#### Accidental Surrogate for Alpha

Chapter 451

#Chapter 451 – Kidnap Ella

Cora spins to look at me, her eyes wide, and together we both run for the window. Cora gets there first, unhooking the latch and

throwing the window open, bending out so that she can see. I lean out too, my eyes scanning the ground below. My gaze locks, instantly, on the action.

A man one whose figure and face I've glared at too many times in the past few days – drags a small girl by the hand. He has his

arm wrapped around the waist of a woman. She fights against him, but her movements are sluggish.

"He's got them," I say, grim, and then I look to the side at my sister, determined. "Tell Sinclair. Stay with the baby." Cora stares at me for a second and then her eyes go round with shock. "Ella," she says, reaching out for me, Ella, what -"

But I've already turned back to the window, and before I can even think about what I'm doing, I transform into my wolf and surge

out.

I hear my sister scream my name behind me, but I'm already gone, leaping from my narrow window ledge to the next below us,

and then another, steadily working my way down the palace wall as fast as I my paws can carry me. The majority of my

concentration is on aiming my jumps and ensuring that I land in the right spot, my wolf's instincts taking over, but a little part of

my mind is suddenly grateful that my wolf is small and nimble.

Sinclair, with his gigantic wolf, would never be able to balance on these small ledges, and neither would Roger. Instead, my smaller rose-gold wolf makes quick of the vertical surface of the palace wall and darts towards the ground. The girl

screams again as my paws hit the flagstones of the courtyard and I'm already moving across them towards the man who drags

the woman and the girl away.

As I bolt across the courtyard towards them, I see from my periphery that I am not the only one to respond – palace guards begin

to converge, their guns raised, but they hesitate when they see that Xander will not make it easy for them to take aim on him

without risking Sarah and Jessica.

And the guards hesitate further when my snarl rips through the air, a steady order that clearly says he's mine. The guards fall back just a little, probably thinking that their King isn't going to like it very much that they let me take the lead. But

my authority brooks no compromise: I mean it.

This is my fight, and I won't let them take it from me.

Xander spins when he hears my snarl, looking first above my head as if he

was looking for a larger wolf. Then his eyes fall, meeting mine, and he has the gall to laugh.

"A she-wolf?" he says, his voice thick with derision.

Xander yanks Jessica closer to him and Sarah struggles anew, though her

movements are slow. I focus on her for a moment, noticing blood on her forehead, in her hair, and realizing that Xander has hurt

her - somehow - to make this escape possible.

Xander holds fast to both of them, and despite their struggles and his older age, he's still a wolf. He is stronger, innately, and his

determination to take what is his is steel.

I growl again, prowling closer, my demand that he let them go is clear in my narrowed wolf's eyes, my bared fangs. Xander just

scoffs at me, beginning to turn away. "You cannot touch me, she- wolf," he snarls. "I will rip you to shreds."

A louder snarl tears from between my teeth, letting Xander know that that's precisely what I intend to do to him.

He spins again to me and then, vicious, he hurls Sarah to the ground and kicks her hard in the ribs. I hear bone crack and she

moans, curling up, shuddering on the ground. I yelp, moving towards her, knowing that she's badly hurt — But before I can take more than a step, Xander pulls Jessica hard against him and pulls a knife from his pocket, pressing it to her

throat. "A step closer," he growls, "and I will kill her, she-wolf. You can keep the old one – I have no more use for her. But this

one?" he says, looking down at Jessica and running a lecherous hand down her cheek, "I had her bred special for me, just to my

tastes. And I will take her."

A growl rumbles in me and from the corners of my eyes I see the palace security creating a circle around us. My muscles go

tense, because I know that Xander sees it too, and I know he sees that his chances of escape are waning.

But a man like Xander, who is already on the run, playing his last card? That won't cow him. It will just make him desperate.

And if he knows we're going to take him out, he may do his best to leave as much collateral damage in his wake as he can. His

knife, now, is pressed tight against a little girl's throat. So, I do the only thing I can.

