

Accidental Surrogate for Alpha by Caroline Above Chapter 319

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#Chapter 319 – The Archive

Cora

That evening, our car rumbles down the road towards the archive, Roger steady at the wheel. Another car with two guards follows behind us, keeping a steady eye out for anything strange. I sigh, already exhausted, even though I got more sleep than Ella or Roger or Sinclair last night. Still it wasn't exactly a peaceful sleep – and then today, with the sketch artist...

I stare down at a copy of the sketch in my lap, at the face of the man I didn't realize had been haunting my dreams. To be able to see him put on paper like this – it's...it's like staring at the ghost you didn't know was haunting you. A little shiver passes through me and I neatly fold the page, placing it in the cup holder next to me, not wanting it in my hands anymore.

"You all right?" Roger asks, glancing over at me.

"Yeah," I say, sighing again, my eyes on the road. "How long until we get there?"

"About two more hours," he replies evenly, nodding towards the GPS system running on his phone. "We're lucky that they're staying open late for us."

"We're not lucky," I murmur, leaning down to tug at the bottom of the jeans that Ella loaned to me which are, predictably, too short. "Sinclair is rich. Anyone will stay open that late in exchange for an insane donation."

Roger smirks, glancing at me, but doesn't reply. Because he knows I'm right.

I feel my phone buzz then, tucked under my thigh, and I pull it out, unlocking it and looking at the

new message on my screen.

Hank: It's **okay**, I totally understand. I'm glad the baby is okay. Don't worry about the clinic – I can hold it down for as long as you need. Have fun? Is that the right sentiment for a trip to an obscure shifter archive?

I smile, laughing a little inwardly at his joke. No, fun was not precisely the word I'd choose either, not for this trip. My smile falls, though, when another message pops onto the screen.

Hank: I miss you.

I glance away from it, licking my lips awkwardly and tucking the phone back under my leg. I look back to the windshield and realize that Roger is watching me from the corner of his eye.

"Who was that?" he asks, smug. I know, instantly, that he already knows.

"Nobody," I murmur, turning away.

"Was it Ella?" he quips, needling me.

I turn **to** send a little glare his way. "It wasn't Ella."

"Oh," he says, smirking now. But he lets it drop. It's enough for him, I guess, to let me **know that** he knows. I sigh, closing my eyes and letting my head rest back against my seat, my face turned away from **Roger**, wanting **a** little nap but knowing I'm not going **to get** it.

Instead, **my** mind wanders to Hank, and I think **of** him seeing patients alone in our little clinic all

night – god, was it only last night? – when I’d pulled him half dressed into my bedroom, gasping for him, and let him peel my clothes from my body before...

Well. Before stuff happened.

Good stuff. Great stuff, even.

So why can’t I text him back and tell him that I miss him too?

I sigh, willing my mind away from it, turning it towards other things. I listen to the steady hum of the car, to the very, very faint sound of Roger breathing next to me. But I don’t reach for my phone. Somehow, I just don’t want to.

And as I drift off to sleep, I wonder if that makes me just...incredibly cruel. I sigh, kind of hating myself right now, but not knowing what to do about it.

Two hours later, I jump at the soft touch of a hand on my shoulder. I gasp, spinning, to see Roger looking at me curiously.

“Eye for an eye,” he says, giving me a warm little smirk. “That’s how you woke me up this morning. With a jolt.”

“Sorry,” I murmur, rubbing my eye sleepily and looking around in the dark. “Are we here?” The car is parked but still running, the windshield wipers slowly moving against a light rain. I look at it curiously, surprised. The forecast didn’t say anything about rain tonight.

“Yup,” Roger says. “Are you ready to go in? Do you need a minute?”

I stretch in my seat, my eyes closed, and take a mental inventory of myself. Body? Stiff, but all right. Mind? Thoroughly shaken. Heart?

...best left uninvestigated, for the moment.

“**Yup,**” I **say**, turning a sunny smile Roger’s way. He blinks a little bit, perhaps surprised to see it. ‘ Did you hear anything from Ella and Sinclair?’”

Roger shakes his head, turning off the car and unbuckling his seatbelt. “I heard from the m,” he **says**, “but nothing of note. All is well at home. **If** we’re **lucky**, we can do our research here tonight and be home by dawn.”

We both climb **out** of the car and I frown at him over the roof. “But then you won’t have slept at all, for twenty–four hours,” I say.

Roger gives me a swift wink, stretching himself after long hours at the wheel. “Don’t worry about me, baby,” he says. “I’ve got stamina.” And then he heads for the entrance to the ornate building in front of us, jogging up the stairs without me.

As I turn to follow, the last thought echoing in my mind is...I bet you fucking do, Roger.

Inside, we’re greeted by a friendly, eager librarian. As she smiles widely at us and leads us into a pretty reading room, dimly lit by golden sconces on the wall, I remind myself that she’s not actually excited to see us.- she’s pumped about the gigantic donation that Sinclair must have made to get us in here overnight.

we ve **punen some books** that **we** **u** **you** use, me
mua **says**, gestumy towards a stack of maybe one
hundred and twenty old leather tomes
stacked on the tables in front **of** us. **My** eyes go wide, taking in the
extent of them. “We do know
that the Cult of the Goddess adopted the robe that we now understand to be traditional
about five hundred years ago. Assuming
that the cult that you are searching for is in some way imitating that tradition, we were a
ble to narrow down the selection to the past five hundred years.”

“This?” I say, gesturing towards the books with my brows raised. “This is the narrowed selection?”

The librarian nods at me, giving us both an eager smile.

“Thank you,” Roger says, smiling back at her warmly.

“I’ll be here if you need me,” the librarian—says, gesturing towards the desk at the head of the room. “But please, make yourself at home. Just...” she hesitates, looking between us. “Please no...food or drink...around the books.”

“We promise,” Roger says, giving her the most charming smile I’ve ever seen from him. “We’ll protect the books at all costs. No sticky fingers here.” The librarian blushes, then giggles, and scurries away.

“Wow,” I say, coming to Roger’s side. “You had...quite the effect on her,” I whisper, watching her go. “Librarians love me,” Roger says, giving a little shrug. “I don’t know why. It’s always been a thing! “Are you sure you just don’t like librarians?” I ask, smirking and raising a single brow in his direction. Roger looks at me consideringly

and I raise my hand to the side of my face, pretending to lower a pair of horn-rimmed glasses down the length of my nose, looking at him seductively over the edge of them. “Oh Mr. Sinclair, please, let me tell **you** all about the

Dewey Decimal system,” I tease, my voice breathy and sensual.

Roger smirks at me, taking a step closer. “**You** watch yourself with that,” he murmurs, looking down at me with a little pretend heat behind his eyes. At least...I think it’s pretend. “If you’re not careful, I’ll pull you behind the stacks and ravish you. Won’t be able to stop myself.”

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I laugh, then, suddenly, at the shock of it — at Roger making a joke to me, to begin, and then a funny one at that. The sound is too loud in this quiet space. I slap a hand over my mouth, still giggling, and look over at the little librarian, who looks towards us, a little shocked. Roger laughs as well, his sound much more library—

appropriate, contained and measured. "Come on," he nodding towards the pile. "Let's get started."

Smiling, I comply, sitting down at the table and pulling the first book towards me.

says,