

ACCIDENTAL SURROGATE FOR ALPHA

Accidental Surrogate Chapter 376-The Cost Ella My internal screaming continues, echoing through me as I grab whatever bond I have to my Goddess mother and pull on it as hard as I can – And I'm still screaming, there, in my mind and honestly maybe from my throat as well, I'm too far beyond myself now to know – when suddenly... ...She's here.

My mother's presence materializes first in my mind as she reaches for me, worried.

"Ella!" I hear her say, her voice chiming against my own frantic screams, "Ella, I am here!" Shocked shocked to feel her, shocked that it worked – I find myself thrown out of my meditative state and into my own body, which is still freezing cold. But when my eyes fly open I gasp to see that she's... She's actually here. Not just present in my mind – but standing before me. And as I blink frantically, letting my eyes adjust, I realize that she's not... physically here. Not in the way she was when we met her in the desert. But she's here in her spirit – she presents herself before me in an echo of her true form, a glowing, beautiful specter that reaches her hands out towards me.

"Mother!" I gasp. "Mom please – I need my baby – please release me -" "Ella," she says, coming forward and reaching for me, though her hands can't quite touch my face. I feel her, though something about her touch tingles against my cheeks as she tries and fails to take my face in her hands. "I don't understand, child – I don't know what's happening -" And then I'm sobbing, looking up at her, desperate for her to know but so cold now so incredibly cold – and unable to find the words to express it all- "Close your eyes, darling," she murmurs, looking down at me with her beautiful, glowing face. "Show me." And I do. I press my eyes shut and, sobbing, I press my thoughts – my memories – my fears – my ideas everything forward towards her. And I hear her gasp at first in shock, and then coo with understanding. – "All right, Ella," she says softly, and I open my eyes again to see her shaking her head at me. "Your gift is bound, my love and I cannot –" "Please, mother!" I sob, looking up at her in desperation. "Do something melt this ice, unbind my gift – go out go out and kill her just something my baby!" I see her grief on the goddess's face, her desire to help as well as her hesitation. We are from different realms – I know she is bound by rules different than me – but I can't believe that there's not something she can do.

Suddenly, her face goes grim. “Once, Ella,” she says, her face hard. “There is a way that I can interfere physically in your world once in your life. And I will never, ever be able to do it again. Are you sure that you want it to be now?” “Yes!” I gasp, desperate. There is nothing else – – no other situation that I could imagine that could be worse – ” Please, mother, please.” “There is a price,” she says, looking clearly into my eyes. “You will...not be able to call upon me again. Ever, Ella. It is the last time we will speak outside of one of my temples.” And I gasp as I look up at her, as I realize that the price for this magic is.... our bond. She looks steadily down into my eyes as she nods, realizing that I understand.

“It is worth it, child,” she says softly to me. “I just wanted you to know what the cost was, so you could save your son.” I stare at her, knowing I should think about it more – that I should hesitate a little But no part of me does. Sharply, I nod. I let her know that I know the price, and though it breaks my heart – I accept it.

“All right, darling,” she murmurs and then she leans forward and presses her lips against my forehead. “It will be all right.” And for a moment the press of her kiss against my forehead feels the same as her hands against my face – just a slight tingle until, slowly, her lips grow warm and corporeal against my skin.

I gasp as I feel my wolf come howling back to me, her teeth ripping and gnashing inside me at the injustice done to her, in her eagerness to get out of here, to help our baby – I look up at my mother, then – knowing it is done – knowing that she has used the magic of our bond to unbind my wolf and her gift. And in its unbinding, our connection has been... used up.

“I love you, Ella,” she says as she begins to fade from my sight. “You will always have a piece of me,” she says, reaching out hand to point towards my chest, where her gift grows warm. “Use it well.” And then, quite suddenly, she is gone.

And I blink back to myself realizing that That even though that felt like a few long minutes with my mother, only seconds have passed – And that I have to get to my son. Now. So I reach within myself, accessing the gift burning now, hot within me. And I hold onto it, and access its strength, and let it burn through me – through my mind, my heart, my skin And all around me the ice begins to melt.

Sinclair My brother lets out a roar of rage, dashing away from Hank who sits limp on the ground outside the clinic, holding his head in agony.

