

ACCIDENTAL SURROGATE FOR ALPHA

Read Novel Accidental Surrogate Chapter 401

Accidental Surrogate Chapter 401-The Refugee Center Ella “Ella,” Sinclair says, snapping his face back to mine, still pissed as hell at my suggestion that I’m bringing Rafe with me to the Refugee Center. “It is too dangerous – I will not let you put both of you in harm’s way like that.” “What are you going to do, Dominic,” I say, turning my head to the side sarcastically, “strap the baby to your chest all day? Bring him to all of your meetings of state?” He looks away from me then, clenching his jaw, saying nothing because he knows I have a point. The baby has to stay with me – I’m still breastfeeding. “Exactly,” I say, heaving a little sigh and pulling myself back to my side of the bed, where I can hear Rafe starting to fuss.” We’ll be fine!” I’m already out of the bed and lifting Rafe up, asking him about his morning and changing his diaper before Sinclair speaks again. ” Can you at least take Cora with you?” he says quietly. “And Roger, if he’s free?” I turn and smile at him then, pleased that he’s not fighting me on this more than he is. “That’s actually a really good idea,” I say, smiling. “Cora will be really helpful.” “Yes,” he sighs, turning to look at me finally. “Plus, she can zap anyone who tries to touch you.” I laugh, shaking my head and turning back to continue changing the baby. When I finish up, I feel Sinclair come close and wrap his arms around my waist. “I just want you safe, trouble,” he murmurs in apology, kissing my hair and then dipping his head to press his cheek to mine.

“I know,” I sigh. “I promise,” I say, turning in his arms and taking his cheeks in my palms, “the moment I feel anything strange, I’ll leave. Absolutely promise. All right?” “All right,” he murmurs, nudging my nose with his. “But I’m putting a tracker somewhere in your clothes so that I can come find you if I need to. And I’m not telling you which piece of clothing so that you can’t get rid of it.” “Well then,” I murmur, pitching my voice lower. “I’ll just have to go naked.” My mate growls and bends his knees so that he can grip the back of my thighs, and then in one swift movement he stands up, yanking me with him so that my legs are wrapped around his waist. I laugh, looping my arms around his neck and moving forward for a kiss.

“Over my dead body,” he murmurs, will I let you go any where naked. Except back to bed.” And then my sweet, overprotective Alpha mate leans in and seals his promise with a kiss.

“I’m glad you asked me to come, Ella,” Cora says as we both climb out of the SUV driven by Conner, the red-haired young man who I healed first with my powers. I was pleased to see Sinclair arranged for him to be our combination chauffeur/bodyguard today – he’s always been a bit of a favorite. ” Sorry Roger couldn’t make it,” Cora continues, leaning over to help me tighten the straps on Rafe’s little carrier. Rafe gurgles happily to see his auntie, which makes me smile. “Yeah, what’s Roger up to that he couldn’t come?” I ask, adjusting Rafe so that his weight rests comfortably on my shoulders. When we’re all ready, Conner nods to us and we start towards the Refugee Center, a squat building on the edge of the city that looks like it could do with both some repairs and some resources. “He’s all wrapped up in Sinclair’s stuff,” she sighs, “I’m surprised Sinclair didn’t realize it.

But when he steps up as King, Roger – as his Beta is going to step forward to manage the affairs of the pack that Sinclair was mostly focusing on.” ” Does he...want to do that?” I ask, hesitating. I mean, Roger’s clever and a hard worker, but Sinclair has always enjoyed the bureaucratic work more than Roger.

“I don’t think so,” Cora sighs to me, shaking her head a little.

” He’s still figuring out his place. It’s something we talk about a lot.” “Well, I hope he’s not unhappy,” I murmur, suddenly worried for my brother-in-law. Roger’s a tough nut to crack, but I know he’s got a big heart beneath all his bravado. And I also know he’s so dedicated to his brother that he’ll do whatever Sinclair asks of him, even if it doesn’t make him happy.

“Oh, don’t worry too much about him,” Cora says with a little laugh as we approach the Center’s doors. “He’s got a new mate, a new baby coming along, and new bonds with both – he’s all set.” “That’s so sweet,” I murmur, truly meaning it as I pull open the doors. But any warm and fuzzy feelings that Cora just gave me are wiped away at what I see before me. The office is...a mess. Cora, Conner, and I slowly look around, taking everything in before us. Phones are ringing off the hook, paperwork is stacked a mile high, and a long line of people winds around the room, waiting for two harried people at the desk to attend to them.

Unfortunately, those people are also working the phones. As I glance around, I also see that the room could use a nice cleaning. I’m not precisely a neat freak...so if even I’m noticing? It’s dirty. I grimace, guilt roiling in my stomach.

