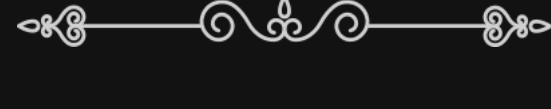


Accidental Surrogate for Alpha

Chapter 339



#Chapter 339 – Choices

Cora

"It's all right," Roger says, his eyes going wide as he takes in my pale face, my scared expression and realizes that he's freaked me out for the third or fourth time today. "It's not – it's not bad, I was just kind of a dick – it was a misunderstanding –"

"What?" I ask, more confused now than ever.

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"Listen," he says, leaning in towards me. "Just let me tell you, all right? It was going to tell you at some point, definitely not like this but..." he sighs, looking into my face and then down at my stomach, and then back up into my eyes. "I think that... if we're going to start on this new part

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of our lives – this parent thing – well," he says, giving me a charming little half-smile and a

shrug. "We should be on the same page, right?"

I nod, agreeing, but looking at him a little askance. "Did you not think that we should...go into our mating? On the same page?"

He sighs and runs a hand through his hair. "It's a little different, Cora – because it didn't matter – I didn't think we could have kids

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I frown at him – not mad or angry, but confused...

"Listen, let me just tell it," he says, leaning forward and looking at me with pleading eyes.

"Okay," I say, quite simply, taking his hands and leaning even closer to press a kiss to his mouth letting him know that I'm listening with an open heart.

"Okay," Roger says again, taking a deep breath before he begins. "Do you remember... when you and Ella went into the desert with her mother, Regina?"

"Reina," I correct softly, and he laughs.

"Right," he says, shaking his head. "Those names are so easy to mix up. Anyway – you three were out on your girls trip, and my choice was either to hang out with those priests in the temple, or go back on to the ship all alone."

I smirk at him, knowing precisely which one he chose. He sees my smile and laughs a little.

"Yeah," he says, grinning at me. "I chose solitude. Or at least...I thought I did."

"Was there someone on the ship?" I ask, curious.

"Not precisely," he replies. "I was standing at the bow looking out at the desert – honestly, a little pissed off at being left behind. Sinclair sent me to protect Ella, and there's frankly nowhere I wanted to be except at your side –"

I smile when I hear this, but I don't interrupt.

"But then, as I was looking at the sky, staring at the moon, it started to grow...brighter and brighter. And at first I thought that I was just crazy or drunk I mean, the captain gave me a little of his whiskey when he saw how upset I was

I squeeze his hands a little, begging him to focus, and he looks at me again and nods.

"And suddenly," he says, his voice faltering a little, looking down at our joined hands, "she was there."

"Who?" I ask, a little breathless, but some part of me knowing already.

Roger looks up at me now, his eyes wide and still a little startled by the experience. "Your mother, Cora. Except...at the time, I didn't know she was your mom."

"Oh," I reply, and I try to keep my face steady but honestly...some part of me is a little jealous. We all met the goddess that night in the temple with Ella – Roger met her, and me, but she had only spoken to Ella beyond a brief introduction that Ella insisted on giving us. And at the time it had made sense – Ella was her daughter, the one she wanted to see.

But now? Now that I know that she's my mother too? And that she only spoke to Ella in the temple, and then went to Roger later that night for a little chat?

I sigh a little through my nose, disappointed. Why does she want to talk to everyone but me?

"I know," Roger murmurs, reaching forward and brushing my cheek with his thumb. "It's half of why I didn't want to tell you, Cora," he continues, his face all sympathy. "I knew that it would... hurt."

"Well, what did she do?" I ask, pushing past my jealousy and truly wanting to know.

He sighs, looking off into the distance a little as he continues his story. "She didn't come in her bodily form," he says, "like she did in the temple. Instead, it was just...a vision of sorts, more like the baptism but...not quite." He shakes his head a little, at a loss to explain it. "But her message was perfectly clear."

I squeeze his hands again, letting him know that it's okay. That he can tell me. So Roger turns back to me and looks at me directly, not holding anything back.

"She told me," he says, "that I was chasing the wrong destiny. That my future was not in war and politics, as my brother's was – and you have to realize, that that was devastating to hear at the time, considering that we were in a war – and Dominic had just made me his Beta –"

I nod, understanding, concentrating on nothing else but his words.

"But then she said," he twists his mouth a little, concentrating. "It's hard to know how to phrase it – because it wasn't precisely words – but that for the future of the world, I had to focus on family.

family –on finding my mate, and having children, and being a dad, and raising my kids well to be leaders of their generation."

"Oh," I say, blinking with surprise. And then I lean forward, finally getting it. "Oh, so you stopped calling me because..."

"Because I didn't think we could have kids, Cora..." he whispers, clutching my hands tightly. "And it fucking broke my heart to do it because I loved you I was obsessed with you, you know that I

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was and before she said anything to me I didn't even care about kids – didn't even really want

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them it was always Dominic who was dying to be a dad, not me –"

"Oh!" I say again, my eyes going wide.

"Don't listen to me," Roger murmurs, apologetic, "I'm fucking it all up, Cora – I'm thrilled that you're pregnant, and not just because the goddess told me to be. I want –" He pauses He pauses his confused language for a moment and steadies himself, choosing his next words carefully to make sure that I understand.

"I very much want this child, Cora" he tells me, pausing to ensure that I hear him, "and I can't wait to build a family with you."

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And I nod, because I do. I really get it. Honestly, I'm kind of in the same boat – I was likewise unsure if I wanted kids. But the moment I really understood that this was our child – mind and Rogers...

There's nothing else I wanted in the world.

"So, you stopped calling me," I whisper, "because you thought...my mom told you to."

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"I was so fucking dumb, Cora," Roger murmurs, his eyes going wide as he again runs his hand through his hair. "I was totally freaked out I didn't want to, but when a goddess tells you to do something you feel compelled to do it – and I thought she was telling me to run from you, when she probably was telling me to run to you to take you directly to my stupid tiny bunk in that

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awful little ship and knock you up right then and there –"

I can't help the little laugh that spills from me then, thinking about the nights I lay in my own ship bunk, aching for him. "Honestly," I murmur, "I probably would have let you."

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"See?" he says, laughing with me and leaning close. "She shouldn't have come to me at all – she should have just let things pan out the way they were going to should have known that I'm too stupid to understand a goddess's meanings and prophecy –"

I'm laughing harder now, shaking my head and considering that we could have saved ourselves so much grief if my mom had just butted out and left us to our own devices –

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Roger laughs along with me, and suddenly he's gathering me up in his arms, pulling me into his

Roger, misinterpreting my mom – me, crying for weeks and running to Hank for no reason –

And I'm kissing him, loving my sweet mate, who never stopped loving me –

When suddenly I realize –

"Oh my god," I murmur, pulling back from him. "Roger, when you mated with me..."

He frowns at me, not understanding where I'm going with this.

"You..." I whisper, shocked. "You thought you were picking me despite the fact that we'd never have kids. You thought you were...defying a goddess."

Roger's smile is slow, but deep, and he nudges me with his nose before pressing a long, slow kiss to my lips. "You were worth it, Cora" he whispers. "I was ridiculous to try to stay away from you. I'd defy a thousand gods to live this life by your side. It's the only place I want to be."

And I close my eyes, and kiss my mate, and let his love sweep through me.

Because even though it sometimes feels like my entire life I've been abandoned...Roger chose me.

Above everything else. Above his future, his family, the orders of a goddess, his destiny even... Roger chose me.

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And as I kiss him, as I hold him close to me, I know that I chose him a long time ago, and now every part of me sings that despite all obstacles and hesitations – that choice was right, right, right.