

ACCIDENTAL SURROGATE FOR ALPHA

Accidental Surrogate Chapter 386-The Long...Long Road Ella It takes me just a little over an hour to realize that...I hate road trips.

“Oh my god,” I murmur to Cora as the vibrations of the gigantic RV continue to shake through us, making poor Rafe grumble uncomfortably. “Is it night yet?”

Can we stop?” “You’re being a baby, Ella,” my sister replies, looking up at me with a smirk, jumping her red king over three of Roger’s black checkers and capturing them.

“It’s fun!” “You’re only having fun because you’re kicking Roger’s ass for the third time at that game,” I murmur, sighing as I glance out the window.

“Seriously,” Roger sighs, leaning back against the white leather of the kitchenette’s booth. “You should quit that, Cora. For Ella’s sake – she’s trying to enjoy herself.” He runs a frustrated hand through his hair, staring at the board.

“Yes,” Cora replies, laughing. “For Ella’s sake, I’ll go easy on you.” “I just thought it would be prettier,” I sigh, looking out the window at the endless highway miles. “Like, purple mountains majesty. Fruited plains. Etcetera.” Instead, it’s just hour after hour of looking at cars, and asphalt, and the sad little pine scrub that borders the highways.

“Maybe when we get further out,” Cora offers, hopeful. “Nah,” Roger replies, making his next move on the checker’s board. “After the forest it’s all corn for days.” I groan, leaning my head back. “I hate corn.” “No, you don’t,” Cora chides, instantly making her next move on the board and capturing two more of Roger’s pieces. He gasps in protest and then slumps back again.

“How are you doing this,” he murmurs, studying the board. “Are you a witch?” “Maybe,” she says with a shrug. “Guess we have to ask mom.” I smile at her then, bouncing my fussy baby in my arms. And I inhale a deep breath, silently ordering myself to cheer up because even if I decidedly do not like riding in the RV, I’m still excited to take this trip for my sister, to get her the answers she so desperately wants.

Eventually Cora and I retire with the baby to the bedroom where Sinclair suggests I might not feel the movement of the RV as much. The boys all stay together up front, studying maps and discussing ridiculous things like terrain and gas mileage things. They find it endlessly fascinating for some weird boy reason.

But I shrug and leave them to it. Cora and I curl up in the incredibly comfortable bed and spend our time chatting, watching movies, and napping lightly with the baby between us.

It ends up being a wonderful day in the little sun-soaked room at the back of the RV, laughing and talking with my sister, reconnecting with her and with the peace that I've been missing from my life since that terrible day when those men broke through my window.

"Do you think it's all really over?" I ask her in a quiet moment as the sun starts to sink to the horizon.

Cora doesn't bother to ask me what I'm talking about – she already knows. "I don't," she sighs, telling me honestly. "I think...well, Ella, I think we picked mates with big lives. I think we're going to have to snatch at moments of peace whenever we have them because the next challenge is always coming. And that we're going to have to fight to make that peace in our lives, because... something is always going to try to steal it away." I sigh, looking down at my napping baby, trailing a little finger down his belly.

"Are we dumb?" I ask quietly. "Did we choose wrong? I mean – neither of them are our fated mates. We picked this...should we have chosen simpler lives?" "You don't want a simpler life," Cora laughs, and I look up at her in surprise to see her smiling and shaking her head at me.

"What?" I ask, sitting up straight, "Cora, I was a nanny – I was ready to be a broke single mom, to live quietly alone with my baby.

"Nah," she says, waving a hand at me in dismissal. "That was just the start of your story, Ella, always. Yes, you were always going to be a mom," she says, cocking her head to the side, "but...you were never going to stop helping people. I think it kind of makes sense that you ended up being such a good pair for Dominic. He opens a door for you to help thousands when he is king, and I think that was always your fate." "Huh," I say, considering what she's saying. And I guess...well, I guess I think she's right. That this was perhaps

always the life I wanted, even if I want to pretend sometimes that I wanted a simple life.

“And also,” she adds, her voice dropping lower. “I’m actually...I’m not sure if Roger isn’t my fated mate,” she says, considering.

“Really?” I ask, my eyes going wide. “But you’re a human -” “I know,” she says, frowning. “But... Ella, this thing between us,” she says, shaking her head. “It feels really big. I don’t...know how to explain it except like that.” “Did you feel a mating bond snap into place?” I ask, curious.

“I don’t know,” she says, turning back to me. “But Roger said it first, when we were out in that rainstorm – that day when we had to stop at the roadside motel.” I grin at her, knowing what happened that day, and she blushes a little and rolls her eyes. But I lean forward eagerly, wanting to know. “What did he say?” “That I was his mate,” Cora replies, giving a little shrug. “But the way he said it so definitive. Not I choose you as my mate. Just...that I was.” “Wow,” I say, impressed, a little jealous. I have no hesitations about Sinclair as my chosen mate, and I know that what’s between us is far beyond anything he had with his own fated mate. But still – it’s an experience I’ll never have. “Well,” I continue, “did you ask him about it?” “No,” she says, shrugging again.