These people deserve better. “Follow me,” Conner murmurs, taking lead. Cora and I fall into step behind him. “Hey!” someone in the line shouts, thinking we’re cutting. “Line starts back there!” “Apologies!” Conner calls to whoever it was, putting on his charming smile.

” We’re not cutting in line – official business.” “They should still see us first!” Someone else calls out, a man this time. But Conner just grimaces a little and ignores him, leading Cora, Rafe, and I behind the desk. A girl working the desk – dark-haired with pretty brown eyes – stands up straight in shock and surprise to see us come around.

“You can’t be back here,” she murmurs, putting a hand over the receiver of the phone so whoever she’s talking to can’t hear. “You have to wait in line” “This is Ella Sinclair,” Conner replies, stepping aside a little so that she can see me more clearly.” And her sister, Cora...Sinclair?” He says it as half a question since Cora and Roger haven’t technically been mated yet. Cora just rolls her eyes and waves a hand, as if she doesn’t know and cares even less. I give an awkward little wave to the girl, whose eyes go wide, moving between me and the baby.

I feel a sudden shyness come over me as I realizes that...well that she recognizes me. Of course I’ve long been aware that Sinclair is a public person and that as his mate people probably know who I am. But so far Sinclair has done such a good job of keeping us away from the world and the media that this is the first time I’m really aware of being publicly recognized. “Oh my god,” the girl murmurs, hanging up the phone without saying goodbye.

“Apologies, my Queen – Luna um...” she folds into a little bow, simultaneously smacking the arm of the slim blonde man next to her, who gives her a dirty look before his own eyes go wide. A whisper travels through the room and I anxiously play with Rafe’s little foot as a thrill of anxiety rolls through me. I hadn’t... realized it would be quite like this. But then Rafe gives a happy squeal, looking around cheerfully at everyone, and I smile at him realizing that he’s right. Well, he didn’t mean to be right.

But he still is. And I feel my own smile come to my face as I look around at everyone and tuck away my own shyness and anxiety, trying instead to be kind and warm and welcoming. That’s what these people need right now, instead of me cowering away in my anxiety. “Hello,” I say, directing my attention to the girl behind the counter. “Please don’t worry about any of that.

We came to help. But we're looking for Isabel?" " Oh," the young blonde man says, his eyebrows going up. "Yeah, she's out at the camps. She left early this morning." "Where are those?" I ask. " Not far," he replies, but then he hesitates.

"But I...they're not nice, Luna," he says, letting his words drift off at the end. "I'm not sure you want to ""Not nice we can handle," Cora says breezily, flashing him a smile and then looking back to the dark-haired girl.

" Can you give us directions? I'm sure we can make it." "Of course," the girl says, her hands shaking a little as she sorts through the paperwork on her desk, looking for a map. As she does, I look around the room at all of the silent people who I realize are looking right at me. And I'm a little intimidated to see the variety of expressions on their faces. Some are interested, some look happy but still others look really, really mad.

Or worse, sad and betrayed. I do my best to keep my own feelings in and present a sunny demeanor to them, hoping that it's right. It's not that I want to smile in the face of their pain but...if I can let them see that I'm working? That I'm trying, and that good things are coming? Isn't hope as good a medicine as any Goddess' gift? I turn back to the desk when I hear a rustle of paper and see Conner reaching forward to take a map from the girl. " Can I do anything else to help you?" she asks, directing her words to me with a still-shy but now slightly eager smile..

"No," I say, giving her a big grin and shaking my head. "But I'd like you to please make a list of improvements you'd make to this place. A big list – don't hold back, okay?" The girl glances at her colleague and both of their faces brighten, which starts a warm little spot in my belly burning. "Okay," she agrees. "Someone will come get it this afternoon," I say, nodding to them, letting them see it's a promise. "And then we'll get started making this place better." They're both smiling widely at me now as I say my goodbyes and then head back out of the door with my sister, my baby, and my bodyguard.

Some people wave to us as we go and I wave back, but as we pass through the doors the only thing that settles in me is resolve. "We have to do something to help these people," I say to Cora as we move to the car. She nods stoically at my side, agreeing. "But Ella," she says, hesitating a little, "I think that in there?"

It's just scratching the surface." And as we get into the car and start to drive away, I find that I agree. And that I'm a little afraid of what we're going to see next

Accidental Surrogate Chapter 402-The Camps Ella Someone must have called ahead because when we pull up to the refugee camp I see Isabel standing outside the gates, her arms crossed over her chest and a big smile on her face. I give a little squeal of excitement when I see her, my hand immediately going to the lever on the car door. "Seriously, Ella," Cora murmurs, grabbing my other wrist. "Let's not leap out of the moving vehicle just because we see our friends." "Ohhh," I say, tossing her a little glare over my shoulder.

