

# Accidental Surrogate

Chapter 273

#Chapter 273 – Cora’s Gift

3(rd) Person

Cora almost skids to a stop as she flies into Ella’s hospital room. “What,” she gasps. “What is it – is she –”

But Sinclair is just standing at the side of Ella’s bed, his hands pressed deep into his pockets, staring at the door as if he was waiting for her. Cora bites her words back, knowing that if Ella had ...well, Sinclair wouldn’t just be standing still. He’d be tearing the world to pieces.

Cora lets out a deep breath, her eyes trailing down to her sister in the bed. God, she looks so frail just laying there, wired up to all of those machines. Her passionate sister, so full of life, looks like a little bird crumpled up in that bed...

“She’s fine,” Sinclair snaps, bringing Cora’s eyes back to him. Roger comes into the room then as well and Sinclair’s eyes flick to him, a little surprised. After all, he hadn’t called for Roger, he’d called for Cora. Apparently, they’d been together.

Sinclair didn’t let himself think about why. He didn’t care. His attention returns to Cora alone. “Give it back to her,” Sinclair demands, his voice even and controlled.

“What?” Cora asks, standing up straight. “Give what back? I didn’t take anything –”

“What’s going on, Dominic?” Roger asks, stepping in front of Cora, realizing that his brother is worked up about something. “Tell us. We need to understand.”

Frustrated at not being immediately obeyed, Sinclair takes a deep breath and steels himself, trying to will patience into his body, even though he’s run completely out of it. He just wants this done. Wants her back.

“I met her,” Sinclair snaps, working to summarize the past few hours as quickly as possible. “In the dream state. She was there with ...with Rafe.” Cora’s face lights up with this news and she opens her mouth to ask a thousand questions, but Sinclair keeps going. “Ella is strong in her spirit, but the doctor says her body is too weak. That she would need a gift from the Goddess to heal her now.” His eyes move to Cora’s, angry. “Which you took from her.”

Cora’s mouth drops open at his accusation and a hand flies to her breast. “Sinclair,” she breathes, “I would never – she gave it to me – I had to

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“I don’t care,” he interrupts, his voice raising now. “You took it, and now you have to give it back.” He takes a step towards her now, as if he’d rip it from her body if it would save his mate.

“Easy,” Roger warns, taking a step closer to his brother. “Easy, Dominic. We hear you. You have a point, okay? Just...just let Cora think.”

The brothers turn to Cora then, pinning her under their dual stare. Her breath comes faster as she quickly sorts through her thoughts. Is this her fault? Did she do this to Ella, by taking the gift? Was she the reason her sister would die?

“Cora,” Roger says carefully. “What do you think?”

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“Um,” she mutters, her eyes unfocused as she stares at the ground, trying to piece it together. “I don’t know? I didn’t mean...I didn’t mean to? But he might be right? When I took the gift from her,

that’s when she collapsed...”

“Well,” Roger says, working hard to keep the energy in the room calm, feeling like he’s walking in a minefield that could explode at any minute. “Can you give it back?”

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“May maybe?” Cora replies, lifting her eyes and looking between the brothers. “But will that be good for her? She couldn’t she couldn’t hold it all, when she was weak...”

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Sinclair begins to growl then and Cora shrinks away, overwhelmed.

“Enough,” Roger snaps, glaring at his brother and gesturing towards Cora. “Can’t you see that she’s trying? That none of this is her fault? She’s trying to help – let her help, if she can.” Sinclair visibly fights his instincts to force Cora to do his bidding, to save his mate. But Roger is right – terrifying the girl isn’t helping, so he forces himself to take two steps back, to return to his spot by Ella’s head.

Cora relaxes a little as Sinclair backs off. She looks between the brothers, hesitating. “Are you sure you want me to try this? Even if it could...hurt her?”

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Roger glances over his shoulder at the open door. “Do you want me to get the doctor and ask?”

“No,” Sinclair bites out. “He’s done all he can. He’s out of this now. This is between us. Between... the two of you.” It kills him to say it, to admit – however tacitly that there’s nothing he himself can do anymore.

That this is now between the sisters, and the best he can do is watch. “Do it.”

Cora still hesitates and is surprised when Rafe comes to her side and takes her hand. “We have to try,” he murmurs. When she looks up at him, she’s further shocked to see that his eyes are filled with hope. “I think he’s right, Cora. It makes sense. And it’s a gift – I don’t think it can hurt her.” Cora’s lip begins to tremble then as she thinks about it – the horrible, awful consequences that this could have if it went wrong. But Roger holds her gaze, tightening his grip on her hand, giving her the strength she needs, the courage.

“All right,” Cora whispers, nodding once and moving swiftly to the side of Ella’s bed, taking her sister’s hand. “Um,” she says, looking around. “Can I have a chair?”

Roger quickly moves to bring her one from across the room, helping her settle into it. As he moves away, Cora tucks her legs up beneath her so that she’s seated cross-legged, as she was that night in the desert with Ella and Reina. Sinclair makes no move, standing stoically by his mate, watching everything.

Cora gives them both a tremulous smile and then, taking a deep breath, she closes her eyes. She had watched everything that Ella did that night in the desert. Had watched her sister fall deeper into a state of truth, had watched her make that connection with her mother, had watched her be filled with the Goddess’s gift and start to glow with it. Cora hadn’t wanted to admit it then, but she’d felt...well, a little jealous. It was the jealousy of an orphan for a friend who found her mother, the jealousy of a girl who was starting to feel like a tag-along while her best friend found her mate, and her true identity, and her calling. A whole beautiful life while Cora had...

Well, not nothing. But not that. So, she had been jealous – happy for Ella but wanting a little piece of that for herself as well. And she had been ashamed of those emotions in that moment, of her envy, and had felt herself...undeserving of her spot on that sacred trip to the desert to commune with the Goddess.

But now, after learning the truth?

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Cora knew that all of that the envy, the feelings of inadequacy – it had all been in her head. The Goddess was her mother as well, after all. And she, Cora, a human, had been the one to give the gift to the world.

There was no reason to think that Ella could do anything that she could not.

Well, except turn into a wolf.

But Cora pushes that thought to the side along with the rest of her doubts. Instead, she embraces her identity and sinks – as she had seen Ella do – into that deeper state. And as she does that – as the light behind her eyes fades from orange to green to a deep and rich lavender and the sounds of the room’s medical devices fades to the background – Cora finds a peace within herself.

And...there.

There, right at the center, where she imagines her heart *to* be, Cora finds it. The gift, shining, waiting, not exhausted but endless and ready to be given at will. Cora moves forward towards it, wrapping her hands around it, feeling it pulse with warmth. As she lifts it in her hands, she imagines that she can almost hear her mother speaking to her, singing, encouraging her to give it.

So she does. Cora opens her eyes in the real world and is not at all surprised to see the gift glowing in her hands – a real thing, a true entity, lighting the room with its warmth. Cora smiles at it and then glances at Roger, pursing her lips against her laughter to see him staring at her in shock, his mouth hanging open.

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But when her eyes move to Sinclair, she sees that he has not moved at all. That he just stares at her, demand in every line of him. She nods to him, agreeing. It is time.

So Cora simply stands and takes two steps closer to her sister. She reaches out her hands, presenting the gift, leaning over to hold it close over Ella’s own heart.

“I love you, sister,” Cora whispers. “It’s time for you to take it back.”

And there is not a doubt in her mind as she opens her hands and gently places the gift directly in the center of Ella’s chest.