“Why not?” “Because,” she sighs. “I...like the idea. I don’t want him to tell me that I’m not.” “Well, I’ll go ask -” I say simply, scooching forward on the bed, ready to jump off.

“Ella!” she gasps, grabbing my arm.

“What?” I reply, looking at her wide-eyed.

“Stop meddling!” she laughs, tugging me back down. “That’s between me and him!” “And me now! Since you told me!” Cora laughs, throwing a pillow at me. “Lay down, trouble,” she growls, doing her best impression of Sinclair. I laugh and snatch the pillow out of the air. Then I do as she says, sighing as I lay down and reaching out to gently pull my little baby closer to me.

“Okay, I won’t,” I murmur, smiling up at my sister. “But you have to tell me as soon as you know. Do you think you’ll ask mom?” “Probably,” she says, smiling contentedly. Then her face falls a little as she cocks her head at me. “Do you think you have a fated mate somewhere out there, Ella? Looking for you?” “Nah,” I say, smiling down at my baby. “Not everyone gets one, they’re pretty rare. So,” I shrug, smiling down at my baby and leaning over to give him

a little kiss on the head. "I think the Goddess gave me Sinclair, and he's more than I could ever ask for." "Damn right I am," my mate says, coming into the room and leaning against the wall, smiling down at us. He and Roger switched driving positions about an hour ago at a rest stop where Cora and I picked up some more snacks. "What are you two talking about?" Cora opens her mouth to bring up the fated mate question, but I interrupt, not wanting Sinclair to even have to consider it. "Who loves their Sinclair brother more," I say simperingly, smirking at him. "Me or Cora. We just can't decide, we're both so obsessed. with you two -" Sinclair growls playfully, coming swiftly to the side of the bed and laying himself down on it, fitting his body close to mine. "You'd better be winning, little mate," he murmurs, nuzzling me as he slips an arm around my waist and pulls me close. "I can't let Roger have this one." I laugh and assure him that I am indeed winning as his stubble rushes against my skin, tickling me and making me laugh.

Cora pretends to gag and stands up from the bed, snatching a bag of pretzels and heading for the door. "I'll be out here!" she says, waving to us over her shoulder. "Don't do anything weird in my bed!" Then, as she disappears from the room, I half turn to my mate and wrinkle my nose at him mischievously. "Want to do weird stuff in her bed?" I whisper, trailing a finger down the length of his chest.

"Absolutely I do," my mate murmurs back.

Accidental Surrogate Chapter 387-The trip improves by leaps and bounds the moment we stop at the campground for the night.

"Finally," I sigh, taking a deep breath of the fresh air as I climb down the steps of the RV, my baby curled in my arm and looking around him with bright and interested eyes. "It's good to be on steady ground again." "Remind me never to take you on a boat," Sinclair murmurs, coming down the stairs behind me. "If you didn't like this...you won't respond well to that." "Yes sir," I say passively, smiling down at the baby, who frees one of his arms and reaches out into the cool evening air, clasping his fingers at a firefly who passes close by. I don't mention that I liked the sea voyage to the desert much more than I liked this, even though the accommodations weren't as nice.

"What about this?" Sinclair murmurs as he steps down the final step and comes to stand behind me, wrapping his arms around my shoulders. I smile as I lean back against his chest. "Is the forest an improvement?" I look around our isolated campsite, lit with grey and blue tones in the dying light of the day.

I smile at what I see, appreciating the cool air and the blinking light of the fireflies that float lazily through the space.

“Yes,” I say with a decisive nod. “This will do quite well.” “Good,” Sinclair replies, giving me a quick kiss on the cheek before releasing me and moving to a luggage compartment low on the RV, I watch as he opens it and begins pulling out camping gear chairs, a cooler, some bags with extra snacks and bug spray.

“Oh!” I say, surprised by it all as my mate begins to set it all up around a burned-out ring where a fire goes. “Oh, we’re very prepared.” “Of course we are,” Roger says, climbing out of the RV with Cora behind him.

When he reaches the ground, Roger flicks the switch that prepares Henry’s little elevator. “We’re always ready to go glamping in this family.” I laugh at the term, settling into a chair that Sinclair waves me towards, smiling down at the baby. “What do you think, Rafe?” I whisper to him. “Do you like glamping?” He gives a happy little coo in response and I laugh, grinning up at his father. “I think that’s a yes.” “Kid has taste,” Sinclair says, winking at me as he continues his work. We’re all settled around a fire much faster than I thought was possible and I smile as I watch Sinclair and Roger set a little grill across it, apparently preparing to make us our dinner as well.