"I'm not that dumb, Cora -" "You've done it before," she sighs. "Once!" I snap, giving her a real glare and then quickly moving to unbuckle myself and then Rafe, getting him strapped to my chest as fast as I can when the car stops. The result of the delay is that Isabel pulls open my door the moment I turn around, ready to grab the handle again. "Ella!" she shouts, laughing already, and I burst out of the car, wrapping my friend in a one-armed hug, kind of regretting that I already strapped Rafe to me so that I can't hold her properly.

"Isabel!" I gasp, giving her a big kiss on the cheek. "It issogood to see you!" "And you, friend," she says, sighing a little in relief that looks like it was a long time coming. "We were all going crazy when we didn't hear from you for so long and we got some of the details, but no one really knows what happened? Some kind of...attack?" "It's an insane story," I say, rolling my eyes as Cora and Conner come around the car. "I'll tell you all about it, but it needs a long telling, so maybe...not now," I say, glancing over at the refugee camp. "All right," she nods, still looking at me.

"But you're okay? Things are...steady?" "We're fine, everyone's fine," I say, running a hand over my baby's hair. "Things are steady for now." I give a little shrug, letting her know that that's all we've got. She smiles at me and nods, understanding, and then takes a moment to fuss over Rafe, telling him how big he got, and then giving Cora a kiss on the cheek as well. As Isabel hugs Cora, she pauses and steps back, looking down at her-belly. "Are you..." "Yes, yes," Cora says, laughing, "though I'm not sure I'm used to people being able to smell it on me." "But," Isabel's eyes go wide as she looks up into Cora's face. "This baby...is a pup?" Cora laughs and shrugs a little. "Listen, it's complicated. But yeah.... I'm a human with a wolf soul and I'm pregnant with a hybrid mostly-wolf baby." Isabel blinks in surprise and then laughs, narrowing her eyes at her. "It's Roger's isn't it?" she asks, grinning.

Cora laughs again, harder now and blushing to be called out. “God,” she says, running a hand through her hair, “were we that obvious in Vanara?” “To everyone but yourselves, apparently,” Isabel says, smirking at her. And then she turns her attention to Conner. “And who are you?” “A bit of a new addition,” he says, rubbing his hair awkwardly but giving her a smile anyway. “My name is Conner, I’m a sergeant in the pack,” he says, nodding to us to let her know which one. “And are you single?” Isabel asks, looking him up and down as she folds her arms over her chest.

Conner, bless him, blushes bright red as I burst into laughter and shove my friend on her shoulder. “Isabel!” I laugh, shaking my head at her. “You’d have bitten my head off if I asked that of you the moment I met you.” “Well, I’m different now,” she says, grinning at me. “More romantic, now that I see how much it turned my life around. After tragedy. I’m a meddler by nature,” she says, giving me a wink before turning back to him. “So?” she prods. “Yes, ma’am,” he murmurs down towards his feet, smiling a little. “I am single.” “Good,” she says, reaching out to pat him on the shoulder and then turning with all of us towards the gates. “We’ll see what we can do about that.” And then, together, Isabel walks us towards the gates. As we pass through them, I see her mood change just a little bit as she looks at my sister and I warily.

“I know you’ve seen some tough things, Ella, Cora,” she says, but I do want you to be prepared for what you’re walking into.” I frown at her. “Please,” I say, shaking my head. “Don’t hold back. We want to help - we have resources now -” “I know,” she says, placing a hand on my arm. “I just these people have been through a lot. This is not going to be a walk in the park.” “That’s all right,” Cora says with a sigh, starting to look around, her hands on her hips.

“We’ve never been park people, really. We like the beach.” “All right, then,” Isabel says, nodding and starting forward. “Let’s get started.” She fills us in on her family as we begin to walk, letting us know that James is well and – interestingly – at the palace today, enough – reconnecting with Sinclair and seeing if there’s a place for him in the administration.

A beautiful smile takes over Isabel’s face when she tells us about Sadie, even though I don’t think she knows it. The little girl is apparently growing like a weed and a fast learner, eager for every picture book she can get her hands on. While all of this news about my friend’s family warms my heart to its core, that heat fades from me the deeper we get into the camp. Isabel gives us a thorough tour, taking us down row after row of tents where families live together, scrapping together their world as best they can. “How did these people get here,” Cora murmurs, confused. “Well, this is the Wolf Camp,”

Isabel says quietly, “the Human Camp is across the river -” “What?” I ask, a little appalled. “You’re keeping them separate?” “I’m not keeping them separate,” Isabel says, turning to me with narrowed eyes. “

They demanded separate accommodations.” “Oh,” I sigh, realizing that that makes sense but disappointed nonetheless.” But anyway, these wolves are all people who had their home destroyed during the war and don’t have family to take them in, or have no way to get to that family, or who otherwise don’t have access to the resources they need to get their lives back together.” “Why the fences?” Cora asks, looking around at the tall chain link fences all around the perimeter with barbed wire on top.