But I'm already on the move, shifting into my wolf and bellowing in pain as I do so, as the wounds on my skin stretch horribly, as I feel my inner organs shift into my wolf form and the injuries in them scream in protest against it. But I'm in full panic now, running on fear and adrenaline, pushing myself to go after my son even though my body screams in my mind to stop – That it can't□But I ignore it, forcing myself forward beyond the pain, sprinting towards the priestess who carries my son. She's locked in my sight now, her form growing continually larger as I stream towards her, as I ignore my pain and hurl my body into the chase.

I see the moment that she hears me – she her hesitate in her steps, turn Her eyes go wide with horror as I pull together my last bit of will and leap for her.

I can see the knowledge of her death on her face as she turns towards me, clutching the baby to her in fear as I slam my paws into her shoulders, hurling her backwards Her scream rips through the air as she falls, but the instant she loses her balance I reach with my teeth for the little bundle held in her arms, desperate to reach him – And as she careens for the ground under the weight of my paws my incisors clench in the fabric of Rafe's pajama set – the clothes I dressed him in this morning with my own hands pulling him from her arms as she slams into the ground. My body crashes, hard, on top of the priestess, but I hold Rafe up by arching my neck as far as it will go – And he doesn't touch her, or the ground he just dangles, screaming, held up by the safety of my teeth. I transform in an instant, reaching for him as I roll away from the priestess, groaning with pain but clutching my little boy safe against my chest – I can't see, for the pain – I'm gasping, wincing with every passing breath – Some part of me is aware that Roger is here now – that he chased after me in his wolf's body, that he was only a step behind – And I hear him in action now as he tears at the priestess, as he rips at her throat and her face, ensuring that she's dead – beyond dead, if he can – sent straight to hell – But I don't watch can't. All of my energy goes to staying conscious, to holding my little boy tight against me so that he's safe while I struggle for breath.

"Dominic!" I hear Roger panting beside me and then I feel his hands on my shoulders, on my skin – but I can barely register it, feeling myself slip away from the world. "Dominic!" he shouts now, shaking me, cursing frantically.

"Baby," I murmur, trying to hold Rafe out to his uncle. "Take...the baby." But even I know that my words don't make any sense, that I can't get them out.

Still, he understands. I feel Rafe lifted from me and I open my eyes just a little to see Roger standing up with him, tucking him safe against his arm. "I'll be right back, Dominic," he snarls, fierce in his determination to save me. But can I even be saved?

Everything feels...so far.

"I'll be right back!" Then he's gone, and my son with him, and I'm alone here, staring up at the dark sky. And as I watch, the stars slowly start to blink out.

And everything fades to black.

Accidental Surrogate Chapter 377-Rolls Reversed Ella The gift burns through me and the ice strips away from my body faster than I thought possible, water sliding to the floor as I push myself out, as I free my legs and start to run.

I have to grab the door frame as I fly into the hall, using it to pivot around the corner and keep running towards the lobby where scared humans and wolves are pressed against the walls, staring around in hushed voices as nurses begin to treat those who were worst wounded by the rogue priestess who came through apparently willing to hurt anyone in her path – I ignore them though I can't give them any of my attention right now. I'm focused, instead, on finding my son. I tear through the lobby, hurling the door open at the front of the clinic and bolting through it. I'm already running, my head swiveling, looking for any sign of the Priestess when I hear my name.

"Ella!" I spin, looking everywhere, and finally see Hank on the ground, his hand pressed against his head, his jaw looking painfully swollen. Before I can say anything though, he shoots a hand to his right, pointing off into the distance.

"That way!" Hank shouts. "Roger – Sinclair – " I gasp in relief – but then fear chases it as I realize that I have no real idea what Hank means when he indicates that they're here – I start off at a sprint, using all of my senses, needing to find them – It's not long, though, before I see Roger stumbling towards me, covered in blood a little blue bundle in his arms A cry rips from my throat as I put on an extra spurt of speed to get to his side, reaching for my baby boy, tears bursting from my eyes and streaming from my face as Roger comes stumbling to a halt, holding him out to me.

"Is he "I gasp, grabbing my baby, simultaneously trying to hold him close and look him over – "He's fine, Ella -" Roger says, taking me by the shoulders. But

I don't look up at him, instead sobbing down at my little boy, who wails like a banshee in unhappiness and fright. I scan him through my tears but it looks like – I can't see anything wrong□I close my eyes, seeking my bond with my child – hoping it can tell me more But I can't reach it, because Roger shakes me again.