“They only cook,” Henry whispers, leaning over to Cora and I and giving us a smile, “when it’s outdoors. Otherwise, they’re not interested.” “Not true!” Sinclair protests, his eyes still on the fire.

“Absolutely true!” Roger chimes in, making us laugh. “If I’m making food, it’s grilled. Otherwise I’m getting takeout.” “Guess your baby is gonna eat a lot of hotdogs,” I murmur to Cora.

“And eggrolls,” she adds, sighing. Then she looks over at me from her chair next to mine. “You know I can’t cook either.” I shrug. “Maybe we can make them hire us chefs,” I consider. She raises her eyebrows, pleased at the idea, and we both grin.

It continues like this long into the night the family gathered happily around the fire, talking about nothing and everything, chatting lightly about what we’ll be doing in our mutual future but not touching on any of the big, scary subjects that lurk behind the conversation. We all know that they’re there, after all – and we all simultaneously decide to leave them untouched for the moment.

Instead, tonight is just about laughter, and fun, and spending time together.

I moan a little as I bite into a smore that Sinclair hands me, the marshmallow burned to a crisp just the way I like it. “Oh my god,” I murmur, closing my eyes as I chew. “This is so good, I can barely stand it.” “You’re dripping,” Sinclair laughs, you’re going to get marshmallow all over the baby – ” “I don’t care,” I murmur, shaking my head and refusing to open my eyes as I take another bite. “He won’t mind -=” Sinclair laughs again as he comes and lifts Rafe from my arms. I let him, wanting to be alone with my s’more anyway. Cora, Roger, and Henry laugh as well as Sinclair walks Rafe away from me, apologizing in a loud murmur for how messy and inconsiderate his mother is. I wave a hand at him, dismissing him and his words, knowing that he’s kidding anyway.

Regretfully, I finish my s’more and look around at my family, watching them quietly. Henry watches Sinclair and his grandchild while Cora and Roger sit close to each other, not talking but clearly connected in this peaceful moment.

“It’s nice out here,” Cora says, wrapping her arms around herself and smiling around at our dark camp. “I didn’t think I’d like sitting outside in the dark by a fire as much as this.” “Something primal about it, isn’t there?” Roger murmurs, raising a hand to play with Cora’s hair as he smiles at her.

“Yeah,” she says, looking up at the stars and then turning her head to look at Roger, beaming at him.

I can’t help my own smile from crossing my face as I watch them. And then, as they stare at each other, I decide that that’s my cue.

As quiet as I can, I stand up from my little camping chair and send a pulse down my bond with Sinclair. He looks up at me, curious and I nod my head first towards the RV and then towards Roger and Cora, who begin talking quietly. My mate follows my gaze and then nods his understanding. He walks to his father and puts a hand on his back, leaning down to speak a whispered word.

Then, one by one, as stealthily as we can – which is not very stealthy, considering Henry has to be lifted into the RV with a noisy platform – the three of us and the baby make our way back into the little mobile house, leaving Cora and Roger alone by the fire to have a moment to themselves.

“What do you think they’re talking about,” I say to Sinclair as he climbs last into the RV, pulling the door shut behind him, the baby still curled in his arms.

I'm sitting in the little kitchen nook, peering out the window at Roger and Cora through the tinted window.

"Isn't that their business, little spy?" he says, coming to sit with me on the plush leather. Henry, perhaps wanting to give us our own moment, rolls his way back to the bedroom, making some excuse about wanting to watch some television, though we both know he doesn't watch TV.

"Yes," I sigh, looking up at my mate and reaching for my baby, who Sinclair passes into my arms. "But you know I always want to know." Sinclair laughs. "Do you know," he murmurs, slipping his arms low around me and pulling the baby and I warmly against him, resting his chin on my shoulder so that he too can look out at Cora and Roger, "I never cared as much about the details of my brother's love life until you came along." "Why not, I say, still peering out at them. "Roger's hot. He probably has had lots of interesting girlfriend drama "Roger's hot?" Sinclair asks, his body going stiff behind me, just a little bit.

"What?" I ask, turning to him, confused now.

"You think my brother's hot?" I burst out laughing, lifting a hand to my mate's face. "Dominic," I say, shaking my head at him. "Your brother is hot. It's an ostensible fact – not my opinion." "Still," he growls, pulling me tighter. "I don't like to hear you say it." "Oh?" I inquire with a smirk. "And what would you have me say instead?" "That all men, beside me, are nonexistent. Or disgusting swamp creatures –" I burst out laughing again at this, tilting my head back.