“They’re not to keep the people in,” Isabel sighs, “people can come and go as they please. The fences are here to keep other people out.” “Who?” I ask, a little appalled, my hand instantly going to Rafe in my sudden fear. “Stragglers, mostly,” she says, shrugging to me. “There’s probably a better word for it – but there are plenty of people – both human and wolf – who do not like the way that services are being distributed to refugees, and who believe that they can do it better on their own. Still, they need supplies as well, and many don’t hesitate to prey on those within this camp if they can get in.” “Oh my god,” I sigh, looking around at all of the poor people around us, dozens and hundreds of them living in tents, doing their best just to survive after the war took everything from them. “Will you...will you take me to the human camps too?” “I will,” she says, biting her lip and looking up at me. “Though...they may not be as happy to see you as you think.” “Because I’m a wolf?” I ask quietly.

Slowly, she nods.

“The humans have felt deeply betrayed by all of this, and I can’t say I blame them,” Isabel sighs. “It’s wonderful that human and wolf governments are able to come to a cease -fire, but the realization that this entire city is under wolf jurisdiction and that wolves have for a long time considered humans second class citizens, if not...worse,” she shrugs, clearly frustrated with it and without solutions regarding how to make it better. “It’s not good.” “Still,” I say quietly, looking at Cora, who nods to me. “I want to go.” “Okay,” Isabel says quietly, and then she turns to look me in the eye, glancing down at Rafe. “But there’s something I want you to see first. Actually,” she turns to Cora now, meeting her eyes, “I’m more eager for you to see it, considering your medical experience.” Cora smiles and glances at me, making Isabel frown a little bit, but Cora just waves a hand. “We’ll fill you in,” she says briefly, nodding to Isabel, “but you may want Ella now even more than you want me, if it’s something medical.

But please, lead the way.” Isabel does, silent and stern as she takes us towards a large brown tent towards the front of the camps. She takes a deep breath as she pulls back the flap, and then we all step inside. And my heart sinks down to the very pit of my stomach. Because the tent is absolutely filled with children.

Accidental Surrogate Chapter 403-The Children’s Tent Ella There are dozens of children in this tent – maybe hundreds – and my heart breaks as I look them over. Each of the children is laying in on a medical cot, being tended to by a very tiny staff of medical and social workers who look run off their feet. “Oh my god, Isabel,” I murmur, my heart going immediately into my throat.

“Who are...who are all of these children...” “They’re the pups of the camp who are sick,” she says quietly. “Some of them have parents,” she says, nodding to a couple who are sitting quietly by their daughter’s bed, reading her a book even though the little girl can barely pay attention because she’s whimpering with pain. ” But a lot of them,” Isabel says, taking my hand and drawing my attention back to her, “a lot of them are alone.

The rest of the orphans have already gone to the adoption center in the city, but these ones -” “They need help,” I say, my voice tight, determined. “Yes,” she says quietly. And then she turns her eyes to Cora. “Can you...would you be willing to spend some time here? We can use all the hands we’ve got.” ” You’ll want both of us,” Cora says, turning to me to consult. And I nod to her, but turn back to Isabel first. “Are there children like this in the human camp as well?” I ask quietly. “Yes,” she replies. “A tent as big as this, filled. Maybe bigger.” “Okay,” I say, my heart breaking. But that resolve in me that started earlier, it hardens. “Here today? The other camp tomorrow?” I ask, looking up at Cora, who twists her lips, judging the number of people in the room. “It depends on the severity of the cases,” she murmurs, crossing her arms. “What are you talking about?” Isabel asks, looking between us and then up at Conner, frowning.

You’re about to see something very cool,” Conner replies, giving her a soft smile.

“But just... let them work. They’ve got their own system.” Isabel turns to me with a frown, but I just dip a little kiss to my baby’s head and then get started. Cora and I fall immediately into the routine we set up when we were healing the men in the bunker after their battles. She begins by speaking with one of the doctors about the worst cases and as I put Conner to work as a nurse – my old job going bed to bed and speaking to the children and their families (if

they have them) with a notepad, noting those who seem most in danger or in the most pain. I move around too, mostly saying hello to people, letting them see the baby, getting the feel of the room with Isabel at my side to show me how things work. But that doesn't last long, because Cora comes back to me pretty fast.

"Come on, Ella," she says, taking my hand and leading me to the far corner of the tent. "We need to act now. This one is...very bad." And so we get to work.

The time slips by very quickly as we go from bed to bed, coordinating with the doctors and social workers already on staff to ensure that we're doing the best work that we can in the short time that we have available. But generally, we fall into a pretty stable routine of me healing the children while Cora and Isabel consult to determine who is next. Conner takes Rafe while I heal, ensuring that he's content when he's away from me.