I transform back into my human form and hold my hands out placatingly.

"Don't do anything you'll regret, uncle," I say quietly. "If you give the girl to me now, we will give you a fair trial." "You have nothing with which to negotiate," he says, backing away, and Jessica cries out as he pulls her with him, reaching out

her hands to me in a way that makes my heart twist with fear. Xander wraps his fingers in her hair, tugging hard and making her

shriek, but her hands drop as she goes with him. "She is mine, and I will take her. Now, call off your dogs," he growls, tipping his

head towards the guards on either side of us.

I hesitate, suddenly wishing I had Cora's mind or Sinclair's strength because –

Because, damn it, I don't know what to do.

I take a step forward, not wanting Xander to put more distance between us, and his eyes narrow, his hand pressing the knife

even tighter. So I counter, seeking to placate him, raising my hands on either side and shouting an order for the guards to lower their guns. My eyes flash to Sarah, who lays on the flagstones to my left, breathing softly and whimpering in pain.

Good, I think, alive. And then I refocus on Xander, who continues to slowly back away from me. For every step he takes, I take

one step closer.

"Stop," he growls, his eyes fully focused on me, angry.

"Stop following me, you worthless girl – let me pass -" I see, quite suddenly, that all of his attention is on me in this moment. That I'm pissing him off enough by continuing to step after

him that he doesn't notice the end of the courtyard behind him and the wide set of stairs that follow. If I can just...keep him

distracted...

"No," I say softly, not pushing him enough to do anything to Jessica but wanting his attention here, on me. "You don't control me,

Xander. No matter how much you've tried, I've defied you at every turn."

"You did nothing," he hisses, steadily moving backwards, three steps from the stairs now —

"I didn't have to," I murmur, taking one step forward myself. "I had the right friends in place – my sister, my mate -"

"Your sister," he spits, laughing." That human bitch—" He takes one more step back. Only two steps left...

The insult rankles in me, but I don't let it get far. I take another step forward, a larger one this time. God, it's so close, I have to time this just right...

Xander reacts as I hoped he would, taking another step back, a big one, big enough that his next step will land just on the edge...

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# Accidental Surrogate for Alpha by Caroline Above Story Chapter 451

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Chapter 452

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#### Accidental Surrogate for Alpha

Chapter 452

#Chapter 452- On the Edge

Ella

My eyes flick to Jessica's to find her gaze already on me. I stare at her, hoping she can intuit, hoping she has the courage to run

when -

"If you think my human sister is a bitch," I say, taking another precise step forward, forcing Xander to rise his foot to take his final step back. As that foot falls, I bare my teeth. "Then just wait until you really meet me."

And as Xander places that foot down, and it falls on the edge of the stair that he didn't know was there, I bare my teeth and

transform in a flash.

Xander's foot slips and slides unsteadily to the step below, unbalancing him. He flings out an arm to balance himself and while

he keeps one hand steadily on Jessica –

As I hoped, the hand he flings out for balance is the one that holds the knife.

The moment she feels the cold press of it leave her neck, Jessica screams and rips herself away from Xander. His hand is still

knotted in her hair and I swear I hear it rip from her scalp as I leap for him, but I can't turn and see

Instead, I'm already in the air in my wolf's body, sailing for him, my teeth bared. His eyes are wide as my paws slam into his

shoulders, as I take him down to the ground.

A garbled scream falls from his mouth as he whips the knife in his hand toward my side, but it's too late.My teeth are already

closing around his throat, digging deep.

The dagger cuts me, I can feel it, but it slides away from my skin to clatter on the ground as Xander's body crashes into the stone steps. My jaws close, my teeth meeting, and instincts take over as I shake my head, ripping the life from him as I tear his flesh.

I feel him go still beneath me quickly, leaving no time for a last gasp or a final word.

I did my job well.

My chest heaving, I stand above him for a moment, looking down into his face, making sure his eyes are dead. And then I disdainfully step away, wanting nothing more to do with him, wanting the taste of his putrid blood out of my mouth.