Sinclair laughs along with me and I tuck myself even closer to him, grinning up into his face. "I promise," I murmur, pressing a kiss to his mouth, all men, next to you, actually are disgusting swamp creatures. But, for Cora's sake, I'm glad Roger's hot." Sinclair's chest hums for a moment as he considers my point but then he nods sharply, finding this acceptable. I quirk my head to the side, a question coming to me quite suddenly. "Do you think Cora's pretty?" "What?" he asks, pulling back a little, aghast.

I grin. "It's just a question." "Ella," he says, looking at me as if I'm strange and shaking his head. "I've – never even thought about it. I don't look at her that way." "Really?" I ask, curious. "You don't look at other women?" "No," he says, shaking his head seriously. "It's not it doesn't even cross my mind anymore. All of those parts of my focus are directed solely at you. It doesn't even enter my mind to think if I'm attracted to anyone else – it doesn't matter." "Oh," I say, raising my eyebrows, surprised and pleased. Then I smile at him.

“Well, that’s very nice to hear.” “You’re it for me, Ella,” Sinclair murmurs, putting a hand on my cheek and turning my face up to him. Then, quite softly, he presses a kiss to my mouth.

“You’re the only one who matters, who will matter, ever.” “Same for me, my love,” I whisper back to him, and then I kiss him again, for real. The kiss sweeps through me – fast, hot. My heart rate increases and I find myself panting much sooner than I thought I’d be.

“Shit,” Sinclair sighs, glancing around the very public room in which we’re sitting.

“Dream state?” I suggest, grimacing a little. Because I think we both know that we’d rather... “Yes,” he sighs, standing up to rearrange the furniture in the living area and turn it into a little bedroom, though he glances with a grimace at the little twin bed where we know his father will sleep. “Though next vacation,” he says, sending me a frustrated glance, “we’re going alone. And there will be doors.” “Agreed,” I say with a sigh. And then I spend the new few minutes getting the baby ready for bed while my mate works, every second regretting the promise we made to let Cora and Roger take the bedroom.

Accidental Surrogate Chapter 388-What Kind of Mate?

Cora “They think they’re being subtle,” I whisper, smiling as Sinclair closes the RV’s door behind him, the last to “disappear” from our little circle around the fire.

“I’m not complaining,” Roger murmurs, slipping an arm around my shoulder.

“Are you, little mate?” I laugh lightly at the nickname, shaking my head at him. “It still doesn’t work, Roger,” I say, leaning closer to him, though the camping chairs make it hard to get as close as I’d like to be. “I’ve told you before – I’m not little.” “Sure you are,” he replies, grinning at me.

“I’m not!” I say, laughing. “Ella’s the little one,” I continue, “I’m tall – I’m not -” “You’re little to me,” he interrupts, moving his chair closer so that he can tuck his face between my neck and my shoulder, breathing deeply in – I think savoring the way that I smell, which sends a little thrill through me. I lower my own head and breathe in Roger’s own unique scent, letting it flood my senses.

God, does he even know how good he smells? Though he probably does – his sense of smell far outstrips mine.

“What do you mean?” I ask. “Little to you?” He lifts his head so he can look into my face, only inches from me now. You’re little to me, Cora,” he replies, in that you’re...I don’t know. Quite precious. The way I think of you – I don’t know, I don’t want you to be insulted, but I think of you as...very small,” “What?” I ask, confused, “why?” “Because,” he says seriously, shrugging a little, “you’d have to be very tiny, to make a home out of my heart,” he says, tapping lightly at his chest. “As you have done.” A broad smile stretches across my face and I laugh a little, even though I’m deeply touched at what he’s said. “Really?” I ask. “That’s what you think of me?” “Mmhmm,” he says, turning his head a little and considering me from different angles. “My little mate, who I carry around all day in my heart. Even when you’re not physically around I keep you in here. I talk to you, send all kinds of messages. Tell you little jokes.” you I grin. “Do I think they’re funny?” He nods, smiling at me. “Always.” Slowly, I shake my head. “Then it must be a tiny imposter,” I joke, starting to laugh. “Because if it was me, she’d be telling you to get some new material – ” He laughs, growling a little and grabbing my arm, tugging me closer. “Get your ass over here, little mate,” he snarls playfully.

“No!” I laugh, resisting and eyeing the flimsy camping chair he’s sitting in. It barely looks like it can hold his huge werewolf form, let alone both of us. We’ll break the chair!” “Break it,” he murmurs, still pulling me closer and making me laugh. “Sinclair’s rich – he’ll buy another.” “No,” I say, standing up and tugging myself out of his grasp a little. “I have a better idea,” Roger scowls, but he lets me go – watching me as I move to the camping supplies and pull out a couple of blankets. He continues to watch as I spread two out before the fire and then gesture towards them, another blanket tucked under my arm. “Better,” he concedes, standing up for a moment and then sitting gracefully down in the middle of the blankets, pulling me down into his lap as he does so.