“Ella!” Roger shouts, his hands still hard on my shoulders. “I'm serious, Ella!

Rafe, I think, is okay but... Dominic” He looks back over his shoulder and back towards the clearing behind the clinic.

I snap my head up to look at Roger's face when he says my mate's name. And when I see how grave his expression is...how worried... The blood feels like it drains from me. Like I'm frozen, again, in the ice.

And I turn to look, to follow his gaze, and I see two dark forms laying there, so close to each other in the darkness. One covered in the folds of a priestess' robes, the other... I set off again in an instant, as fast as I can go – but I can't run now – I can't, with the baby in my arms I feel someone tug at Rafe and my instincts kick in, making me snap towards whoever it is with a terrible snarl, my teeth fully bared, already elongating in my mouth Roger opens his eyes wide in shock and puts up his hands, showing me that he means no harm. But he speaks fast. “Ella, the gift – you have to get to him now – please, give me the baby -” And it breaks every part of my poor motherly heart to hand Rafe over to his uncle, every molecule within me screaming to hold him close, to never let him go again... But one more glance towards those forms in the darkness has me decided, and I hastily hand my crying child to his godfather. Roger will take care of him, I know. And without a word I take off, sprinting towards my fallen mate.

Sinclair I blink my eyes open in the forest and wince as the bright white light stings my eyes. Fuck, I think, covering the top half of my face with my hands. Is it already morning?

But then I realize, quite suddenly....

That I don't remember going to bed.

I sit up, wary, trying to understand... But I'm not even in my bed. Or... Inside at all... Confused, I look all around the bright forest and down at the soft bed on which I sit, running my hands over the crisp white linens. Where the hell am I?

“Hey, handsome,” a soft voice says, and I whip my head up to look at her the beautiful woman standing in front of me. I blink, trying to clear my wide eyes. Because she’s so beautiful. She’s got to be she can’t be anything but... “Are you an angel?” I ask, my voice low with awe. But she doesn’t answer my question with the soft smile I expect, instead bursting into laughter.

“No, Dominic,” she says, shaking her head and coming close to me, taking my face in her hands and smiling down into my face. “You’ve been asleep for a while. You’re confused. Think about it – you know me.” “Am I...am I dead?” She smiles down at me, slowly shaking her head. “No, baby,” she murmurs.

“And I’d be worried about these questions, except Dr. Hank says your brain scan is fine. You’re just really, really exhausted.” “What?” I ask, frowning up at her. But she just smiles at me again and steps closer before sitting herself in my lap. My arms wrap around her instinctually, as if that’s where they belong. As if I’ve done it a thousand times before.

“I’ve been trying for a long time,” she says, ignoring my question, “to get you to meet me here.” I laugh a little myself. “I can’t come up with a reason why I would protest,” I murmur, looking down at her as she rests her head against my chest and starts to idly drag her fingers up and down the fabric of my shirt. She’s just... so beautiful... “You weren’t ready,” she sighs. “We were really worried about you, Dominic. The baby especially.” “The baby?” I ask, confused, and she lifts her head to frown up at me.

“Rafe,” she replies.

I just stare at her, confused, and she starts to shake her head at me, raising her hand to my cheek again. “You need to come back to me, Dominic,” she murmurs. “To both of us.” “I – I’m not...trying not to...” I protest, horrified to disappoint her – but I don’t know what to do – “It’s okay,” she sighs, cocking her head a little as she considers me. Maybe you just need more...time.” “More time?” I ask, starting to get frustrated. I look around the space where we’re sitting, starting to get worried. Where the hell am I? Am I...am I dead?

Imprisoned? What on earth is happening – “Calm down, Dominic,” she murmurs, sitting up and adjusting herself in my lap so that her legs are straddled wide across my own, so that her hands are linked behind my neck. When I turn to look her way – to protest that I can’t calm down – I don’t have any idea what’s going on – I find her face close to mine, her eyes warm and kind.

"It's okay, baby," she murmurs, nudging me a little with her nose. "You just need to...remember who you are. So that you can come back to me." And then she leans closer, and presses her mouth to mine, and I feel everything I am collapse at the touch of her mouth against my own. And then, as her lips part, and my arms tighten around her, holding her tight... I feel myself begin to reform.

And my identity snaps into place.