I transform back into my human body as I continue to stand above him, my shoulders still heaving, and I drag an arm across my

face, wiping the blood away from my mouth with my sleeve as much as I can.

Guards converge around us, shouting orders and I blink suddenly, brought instantly away from my primal instincts to protect and

back to my reality, where I'm standing above a dead man on the palace's steps.

My first thought is for Jessica, and I turn, seeking her – But suddenly, I see flashes ahead of me and turn wide-eyed back to the stairs. Because I realize with quick horror that while I

concentrated only on Xander, and Jessica, and the guards...

That this is still a palace in the middle of a city on a night when we hosted a very large party.

And that the stairs ahead of me are crowded with people who look at me in shock. And press, who snap pictures of their Queen

covered in blood.

There is a momentary pause when I panic and stare out at the flashing cameras, but then suddenly – quite suddenly

everything is chaos. An arm grabs me and I look up into Conner's face, blinking in surprise to see him there And I turn when I hear Jessica's voice, screaming her sister's name

"I have to get to Sarah," I say on a gasp, knowing that she needs to be healed.

"You have to get inside, Luna," Conner says, his voice worried. I tug at his arm but he won't let me go, so I glare up at him.

"Seriously, Ella," he says, his voice low as he whispers his words, "you're covered in blood, and the Alpha is going to flip out if he

sees you here like this -"

"But she -"

"She's breathing," he says, nodding to me, "she's conscious — let us take her inside, you can heal her there -

And I look up at him, blinking a little, and then I nod, agreeing to it, realizing that he's right. Because I am panicking right now,

and trying to do everything at once, and completely forgetting that I'm a Queen and not some vigilante who can just do what she

wants

Conner, seeing that I understand, nods once to me and then stands straight, supporting me as I step away from Xander's lifeless

form. Conner's hand is still supportively around my arm as we begin to stride towards the entrance to the palace.

"Jessica!" I shout, seeing that the girl is scared and struggling against the guards who hold her back from her sister, at whose

side medics are already gathering.

Jessica whips her head to me, her eyes scared.

"Come with me!" I command, holding out my free hand. The guards hesitate but then let the girl go as they see my serious face.

Jessica rushes to my side, wrapping her hand in mine, whimpering in fear as she does.

I pull her close to my un-cut side, wrapping my arm around her. "The doctors are going to bring Sarah in," I say quietly, "don't

worry, all right? I'll keep you safe."

"Do you," she says, looking back, "do you promise she's all right?"

"I promise, Jessica," I say quietly, meaning every word of it. "We just all need to get inside, okay? And Sarah needs people to lift

her, and you and I?

We're too little for that. The doctors – they're going to help bring her in."

Jessica nods shakily, pressing herself closer to my side, but she trusts me and lets me guide her to the door. We're almost there when suddenly a large form fills it,

and my knees go almost shaky with relief as I instantly recognize my

mate.

I want to throw myself in his arms, but I've got Jessica with me now know that I can't. Not yet. and I Conner removes his hand from me now, knowing that I'm safe, and he steps back as Sinclair takes a step forward, his face livid

and scared and breathless all at once.

"Ella," he growls, stepping close to me and glancing momentarily down at Jessica and over at Conner, assessing them as threats in his panic.

But I reach up and place my hand on his cheek, shaking my head. "I'm fine, it's fine," I say, nodding fervently. He releases a slow and steady breath. The rage and fear still burns in him, I know, but it's tempered now with the knowledge that I'm okay. He opens his mouth to say more but I nod down at the little girl.

"We need to get her in," I say, my eyebrows going up.

He hesitates, wanting to storm out and assess the situation, wanting simultaneously – I know – to yell at me for taking whatever

risk it was that I just took

But he masters himself, glares at me a little, and nods as he realizes that I'm right. And then the King steps behind Jessica and I

and escorts us into the palace.