“Much better, clever little doctor mate.” I take a moment to place my hands on Roger’s face for a second, looking seriously at him before bringing my mouth to his and kissing him, letting myself sink into it, hoping – quite desperately that he knows just how – much I love him.

Because we fight, and we tease – But god, god how I love this man. All of him every arrogant, swaggering, adorable, sweet bit of him – Roger’s arms tighten around me as he kisses me back, taking deep breaths as he does so like he’s finally home, like he’s been waiting to do this all day. And I smile, thinking that...perhaps he knows, a little bit. Even if we don’t have a mating bond that we can both feel, that we can pass messages along, like Ella and Sinclair do.

I break the kiss after a few moments, resting my head against his chest as he keeps his arms wrapped tight around me. And we're quiet for a little bit, staring at the fire, just...happy to be here with each other. Happy to have this quiet moment.

"Roger," I say quietly, thinking back on Ella's conversation we had earlier.

"Hmm?" he says, inviting me to ask whatever question is floating through my mind.

"Do you think I'm your mate?" "Um," he says, laughing a little, "Yeah, Cora," he says, as if it's a stupid question, "I think we've made that pretty clear – " "No," I say, turning to look up at him a little, to let him know that I'm serious. "Do you think I'm your...your mate mate. Like...fated mate. Instead of chosen." "Oh," he says, his eyebrows raising a little. Then he grins at me and laughs. "Wait, you seriously don't know?" I frown at him, confused – I hadn't known there was something to know. "What are you talking about?" "You didn't feel it?" he says, turning his head and watching me curiously. "That day out in the forest, in the rain, outside the motel?" My frown deepens as I start to get frustrated. "Feel what?" I ask.

He laughs then, a real laugh, a big one that shakes his whole frame. "Cora," he says, looking back at me with a gentle smile. "You're my mate. Truly. Fated, done deal. I've suspected it for a while for a long time, even though... well, I also denied it for a long time, because I didn't think my mate could be a human.

But I knew for absolute sure that day when you ran like an idiot out of the motel – "Hey!" I protest, slapping his chest, "I was really upset!" "I know," he murmurs, nudging me with his nose. "But you were also being really dumb. Anyway I knew for sure, because that's when it snapped into place. You and me, Cora? We're end game. At least, on my side. But," he considers me again, putting his thoughts together. "It should have snapped in for you at the same moment. You didn't feel it?" "No," I sigh, disappointed. "I didn't feel...anything 'snap.'" "Well, then mine will have to be enough for both of us," he says easily, drawing me close and starting to lay kisses across my cheek, my jaw, down my neck.

But I'm still disappointed and jealous. It just feels unfair sometimes – the rest of my family gets to feel these intense emotions and I'm missing out on them.

“I almost laid you down and fucked you right there in the forest, Cora” Roger growls softly in my ear, distracting me. “It was very...intense. It was a nightmare, having to carry you all the way back to bed -” “We would have drowned,” I laugh, pulling back a little so I can see his beautiful face, wrinkling my nose at him.

“I probably would have died happy and said it was worth it,” he murmurs, shrugging.

“Well, that would have been disappointing,” I scold. “Trading decades of sex for one very damp experience? I’m starting to doubt your judgment here, Roger.” “Hmm,” he considers, tightening his arms and pulling me close against him, one of his hands tracing down the length of my spine. “Maybe we need to experiment. Maybe the rain really was the problem, but the experience in the forest...” I glance around at our whereabouts and start to laugh, seeing where he’s going with this as Roger leans me back, trying to lay me out before the fire.

“Roger!” I hiss, glancing towards the RV. “Seriously, they’re right in there! They’ll see!” “Oh come on,” he growls, pulling the third blanket over us to give us a little privacy. “No one’s watching -” “Have you met Ella!? Of course she is!” Roger laughs, shaking his head as he lowers me to the ground and lays the length of his body next to me, curving his shoulders over top of my chest so that he can lower his face until his lips are so close to mine I can feel his breath against me.

“I’m not thinking about Ella right now,” Roger says, nudging me with his nose.

And then he slides a hand under my shirt, across the skin of my stomach, moving upwards. “And I’d prefer it if you weren’t either...” I laugh, leaning my head back and giving in to him as Roger kisses my neck.

“Let me show you,” he murmurs, “some of the things I wanted to do that day...” And, taking a deep breath and covering my eyes with one hand – hoping to hell that Ella and Sinclair and Henry have gone to bed – I let him.

Accidental Surrogate Chapter 389-Good morning, Cora!

