

Accidental Surrogate for Alpha

Chapter 240

tfChapter 240 - Vision

Trigger warning: suicidal ideation - please take care!

Ella

I'm about to hoist myself up onto the frozen railing when two robed figures appear on either side of me, their faces both familiar and strange. There's something about them that sets off alarms in my mind, but not the usual kind. It feels as though I'm trying to remember something from another life ... from someone else's life.

I don't have the faintest idea where they came from, and I don't really care. Cora's safe at the orphanage and it's not as if they can do worse to me than what I've already survived. Maybe this is even fate answering my question, giving me a way out in her typical morbid fashion. Perhaps an icy plunge is too easy an end for me, perhaps I must know one final agony before I go. "Are you here to kill me?" I ask in a voice I don't recognize.

"Do you want to die?" One asks, leaning his arms against the icy metal.

"It's not that I want to die." I hiccup, tears falling from my lashes and freezing against my cheeks. "It's just that I don't want to live if this is all life has to offer... and I'm afraid that this is truly all there is for me. I have no reason to believe otherwise." I shake my head forlornly, "they say the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over but expecting different results. So I would be crazy to think I can keep meeting the sun each morning without inviting more heartache... wouldn't I?"

"That depends. What you call crazy, others might call hope." The second man replies, making no move to look at or touch me. The three of us simply stare out at the frozen expanse with the same melancholy spirit, watching the river rushing below the ice so far below.

"Hope is a privilege for those born in the light." I reply, not entirely understanding where these words are coming from. "They know that the darkness is only temporary because they don't belong there... but how am I to believe in light when I've never seen it?"

"And if we were to give you a glimpse of the future?" The first man offers. "If we were to show you a vision of the life you might have one day, if you find the will to believe despite your experiences?"

"You can do that?" I ask, turning to look at him for the first time.

"Only if you are brave enough to take the risk." The second answers.

"And only if you are willing to fight for your future." The first man adds. "The vision we give you will only be a possibility - one in a hundred - of the person you might become if you refuse to give up. It is not guaranteed, and it is not entirely in your control. Countless actions and decisions shape our futures, and we can only tell you that this may come to pass if everything goes right."

"Show me." I beg, somehow believing they have this power even though there's no such thing as magic. Perhaps I've lost my mind. Perhaps I've already jumped and this is all a hallucination on the brink between worlds.

The robed men take hold of my hands in perfect synchrony, and I let them. As our palms connect a brilliant white light surges between our skin. It's so bright I have to shut my eyes against the glare, but it does not hurt - it does not burn me as it probably should. Energy surges through my body, so potent and wild that I feel like I'm being electrocuted. I open my mouth to cry out, but before any sound can escape my lips a torrent of color bursts in my mind's eye.

I see a woman who looks exactly like me, only much older. Her belly is not bloated with hunger, her skin is not lifeless and pale. She's clean and healthy, wearing a dress which must cost more than everything I've ever owned - combined. She moves with such an easy grace, and when she smiles I understand why people tell me I'm beautiful.

The woman is looking at something I cannot see, grinning with an overwhelming joy I can't even begin to understand. In the next moment I see a man more than twice her size, who is as handsome as he is terrifying. He moves with the lethal grace of a predator, and there's a vicious edge to his bronzed, raven-haired beauty. He approaches her like a wolf stalking his prey, but she isn't afraid. He pulls her into his strong arms and kisses her soundly, and when they part she looks down at a tiny bundle in his arms.

They coo and croon over a baby with rose gold hair and a pink bow, pulling faces and tickling the infant's swaddled tummy. Then a rush of pure exuberance bursts into the serene scene, and three bundles of energy come zooming into sight. There's a boy around five years old, who is the spitting image of the huge man. He races forward and crashes into his parents' legs, wrapping his arms around each and grinning mischievously up at them. A pair of toddlers quickly follow, one who appears to be a miniature version of the older boy, and the other an angelic looking girl with the same coloring as the babe.

They pile into the group hug and their father bends down to scoop them up into his arms, balancing the three older children while his wife cradles the youngest. I can hear their laughter, but I can feel it too. Their happiness is foreign to me and yet so contagious, merely watching them makes me feel as if I've swallowed the sun. Is that what they feel every day? Is it possible to ever be so full of emotion when the void inside of me is so bottomless?

The vision disappears as quickly as it came, and when I open my eyes again they're full of tears. "That's me?" I choke, "I could have a family one day? That family?"

"Only if you are willing to fight for it." The second man repeats. "Nothing is handed to us in life, especially not this. It will be a difficult road ahead, but there are rewards at the end if you're brave enough to make the journey."

"Haven't I already been through enough?" I ask, wondering why some people do seem to be handed everything, while others must constantly struggle.

"The trials you've overcome have ensured you're strong enough to win the fight, but you have to enter it yourself. You have to want to win, Ella." The first man explains.

"How do you know my name?" I ask, but I never get my answer. The men turn and walk away, and ten minutes later I don't remember meeting them at all. In fact, I don't remember why I'm out here in the middle of the night or what I'm doing standing on this bridge. Certain I'm going to catch my death from cold, I hurry back to the orphanage and my sister - praying no one noticed my absence.

The memory fades away as Leon calls me back to the present, "Come back to us, now." He encourages. "You did so well."

"I'm here, Ella." Sinclair purrs, his lips grazing my tear-stained cheek. "I'm here, I've got you."

I open my eyes and find my mate watching me with shining eyes. His hand rests on my swollen middle, calming our unborn pup as I struggle to resurface. "I saw you." I tell him in amazement. "I saw you... and Rafe" I recall, remembering the oldest boy in the vision. "There were other pups too."

"I know." Sinclair beams, kissing me softly. "I know, baby. I'm so proud of you."

"Does that..." I trail off, trying to wrap my mind around the scene we just witnessed. Unfortunately the ether is still in control, and I almost lose my train of thought. "Does that mean we're fated somehow?"

Sinclair frowns. "Wolves only get one fated mate, sweetheart. I think that was just a possibility of our paths crossing one day if you chose to live. You heard what the priests said - nothing they showed you was guaranteed."

"But you told me sometimes mates are fated, not because they're good together, but in order to become the people they're meant to be." I remind him stubbornly, hoping that my logic is being guided by evidence and not the ether. "I was born to unite humans and wolves in this war, and you were destined to lead the resistance. You had to be with Lydia in order to become the man you are today... to this point in your life without children so that you would turn to the sperm bank precisely when I did. If you hadn't then my wolf would never wake and we would never have Rafe... what is that if not fate?"

Sinclair smiles tenderly, "Maybe you're right... after all, these sessions have taught us that shifters don't understand our world nearly as well as we think we do. Maybe it's possible to have more than one destined mate."

For a long moment we get completely lost in each other's eyes, and before too long all the twirly sensations I'd been feeling earlier come surging back at full force. However we don't get to indulge ourselves for too long because, ever the therapist, Leon finds a way to bring us back down to earth.

"Ella, I think we might be better served addressing the things which took you to that bridge in the first place." Leon suggests.

"Leon?" Sinclair responds, not taking his eyes off of me.

"Yes, Alpha?" The therapist inquires eagerly.

Put a sock in it.