

Accidental Surrogate for Alpha by Caroline Above Chapter 311

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#Chapter 311 – Cora at Home

Cora

When I wake up it's
almost eight at night and I groan, realizing that my sleep schedule is

completely wrecked. I'm reminded, suddenly, of my years as a medical resident when this sort of thing was normal – sleeping all day, taking night shifts, living moment to moment rather than a steady, scheduled life.

And quite frankly, right now? That sounds really wonderful, compared against a whole night of empty hours in which I have nothing to do but... think.

Think about what I'm doing in my life, think about my career which has gone in a really weird direction, think about my relationship...s.

About a certain kiss in the woods.

About a sweet doctor who, apparently, wants to build a life with me.

I sigh and sit up, looking
around at my sterile little apartment. I never really decorated, I realize as

I look around at the grey and
beige furniture, the simple linens, the charmless curtains. Everything is functional and high quality but none of it is... me?

Or is it?

I frown at my space, thinking of Ella's sweet home that – **even** though Sinclair picked out most of the furniture before she moved in – still sings Ella Ella Ella in every corner. It's warm and sweet and comfortable. What does my space say about me?

I mean, I'm an orphan – I never had any possessions or any control over the environments in which I lived, so where would I have learned to decorate? I never had a mother to show me how

So where did Ella...

I groan, rolling my eyes at myself, sick, again, of being jealous of my sister.

I love her so, so much – and I'm so happy she has what she wants in her life. But sometimes she's just so....perfect. That it makes me realize how unhappy I am, when I stand next to her.

I roll over, reaching for my phone, seeking some kind of distraction from these disquieting thoughts. But when I pick it up the first thing I see is one of those relationships I'm trying to avoid leaving me an assortment of messages. I sigh and click open my message app.

Hank: Hey, Cora – how did the baptism go? Dinner later?

Hank: Cora? **You** okay?

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Hank: Hey, send me a text when you get up – I know you were up all night but I'm worried that I haven't heard from you.

Sighing,

I swipe the messages away and click through the rest of my phone, trying, determinedly ,

to not let it bother me that there's nothing at all from Roger. Not a peep. As I take a deep breath and check my email, another message from Hank pops up.

Hank: Hey, are you home? I'm... I mean, this is a little pathetic, but I'm outside. Can you let me in? I

your apartment **door**...

My heart twinges a little bit when I see that. Hank. He's being so sweet and I'm...well, I'm not being fair to him, am I?

Ella's right. I'm holding a space for Roger, one he doesn't even want – despite what might have passed between us last night, it doesn't change anything. And there's a man standing outside my door with mooshoo pork, dying to love me.

God, what's wrong with me? Quickly, I jump out of my bed and dash for the front door of my apartment.

When I get to it, I yank it open, hoping

Hank jumps a little, his eyes going wide, accidentally dropping the large bag of Chinese on the little mail table I keep outside my door. "Gah!"

"Hi!" I say, bright, cheerful – maybe too bright, too cheerful. "I'm so sorry," I continue, smiling at him, "I just woke up – we were up all night. It's – I'm very sorry. I should have texted before I fell asleep."

"It's okay," Hank says, giving me his rare, warm smile. "I get it – you had a busy night."

"Do you want to come in?" I ask, leaning against my door frame and gesturing towards my little apartment. "I am...well, I am starving,

“Sure,” he says, his lips turning up a bit at the corner. “That sounds great, Cora.”

As we sit on the house, the Chinese spread out around us on the coffee table, eating right out of the containers with the supplied chopsticks, Hank tells me all about his day. He held down the fort at the little free clinic we both work at, seeing both prospective mothers as well as general ailments from humans and wolves who currently don’t have access to their regular healthcare providers.

It was, apparently, a busy day with some tricky cases. I watch Hank closely as he tells **me** his story, my eyes flicking over his handsome, serious face – his thick brown hair – his strong, capable hands-

And I feel something twist in my stomach as I watch him, something that makes me...well, makes- me want to jump across the couch and kiss him...

“Cora?” he asks, making me blink and focus on him. “Did you hear me?”

“Hmm?” I ask, shaking myself and forcing myself to listen to his words. Then, I grimace a little. I’m sorry, Hank,” I say, giving him an apologetic look. “I got....lost in my thoughts a little bit. Forgive me. Can **you** start again?”

“It’s okay,” he responds, giving me a little wink and reaching out to grab my hand, squeezing it a bit before sitting **back**. “I was just curious if you think Ella would want to be more involved in the clinic.”

“I think she’d be dying to be more involved in the clinic,” I respond instantly, looking down at my chicken with broccoli and picking up a morsel. “But she doesn’t have any medical experience. Would she really be helpful there? I think that she would do anything – but she’s got a big heart,

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need most.”

“I wasn’t thinking about administration,” Hank says, swirling some noodles around his chopsticks. “And it’s true that she doesn’t have medical experience, but she does have...healing experience.”

I cock my head at him, confused.

“Or more precisely healing powers,” Hank clarifies quietly.

“Our mother’s gift?” I ask, raising my eyebrows at him.

He shrugs a little. “It was incredible, what she was able to do to herself twice now. To bring herself out of that coma that should have killed her. And then I saw her, before my eyes, almost instantly heal wounds that should have incapacitated her for days. If she were able to harness that power... Or, Cora,” he says seriously, meeting my eyes now, “if you were able to harness that power...”

“Oh,” I say, my mouth going to a little “o” as I lower the takeout to my lap. I had honestly never thought of it – of leveraging my mother’s power for the practice of medicine. It seemed somehow... too sacred, too special, to be used to heal bumps and bruises. But could it, should it, be used to cure people on the edge of death, like Ella had been?

Could it be used to fight things like terminal cancer, or deadly wounds?

My skin starts to tingle

at the possibilities, but I’m wary. I mean, I gave the gift back to Ella – and our mother gave it to her in the first place. It’s hers to use as she wishes.

But if I had it, would I use it differently than Ella might?

“Sorry,” Hank says softly. “Did I...was it wrong to suggest it?”

“No,” I say, snapping my attention back to him. “Um, but it’s a bigger question than just I can answer. We’ll have to ask Ella.”

“Well,” Hank says with a smile, “now that she’s feeling better, maybe we can have that conversation soon. If the gift can truly heal...she could help a lot of people. Quickly.”

“Yeah,” I say, grinning at him, excited. “And it’s not like she’s got anything else on her plate at the moment.”

“Well, neither do we,” says Hank, pushing his takeout aside and moving across the couch to me, taking the container of food out of my hands and putting it on the table next to me. “At least, not for the next twelve hours or so, until we have to go to work.”

I laugh lightly as he moves his body over mine, bringing his face close to me and slipping a hand behind my back.

“Whatever shall we do?” I murmur, happy as I let Hank use that hand on my back to lay me flat on the couch. Then I close my eyes as Hank brings his mouth to mine.