Ella “Really, Cora?” I say, nudging my sister with my toe. I shake my head at my sister’s naked sleeping form, pressed against her mate under the single little throw blanket that’s tossed over both of them. Seriously, how are they not freezing?

“Auntie Cora is going to be so embarrassed,” I whisper to Rafe in my arms, who smiles at me and makes me laugh. “We are never going to let her live this down, are we, little baby!?” Cora blinks awake then, looking blearily around her as she lifts her head. Roger is still senseless to the world, fully asleep beside her.

“What?” Cora murmurs, still looking around for a moment before glancing up at me and the baby. Then, as reality snaps back to her, she gasps and clutches the blanket tight to her chest.

“Morning, sister,” I say, smiling wickedly down at her. “Missing something?” And then I pull her bra out from behind my back.

“Ella!” she gasps, reaching for it, though I pull it away from her.

“What!” I laugh, enjoying every second of this. “It’s not like you were keeping it safe – I found this ten feet away, tossed at the foot of the RV! It’s the first thing I saw at the bottom of the steps!” “No, you didn’t!” she growls in response, reaching for it again.

“Did too!” I laugh, tossing it to her now and shaking my head with glee. “Soooo,” I tease, “did you guys have a good nightttt?” Cora just glares up at me as she struggles to get her bra back on without dropping the blanket. After she closes the clasp behind her back she smacks Roger on the ribs; he wakes with a gasp as she glances anxiously towards the RV.

“Wake up,” Cora hisses. “Put your damn pants on before everyone sees -” “Oh,” I say, still grinning gleefully at him. “Everyone’s already seen, sis. No reason to be ashamed now.” Cora glares up at me, blushing hard. “Hey, Ella,” Roger says, sitting up and giving me a wide grin, completely unabashed to have been found naked and in a compromised position with my sister. “Is there any coffee?” “There is!” I say, giving him a wide false grin. But then I let it fall instantly from my face, shifting into a glare.” But none for you.” “What!?” he asks, frowning. “Why?” Cora ignores the conversation, reaching for the scattered pieces of her clothing and pulling them on as discreetly as she can.

“Because!” I exclaim. “If you two were going to go all Survivor on us and sleep out here, you could have at least told us so that we could have taken the big bed!” “No way,” Cora says, standing now in her bra and underwear and tossing the blanket over Roger to cover him up. She points a finger at me before walking a few feet away to grab her jeans. “I told you I don’t want you and Sinclair doing weird things in my bed.” “You abandoned the bed!” I

exclaim. "The bed is up for grabs! I now claim the bed!" "Nope!" she shouts over her shoulder, stumbling a little as she steps into her pants and starts to pull them up. "We have dibs forever dibs on the bed, whether we want to use it or not." I gasp at her, appalled at her selfishness, as Roger gets to his feet and wraps the blanket around his hips, tucking it in like a towel. "I'm getting coffee," he murmurs, flashing Cora a grin before striding for the RV's door, ignoring the pieces of his own clothing scattered around the fire. "It's way too early for sister wars." I laugh at him and walk to Cora's side, bending on my way to grab her tshirt and hand it to her. "So," I say, smiling widely at her as she scowls at me and pulls her shirt over her head. "You never answered my question. Did you have funnnn last night?" "Let's just go," she says, turning towards the RV and ignoring me even though she can't hide the happy smile I see on her face. "The sooner we get to the temple, the sooner we get you off this line of questioning." "You did!" I laugh, gleeful, chasing my sister to the RV's door. "You totally did!

Come on, Cora! Tell me everything!" We have a very cheerful morning after that, with everyone teasing Roger and Cora, and Cora blushing and covering her face with her hands a lot, and Roger refusing to be ashamed and happily drinking his coffee while still dressed in nothing but the blanket wrapped around his hips.

Even Henry gets in on it, making Cora's blush deepen by patting her on the shoulder and telling her that it's okay that no woman can resist the sight of a Sinclair man in the moonlight – Cora just groans deeply at that and stands up, stalking away to the bathroom and slamming the door shut behind her as we all laugh, perhaps a little too hard.

"All right, Roger," I say, still laughing and moving to take Rafe to the bedroom to change his diaper. "Joke's over – put on some damn clothes." "No way," he says, lounging back against the white booth of the kitchenette and grinning at me, his coffee still in his hand. "Have you felt this leather against your skin? It's amazing-" I just groan and roll my eyes, taking my baby away as Sinclair and Henry laugh, heading for the front of the RV so that we can get started.

As we drive, though, the mood in the RV gets noticeably darker. We all know, of course, that as the minute pass we're getting close and closer to the temple.

And even though we're here for a good reason to visit our mother, to get some very necessary information – well? It's...tense. Because we don't know what that information is.

