

Accidental Surrogate for Alpha

Chapter 223

#Chapter 223 – The Summit Begins

Ella

Warm hands trail over my bare skin as I come awake, tracing the curve of my belly, outlining the shape of my breasts. Sinclair’s perusal is slow and steady, not meaning to arouse, but merely explore. My back is flush to his chest, and his broad shoulders offer endless support for my aching spine.

His warm voice rumbles in my ear, but I quickly realize he’s not talking to me. “The cities were magnificent.” He declares in a quiet, almost reverent tone. “I wish you had been able to see them, but I promise I’ll take you some day – you and your Mommy. They had things I never even imagined were real: entire territories powered on Vanarium with no need for fuel, and cars that can transform into boats or aircraft in the blink of an eye.”

“Your Uncle Gabriel is clever but he’s a bit old fashioned too – some of his Alpha’s are much more interested in showing off their innovations than celebrating their history.” Sinclair continues to caress my tummy as the baby flutters in response – not understanding his father’s words, but loving the sound of his voice and not wanting it to end.

I don’t want Sinclair to stop either, so I pretend I’m still asleep. At the same time, my bladder is screaming for me to get up, and my rumbling stomach isn’t far behind. “When you grow up we’re all going to be living in a very different world,” my mate continues. “It’s exciting to imagine how far society and technology will have come... and daunting too. But there are some things that are truly timeless – and I’ll teach you all about them. How to control your power; how to hunt and survive in every kind of climate; how to track a target and fight as both man and wolf.”

Sinclair pauses thoughtfully, and for a moment I think he’s onto me, but then he carries on as before. “How to trust your wolf’s instincts and lead with your heart and your head as well as your strength.” A gravelly note enters his deep bass, and suddenly I feel sharp fangs are scraping across the curve of my neck, “How to know when you’ve met your mate, and what to do with her when she makes mischief – like pretending to be asleep so she can eavesdrop on your conversations with your pup.”

I gasp and giggle as his fingers begin tickling my sides, the sensations taking over me before I’ve finished processing his words. My eyes snap open and I try to wriggle away from the sly wolf, who grins down at me triumphantly. “Did you really think I couldn’t tell, trouble?” He croons, nibbling my shoulder as his wolf’s voice chants Mine in my head.

Joy blooms in my chest in response to my mate’s playful mood – he so rarely gets to be silly, even though it’s one of my favorite aspects of his personality. I don’t want the fun to end for either of us, but the persistent pinching in my lower abdomen is only growing sharper the more I laugh.

“Dominic stop! I have to pee!” I squeal, still trying to escape his hands.

“You should have thought of that before, little wolf.” He teases, laughter vibrating in his chest. “You’ll never get away from me now!”

A tiny trickle of urine escapes me, and I start to truly fear I might wet the bed. The Nest! My wolf cries anxiously, Not my nest! It will ruin it! Sinclair senses my panic and finally lets up, helping me find my feet and sending me off to the bathroom with a playful swat on my – still sore – behind. I yelp but rush off, and when I finish my business and return, I pin my mate with my fiercest glower. “I hope you know I won’t ever forgive you if you make me sully my beautiful nest.” I growl in warning, poisoning my hands on my hips. “my bladder control is hanging by a thread and it’s only going to get worse as the pregnancy progresses.”

Sinclair frowns, considering the ruffled pillows and disheveled blankets – evidence of his crime, even if it was a close call. “I’m sorry baby, I wasn’t thinking about the nest.” He confesses, rising from the bed and reaching for my tightly wound body. “I got a bit carried away. I just love hearing you laugh.”

Sulking, I reluctantly allow myself to be cuddled, but I don’t relax against him until he begins purring. “Well I like laughing with you, and I liked hearing you talk to Rafe.” I pout, “it doesn’t count as eavesdropping when the person you’re talking to lives inside me, you know.”

“I know.” He croons, in a sympathetic tone which tells me he senses exactly how vulnerable I’m feeling. “Poor little mate, I wasn’t playing fair.”

“It’s okay.” I sigh, nuzzling his chest and breathing in his beloved scent. We stay like that for a long moment, simply holding one another, stealing yet another moment in the midst of the chaos ahead.

