

Accidental Surrogate

Chapter 255 Cora receives an unpleasant surprise

Third person

" Well, it looks like you and I are the only bachelors left in this place , " Cora commented to Gabriel , watching Isabel and James in their far corner of the table . Thankfully, they weren't as obvious about their romance of her as her sister was of her and Sinclair .to whom one could easily be shocked if the couple did not realize that they had an audience . Isabel and James , on the other hand , had been snuggled together for the better part of an hour , close but not really touching . really his _Proximity isn't what gave them away it was their laser focus on each other , not speaking or looking at anyone else . _ It was as if they were the only two people in the world . _

Cora felt a pang of jealousy and immediately forced her away , embarrassed by the ugly emotion . Instead , she tried to concentrate on her conversation with the king . " Excuse me , but I happen to be dating a very handsome wolf named Thomas . " . Gabriel replied , not sounding annoyed in the least by her assumption of him.

" Oh . " Cora frowned , obviously disappointed to learn that even the Vanaran king was also part of a couple now . " I'm sorry , I should n't have assumed , " she sincerely apologized , even as questions welled up in the back of her head.mind . NamelyWhen had he become so sentimental that the sight of just one happy couple could make his heart overflow with longing ? What learning about another could make her boil with envy ?

" Okay . " _ Gabriel assured him : " It is intentional . I prefer people to keep guessing about my love life . "

Cora concentrated enough to sneer sympathetically , " Yeah , I 'd imagine there are a hundred too many opinions on that particular subject . " _

" You can say that again . " Gabriel chuckled , taking a sip of his wine from him . Then , a mischievous expression appeared on his face in the form of a small , secret smile as if he was about to admit something he should n't . goes_ good though _ Someday soon I hope to make it official . _ _ "

Cora forced herself to smile . Congratulations ! _ " To make a relationship official in the world of shapeshifters meant a formal claim : another mating ceremony . She tried to hide the sudden , inexplicable pain that swallowed her insides from her , silently wondering if she was freaking out ... or maybe about to get her period . She was never so moody and she could n't understand it . _ _

" Thank you , but if it happens it will be after the war . Gabriel replied , visibly recanting her own hopes of him in favor of realistic expectations . _ _ _ _ _

" Are you sure ? Cora asked , nodding at James and Isabel . _ _ " Maybe they have the right idea , bond while you can . " _ _ _ _ _

It was their last night in Vanara , either traveling to the halls of Altaran to find Ella's mother , or returning to the mainland with Sinclair to face Damon . Either way , they would all be separated by this time tomorrow ... and goodbyes in times of war . They were the worst of all . _ Cora she knew that there were never guarantees in life , and she knew especially the cost of fighting at home . Suddenly, an image flashed in his mind of her, a bloody vision of the operating room that afternoon , of a resistance fighter they had failed to save . Only in his mind 's eye of him was Roger 's face in that lifeless form , instead of the stranger he had been unable to save .

" Cora , are you okay ? Gabriel asked suddenly , worry seizing him as tears welled up on the human 's lashes .

" I'm fine . She assured him through a completely unconvincing smile . _ " I just need a moment . Some fresh air . " _ She gasped , pushing her chair back . He met Ella's concerned gaze and shook his head to make sure she was right.her sister did not follow her .Unfortunately , there was nothing she could do to stop Roger from following her .

Cora moved stiffly for the balcony doors and ran out onto the terrace . The gardens were still decorated from the night before , though they were much quieter now . Courtiers and delegations , all refugees willing and able to fight , _ _ everyone was home preparing for war . _ Those who weren't were back in the dining room trying to enjoy what little time they had left together . Cora descended into the maze of plants , sucking in great gulps of air as her awareness of her cruelly narrated.the scene . _ _ And tonight they 'll all go up to their rooms and hold each other tight and make sweet , sweet love and I 'll be here ... staring at a fucking leaf .