Cora grows the quietest, not even wanting to play any board games or cards as noon slips by. So I just take her hand, the baby curled in my other arm, and sit quietly with her. Waiting.

Sinclair starts to slow the RV at around two o'clock, glancing back over his shoulder. "We're close now," he informs us, his face impassive. I know that he's aware of the tension, but he lets Cora have her space to process her emotions.

Cora simply nods and we all sit quietly as Sinclair gets the RV as close as he can. But, unfortunately, the temple was designed to only be approached on foot something about a sacrifice to the Goddess? I don't know.

But either way, as we all step out of the RV at the base of a series of stone steps that winds slowly upwards and out of our sight through the forest. I know that each of us feels the tension.

"Will you be all right here, dad?" Sinclair asks quietly, putting a hand on his father's shoulder once Henry uses the lift to lower himself to the ground so that he can see us off.

"I'll be fine," he says with a small smile. Then he reaches out to touch Rafe's little foot, hanging free from the baby carrier that's strapped to my chest. "Are you sure you don't want to leave the little one?" "I don't think I'm ever letting him out. of my sight again, Henry," I say quietly, dipping my head to plant a little kiss on Rafe's head. Rafe gurgles pleasantly, blowing bubbles between his tiny pink lips. I can't help but smile when I look at him.

"Well," Henry says, folding his hands in his lap. "That, I understand. Good luck.

"I'll see you in a few hours." We each bend to give Henry a kiss before we all turn towards the steps. I take Cora's hand as Roger starts to climb, taking the lead. Sinclair, on some Alpha instinct to protect the most vulnerable members of his pack, falls behind.

"You ready for this?" I ask.

"As much as I'm gonna be," Cora sighs, glancing at me with a little smile. And then, after she takes a deep breath, we start to climb the stairs on what promises to be a long, long hike.

Accidental Surrogate Chapter 390-The Temple Ella It is, indeed, a long climb. Cora and I are panting by the time we get to the top, and even though Sinclair took Rafe from me halfway through the hike I have to take a moment to catch my break when we pull ourselves up to the final level.

Roger has the indecency to look a little smug about the fact that he barely looks winded and Cora gives him a little shove on the shoulder as she works to take a few deep breaths and wipe the sweat from her brow.

Even as I work to bring my heartrate back down, I absolutely marvel at the sight before me.

The Goddess' temple, like the one in the city, is built completely with white marble. But unlike the one in the city, this one looks...ancient. Vines grow in ropes all over it, looking almost as if the structure is part of the forest itself, having grown up organically from it. The temple is tall and wide, the pillars in front drawing my eyes upward to the slanted roof which curls into a dome. At the very peak of the dome is a golden crescent moon, reaching up towards the sky, glinting in the bright sunlight.

"Wow," Cora says, standing straight next to me and likewise marveling at the temple. "Mom has some... impressive property." "I know, right?" I mutter back, crossing my arms and shaking my head. If someone had told me, when I was a little girl sleeping in my creaky little orphan bed, that my mom lived here... Well. I probably would have believed them.

But I was a very imaginative child.

"Um," Roger says, looking anxiously at Cora. "Shall we?" I smile at him, seeing that he's eager to move on but also that he wants to give her room to process this experience. It's more intense for her than it is for him, and I think that it's very sweet that he realizes this. Roger really has come leaps and bounds as a person from when I first met him.

Sinclair comes to stand next to me and I grin at him and then turn to my baby, taking his hands and speaking to him quietly, asking him how he likes it here and if he's ready to meet his granny for real this time. Rafe claps and gurgles like he really is excited.

"It's like he understands sometimes," I say quietly, smiling up at Sinclair.

“Well,” Sinclair says, grinning proudly down at his son. “He’s very clever.” “Yes,” I say, leaning closer to kiss my baby’s forehead. “Yes, he is. The most clever baby the world will ever see -” “He can keep that title for about...five more months,” Roger calls to us, crossing his arms over his chest with a smirk. Sinclair just laughs and shakes his head, letting it pass.

“Are you ready, Cora?” I ask, moving again to her side.

“I think so,” she says, giving me a nod and reaching for my hand. I give it, and, with another deep breath, the five of us begin to walk towards the temple. As we approach, a woman in dove-colored robes comes out of the front.

I hesitate for a moment, going still at the sight of those robes – Because the last time I saw them But I feel Sinclair behind me, his hand warm against my back, and then a little pulse of comfort comes down the bond and I exhale, skipping forward a little to stay at Cora’s side.

Because he’s right. This is...this is not the same situation we were in before.

This is different, and not every priestess we meet is going to try to take my baby away. Some of them, surely, actually serve my mother.

“Welcome,” the woman says, bowing a little and giving us a deep smile as we approach. “Daughters of the Goddess – you are welcome here. And you are right on time.” Cora and I smile at each other and then look back to the woman. “Is she here?” I ask. The priestess smiles warmly at me but Cora turns to me with a frown.