We move quickly through the halls, heading immediately for our rooms, where we know we'll be safe and I'l feel more at peace,

with my mate and my baby and my family all near.

Conner comes with us, briefing Sinclair on the details as we walk. I keep a

hand on Jessica's shoulder, not wanting to be separated from her for an instant.

"Sarah needs to be brought to us," I say to Sinclair, who still glares at me but nods once. He, in turn, looks over his shoulder at

another of his guards and nods to him, letting him know to pass the order around. Then we all move steadily through the halls

towards our room.

We get there quickly, luckily not passing many people in the halls who would see poor Jessica's tear-stained face or my bloody

face and clothing. But when I press open the door, Cora's appalled gasp is enough to make up for it.

"Ella!" she shouts, dashing over to me and throwing her arms out, clearly wanting to wrap them around me, to hold me and make sure I'm okay.

"Cora, no!" I gasp, stepping back. She hesitates and I gesture towards her pretty new sweatsuit. "Cora you're all in white -"

"Oh my god," she mutters, burying her face in her hands.

"You're so ridiculous, Ella – I can't believe that's what you're worried

about - "

"Jessica," I say, getting down on one knee as Sinclair closes the door hard behind us. "Do you remember Cora?" I ask, pointing

up at my sister.

Jessica looks up at Cora and nods.

"She's a doctor," I say, hoping the words are reassuring.

"She's going to have a look at you, all right? Make sure you don't have

any bumps and bruises that we need to fix. And while she does that, I'm going to go get changed into something cleaner, okay?"

Jessica hesitates, clearly not wanting to be separated from me, but then nods shakily as Cora reaches out a hand. "Come on, kid," Cora says with a smile, tugging Jessica away. "Does anything on your body hurt?" Cora asks as she leads

Jessica over to where Roger stands with wide, scared eyes, not understanding what's going on. Relief courses through me when

I see Rafe sleeping in his godfather's arms, blissfully unaware of the drama and the violence of the night. Jessica begins to speak and I loose a long breath, glad that she's in good hands.

And then I look up at my livid mate, and nod once, heading for the bathroom. My heart wrenches to not go immediately to my

child, to take him in my arms, but...

Well, I am all bloody. And my mate and I need to talk. Sinclair understands immediately, following me into the bathroom where

we can speak privately.

And he slams the door hard behind him.

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### Accidental Surrogate for Alpha

Chapter 453

#Chapter 453 — Fallout Ella

I spin around to face my mate, my hands on my hips, ready to defend myself. But he closes the distance in an instant, taking my

face in his hands.

"Are you all right?" he growls, looking down into my face, his eyes quickly moving over my features. My mouth falls open a bit

and I blink in surprise. "I'm fine, Dominic."

"Thank god," he breathes, wrapping his arms around me and gathering me to him in a tight hug. "I mean, I'm mad as hell, Ella I

can't believe you did that, but -"

"Dominic!" I protest, pulling back a little and frowning up at him. "How could I not have done that!?"

"Are you seriously asking me how you could have not jumped out of the window and attacked a man under the explicit protection

of a nation about to take us to war? How you could have just let the palace guards that we hired to protect our people handle it,

like they were about to do?"

I narrow my eyes at him, but...well. I also see his point. Still. I stand by it – every moment of it.

"His life was mine to take," I say, my voice more of a growl than I intended it to be. "Mine, Dominic. And no – I didn't do it for

vengeance, but he crossed a line tonight, trying to take Sarah and Jessica like he did. Would you have let him live, after he did

that?"

Sinclair's mouth tightens into a thin line. "No," he says, answering honestly. "I'd have had the guards shoot him, take the shot as

soon as they safely could."

"His death was mine," I repeat. "If someone was going to take it, I wanted the blood on my hands. And you, of all people, know

why."

Sinclair steps back from me a second, looking down at the man's blood quite literally all over me. And then he sighs, and shakes

his head, and surprises me by starting to tug at my shirt. "What?" I ask, confused.

