

# Accidental Surrogate for Alpha

Chapter 237

## #Chapter 237 - Aileen's Sorrow

### Ella

Once Sinclair returned and I was allowed off of bed rest, I finally got the opportunity to visit Hugo's widow Aileen. At least, I thought I would have the chance - instead I was turned away from her door and told in no uncertain terms that she wasn't accepting visitors. I've been back every day since, but this morning is the first time she's allowed me inside.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" I ask her gently, knowing better than to offer her empty apologies and condolences. "Anything at all?"

"You already are," She answers wryly, looking up at me from her bed. "You know you, Dominic and Henry are the only ones who have come to see me? Not just to tell me how amazing Hugo was or say how much they pity me, but to find out how I'm doing because you truly care. And of the three of you, you're the only one who hasn't gotten the message to leave me alone."

I shrug, not feeling the least bit sorry. "Sometimes we want to be left alone precisely when we shouldn't be." I frown, thinking about the other wolves in the palace - our fellow countrymen. "And don't take the others' absence personally. Everyone is caught up in their own worries with the war, and no one likes to be reminded of how quickly it can all be taken away... your grief makes it impossible to avoid."

Aileen snorts, "you don't beat around the bush, do you?"

"Would you rather I did? That I diminish the gravity of your loss for the sake of politeness?" I ask, hoping that I'm not miscalculating. My prayer is that a bit of reverse psychology will help Aileen come back to herself for the sake of her pup - who has been spending a great deal of time in the nursery since his mother disappeared into her grief.

"I still have my boy." Aileen answers firmly, reminding herself of the very fact I came to press upon her

"And how is Davey doing?" I inquire pointedly, though I already know the answer. Sinclair and Henry have been spending any time they can with the poor pup - not that this amounts to much. The horrible reality is that none of us have the bandwidth to give the bereaved the attention they deserve, but the same is true of all the refugees. Doing our jobs as leaders means neglecting them in the present, so that we can ensure they have a future.

Aileen's gaze drops to her lap, an expression of profound shame overtaking her features. "He's devastated of course - he thought his father hung the moon. He's the only thing keeping me going... if he wasn't here I think..."

"Is he here?" I question gently, looking around the empty room.

"I sent him away." She confesses, tears welling in her eyes. "I kept our bond open, but only just. I didn't want him to see me like this."

"Maybe he needs to see you like this." I suggest, reaching for her hands and clasping them tightly. "Maybe he needs to see that you're hurting just as badly as he is. Hugo isn't the only one who hung the moon for him, Aileen. But right now he's going it all alone."

"But the other pups..." Aileen argues, "and the Alpha. Surely they'll

"They aren't his mother. It's not the same." I insist, rising to my feet. "Come with me to visit the nursery, come see Davey. Or let me bring him to you."

She hesitates, glancing towards a mirror on the far wall. She certainly looks more than a little worse for wear, with great dark circles under her eyes and dirty, lank hair. "I promise you, he doesn't care how you look - only that you're there." I state before she can object.

Aileen nods hesitantly, and together we walk down to the nursery. Isabel and Henry are waiting for us - another scheme I concocted in hopes Aileen might take comfort from people who have been through this and know how she feels. Of course, we haven't even set foot in the room when a small voice cries, "Mommy!!!"

Davey's dark head is racing towards us through the familiar space, crashing into his mother's arms with tears streaming down his cheeks." Mommy where have you been?!" He cries, his words muffled against her breast.

Aileen's arms wrap around him reflexively, but it takes a moment for her to break. When it does happen, she shatters before our very eyes, crashing to her knees and dragging the pup into her lap. "I'm sorry." She moans, rocking him back and forth. "I'm so sorry angel, I've just been so sad."

"But I've b-been sad too!" Davey complained, sniffing, "I k-kept trying to c- come see you but th-they told me I couldn't."

Aileen continues sobbing apologies to her son, and then Isabel and Henry come forward to lend their arms as well.

Sinclair appears by my shoulder, a pained expression on his handsome face as he takes in the scene. "You finally got through to her?"

"Not me." I correct, running my hands over my baby bump and thanking the stars for my unborn son. "This was all Davey."

I know we can't stay much longer, as our first video call with a human government is due to begin in only five minutes. Still, I wish we could stay longer - I wish we could do more for all of our people. As my mate leads me away, I lean into his warmth, "Please tell me you have good news? It's beginning to feel like all we have around here is heartbreak."

"As a matter of fact, I do." Sinclair reveals, kissing my hair. "Roger caught the spy."

"Really?" I gasp, stopping in my tracks. "That's wonderful!"

Sinclair nods, tucking me under his arm and encouraging me to keep walking. "The bastard is dead, but he told Damon the assassination was successful before he took his last breath."

"Surely that will be an advantage to us?" I inquire, my wolf howling with vengeful joy to know our enemy is no longer.

"I hope so, but I have to admit I'm relieved that you'll be leaving Vanara soon." Sinclair declares, surprising me. "Damon knows you're here and he believes I'm out of the way. I'm sure he views you and Rafe as the last threats standing between him and world domination."

Understanding clicks at once, "So we may be more at risk?" I muse aloud, probing our bond for signs of alarm. "And you're still going to let me go?"

"Don't make me think about it too hard, trouble." Sinclair teases, his voice barely more than a growl. "But yes, I believe we made the right decision - though I'm going to arrange more security for you on the journey."

I smother a groan, I really don't want to travel with an entire army, but I'll be damned if I'm going to complain when I know how hard it was for my mate to agree to this plan in the first place. No doubt sensing my reluctance, Sinclair chuckles, kissing me again. "Thank you for understanding, little wolf. I promise I'm not going to go overboard."

"Suurree." I tease, "just like when you promised not to get carried away last night?"

He offers me a wolfish grin, and I wonder if it was a mistake to remind him of our marathon lovemaking. After all, we still have a few minutes to spare and his wolf is even more insatiable than usual amidst all this stress. "That was different, you know I can't resist the taste of your sweet p- Ah, hello Gabriel." Sinclair abruptly cuts off his sentence as the King rounds the corner in front of us.

Gabriel rolls his eyes, "like I can't guess where that sentence was going? I swear, you two are determined to scandalize my entire palace."

"He's just jealous." Sinclair whispers in my ear, making me giggle. "He wishes he had a mate to love him senseless every night."

The King merely crosses his arms over his chest. "Are you quite finished? There is a war on, you know?"

"We know. And we're sorry." I profess earnestly.

"I'm not." Sinclair mutters unhelpfully. I swat his arm and he pinches my bottom, making me squeak in surprise.

"We're ready." I assure Gabriel, though in truth I'm feeling rather breathless.

No less exasperated than before, the King pushes open the doors to his largest conference room, revealing the assembled Vanaran delegations and a large television screen mounted on the far wall. We take our seats at the head of the table, and then Gabriel opens the call interface.

None of us really know what to expect, and I can only hope that the wolves around me have enough sense and diplomatic skill not to insult the humans with whom we're about to speak. We've done our best to ensure everyone is on the same page about how important a human alliance is - as it's the only thing which might keep the whole of the shifter world from descending on Vanara while the countries they leave behind collapse.

Of course, the very last thing I expect to see when the screen comes to life, is the woman I once considered to be the leader of my own city. Sinclair's hands tighten on me when he sees the familiar face of the Moon Valley mayor fill the call window. As far as I know, the last time they saw each other was after the rogue attack in Old Town and she certainly hadn't been friendly then. On the contrary, she was Damon's ally