"He's a really good baby," Conner murmurs to me the fifth or sixth time that he takes Rafe from me and tucks him happily away in the crook of his arm. "He's... very chill. I wasn't expecting that." "Well," I sigh, smiling up at him, "Rafe likes his dad better than me and you probably remind him of Sinclair. You're both..." I wave a hand towards Conner's large, muscular frame, "gigantic and stuff.

Probably thinks he's right at home!" "I can't believe that's true," Conner says casually, grinning down at Rafe." Everyone loves the Luna." As if in confirmation, Rafe gives a happy little squeal and reaches out a hand to me, which I kiss. I look back up at Conner." You'll let me know? If he needs anything?" "Always," Conner murmurs, giving me a little wink and stepping away with the baby, who tucks his face away against Conner's chest, apparently getting ready for a nap. And so I turn my attention away, heading over to the little girl who looks up at me with wide eyes in a pale face. "Hi," I say, smiling and sitting next to her, taking her hand. "What's your name?" "Leah," she says, the word barely audible as it escapes through her cracked lips. "Well, Leah," I say, smiling as I lean closer. "I know you've been feeling pretty badly lately, but I'm going to help you feel better, if that's okay with you." Slowly, Leah nods and closes her eyes, leaning back against her pillows. I squeeze her hand a little as I glance towards the empty chair next to her, my heart breaking as I consider that she has no parent to come sit with her.

But I brush my grief for this little girl aside, because it's not going to do her any good, and then I close my eyes and access my mother's gift, letting it sweep through me first and then into her, where I find...quite a lot of damage done.

“This one might take a while,” I say, feeling Isabel’s presence by my side.

“That’s all right, Luna,” she replies quietly, and I smile a little to hear her say that name. “You take your time.” Leah’s injuries are extensive she’s battered and bruised from her experiences either during the war or from her time here in the camp. But I also find something...darker, deeper within her. I don’t know anything, really, about biology or what organs I’m sensing in her as ill (and I make a mental note to immediately get some books or take some courses on the subject) but it doesn’t really matter.

The gift, in its grace, can sense when something is wrong – and it knows how to fix it. I’m really, in all things, just the conduit. But as I put the gift to work, I’m so, so grateful to my mother for letting me be the conduit for this particular gift. It’s almost as if she knew it would bring me a personal joy to be able to help in this way.

It does take a long time for the gift to do its work, to heal a long lesion within what I think is – maybe? – Leah’s liver. And then, when that’s all patched up, the gift flows through her body and slowly knits up all the cuts and bruises on her and at the last works to gently eradicate what feel like...well, tiny little dots in her body, which are just wrong. Oroff.

I don’t know how else to explain it. When I finally open my eyes, I look down at Leah’s hand still in my own and smile to see that it’s already warmer than it was when I started. And I look up, my smile deepening when I see that she’s peacefully asleep, a little smile on her face. My heart squeezes as I hope that she’s dreaming, and that her dreams are wonderful.

“Okay,” I murmur, sighing and standing up, surprised to find my body stiff. “Let’s let her rest.” I turn then and am a little surprised to see Isabel standing there, staring at me in shock. “What...” she mutters, “what did you just do?” “I healed her,” I say simply, giving a little shrug, understanding that it’s going to take her some time to comprehend. We told her about the Goddess’ gift before we got started but I’m well aware that it’s one thing to hear about it and quite another to see it work. “How long was I ...out?” “Over an hour,” Cora snaps, striding over to us and giving me a little glare. “What?” I ask, my eyes going wide. And then I groan a little, because that’s...that’s way too long. If I spend an hour on each of these children... “Well, if you’d simply did what I told you to do,” Cora says, glaring at me some more, “and just healed her liver-her body could have done the rest over the next few days, or we could have come back -” “There’s no way,” I say, my voice shaking a little with emotion as I return Cora’s glare, “absolutely no way I was letting this little girl suffer for one

more moment.” “Well,” Cora says, opening her eyes wide and waving a hand to encompass the rest of the room. “You healed her, every little bump and bruise, and in doing so let all the seother children continue to suffer. Some of which reallyneedyou, Ella.” And my heart sinks as I look around and realize that she’s right. My eyes snap back to my sister’s and the guilt overtakes me, knocking out my anger like a tidal wave as I think of every little kid in each of these beds, quietly suffering, waiting for me – And quite suddenly, I burst into tears.