“Can’t you feel her?” I blink at Cora for a second and then, as I realize what she means that she can feel our mother here already – I bite my lip, feeling a very deep grief.

Because I cannot feel her. I used up’ our bond – used the magic of it to unbind my wolf and my gift so that I could save my child, and Cora, and my mate. Cora realizes this very suddenly, her mouth making a startled “o” of concern, but I just shake my head and work hard to give her a smile.

“It’s okay,” I say, squeezing her hand. “I’m glad you can feel her for both of us.” She nods to me, sympathetic, and then we both turn back to the priestess.

“Please,” the priestess says, smiling around at our whole party and taking a moment to let her gaze linger on the baby, admiring him. “Please, do come inside.” And so, as a group, we follow the priestess into my mother’s temple. And as we go, I wonder if everyone’s heart is pounding as much as mine.

The temple, inside, is different than the ones that we’ve been in before.

While the desert temple was elegantly sparse, and the city temple was sweeping and impressive, this one is... cozy. The architecture is still bright and wide, but you can tell that women live here and treat it as a home. As I look around at the padded benches by the windows, at the well-loved books neatly tucked into alcoves and the little worn stick broom tucked into a corner, I decide quite suddenly that this is my favorite temple of all – and that I quite like it here.

The priestess does not pause in the middle of the large central room of the temple, the space beneath the dome, but instead leads us across it to a door at the back. Before she opens it, she turns to us with a warm smile. “Are you ready?” she asks, giving us a moment. to prepare.

Cora tucks her hair behind her ears and Roger comes to stand behind her, straightening his shoulders, his face very serious. He is, after all, about to be introduced to his mate’s mother as such for the first time. I smile at both of them as I reach for the baby, who Sinclair helps me unbuckle from the carrier. I don’t know why I do it, but somehow I want Rafe quite close to me as we go to see his grandmother. It feels ...right.

Then, once we’re all ready – and Sinclair has placed a warm hand on my shoulder – Cora nods to the priestess who opens the door and leads us inside.

We see her immediately, we all do. The beautiful Goddess, standing at the far end of the room, glowing with the faint luminescence of moonlight. Her face breaks into a smile as we cross the room, her eyes flashing over all of us but focusing on Cora. I can’t help the tears that well in my eyes when I see her, as I study her form. And this time, as I look at her – I see Cora all over her, in her face, in her expression, in the way she holds herself. Her hair is still like mine, but it seems like everything – everything else is my sister. How did I not see it before? Was I such a fool?

But as I think the thought, I dismiss it. Because she’s a Goddess, she’s divine. I think...she lets us see what we want or need to see in her.

As I think that my mother's eyes move to me, and she smiles. And a few tears slip down my cheeks as I smile back.

Then, as she should, she refocuses on Cora, moving forward to take her hands.

"I'm so glad that you've come to see me, daughter. Finally." "Hey," Cora says, tears slipping down her own cheeks, and then she laughs a little at her awkward start. "Hello, mom.

"Um," Cora says, half turning to her mate. "You remember Roger, right?" "I do," the Goddess says, laughing a little, the sound ringing in my ears like tinkling bells. "I'm glad, Roger, that you finally figured out what I meant in my message to you. By the desert." "Yeah," he says, smiling and grimacing awkwardly at once as he runs a hand through his hair. "I'm sorry about that I...overthought it." The Goddess' smile grows then and she reaches a hand out to him as well. "You will come with me," she says, turning towards another door, to an even more private room. "So that we may speak." I step back then, towards my mate, but before she goes my mother turns to me and gives me a special smile. "Ella," she says warmly, and then her eyes shift to Rafe in my arms. "Thank you," she says, "for bringing my first grandchild to meet me. I had a glimpse of him before, of course, when you had him dedicated to me. But to see him now – in the flesh? It is...a gift." "He's a gift," I whisper, holding my baby tight, tugging at the little bond I have with him and passing a great deal of love down it, so much that my baby looks up at me curiously and squeaks a little with his happy joy. I laugh and look down at him.

"As you are to me," my mother says, and I look back up at her, tears still dripping down my face. And I nod, understanding – finally – exactly what she means.

The goddess turns then, taking Cora and Roger's hands, leading them away. As the door closes behind them, I take a step backwards into Sinclair's arms, which I know were waiting to wrap around me.

"You okay, gorgeous?" he murmurs, bringing his lips down close to my ear to whisper the words.

"Yeah," I say, snuggling against him and dipping my head to kiss Rafe's. "I really, really am, Dominic. I'm perfect." "Yes," he sighs, kissing my own head now, just as I did Rafe's. "Yes, you are."