Cora made a face and shook herself a bit , " Enough ! " , she scolded herself . " You're being a brat . It's not their fault they're happy . "

" Talking to yourself , little human ? A familiar and infuriatingly deep voice sounded behind her . _ _

Cora jumped , turning back to look at Roger . " You know where I come from , it's rude to stalk lonely women in the dark and listen to their private conversations . "

Roger frowned , as if racking his brains . " No , no , we come from the same place and I don't remember any rules like that . Also , is it a conversation if you are having it with yourself ? " _

" It's the most private type of conversation . I answer haughtily , turning my nose towards the handsome wolf . _ _ _ " So do us both a favor and run before you make things even more awkward than they already are . "

Roger pursed his lips , shoving his hands into his pockets as he crept forward . " Well, since things are already so awkward , I might as well ask why you're crying ... and why you were mad because someone is happy . " Cora crossed from _arms . on his chest From him, wishing he could kill this man with his eyes alone ... then trying and snorting when the big wolf just chuckled . " Come on , " He encouraged , moving so close now that they were almost touching . _ _ _ " Do you know that I can be a _ very good listener . "

Somehow , Cora doubted that Roger's services as an impartial friend and advisor extended to her feelings for him ... not that she had feelings, of course . " Actually I 'm going to bed . She lied quickly . But listen , in case we do n't have one opportunity in the Tomorrow I want to thank you for being so supportive of me . _ _ _ Tor helping me and getting me out of Moon Valley in the first place . _ _ _ You saved my life . She held out her hand , " I hope we meet again . " "

Cora was counting the minutes until her and Ella 's departure , and dreading them . She knew that saying this goodbye would be difficult , but she was also the one she wanted the most to get out of the way . _ _ _ _ _

" Oh, I see . " Roger's lips unfurled in an utterly devilish smile . " I was wondering why you didn't mention it . Dominic did n't tell you . "

" You didn't tell me what ? Cora snapped , not liking the predatory grin on her face one bit .

" Well , since the killer told Damon that the Alpha is dead , his next logical targets are Ella and the baby . _ This possibility seemed to be confirmed when Kieran was approached by Damon , so we made arrangements to ensure additional security on his journey . " . Roger explained vaguely , looking like the cat that ate the canary . _ " You must realize that my brother puts the safety of his mate and his son even above his own ... he will spare no resource or expense for Ella and Rafe . "

" What are you saying ? Ella Cora demanded , though she had a terrible feeling that she already knew .

" I'm saying you do n't have to worry about getting separated or something happening to me while you're on Altara . " Roger clarified , still smiling as he pushed Cora against the wall .

" Why not ? _ Cora swallowed , cursing her body as she instinctively backed away from the wolf .

Roger bared his fangs . " Because I'm going with you . " He stated , in a tone that sent shivers down Cora 's spine . _ " I'll be with you every step of the way . " Roger continued as Cora 's shoulder blades collided withthe stone , and he loomed over her , taking her cheek in his great hand . " Day and night , for the next few weeks ... on a chain of deserted islands ... with nothing to do but watch over your sister with a dozen other guards . "" . she purred Ella, and Cora found her lashes droop , wondering if he was about to kiss her ... and then wondering if she would have the strength to stop him .

He did n't . " I don't know about you , " Roger concluded , his dark eyes boring into Cora's as she looked up at him again , nervously licking her lips . His glowing wolf gaze dropped from her to follow her little pink tongue from her, and suddenly the Beta wasfinding his pants too tight . _ " But I'm going to work hard to think of ways to entertain ourselves during those long hours on the boat and in the temple . " _ _ _

Cora's heart pounded frantically against her ribs , her thighs clenching reflexively to ease the ache in her core . " Surely a temple dedicated to the Goddess is a very holy and sacred place , " Ella Cora suggested , her voice quavering . " Probablywe will have tobe very quiet and respectful while we are there . "

Roger laughed , a sort of ominous , knowing roar . " Sweet Cora , is that really what you expect , knowing what you make of our kind ? " "

Suddenly, her mind returned to the changing holidays and traditions she was familiar with , and the few she was able to celebrate with Ella this year . She thought of the Solstice , with its bonfires , moon baths , and wild hunt . She thought of the primitive , paganthe energy of those nights , the way they are all rooted in ancient magic and base instincts , the raw sensuality they all seemed to bring to the surface . She thought of the heady power of being alone with Roger in these completely nondescript settings , and tried to imagine yourself in a place of mystery and power , where all your senses would be heightened even more .

And suddenly she understood why Roger seemed so pleased with himself .

It was clear that he did not expect her to be able to resist once they left together . He planned to make her his , sooner rather than later . _ _ _ _ _ And the scariest part of all ? Cora had a very bad feeling that she was going to have success .