"What, would you like to sleep in your blood-soaked clothing, Ella?" He asks, glaring at me a little. "You need a shower, and to

get changed."

"Oh," I reply, realizing that he's helping me. And so I take a step back, raising my hands and letting my mate pull my shirt over my head.

"It's not that I disagree with any of the things you did," Sinclair says softly as he helps me strip. He pauses and glares at me

when he sees the long cut along my side, but I roll my eyes before closing them and accessing my gift. It just takes a second –

it's a scratch, honestly and when I open my eyes I'm all healed up.

I twist so Sinclair can see the skin again smooth and healed. Satisfied, he nods and then moves to the shower, turning the water

on so it's nice and steamy, just how I like it.

"Like I was saying," he picks up, turning to me again.

"I'm not sad to see him go, just..."

"I know," I say, sighing and stepping into the shower as Sinclair strips his own tuxedo, now likewise stained with my uncle's

blood. "I'm...Queen now. I should have let someone else do it. Should not have...gotten my hands dirty, as it were."

Quickly, I soap myself down, doing best to keep my hair dry as Sinclair ducks into the closet to grab us both a fresh set of

clothes. When he comes back, I'm nearly finished. I rinse myself off as I look at my mate a little guiltily.

"People got pictures, Dominic," I say quietly, my voice apologetic. "There may have been...press."

"I'm aware," he says on a sigh as I turn off the water and step out of the shower. He hands me a towel, looking at me with a

blank face. "It will...be what it is. Wolves won't care about the violence – I think, when the details come out, they'll understand.

Humans, though..."

"I know," I sigh, glancing at the door as I towel off. "All the good press will we bought with Cora's wedding..." He steps close to me then, wrapping an arm around my naked waist and again pulling me flush against him." We'll handle it,

Ella," he murmurs, brushing his knuckles down the length of my cheek, and I smile a little up at him.

"You think it's fixable?"

"I think you're the Queen," he says, shaking his head with a little shrug. "No going back now."

I laugh a little, looking up at him. "That's not what I asked."

Gently, Sinclair lowers his face, pressing his lips to mine.

"We'll figure it out," he murmurs when he pulls away, just an inch.

"Now," he raises his head more and swats me on the ass, maybe a little harder than necessary, but it just makes me grin. "Get

dressed. Let's go...see what the hell our family thinks."

I stand on my toes and kiss him again, grateful that he's on my side. I know that he's madder than he's letting on, and that this

really is a big deal, but...

Well, it's good to know that he's got my back.

I hurriedly get dressed in the soft clothing Sinclair brought in for me, twisting my hair up into a quick bun before stepping into

some slippers. When I'm ready, I nod, and Sinclair and I together walk back into our bedroom.

Cora sits on the couch with Jessica by her side, a tablet in her hands. Roger stands next to her, Rafe asleep in his arms. Henry

turns his chair towards us as we cross the room.

"Well?" Sinclar asks, nodding down at the tablet. "What's the verdict?"

Cora looks wide-eyed at both of us. "It's...not good," Cora says softly, shaking her head as she concentrates on me. "The press

is getting wind, and social media is already going crazy. Ella, are you – are you all right? Did -"

"I'm fine," I say, stepping to Roger's side and reaching for my baby. "But forget about the news. Where is Sarah?"

"Infirmary, downstairs." Henry reports, smiling kindly at Jessica, who looks around at all of us, worried and confused. "We've

been getting reports, and the aids are desperate to come in and start making plans for how to handle this but..." he glances up at

Roger. "We wanted a moment, to make sure we're all on the same page."

"Which is?" Sinclair says, crossing his arms and looking around.

"Full support," Roger says in an instant. "You did the right thing, Ella," he says, locking eyes with me and nodding. "I mean, I

personally wouldn't have leapt from the window to do it?" He cocks his head to the side a little here, a smirk pulling at his lips."

But Xander crossed the line – he was going to get taken out. It was just a question of who did it."

"And are we all agreed?" I ask, looking particularly at Cora now.