Accidental Surrogate Chapter 378-Rebuild Ella "Hey, handsome," I say again, in the real world this time. A little smirk pulls on my lips as Sinclair's eyes flutter open. We're laying pressed quite close together in the little hospital bed, so I can see every twitch of his eyelash as he begins to focus on me.

He doesn't say anything at first, just stares at me while he takes a couple of deep breaths. And then, quite slowly, he lifts a hand close to my face, sliding the knuckle of his index finger slowly down the length of my cheek. "Hey, trouble," he murmurs, his voice scratchy after so many days of disuse.

I burst into a happy grin, so thrilled to see him awake and aware that I can barely contain myself. But I force myself to stay still, to not grab him, to.... let him get used to consciousness again in his battered body..

"Rafe?" he asks, his eyes worried as his memories of his last conscious moments come back to him.

"He's fine," I say softly, gesturing with my chin behind my mate, hoping that he understands that the baby is here in the room with us, asleep. "He missed you," I whisper. "He doesn't like it when he doesn't have his dad around to hold him." I wrinkle my nose and playfully glare at my mate. "He likes you better." A little laugh shudders from Sinclair's mouth. "Does not," he murmurs, staring at me steadily, as if he can't get enough of the sight of my face. "You feed him, and sing to him. When you leave the room, he looks for you." "Really?" I ask, surprised and pleased. I hadn't known this before.

"Well, he's not alone," Sinclair smirks, shifting forward to press his forehead against mine, a gesture that makes me grin with pleasure, joy pulsing through me at a ridiculous rate to have him back. "You're the center of the world, Ella.

We all turn to you." "Good," I sigh, content. "I like all my boys obsessed with me. Makes it easier to boss you around." Sinclair chuckles a little and then pulls back a bit, frowning. I sigh again, but in resignation this time because I

know our little stolen moment of peace is over that he needs to know about the world and what's happened since he's been gone from it.

"The priestess?" he asks.

"Dead," I say solemnly. "Roger killed her the moment after you knocked her down." "And Rafe is..." "He's totally fine," I say, unable to keep the little smile from my mouth. "Though I want to hear more about how you caught him in the air with your teeth and didn't leave a mark on him, Dominic –" "Dad skills," he says with a smug shrug that makes me laugh again. "But then he continues. "Cora? Dad?" "They're both okay," I say, raising my eyebrows with the pleased memory of using the gift on Cora, patching her up, and then the slightly worse memory of Henry arriving at the clinic, terribly battered needing quite a bite of care.

"It's a long story," I say with a sigh, but they're both fine now. And so are you, by the way," I add, giving him a little push on the shoulder, wondering why his own health is the last that he asked about. "Seriously? Not curious at all about what's going on with you?" "Well, I think I knew that," he murmurs, rolling his shoulders a little experimentally and glancing down at himself, or at least as much as he can see tucked into the tiny bed with me. I'm not in pain anymore..." "But you were asleep for three whole days, Dominic." "Really?" he asks, raising his eyebrows in surprise. "But you...healed me? With the gift?" "Yeah," I say quietly, watching him carefully. "I patched you up almost immediately when we got to you, and then Hank and Roger helped me get you inside – you're very heavy –" I inform him, giving him a little glare that makes him laugh.

"So why was I asleep?" my mate asks me, smiling a little now.

"Apparently I can fix you up," I say, "but I can't make new blood, or restore lost energy." I pause here, letting the worry of the past three days creep my face a little. "It was really bad, Dominic. If I hadn't been there, if I had ...if my gift had still been bound..." into He shakes his head then and pulls me close so that my body is as flush against his as it can be, my head tucked neatly under his chin. "You saved me, Ella," he sighs into my hair. "I can...never thank you. I'm so grateful. You're a miracle." "I can't lose you, Dominic," I say quietly, my voice shaking a little as I hold him tight. "It was so...so scary. We can't keep doing this – living like this. We have Rafe now – and the rest of our lives – I don't want to do this anymore "I know," he replies, and I can feel him nodding, agreeing with me. "I'm so sorry, Ella. Never again. You're right it's not worth it. I can't keep putting my body on the line like this. Peace, now.

Peace.” “Do you promise?” I sigh, hoping to hell that he means it – because that’s. all I want in the world. My mate, my baby, and peace.

“I promise,” he says. “I swear it, Ella.” “Okay.” I say, clenching my jaw shut against the hope that blooms in me.