Accidental Surrogate Chapter 404-An Angry King Ella “Oh, Ella,” Cora sighs, her shoulders slumping as she sees my reaction to her words. She strides over to me and wraps me in a big hug. “I’m sorry,” she murmurs into my hair, “I shouldn’t have said it like that.” “No,” I sniff, you’re right – I should have listened – ” “It’s okay. You didso goodbye her,” Cora says, loosening her grip and turning me towards the little girl asleep in her bed. “She wasn’t going to make it, Ella,” Cora whispers as we look down at the girl. “Not even a few more days maybe not even through the night. And look at her now.” Tears are streaming freely down my cheeks now. “She’s perfect,” I murmur, and Cora nods.

“So, you did a good thing,” she sighs, wiping at my tears in her own brusky way, “but we still haveworkto do. All right?” “Okay,” I say nodding and looking around the room. “Who’s next?” “A little boy,” she says, looking down at her clipboard. “Named Philip.” “A sweet little boy!” I gasp, and then I bury my face in my hands and start crying again, thinking of my own sweet baby – and if he ever got sick – “Ella,” Cora sighs next to me, and I hear her take a deep steadying breath.

“We are not going to get through this if you keep crying all the time.” “I can’t help it,” I sniff, looking up at her and wiping again at my tears, which just seem to keep coming. “Do you think...if these kids don’t have a home, Sinclair will...” “If you go home tonight and ask Sinclair to adopt all these kids,” she says slowly, raising her eyebrows and shaking her head at me, though unable to keep a smile from starting on her lips, “he’s gonna flip, Ella.” “But -” “Move on, kid!” she laughs, giving me a little push between the shoulder blades to keep me moving. “Let’s go help Philip!” “Philip,” I say, taking a deep breath and nodding steadily, trying to put my motherly impulse to save and keep and raiseallthe children away, though it is very difficult. We don’t have far to go, but as we walk I take my baby from Conner’s arms, even though I know I’ll have to give him back in about two seconds.

“What do you think, baby,” I murmur to Rafe, looking down and watching him sleep, warmth crawling through me and chasing away my sadness as I look down into his perfect little face. “Should we bring home about a dozen new orphan siblings for you today? Do you think daddy will be mad?” Conner drops Cora off first and then drives us back to the palace. To my extreme disappointment, I was convinced not to bring any children back with me tonight, so it’s just me and Rafe in the car with him. Conner surprises me by driving around to the back of the palace and pressing a button at the top of the car, opening a wide black door.

“Oh,” I say, leaning forward curiously. “So there is a garage...” Conner laughs a little and confirms my suspicions. As he pulls into a parking spot very close to what I assume is the entrance, I place a hand on his shoulder.

“You did really well today, Conner,” I say softly. “Thank you, Luna,” he says, flashing me a smile. “You should...” and I hesitate here, not really knowing what to say. “I should what?” he asks, curious. “Well, I know that you’re part of the military,” say, taking my hand away and twisting my fingers together anxiously, “and I know that you probably have all sorts of ambitions there, but...well, if you’d like to be part of my team, even just for now, and help me continue doing this work, we’d be really happy to have you.” I smile at him, hoping it’s an offer he’ll consider, and hoping even more that it doesn’t derail his own plans. “I’ll think about it, Luna,” he says, meeting my eyes with a very genuine smile. “I promise I will.” And then we both nod at each other and get out of the car, me unstrapping the baby and leaving his car seat where it is – because he’s just going to need it tomorrow anyway.

Conner leads me through the winding halls beneath the palace to an elevator, which we climb into. He presses a button and swipes a card from his pocket and, when it reaches the second floor, I’m very surprised to find us in the hallway where my personal rooms are. “Oh,” I say, my eyebrows arching almost to my hairline. “Well, that’s terribly convenient, isn’t it?” “Only the best for our Queen,” Conner says, gesturing forward so that I can step out ahead of him. I smile at him and do so, but frown and turn when he stays in the elevator. “You aren’t coming?” Nah,” he says, smiling at me and shrugging. “I’ve got to get back to the barracks, Luna. Have to get some rest so that I’m fresh tomorrow.

I roll my eyes at myself – of course. What was I thinking, that he was going to come and hang out with me and Sinclair? I wave goodbye to him and wish him a good night’s sleep, considering that I’ll just have to give my own report to Sinclair, even though I figured Conner would handle it.

But still. I can handle that, right? As long as I don't fall asleep on my feet first.

But when I push open the door to our suite, I can tell already that Sinclair is mad. Frowning, I close the door behind me, looking towards where he sits at his new desk by the window, already glowering at me with his arms crossed. "What is it?" I ask, confused.

"Ella," Sinclair snaps, standing and striding over to me as he gestures to the darkness outside the window. "You were gone all day- and while I don't care about that, you did not answer your phone the entire time -" "My phone," I say, frowning up at him and passing the baby over to the arms he holds out, silently asking for him. "I don't even think I brought it" "Yes," Sinclair growls, frowning down at me even as he lifts Rafe to his shoulder and begins to lovingly stroke his back, welcoming him home and giving me a lecture at the same time. "I realized that you left your phone behind after panicking for three hours that something had happened to you." "Why didn't you just contact Conner?" "I did!" "Well then what's the problem?" I ask, exhausted and crossing my arms over my chest, truly not getting it and honestly maybe too tired to try.