She blinks up at me. "Wait, why am I being singled out?" she asks.

"Because," I say, shrugging a little. "You're..."

"Human?" she says, raising an eyebrow.

And none of us say anything, because honestly, that's what we're all thinking.

"Ella," Cora says, shaking her head at me. "Just because I'm human doesn't mean a little bit of me isn't pleased to see that man meet his end. Did I wish that that responsibility fell on your shoulders? Probably not. But still," she shrugs, meeting my gaze

steadily. "I am on your side, with everyone else.

And I'll defend you to the ends of it."

"Good," I say, looking around. And then I sigh and look at my mate. "Ready?"

"I'll let the aids in," he says, moving towards the door with a nod. "It's going to be a long night."

"Have Sarah sent up too," I call to him, and I wait to see him nod again before I kneel before Jessica, taking her hands. "We're

going to bring her here, and I'm going to heal her up, okay? And then the two of you can go back to your rooms, if you'd like."

"Okay," she says, her voice soft and still a little scared.

"Okay, sweetheart," I say, taking her hand and giving it a squeeze. As I smile at her, I access my gift a little bit and let it sweep

through her, healing the few places on her scalp where Xander hurt her, as well as a few bruises on her body. It isn't much, but

I'm glad to help her feel even a little better.

When I move to stand up, though, Jessica tightens her hand. She looks anxiously at Cora, Roger, and Henry, and then quirks

her finger at me, asking me to come closer so she can tell me a secret. I lean in, turning my ear to the little girl.

"Ella, I know I'm supposed to be nice but..."

I nod, encouraging her.

"I hated the Master, Ella. He was always so mean, and we were scared of him always. I'm...I'm glad he's dead. I'm glad you did it."

I breathe out a deep breath and then move a way a little, locking eyes with the little girl and nodding deeply. "Me too, Jess," I say,

squeezing her hand tight and giving her a big smile. "It wasn't nice but...well," I shrug and let my shoulders fall with a sigh."

Sometimes, when people aren't good to us? We don't have the choice but to stop being nice."

And she gives me a little smile, and I return it tenfold.

And then I get to my feet, ready to face whatever consequences come for me. Because that approval, from this little girl who has

suffered under Xander far more than I have?

It's more than I need.

I will stand by the actions that I took tonight and never, not once, publicly apologize for them. I did it for me, but I did it for Jessica

too, and all the little girls like her.

And even if the press tears me to shreds, I know in my heart: I'm fighting for the girls who have never had someone to fight for

them.

Girls like Jessica, and Sarah, and Cora and me, when we were small.

And I'll do it all again in a heartbeat.

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#### Accidental Surrogate for Alpha

Chapter 454

#Chapter 454- Press

Ella

We stayed up all night working and strategizing. A flurry of aids came into the room right away as well as several guards, who

worked with Sinclair to brief him and to begin to come up with a plan about how to handle the press.

I trusted my mate to handle that, though, focusing my attention singularly on Sarah when she was wheeled into the room on a

hospital gurney. Sarah was conscious, but in a great deal of pain, and Cora and I moved immediately to her side.

Cora asked

questions of both the attendant doctor and Sarah herself as I handed Rafe to Henry.

When Cora quickly briefed me that the wounds, as far as she could tell, were nothing that I hadn't handled before, I nodded to

her and quickly took Sarah's hand. "I'd like to heal you, Sarah, if you'll let me," I said quietly, looking her in the eye.

She laughed a little, shaking her head at me. "Go ahead," she said with an attempt at a grin that immediately fell away as she

winced, favoring her side where Xander kicked her.

I exhaled sharply, hating that he put her in pain again, and that I was the cause of it. But, eager to be the solution as much as I

could, I closed my eyes and concentrated, accessing my gift and healing my friend.

The work was done quickly and barely twenty minutes later I opened my eyes to see Sarah staring at me in awe." That's...incredible," she said. "I mean, I watched you work on Jessica, but feeling it?"

"Better?" I asked, and she had just laughed, marveling a little.