Because I want to believe him so bad... But I also know that this isn’t finished. That there are still loose ends that need to be tied up.

Sinclair is still holding me tight when we hear the soft creak of the door opening behind us. I lift my head a little, peering over Sinclair’s arm. I smile when I see Hank peering through. the dim light of the room at us. It’s late in the evening, but I’ve drawn the blinds closed anyway.

“Hey, Hank,” I say, working to sit up.

He smiles at me and then blinks in surprise at Sinclair. “Is he up?” Hank asks.

“Did calling for him in the dream finally work?” “Yeah,” I say, nodding happily as I lean forward and smile at my while Sinclair too works to sit up behind me. friend “Hey, Hank,” my mate murmurs, looking a little ruefully at him, which makes me laugh. “How’s your jaw?” “It’s fine,” Hank says, shooting my mate a smirking little glare as he comes to take the chart off of the end of the bed, flipping through it. “Roger has apologized, though I...don’t think he liked it very much. How are you feeling?” Sinclair lets the awkwardness pass and takes a deep breath, stretching his arms high over his head. “Rested,” he answers, quite simply.

“Good,” Hank says, tucking the chart away and looking Sinclair up and down.

“Well, there’s not much for me to do,” he says a little ruefully as he crosses his arms. “Your mate has made my job obsolete, after all.” “Has she?” Sinclair asks, grinning proudly at me.

“Yes,” Hank replies as I swing my legs off of the bed and begin to move towards Rafe, who is still napping in his little basinet in the corner. “She healed you with a goddess’ gift, and then you slept, and then she went to fetch you from your unconscious state in a dream state. None of which is... standard medical rocedure,” he continues with a casual shrug, “but... I’m starting to get used to this family’s bizarre healing methods.” Sinclair laughs a little at this and leans back against the pillows, looking seriously at Hank as I

pick up my sleeping baby, holding him close in my arms and letting him continue his little nap.

"I owe you an apology, Hank," Sinclair says quietly. "We all do. Well, not Cora," he says, tilting his head. "To be fair – she never suspected you had joined the cult of a dark god." "And me!" I interrupt. "I only suspected for like, thirty seconds! And then again was team Hank!" Hank laughs quietly, shaking his head and holding up a hand. "No, I get it. I mean, I was offended at first but once Ella and Cora explained it to me, and I got to see Roger grovel a little bit," he smirks here, "which was...quite satisfying in its own way. Well, after all of it, I understand." Hank tilts his head a little and looks seriously into my mate's eyes before continuing. "I do hope, though," he says quietly, significantly, "that any doubts that you had are now gone." "I saw the way you chased the woman who kidnapped my son, Hank, how you tried to get him back," Sinclair says seriously, holding Hank's gaze. "I saw what you did for us, and I know what you've done. You have this family's faith forever, along with its gratitude." Hank nods his head a little, accepting. "Friendship," he says quietly. "Would be enough." "Well that you have," I assure him, giving him a big smile. "Also forever." "Good," Hank says, smiling at both of us. "Because there's still a lot of work to do, healing this nation. And together, I think we could do a lot of good." And as I step to Sinclair's side, smiling at our friend, I'm newly excited about getting started on that work.

Accidental Surrogate Chapter 379-Family Planning Ella We're an almost ridiculously cheerful group about an hour later when Roger and Cora come to join me and Sinclair in his little clinic room.

Roger is first through the door, his face stark with worry as he storms into the room after getting word – probably from Hank – that Sinclair is awake.

"Dominic -" he says, all anxiety as Cora follows him in, closing the door quietly behind them. But Roger stops in his tracks when he sees Dominic sitting up happily in bed, smiling down at Rafe who has just woken up from his nap and finished eating. I'm sitting happily on Sinclair's side, so I have a front-row seat.

"Hey, Rog," Sinclair says, looking up and giving his brother a warm smile.

"Seriously?" Roger asks, staring a little dumbfounded at his brother. "You – you sleep for three days after being miraculously healed and all I get is 'Hey Rog'?" "What else do you want?" Sinclair asks, frowning confusedly at his brother.

