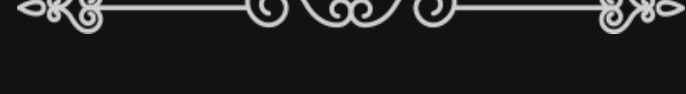


Accidental Surrogate

Chapter 282: Hell on Wheels



Ten days pass with agonizing slowness and I think I'm going to lose my mind.

On the morning of the eleventh day I just sit in my bed, staring passively at the tv, flicking through the channels and not even caring what comes on. I've seen it all, anyway.

It's not that I haven't tried to keep busy in bed. In fact, I've tried everything. I've sent email after email to all of the aid organizations I can think of, asking if there's any way that I can help from home. They all came back with pleasant congratulations and urges for me to concentrate on my improved health. I scowled at each one of them as I deleted them and silently wondered if Sinclair had anything to do with it, just a quiet word to each of the organization heads that I wasn't to be engaged until after the birth of my child.

When that fails, I try a variety of crafts I've always wanted to get into but have never had time for. But it turns out that knitting is crazy boring, and I'm a terrible painter, and I'll never cut it as a novelist because I can't stitch two words together. When hobbies failed, I tried educating myself, downloading a few language apps so I can become the polyglot I've always wanted to be.

But, I swear to god, if that little owl pops up on my phone one more time urging me to practice my French...

Well, let's just say that while I've always braked for birds, I won't be doing that anymore. (2)

So, now, it's just me and this damn tv. And my brain slowly rotting to much as I sit here on bed, rest. Even though it's bed torture.

And it's not that Sinclair isn't kind. We meet every night in the dream space, but in our waking hours he only has so much time. He's working so hard to bring our people together, to unite human and wolf kind, and I don't have the heart to tell him that I'm so bored I've tried to see how many Oreos I can stack on my forehead before they all come crashing down around me.

(Eighteen.)

I know that if I even gave him a hint that I was miserable, he'd drop everything and come to my side, entertain me, make me laugh. But what kind of queen would I be if I took him away from our people? I know that I have to be strong but...damn, it's hard. Who would have thought that a charge through a shelled city towards a temple I could handle, but laying in bed for ten days is really the thing that takes me out?

The only real relief I find is when I am in the dream state, either with Sinclair or alone, so I spend as much time as I can sleeping or napping. I feel freest when it's just me. I love my time with my mate, when we spend our night hours touching and holding each other in ways we can't in the real world, but when I'm alone? I transform into my wolf and run –

I run through rivers and up the sides of mountains, feeling the snow crunch beneath my paws. I run through moonlit forests and drink from silver lakes. I sprint across deserts, the pads of my feet so swift they barely touch the sand. Sometimes, when I look over my shoulder, I see a little pup running along with me, giving little yips of satisfaction and joy. He's not always there, but when he is, I feel my heart could burst from the joy of it.

But a girl can only sleep so much, especially when she's got nothing to do all day but sit around.

So that's what has landed me here, flipping through channel 826. Passively, I wonder what happens after I hit channel 999. Does it go back to 0? Or does it just go on...forever....

Suddenly I sigh and toss the remote across the bed, giving a little growl of aggravation.

Damn it, I need something to do. I'm a wolf, after all. We weren't meant to lay in bed all day, passive. I have to get up, I have to move around and see things.

For the millionth time, I wrack my brain, trying to come up with a solution, wondering how the people I love would handle it. Cora, of course, would grit through it, the way she did med school – just putting her head down and enduring the unpleasantness, knowing the great reward is coming at the end. Sinclair...well, he would probably ignore the doctors and push forward with his life. And while that sounds amazing, I promised I wouldn't.

I slump down against my pillows, running through all the people I know, when suddenly my mind alights on Sinclair's father. Henry.

I gasp, inspired, and grab for my phone. As quickly as I can, I pull up his contact information and call him, crossing my fingers and praying that he picks up.

"Hello?"

"Henry!" I burst out. "Henry, I have a great idea. Can you help me out?"

A few hours later, the house is full of people.

"Yes, this is perfect," I breathe, holding on to the service technician's arm as he lifts me from the bed.

My head snaps up as I hear a ragged snarl rip across the room.

"Get your hands off my mate." I hear Sinclair demand, his voice livid with a murderous threat. The technician spins and, when he sees the huge werewolf in front of him ready to rip his head off, starts to shake so hard he almost drops me.

"No!" I cry as the technician starts to put me back down on the bed. I point a finger in his face, giving him a harsh look and speaking in my best Luna voice. "Don't you dare put me back in that bed. I will flip out."

Torn, the technician whips his head between me and the doorway, not knowing what to do and fearing for his life either way.

Suddenly, Sinclair pulls me from the technician's arms before I can say a word and holds me close against his chest. "Get out," he growls at the man, his voice low. "And if I ever see you again – even once in your life –"

I hear the rapid patter of feet and know that he's gone, but I try to peek around Sinclair's shoulder anyway.

"Seriously!?" I cry, glaring up at him. "You had to scare him off like that?!"

"He had his hands on you, Ella," Sinclair snarls, and I can see the rage still alight in his eyes. I smirk, a little pleased by his jealousy beyond my annoyance. Sinclair narrows his eyes at me for a moment and then looks to the side at the shiny new wheelchair sitting there, waiting for me."

What the hell is all of this, Ella?"

"My salvation," I say, beaming at the chair with love in my eyes, admiring its gleaming wheels and all of the buttons on its control board. "It's state of the art – I'll be able to –"

"Ella," my mate snaps, drawing my attention back to him. "You were commanded to stay in bed."

"This is bed-adjacent!" I cry, defiant. "It's the same thing, basically! I sit up in bed, why can't I sit in a chair!"

"That's not the point," he explains, angry. "You're supposed to be resting, healing"

"Dominic," I interrupt, letting my face drop so that he can see the desperation beneath. "Please. This is..." I shake my head, hoping he will understand. "It is killing me to sit around all day doing nothing. Please, Dominic. I won't even leave the house. I just have to get out of bed."

My mate pauses for a moment, staring down at me, his eyes softening. "Ella," he says, working hard to keep his voice even. "If you were so miserable, why didn't you tell me –"

But I just slowly shake my head and his words fall away. He knows why. He nods, understanding, and then heaves a big sigh, turning and carrying me out into the hall where workers are buzzing around at the staircase.

"And what are these ones doing?" He asks, yielding to me.

"They're putting in my stairlift," I reply, my eyes bright and my words breathless with wonder. Isn't it amazing?"

"Ella," he scolds, shaking his head at me. "What is all of this even going to do "

"It's easy!" I exclaim, feeling true enthusiasm for the first time in a week. "Your dad helped me set it up – just a chair upstairs, and a stairlift, and a chair downstairs, and I have full run of the house! It's amazing, and I never have to get up! Even Doctor Hank and Cora said it was okay."

Sinclair takes another deep breath, holding my gaze, but a huge smile bursts onto my face as I see him visibly give in.

"All right, trouble," he murmurs, carrying me back into the bedroom where he places me gently in my new chair. "But I have a feeling that this is a terrible idea."

"No! The best idea!" I cry, pressing the forward control on the chair and zooming out into the hall. "It's going to be great!"

Immediately, I hear Sinclair skitter out into the hall after me when he hears the crashing sound that I make, totally by accident. His face is terrified

"Um," I say, biting my lip and looking down at the poor broken vase I knocked on the floor. "You didn't like that one...right?"