

Accidental Surrogate for Alpha by Caroline Above Chapter 306

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#Chapter 306 – Old Friends

Ella

Two hours later, Sinclair and I welcome our friends back to our house for a casual breakfast and coffee

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or mimosas, according to preference to celebrate Rafe's moonlight baptism. I can tell our guests are dragging – they've been up all night, after all – but spirits are high.

"Wow," I say, leaning back against Sinclair's chest with a croissant in one hand, a cup of coffee in the other. Rafe, thankfully, is asleep in his little recline stroller. Usually I'd put him to bed in his crib, but I want people to be able to say goodbye if they have to leave. "I can't believe everyone is still up," I say, peering around at our friends and family. "I mean, I know we're on baby time so normal hours mean nothing anymore, but everyone else..."

"It's a special occasion," Sinclair murmurs; lowering his face to my hair and taking a long sniff of my scent. "We're used to it. In wolf culture shifter children are rarer than we'd like, so we take the time to celebrate them when they're born."

"That's so nice..." I say, sniffing a little, my eyes filling with tears.

"What?" Sinclair asks, pulling away from me a little, shocked. "Are you – why are you crying –

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I swat at him, laughing a little. “What! Hormones! I’m tired! Leave me be.” Then I brush the tears off my cheeks, smiling despite them. I’m just overwhelmed and grateful, honestly, for all the love that our family has shown our baby. “It really is a beautiful tradition,” I murmur, and Sinclair kisses my cheek before moving away to talk to some of the Alphas who have come to see their new prince.

As Sinclair moves away, Isabel quickly moves to my side to take his place. “Hi, mama,” she says, giving me a warm smile as she wraps an arm around my waist. “How are you doing?”

“Forget about me!” I cry out, wrapping my arms around her again, “how are you? How are James, and Sadie?”

“They’re good,” she says, but the way she smiles at her mate across the room lets me know that her words are an understatement. James raises a hand to me, little Sadie slumped against his shoulder, deeply asleep.

“Do you want to put her upstairs **in** one of the guest rooms?” I ask Isabel quickly, taking her hand and squeezing it. “You can stay as long as you like —”

“No,” she says, giving me a smile. “I’m so glad we could be here and meet the baby – but we both want to get home. **We** have...a lot of work to do there.” Her face changes, then, and I feel my stomach twist to see it.

“Is everything okay?” I ask, anxious, tugging her hand and urging her to tell me. She nods to a little love seat **in** the corner and I follow her there, Rafe’s little pram in tow, so that we are

away from everyone and as private as we can be.

“Ella,” Isabel says, her voice soft and a little sad, “I know that you’ve been distracted – and there’s nothing wrong with that you’ve had such a hard pregnancy, and I know that the birth wasn’t easy on you either – you really shoul

dn't have been paying attention to anything besides your body and Rafe and Sinclair – ”

“Please, Isabel,” I say, staring at her and

tightening my hold on her hand, “please just tell me –

“My stomach is roiling with guilt to think that I’ve neglected something when I could have helped.

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“It’s just...I don’t

think that Sinclair has told you absolutely everything,” she says, “about how bad the refugee problem is now, after the last days of the war

when you were away on the boat. It’s nothing that he’s done wrong – Sinclair has made so many strides – but we have more children than ever in our centers, and there are even mothers out there who are simply missing their children

My face goes pale at the idea and I flick my glance towards my sleeping baby. If I were ever separated from him by war – just, had no idea where he was, if he was cared for – my heart wrenches to think of it. Isabel notes my paling face, my eyes filling with tears.

“Please, Ella,” she says softly, anxiously looking to where Sinclair is standing. “I’m sorry maybe I shouldn’t have told you –”

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“No,” I say, shaking my head and looking at her

with a new determination on my face. “I need to know, Isabel -I’m getting strong, I need to do this sort of work. If

Sinclair intends to lead these people, I don’t intend to stay home and be a happy little house wife while others suffer. I want to help.”

She nods, understanding. “I knew that you’d feel that way. That’s why I told you – not because ...well, Ella, if you’re still healing, you need to focus on yourself first. You can be so selfless you always put others ahead of yourself.”

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My heart softens and I take a deep breath, still worried but touched by my friend’s concern. She knows me so well. “Thank you, love,” I say, giving her a little smile. “I’ll take care of myself, and my family. But I’m going to help too. Can you tell me? Who is the worst hit, where should I begin?”

“Well,” she says, lowering her voice and looking around the room. “It’s...complicated.”

I frown at her, not understanding, but giving her the space to work through her thoughts.

“Ella,” she says, more urgent now, “we both know that the right side won this war. That Damon would have worked to disenfranchise the humans completely, to enslave them if he could. Sinclair, we know, wants equal rights and peace – but there are people even on Sinclair’s side who still have...complicated ideas about hierarchies between shifters and humans.”

I nod, understanding her, remembering the councils during the war when even some of Sinclair’s allies looked askance at the humans, at Cora, my own sister. I frown to think of it, to see some of those men in this room now. Sighing, I turn back to Isabel.

“I hear you – and I’m aware. It’s something that I know Sinclair is working on but...old prejudices, they die hard. But, Isabel, what does that have to do with refugees?” I ask, confused.

She shrugs a little. “It just means that since the humans were less prepared for the war – – it came **out** of the blue for them a little bit – that they don’t have the resources that the w

olves have to help their people in the aftermath. And there are some among shifter-kind who are eager to divert all resources towards shifters first, meaning..."

I let out a big exhale, both of exhaustion and understanding. "That the humans are getting the short end of the stick." Slowly, Isabel nods.

"In all areas," she says slowly, "and Ella," she bites her lip, looking me in the eye and perhaps not wanting to say it, "it means that...resentment is building. Humans feel lied to, and now that they know the truth, it in many ways seems like Sinclair has offered them peace but is not giving them the resources to survive their new reality."

My eyebrows fly up at this and I follow my knee-jerk reaction to defend my mate. "Sinclair is doing everything he

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"I know, Ella," Isabel says softly, leaning forward to put a reassuring hand on my knee. "I'm just saying, from the human's perspective? ...The trust is not there. They need help, and they need a reason to believe in Sinclair."

I nod, looking away from my friend and staring into space a little bit, trying to figure out what I can do next.

"Maybe," Isabel suggests softly, "his mate, who was raised human for most of her life, and thought she was human until she conceived a wolf child, and who has a human sister..."

I turn back to Isabel, nodding slowly. "Perhaps I'm the link we need."

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need your help. You

I give my friend a warm smile and she squeezes my hand, a plan starting to form between us. Please

stay,” I whisper to her, shaking my head a little. “I need you here could do so much good here, on my team.”

She sighs and looks towards James, considering. “I’ll talk to him,” she says, smiling at her mate and her little girl. “We’ll decide, together, what’s best.”