"I don't know," Roger says, throwing out an exasperated hand. "Something more significant I guess – maybe some kind of address to the fact that you had us worried sick when you wouldn't wake up "Ignore him," Cora says happily, crossing the room to Sinclair's side and dropping a happy little kiss on his cheek. "He's just had a hard couple of days groveling to Hank after punching him in the face and handing Rafe back to his kidnapper." Roger scowls, sinking his hands into his pockets and glaring around at the three of us. "Seriously? Three days later, and I can't get a break about that?" "We've forgiven you," I say, raising my eyebrows and gesturing between me and Cora – and, I admit, enjoying his awkwardness a little bit. "But Dominic," I say, pointing at my mate now, "hasn't even had a chance to be mad. Not to mention Rafe, when we tell him in ten years. He's gonna be pissed." Roger clenches his hands into fists and glares around at all of us, starting to get pissed again, and Sinclair – to my glee – feeds into it.

"You're demoted," he says with a deep Alpha's command, glaring back at his brother. "No longer my Beta, Roger. I'll see what I can do about getting you some menial command, see if you can earn my trust back- "Dom- "Roger gasps, his face falling, but the slow smile that spreads across Sinclair's face has me and Cora cackling. Roger quickly figures out the joke.

"Jackass," Roger growls, taking a few steps forward to smack his brother on the calf.

"Ow!" Sinclair gasps, pretending to be hurt and flinching his leg away." Roger, I'm healing -" Roger's face goes slack, but when we all burst again into laughter he just crosses his arms and glares at us. "I reject all of you," he murmurs, staring at each of us in turn. "I break the bonds of mate, of family, of...sister-in-law," he continues, though I can see him fighting his smile. "Because I refuse to spend my life bonded to jerks who take joy in my guilt and pain – " "Oh, get over it, Roger," Sinclair interrupts, laughing and looking down at Rafe now, who coos and smiles, apparently picking up on the good mood in the room.

"It's fine. No one blames you for anything. Except maybe Hank." Roger groans a little, sitting down on the edge of the bed as Cora comes to his side, wrapping an arm around his shoulders. "I almost wish it was Hank who betrayed us and tried to kidnap Rafe," he murmurs, looking up at his mate.

"Then I wouldn't have to be nice to him." "Poor baby," Cora murmurs, frowning insincerely down at him. "You'll just have to get over it. And, of course, admit I was right." "Never," Roger growls, pulling her close and making her laugh.

“How’s the baby, Cora?” Sinclair asks, shifting Rafe who he hasn’t put down for a moment since he got the baby in his hands so that he can look all around at us. I bite my lip a little as I watch my mate with his baby boy, pleased to see the obvious love that runs between the two of them.

“Baby is okay,” Cora says, smiling down at herself and putting a hand over her stomach. “We were worried for a little bit – I also lost a lot of blood 1 but after Ella healed me,” she gives a little shrug and meets Sinclair’s eyes again. “We were anxious for a day or two but Roger says that the connection is still strong. I don’t think there’s any reason to be worried anymore.” “Good,” Sinclair says, raising his eyebrows. “Rafe needs his buddy.” “Oh yes,” Cora says, raising her eyebrows a little sarcastically, “As long as Rafe gets his buddy, I’m glad my pregnancy can continue.” “Precisely the right attitude, sis,” I sigh, leaning against my mate.

“Where is dad?” Sinclair asks, leaning back into me.

Roger tilts his head back towards the door. “In another room. He’s okay too but he’s...tired. And I think he feels a lot of guilt.” He grimaces a little and I do as well. Henry and the rest of the men took a hard beating at the bunker. They ultimately came out victorious, but.... not everyone made it. I know that Henry feels a lot of guilt for what everyone went through – and especially for putting his grandkids at risk.

All of us – Sinclair aside, of course – have spent a lot of time trying to convince Henry that we all agreed to the plan, we all thought it was best. But he hasn’t let it go.

“You should talk to him,” Roger says quietly, shaking his head at his brother. “He...he might listen to you.” “I will,” Sinclair says seriously, his eyes on his own son. And I intuit, perhaps through our own bond, that he’s hoping to hell he never puts Rafe in a similar situation, or that he never, ever feels like he’s failed Rafe in the same way his father feels he’s failed his children now. “Of course I will.” I press myself tighter against my mate’s side, sending a little pulse of love and reassurance down our bond. I want him to know that it’s never going to be like that. Sinclair turns to me, grateful, and presses a little kiss to my forehead.

I nudge him with my nose as he turns back his brother and I look that way too, but instead of Roger, I find my eyes falling on Cora who looks at me with something a little strange in her eyes. And as I tilt my head at her, curious, I see her blush and look away.