“Are you ready for today?” Sinclair asks after a while, referring to the imminent summit.

“Not really.” I confess. “I’m not sure what to expect. I remember some of the details you shared about your visits, but there were so many. Besides, the delegations are so large I’m going to need a cheat sheet just to keep them all straight.”

“Gabriel and his staff are going to be our living cheat sheets.” Sinclair shares, not sounding nearly as worried as I feel. “It’s too much for any one person to keep track of and anyway, I didn’t even make it to all the packs. Some of these meetings are going to be happening completely cold, and it’s entirely likely that the bombing undermined or altered the conversations I did have.”

“You think they’ll be less likely to help us if they think our presence here threatens them?” I guess, knowing I should start getting dressed – or at least feed myself, but not wanting to move from my mate’s embrace.

“That’s a very real possibility, and the situation with the secrecy pact isn’t helping.” He replied, sounding tense. “I’m not sure we shouldn’t have called them all to the summit cold – too much has changed since I set out on my trip.”

“As far as I’m concerned, I don’t think investing more time and effort in building relationships is ever a mistake.” I offer, kissing one of his muscular pecs. “At least they know what you stand for and how you operate, and you have a stronger sense of their characters.”

Sinclair purrs in appreciation, kissing my hair. “I just hate to think we might have wasted valuable time. It kills me how long this is taking.”

“It’s only been a month.” I remind him gently. “It seems like ages because you feel every single loss of life on your own conscience, but most wars are years in the making. You’re doing everything you can, Dominic. And your dedication is what makes you such a great leader.”

“Even if I steal long afternoons to lie in bed with my mate and pleasure her into a coma?” He jokes, nipping my earlobe.

“Even then.” I grin against his shoulder, only the smallest doubt slipping into my thoughts. “Do you regret it?”

“I agonize over every second I don’t spend on the war.” He admits, “But I know it’s necessary to keep myself going, and I also wouldn’t trade that time for anything.”

“Good.” I proclaim, squeezing him even more tightly than before. “Me neither.”

A little while later I’m standing in one of the King’s opulent sitting rooms, touching up my hair in the mirror. Cora enters and scans the room with an eagle-eyed gaze. It seems like she’s searching for something, but her face falls when she completes her study, her eyes coming to a stop on me.

“Do I look that bad?” I quip, wondering if she’s not looking for a certain handsome Beta.

She blinks and adopts a smile. “No, you look wonderful.” She expresses, gesturing to my floor length maternity dress. It’s more formal than anything I would normally wear, but I have to admit the fabric is divine and I feel free and confident in it.

Sinclair, Henry, and Gabriel enter then, and my sister swings her eyes to the new arrivals, looking hopeful once more. Again she seems disappointed, and I feel slightly giddy with the knowledge that she’s definitely not as indifferent to Roger as she lets on.

“They’re about half an hour out.” Gabriel announces, looking around at our small group with approval. “My chief of staff assures me that everything is ready, so it’s just a waiting game for now.”

“But we aren’t all here yet,” Cora objects, blushing. “Are we?”

Sinclair exchanges a knowing look with me. “My brother will be here shortly, apparently the refugee transports just landed a little while ago.”

“Has he had time to give you a report yet?” Henry inquires curiously.

I smell Roger a moment before he walks in, and I watch with avid interest as Cora jolts then turns away as the door opens, pretending to be oblivious to the man’s arrival. “I’ll give it now.” Roger says by way of greeting. “And I’m afraid it isn’t good.”

“Tell us.” Sinclair instructs him, extending an arm to me. I oblige, not minding the bossy summons because I know it’s a sign of his worry. So I cross the floor and sink into his lap just in time for Roger to deliver the news.

“It’s absolute chaos.” Roger sighs, pulling out his phone and hitting a few buttons. Suddenly images appear on the television screen, and my heart plummets as I see the endless crowd of shifters swarming the transport planes. “There’s too many of them, and not enough of us. Any concept of security is impossible in the current state. Getting the process organized would mean sending in troops, and I have a terrible feeling that this is exactly what Damon is waiting for.”

We’re still trying to grapple with the scale of the crisis when bells begin ringing through the castle, signaling the end of our discussion – no matter how urgent it remains.

The Alphas have arrived.