Things moved quickly then, with Sinclair glancing over at me meaningfully, indicating that he had things he wanted to run my

way. I nodded to him but turned first to Sarah and Jessica to ensure that they got settled. When they hesitated about going back to their rooms tonight Xander had, after all, kidnapped them from that space I insisted they take one of the personal rooms in the

back of Sinclair and my personal quarters one of the rooms that we hope to one day fill with our children. They had smiled at this idea, wanting to be close, and Cora took Jessica by the hand as Sarah lifted herself from the gurney and

walked away, completely free of pain.

"Wow," the attendant doctor had said, his eyes wide.

"What did you..."

"Another time," I had sighed, placing a hand on his shoulder. "We should talk but...another time?" He smiled at me, still a little shocked and awed, but he agreed and quietly left the room. I sighed then, and took the baby back

from Henry before moving to Sinclair's side, ready to face whatever was next.

We were up until about...three in the morning I guess, preparing press releases and dealing with all the details. By the end I had

tucked Rafe away into his little crib and fallen into bed exhausted. I had always thought it was an exaggeration when people say

they fell asleep before their head hit the pillow, but as I have absolutely no memory of laying my head down? I guess they weren't exaggerating after all.

I groan a little as I roll over in bed now and glance at the clock. My groan only deepens when I see that it's only 7 am.

Four hours of sleep – that's... Appalling.

"Morning, little Queen," I hear my mate rumble beside me and I turn towards him with a frown on my face, noting the tablet on his lap.

"Dominic," I murmur, working to sit up. "Did you sleep at all!?"

"A little," he says, reaching out a hand to stroke over my hair. "I wish you'd slept more. What got you up?"

"Anxiety, I guess," I say, moving myself closer to him and nodding towards the tablet. "What are they saying now?"

Last night, the news had gone pretty wild with everything, playing all kinds of footage from the event me racing across the

flagstones in my wolf's body, me negotiating with Xander while he pressed a knife to Jessica's throat, me leaping through the air

again in my wolf's form with my teeth bared, me looking wide-eyed out into the crowd with blood all down my front

It had been...a frenzy, honestly, with no one really knowing what was going on or how to react. Sinclair had been right – a lot of

people, particularly humans, were upset with what they called the "wanton violence" displayed by wolf kind. And while the words

were levied at both Xander and at me...

Well, the sight of a newly crowned Queen covered in a man's blood while his corpse laid at her feet? It wasn't... great.

"I think," Sinclair says, a smile on his lips, "you're going to be...pleasantly surprised." He passes the tablet to me. "What?" I frown at him, confused, but he nods to the tablet and I look down at it.

The baby fusses a little, passing a little pulse of need down the bond and I hesitate but Sinclair gets up, heading toward Rafe's

crib and letting me focus. So, I sigh and concentrate, frowning as I read the headline at the top of the page. A Queen for the People, it reads. My frown deepens. What? What is this?My eyes move down a little and I blink in surprise to see that I recognize the byline: the article is written by

Tempest Bowers, the woman I met last night, whose daughters just wanted some chocolate...

My mouth falls open a little as I begin to read because... The article, as a whole, is a rather stunning defense of my actions last night. And Tempest? She's done her homework. My eyes fly over the tablet, seeing all the details of my life plainly laid out for the readers, wondering how the hell Tempest

figured all this out and further how she got it all done by seven in the morning. But as I continue to read, and see the number of

people that she interviewed...

I realize that Tempest? She's probably been working on this for a long time.

"Clever lady," I murmur, shaking my head as I read through the article. She starts by addressing the violence of last night, with all

of the details about Xander's death at my hands, not shying away from any of it. Indeed, I come away in the first paragraphs

looking...well, precisely as we thought humans might see me: a cold-blooded murderer, over-reacting to a situation that

deserved more diplomacy.