And I realize, quite suddenly, that it's jealousy. Because while she and Roger are incredibly close, and growing closer every day...she doesn't have the wolf's bond with Roger that I have with Sinclair. And I know, in my heart, that she wants it. Maybe even feels a little bit guilty that she can't give that to him.

My face falls when I realize this and I call her name softly as Roger and Sinclair chat about more details of the raid on the bunker, but she looks sharply at me and shakes her head. I slowly close my mouth, glancing at Roger and realizing that she doesn't want him to know that she feels like she ...I don't know. Has failed him in some small way? That his choice in her as his mate means he gives up some of the things he always thought he'd have in his relationship?

My heart breaks to think that she thinks that because I know that's not how Roger feels.

But I nod to my sister, letting her know that I won't say anything. And she gives me my own little nod in response, letting me know she's grateful for my secrecy.

I smile at Cora but then Sinclair's words draw my attention.

"We have to decide," he says, looking between us as Rafe wraps a hand around his dad's gigantic finger, "what our next step is. What we want to...do next. As a family." "Really?" I ask, surprised. "No more reconnaissance meetings? No more board room councils? Just...us deciding?" "Well, those didn't work, did they?" Sinclair asks quietly, glancing down at Rafe who gives a happy little noise that makes us all smile. "Dad will be involved, of course, but I think that moving forward..." My mate glances around at the rest of us, trying to gauge how we feel. "I promised Ella peace," he says quietly, and I meant it. But I think that the best way forward with that is to...stick together. Us four. No more splitting up, no more dividing our forces. Because we have work to do." "Well, I, for one, like it," Cora says, raising her eyebrows and looking around at all of us. "We've got a doctor, two gigantic wolves, a goddess-gifted healer... I think we're quite a force to be reckoned with." "Hey," I say, frowning at my sister. "I'm a wolf too." "Fine," she says loftily, "two and a half gigantic wolves." "And one and a half tiny babies!" I point out, leaning in to tickle Rafe's stomach and making him laugh. "Who are very cute, if helpless!" "They're here for morale," Sinclair rumbles beside me, making me grin. "All right," Roger says. "So, we stick together from here on out. But what do we want to do next?" And as the four of us look around at each other, I realize that...none of us has a plan.

What on earth are we going to do next?

Accidental Surrogate Chapter 380-Battered Ella The four of us spent the next few hours talking, eventually ordering quite a bit of takeout and making some complicated plans while Sinclair ate his weight in Chinese food. The sight of him eating pleased me to no end, but eventually I could see him running out of steam.

“All right,” I say quietly, looking significantly at Cora and Roger. “I thinkwe have enough to go on for now. We can pick up again tomorrow.” “What?” Sinclair asks, frowning around at us though I can see him stifling a yawn. “We have so much to do-” “Enough,” I say significantly, placing my little hand over his larger one.” You’re still exhausted, Dominic.” He frowns at me and opens his mouth, ready to fight, but I shake my head once.

“Tomorrow,” I say, my voice a command. He narrows his eyes at me but I stand strong. “I understand, Dominic. I know it’s in your nature to tear the world apart in the effort to make it all better as fast as you can. But please, for me, can you start tomorrow?” He hesitates but sees the sorrow and worry in my face and, slowly, nods. This is the last day you get to boss me around, trouble,” he growls, not happy about it.

“Tomorrow, I’m in charge again.” “I’ll take it,” I say, leaning forward to give him a kiss on the cheek, Rafe curled happily in my arms.

“I think it’s a good plan,” Roger says, yawning himself and stretching his arms.

He and Cora stand up and he wraps an arm around her waist, smiling down at her. “Ready for bed, little mate?” “Sure, little mate,” Cora replies, grinning up at him, knowing precisely what she’s doing. “What?” Roger says with a start, frowning down at her. “That doesn’t work, Cora – you’re the little one – ” “But it’s sweet!” she says, pretending to be innocent and making me grin. I’m little mate, you’re little mate – ” “I’m not little,” he growls.

“Awww,” she says, patting his cheek fondly. “Sure you’re not, baby.” And as she turns to head out of the room Roger growls, storming after her, and I laugh a little to see how well she knows him.

