

# Accidental Surrogate for Alpha

Chapter 216

#Chapter 215 - New Beta

Sinclair

Morning comes much too soon. My body is sore and aching, but I'm much calmer now that I've let off some steam with my mate. The last thing I want to do is leave our suite and deal with the fallout of last week's drama, but there is much to be done before the summit.

I begin with a visit to the families of the men I lost in the bombing, starting with Aileen. I give her my oath to find the men responsible for the attack, knowing my words are an empty comfort in the face of a life without her mate. These visits nearly break me, as I've yet to truly begin grieving myself. In fact I don't even make it five minutes before regretting my orders for Ella to stay in bed and rest. She is the only thing that could possibly calm my wolf right now, and I dearly want to return to her side. I still hope to steal some time alone with her this afternoon - a final reprieve before the entire continent descends on us - but that will only be possible if I finish my to-do list.

Next I go to the airfield, needing to see the situation for myself. I'm astounded to see how large the refugee camp has grown in my absence, even with the families Gabriel has housed in the city. Though each of the shifters I meet is grappling with profound personal loss, they're no less thrilled to see me alive and well. Their warmth and relief is a welcome balm, and I carry it with me into my meetings with the King's security services.

The enforcers assure me that everything is ready for the summit, and that security will be the strictest the capital has ever seen, but that's where the good news ends. So far, there are no leads on the bomber, and when I explain my miraculous survival to the assembled wolves, they can only exchange befuddled looks and remark that the Goddess must have been looking out for me. I don't understand it myself, and even though Ella has proved just how present divine forces are in our lives, it's beyond surreal to think that the Goddess might have saved me. Even so, I'm much more concerned with discovering Damon's allies in Vanara, but I don't find the answers I'm seeking in the security offices.

I leave, brooding as I check another task off my list. By the time I reach the palace library I don't have any more clarity about who might have carried out the attack, and I'm at a loss for what to do. Thankfully Roger is already there waiting for me, and he greets me with an uncharacteristic hug. I return it enthusiastically, wondering when we last showed each other such affection - if ever.

"I don't know what to make of it." I tell him, quickly bringing him up to speed on the situation. "Obviously Damon orchestrated it, but how? Who is he working with? Is it one of the alphas here? Are there counter forces working against us right under our very nose? Did he somehow figure out a way to send people to Vanara?" I

Roger frowns, his mouth twisting into a grimace. I wait for him to speak, but I can sense his reluctance. "What?"

"Well," he winces, "it could be one of the refugees."

I take a step back, stunned he could suggest such a thing. "I refuse to believe that." I argue, shaking my head. "You've been to the camp - you've seen what they've been through. No one there would help Damon."

"I'm not saying it would be a true refugee - but someone impersonating one." Roger amends, holding his hands up defensively. "And I don't necessarily think that's the case, I'm simply saying that there's only one way off the continent right now. So if Damon did send someone here, it might have been on one of the evacuation flights."

"If Damon found out about the flights and discovered the meeting point, he would just kill all of the refugees." I argue, not adding that I've been terrified of this very eventuality for weeks, 1

"Maybe," Roger agrees. "Or maybe he'd use the opportunity to send spies or assassins. You know? Find out where we are and what we're doing."

I smother a growl, hating this possibility but appreciating that he's thinking strategically. "You need to be very careful who you say that in front of." I warn gruffly. "That is the kind of idea that can spread panic and turn the locals against our people."

"I know that." Roger admits, "I don't like it any more than you do. I'm just trying to think of every possibility."

I grip his shoulder, "I appreciate that, and I'm going to need you to keep thinking that way if we're going to get through this."

"Of course I will." Roger vows, though his frown only deepens. "The real question is going to be how we investigate this without letting the public know our suspicions."

"Well, that can be your number one priority," I reply, watching him closely as I continue. "As my new Beta."

Roger blinks, doing a double take as if he's unsure he heard me correctly. "What did you just say?"

Taking a deep breath, I explain. "I wouldn't normally try to appoint a replacement for Hugo so soon after his death," I confess, feeling a stab of guilt for even suggesting this when his loss is so fresh. "And I know it's a lot to ask when you spent your life dreaming of being Alpha, but I need a second in command and I... well, I want it to be you. It should be you."

Roger drops his gaze to the floor, a sober expression on his face. "I lost any interest in being Alpha the moment I thought you were dead." He shares grimly, his voice like gravel. "It was the closest I'd ever come to leading, and it's the closest I ever want to be. My personal glory isn't worth losing you - nothing is. You have no idea how desperately I prayed to have you back."

I feel a deep pang in my chest, undone by the vestiges of pain still haunting my brother's features. "Well now I am back, and I need someone I can trust by my side." I take him by the shoulders, encouraging him to look me in the eye. "Who better to watch my back than my big brother?"

"That's easier said than done." Roger counters uncertainly. "Betas are supposed to balance their Alphas, not antagonize them."

"They are..." I confirm with a grin. "Do you think you can manage it?"

"That depends," Roger quips, "how big of an ass do you plan on being?"

"No bigger than usual." I laugh, offering him my hand. "So are you up for it, or are you going to make me ask Philippe?"

He exhales dramatically, "And leave Ella without a guard? What am I, a monster?"

"I know." I grimace, thinking of all the soldiers I already have to replace. "At this rate my men are dropping like flies. I don't think I can handle losing anyone else."

Roger slides his hand into mine, squeezing with his full strength. "I won't let you down, Dominic. I'm going to find the people responsible for the bomb if it's the last thing I do"

"I know." I assure him, pulling the stubborn oaf into a hug. "I trust you, brother."

He chuckles, thumping my back with his fist. "Just wait until we tell, Dad. The old man is going to absolutely blubber."

He's not wrong, and I'm already looking forward to sharing the news with our father. Still, my to-do list isn't complete yet, and the scent of my mate's adoptive sister tells me I'm behind schedule. When we part I see Cora leaning in the library doorway, watching us warily.

"You rang?" She inquires, keeping her attention focused entirely on me. She doesn't even afford Roger a glance, and I realize that the burgeoning attraction between the pair hasn't progressed well in my absence. I'll have to ask him about it later, because right now my brother looks as though he's forgotten I'm here. He's staring at Cora with open hunger, and it seems to take him a minute to process her words.

"You did?" Roger questions eventually, looking at me when the information clicks.

"Yes, I need your help with something - if you're willing to lend it." I amend hopefully. "Just before the attack, I realized that Ella and I never got the chance to throw a mating ceremony after our secret came out." I reveal, marveling about how much has changed in such a short time. "We've celebrated becoming mates in private, but we never had the chance to celebrate it with our loved ones, and I don't want to put it off any longer. I'd like to surprise Ella with a ceremony on the last night of the summit - before the ball. What do you think?"

Cora's face splits into a wide smile, "I think that's a wonderful idea. She'll love it."

"Then you'll help?" I ask.

"Of course," Cora agrees.

I glance between her and Roger, not sure the human realizes the full implications of my request. "And you think you'll be able to work together?"

Cora's freezes, her eyes swinging to Roger. My brother grins, flashing his fangs, and I can sense Cora forcing down an indignant protest. Instead she plasters a smile onto her features, and forces her next words out through clenched teeth, "I can't see why not."

I'm not sure who's more pleased, me or my brother. "Perfect."