me. Both men immediately tense, their faces growing grave and serious. "I'll call the doctor for something to calm you down." Gabriel says to me, "And I'll deploy a drone to fly over the road they were traveling, reach out to the Storm Forest Alpha to see if there have been reports of crashes or explosions."

"I don't want the doctor." I argue, rising to my feet and wrapping my arms around my middle. "I'm not taking or doing anything until I know whether or not Dominic is alright." The baby flutters and kicks inside me, and I feel a rush of sadness and confusion through our bond. I hate knowing that my emotions are causing him distress, but I also don't know how to help it. I try to send waves of calm back to him, letting him feel my love and commitment to protect him, but it doesn't help much.

In the end I take a step I never have before, and cut him off from my feelings completely. This was never possible when I was in the depths of hypnosis because I wasn't even present myself, and the other times I've shielded him from things, I've had the presence of mind to allow the good things through our bond. But now I'm too out of control to regulate anything, so it will have to be all or nothing.

I regret this as soon as I do it, because the moment Rafe stops sensing me, he panics. Stress and fear unlike anything I've ever felt from him pummels my heart, and I immediately drop the shield I put up. "It's okay," I say aloud, running my hands over my belly – it must have felt like I disappeared completely, and with Sinclair so far away too, he must have thought he was all alone. "I'm here. I'm here, angel. I'm sorry."

The baby calms at once, and I feel the first pulse of anger he's ever directed at me, as if his tiny mind is demanding where I went – how I could leave him like that. "I'm sorry, I love you so much. I'm here" I repeat over and over.

The sensations make the loss of my own parents loom larger in my heart, but when it happened to me I was too young to remember. Still, I must have felt this way... only instead of a terrified flash it was permanent. I'm all too aware that I'm still in the nursery, surrounded by a number of children who were old enough to remember the pain and fear of being suddenly, viciously alone – their souls cut off from the only bonds they'd ever forged. The thought makes my knees go weak.

Gabriel and Roger are still looking at me with obvious concern, and Isabel is wearing an expression that makes me think she understands exactly what just happened. She nods bleakly, and slides a steadying arm around my waist, looking at the men, "If you don't let her come with you, she's only going to be worse."

I could hug her... assuming she would let me, but Gabriel and Roger exchange a wary glance before agreeing. "Fine, but I'm putting the doctor on call, just in case."

"I'll go get Dad." Roger announces, taking off towards the palace entrance.

An hour later I'm doing breathing exercises while we watch one of Gabriel's aerial drones zoom across the foreign landscape. Any other time I would be fascinated to discover the secrets of the hidden territories, but now I can only wring my hands and pray. The search seems to go on forever, and my nerves are fraying more and more with every moment that passes. Finally a few specks appear in the distance, and I recognize the salt flats Sinclair had shown me out the window on his drive. The specks grow larger and larger as the drone flies... and then we see the flames.

The room is deathly silent as the cars come into view... what's left of them at least. Where there were once shiny SUVs, there are now only mangled and charred husks of metal, centered in the middle of a blasted crater of earth. "No." I gasp, counting them, trying to figure out if there was any way the men might have escaped. The drone flies lower, and when I see the burnt outline of an arm hanging out of one of the shattered windows, I clench my eyes shut. I'm rocking back and forth on the sofa, refusing to look at the screen, to witness the horror tearing through the room.

Pounding footsteps charge for the door, and when Roger's scent fades I understand he must have stormed out. I peek at Henry, hoping he'll tell me this isn't real. But when I look... I barely recognize him. His face is grey and pallid, and all the strong steadiness I've come to expect from him is gone. He's sunk in on himself, his expression one of a man whose just had his whole world shattered. I swing my gaze to Gabriel for help, but the King stands in front of the screen with his hands in tight fists and tears in his eyes. They all believe it. They all think he's gone.

"No." I insist, refusing to accept this. "No, he might have escaped somehow. He's not..." I can't bring myself to say the word. It's too terrible to contemplate.

"I'm so sorry, Ella." Gabriel says, in a voice like gravel. "I don't want to believe it either, but I'm afraid he's gone."

"No!" I cry, shaking my head. "Why are you saying that! He can't be gone! Do you have any idea what he's survived? What he's overcome? He's not dead!" I explode, spinning in place, searching for anyone who will agree with me. When I find none, I stop and dig my heels into the ground. "I won't lose him, I can't!"

Before I can say another word, pain rips through my belly, clenching and white hot. My lips part on a silent cry as I double over, clutching my stomach. Black spots take over my vision, and the carpet zooms up to meet my face. Then all is quiet.