“They really do work,” Sinclair says to me after they close the door. “She knows just how to push his buttons. And Roger needs a good teasing to keep him in line.” “And you?” I ask, perching on the side of the bed. “Do you need to be kept in line?” “No,” he says, letting his voice drop into that deep, dominant

register I like so much. "I am always in charge, Ella. And you wouldn't want me any other way." "Damn right," I murmur, leaning forward to kiss my mate, letting him feel just how much I like it down the bond. The hum in Sinclair's chest deepens as he pulls me a little closer, letting one of his hands drift suggestively down my back.

But I sigh and pull away. "Baby's still up," I say, nodding down at him. "And you need your rest. I'm going to take him for a little walk around the clinic, okay?"

While you try to get some sleep?" "I'll come with you," Sinclair says, starting to stand up, but I put a hand out to his shoulder, asking him to stop.

"Please, Dominic," I beg, letting him see my sincerity in my eyes. "I promise, tomorrow you can go full steam and I won't say anything. Just...please just get one more good night's sleep, okay? For me? So I can...I can know you're all right?" And he sighs as he sits back against the pillows, but I can see the tired lines settle onto his face as he does. "All right, Ella," he says.

I kiss him on the cheek, moving the TV remote closer to him so that he can put something mindless on to distract himself so that his mind doesn't spin while he rests.

"You'll come back soon?" he asks quietly.

"As soon as the baby's asleep," I promise, nodding. Although I cross my fingers just a little bit, because I intend to stay out until I know Sinclair is able to fall into a true, restful sleep whether Rafe is asleep or not.

And then I kiss my mate again and, with a final squeeze of his hand, slip out the door. When I pull the door shut behind me, I turn to find Hank leaning against the wall outside of the door, as I knew he would be.

"Ready to get to work?" he asks, quirked an eyebrow at me.

"You betcha," I say with a sigh, squaring my shoulders. Then Hank passes me a cloth baby carrier and I let him hold Rafe while I strap it to my chest. Once we get the baby strapped in and settled, I look up at him again.

"Okay," I say, nodding to my friend. "Let's get started." Hank and I work side-by-side long into the night tending to the men who were hurt either in the

bunker or on the expedition to Xander's house. I've been at Hank's side every moment that I haven't been pinned to my mate's side for the past three days.

It was terrible to continually have to choose between my responsibilities. Every part of my body wanted to be constantly next to Sinclair, holding his hand, being there for him while his body and mind healed from his horrible experience.

But I also have responsibilities as the Luna of this pack, as the bearer of the Goddess's gift, to use it to heal the men who made such terrible sacrifices for us.

The first night was the worst. Shortly after we got Sinclair inside the clinic was flooded with the men coming in from the bunker 1 some with horrible wounds that needed immediate care. I had to make a horrible decision, then, to prioritize my mate and my sister – to heal them first – while I could hear the men's screams from the other room.

Tears had poured from my eyes as I did it, as Hank guided me towards the worst of Sinclair's and Cora's wounds, making sure they would each survive before I fled to the other rooms and went to work on the men there.

We couldn't...we didn't save everyone. I couldn't get to them fast enough.

And it was horrible – achingly horrible – to hear their cries fade to nothing as worked on one of their comrades across the room. Hank forced me to turn away from the men in the early hours of the morning, when I could barely keep my eyes open.

I had wanted to keep going, but he had been firm. "Enough, Ella," he had snapped when I had insisted I wanted to do more. "They'll survive – everyone who is alive tonight will be alive tomorrow. You need to sleep." And so I did. I tended to my child, and I slept, and I called to my mate in the dream state for as long as I could, and then I woke up and started again.

But we've made good progress in three days. Even if...well, there's still an incredible amount to do. And every moment that I'm away from them, it tortures me to think of them sitting in here, in pain, waiting.

I follow Hank from bed to bed, where he informs me about the next wound he thinks I should concentrate on with the gift. The list is growing less and less severe as we go. At first it was terrible wounds leaking blood around torn

muscles and shattered bones. But now I spend a great deal of my time reknitting sliced muscles, regrowing skin, setting fractures. I admit, I'm glad that it's getting less gory.

"Ready?" Hank asks as we move on to the next case.

"Yup," I say, nodding once and steeling myself, running a hand over Rafe's sweet head as a way to calm my troubled spirit. "Let's go." "Thank you, Luna," the man I just worked on calls after me, and I send a smile to him over my shoulder.

"Any time, soldier," I say, meaning every word of it. "It's the Luna's job to take care of her pack."