"The problem," he growls, turning to give Rafe a kiss on the cheek and run his eyes over him, ensuring that he's okay – which, of course, he is. "Is that I was hesitant about you even going to the Refugee Center, let alone staying there all day- " "Well, we didn't go to the Center all day," I murmur, turning away from him and heading to our expansive closet which is basically a second bedroom where we keep all of our stuff in beautiful, neat little cabinets and racks. "We went to the Wolf Camp almost immediately." "WHAT!" I turn to glare at my mate where he stands at the door. "I don't know why you're freaking out, Dominic," I snap, starting to lose my patience a little bit. "We were totally fine, and -" "It's incredibly dangerous in those camps," Sinclair says, storming forward to loom over me. "I do not want you and Rafe there where anything could happen -" "Too bad," I say, objecting to the command in his voice and crossing my arms, looking up at him stubbornly and slowly shaking my head. "Because we're going back tomorrow. Actually, not back – we're going to the Human Camp" And then I see Sinclair's face turn a shade of red I've never seen before. I blink in surprise, taking a step back as I watch him just get...angrier and angrier. My breath hitches in my throat – not because I'm actually afraid I know he'd never hurt me – but I've just never...pushed him this far.

Accidental Surrogate Chapter 405-Balance Ella "Dominic," I murmur, reaching for him. "No," he snaps, taking a step away from me and shaking his head.

“You’re taking this too far, Ella – I know you want to help, but I cannot have you putting yourself at risk like this!” He sputters for a moment, turning away from me and hanging his head, bringing a hand up to cover his face.

I reach for him, seeking him through our bond, not understanding this reaction and needing to know – He opens his heart to me when I gently ask him to through the bond. He lets me see all of his fear, all of his anxiety, all of the guilt that already rolls in him when he even thinks about the possibility of losing Rafe and I when he could just keep us so safe. And my heart breaks, for what feels like the eightieth time today, as I stare at my mate’s back, his broad shoulders.

“I’m so sorry, Dominic,” I whisper, closing the distance between us and wrapping my arms around his waist from behind, resting my head against his back, closing my eyes. “I hear you feel your fear for me. But I...I can’t not do this...” “Ella,” he says, his voice cracking with the strain of his worry, of not understanding why I’m pushing this so hard. But before he can continue, I let out a deep breath and pass him my own feelings down the bond and along with them, the memories I have from today.

Of little Leah, and her sunken pale face, and how fresh her skin looked after I spent an hour holding her hand. And little Philip, who lost a hand, and whose wound was badly infected. Who will never grow that hand back, but who now will live, and be fitted with a prosthesis, and live a full life – And the memories of a dozen other children who I helped – who need me, 1 who aren’t safe unless I’m there to help them. The bare idea that I would ever, ever give that up, just to keep my own self safe?

It’s absolutely unthinkable to me.

“You’re forgetting who you chose as your mate, Dominic,” I murmur, my arms still wrapped tight around him.” Please, please don’t ask me to turn away from them. I can’t do it – not when I’m the only one who can help them like this. The only one who can really take away their pain.” Sinclair turns towards me then, staying so close that I’m able to keep my arms around his waist, and he settles his free arm around my shoulders, Rafe still curled up in his other. As I look up at him I see that his eyes are wet with tears. I reach up a hand to gently wipe away the ones that start to fall down his cheeks.

“All right, Ella,” he says, his voice gruff. But then he shakes his head at me, not giving in completely. “I see it now – I understand and...and you’re right, to hold you back from this would be to ask you to betray who you are. And who

you are is the reason I love you. I get it.” I nod, looking up at him, sending a pulse of love and gratitude down our bond.

Because I really am just so grateful to be with a man who understands who I really am, down to the core of my being. And more than that a man who is willing to bend, even though he’s never been a particularly pliant person, when I tell him what I need.

“But we’re doing this on my terms,” he continues, a little bit of his growl coming back to his voice even as it’s still thick with emotion, and worry, and tears. “All right?” “All right,” I whisper, agreeing to it freely because I know he’s already given in so much. It’s my term now. “Your terms, Dominic. Whatever you say.” “Damn right, whatever I say,” he snarls, a little playfully, and I grin up at him, loving it – loving him. And I raise myself on my toes, tilting my head back, hoping for a kiss – which he gives me, freely. A good long one that tells me how much he loves me, but also how much he intends to protect me, to keep me safe. Even if I insist on going into what are essentially war zones every day.” Trouble, through and through,” he sighs when I finally pull away, just an inch.

“You’ve known that for a long time, big scary Alpha,” I murmur back, giving him a smart smack on his rear that makes him jump a little and then laugh. “Thought you’d be used to it by now.” “Yeah,” he sighs, letting me loose a bit. “Me too.” And then he starts a bit as I pull away further now, looking down at his crisp white shirt which is now...well, not so crisp, or so white, but instead covered in a fine layer of brown dirt.

“What the hell did you do to me...” he murmurs. “It’s really dirty at those camps,” I sigh, stepping away and crossing my fingers. “I’m sorry – was the shirt expensive? I didn’t mean to -” And then he laughs, giving me my own smack on the ass and nodding towards the door in our closet which also delightfully leads to the bathroom. “Shower, immediately,” he sighs, “filthy girl.” I laugh and give him a wink as I saunter away from the door, “you like me filthy,” I call over my shoulder, “and you know it.” “Don’t listen to your mother,” Sinclair murmurs, pretending to cover Rafe’s ears. I laugh as I start to pass into the bathroom. “We’re not done talking!” he calls after me. “Didn’t think we were!” I call back, and then – happy – I strip off my clothes, looking forward to a nice, long, hot shower.

About an hour later, after I’ve showered and eaten the food that Sinclair ordered up for me, we’re finally settled in bed in the dark. Or, the near-dark as

I lit a little magnolia- scented candle on my bedside table, wanting to be able to see the changes in his face as we talk.

He's so handsome, I think, smiling at him over our baby, who rests between us, babbling little nonsense words and grabbing his feet as he rolls around on his back. Why wouldn't I want to stare at him whenever I can?

Perhaps intuiting my line of thinking, my mate smiles back at me and reaches.

out a hand, slowly letting his thumb drift over the line of my cheek. I turn my head a little and kiss that thumb, hoping he knows how well I love him. But... well, I think he does. Because I know just how much he loves me – he shows me every day. I very much hope that I do the same for him.

“So what's your plan, trouble,” he murmurs, his deep voice so resonant that I can almost feel the vibrations of it through the mattress. Rafe turns towards his father, laughing a little with joy at the sound of it. I smile and stroke my baby's belly, pleased at how much he loves the sound of his daddy's voice. “I need a team,” I whisper, looking up and meeting his eyes. “A big one,” he agrees. “I'm not letting you go there again with just Conner, Ella. I know that you believe in the good in everyone but there are people out there who would hurt you.” “Okay,” I agree, nodding once. “But...can I have Conner?” “Do you like him?” Sinclair asks, tilting his head to the side. “Should I be jealous?” And I laugh, reaching out and giving him a smack on the shoulder. “Don't be ridiculous,” I murmur. “But no, he was very good and helpful today. And he's nice, and Rafe likes him too.” I shrug. “But...I don't want to derail his career. Would it be bad, to bring him on board with me?” “Not necessarily,” Sinclair answers, thinking as he speaks.

“It would be a diversion from his current plans but,” he shrugs, “if he does well protecting the Queen, it could be quite a good mark in his favor. Would you like me to speak with him?” “Very much,” I say, my eyebrows going up. All right,” he murmurs. “Who else?” “Cora,” I say quickly, though I bite my lip. “If she can be drawn away from the Clinic, which...well, which Roger might like. But also...” I laugh a little, looking up at my mate. “I want Hank too, if I can have him.” “How long are you anticipating this project will take?” he murmurs, frowning at me.

“Hank might be willing to leave the clinic for a few days to help an emergency refugee situation, but he's very passionate about the work he's doing there. I don't see him leaving it not willingly.” “Well, I don't want to ask him to do that,” I sigh, looking up at the ceiling as I think it through. “Isabel, certainly, I need.

What about James? Did you...did you have a good talk with him today?" "Yes," Sinclair says, and I turn my eyes back to him. "Though I'm afraid I want him myself, Ella, unless you can make a good argument for why no one else can take his place on your team. I want him to train as an ambassador." "Really?" I ask, my eyes going a bit wide. "But he's ...military..." "He's also smart," Sinclair counters, "and charming, and good with people, and trustworthy. And we may be in a situation in the future where an ambassador who knows the ways of war is going to be quite an asset. "Do you want to send him to Venda?" I ask quietly. Slowly, Sinclair shakes his head. "Or major problem," he murmurs, "is still with Atalaxia." And I go cold as I realize that...well, that I forgot all about Atalaxia – this incredible force looming behind us. But as I look into my mate's eyes, I realize that he hasn't forgotten about it – not for a second. And that, even if Sinclair's worried about me? The main focus of his worry is on this other nation that's still harboring my uncle, and very well might be planning to support Xander in his desire to take our child.