But then Tempest continues to spin out the story, including all the details of how Xander knew I was his niece but abandoned me

to be raised in an orphanage, only to find me years later and violate my body and my privacy by having me impregnated with the

sperm of his choice. She continues to focus on Xander only for a few short paragraphs, detailing his politics and his forced

subjection of Sarah, and Jessica, and their mother.

But then, to my surprise, the story turns again to me. It's a love story, really, of how Sinclair and I found each other despite

Xander's plans and fell in love, how hard we worked to rid this nation of Damon – who honestly wouldn't have been much better

than Xander himself. She even tells of Xander's attempt to kidnap Rafe, and then all the work I did in the refugee camps to help

people who really need me.

There are some guesses in there, and hints, about the magic I wield, which was never precisely a secret even if it's not common

knowledge. I smirk to see how well she's begun to guess at what, precisely, I am able to do with my powers. She doesn't go so

far as to say I'm a magical all-healing Queen, but she does detail the incredible number of people – especially children – who

walked away from the refugee camps entirely healed of dreadful injuries and diseases.

In the end, Tempest returns to the question of what I did last night, and carefully asks the reader to reconsider the situation.

While it may appear at first glance as if a woman brutally murdered an old man, Tempest ends by asking: "what side, really, would have your Queen take? I, for one, might prefer a fierce Queen who doesn't wait to let bureaucracy handle serial abusers

who attempt to kidnap little girls, but who instead tears their throats out and ends the issue there. Ella Sinclair isn't a politician,

she's a woman who fights for her people, and heals them too. At least, those who deserve it."

"Damn," I say, lowering the tablet to my lap and looking up at Sinclair, who smirks down at me with the baby in his arms. I reach

for Rafe, knowing he needs to be fed. "I mean, are people... reading this? Do they believe her?"

"Shared on social media over a million times in the hour since it's been published," Sinclair says, happily handing the baby to

me. I smile down at Rafe, tugging up my shirt and preparing to feed him, but Sinclair places my a soft hand beneath my chin. I

look up at him.

"People are seeing you, Ella, for what you truly are," he says quietly. "I'm glad for that, and grateful. But I knew, eventually, that

they would."

I smile up at him, my eyes shining a bit with my tears.

"Do you really think so?" I ask, shaking my head, marveling a bit.

Slowly, he nods, a grin taking over his face. "Thanks to Tempest Bowers, they're seeing it faster than I thought they might." He

stands up, running a hand through his hair. "She really helped us out here, with this article."

I laugh a little, turning my attention back to Rafe when he gives a hungry little squeak of protest. I quickly get him started, sighing

a little when I feel him latch. Then, I look back up at my mate.

"Well? What do you send the woman who has single-handedly saved your reputation?" I ask, grinning at him. "Like, a fruit basket?"

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Chapter 455

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#### Accidental Surrogate for Alpha

Chapter 455

#Chapter 455 – The Threat of War Ella

We're able to see the true fallout of Xander's death as the next few days pass, which are...more stressful than I'd like them to

be. Cora, luckily, stays at my side through most of it, knowing that I need her support.

"Well," she says, lounging in bed with me and flicking through her phone "you'll be happy to know that incidents of people calling

you a hero outweigh those calling you a murderer three to one by this point!"

I sigh and throw a pretzel at my sister, giving her a little glare that she returns with a grin. Both of us are lounging around in

pajamas because Sinclair has asked me not to leave our suite until things calm down a bit. Rafe lays peacefully in the blankets

between us, gurgling and grabbing at his toes.

"Don't tease me," I murmur. "You know I hate this."

"You need to get over it, Ells," Cora murmurs, returning her attention to her phone. "You care way too much about what people

think about you. You did what you did for everyone's good. People just love to have someone to dogpile on. And like I said, there

are way more people on your side than those who are against you, so I think it's all turning out nicely."

"Easy for you to say," I sigh. "You're the martyred duchess whose wedding I ruined."

"I know," she says, flashing me a wicked grin. "No one's saying anything bad about me, the poor innocent duchess!"

I growl a little and toss another pretzel at her, satisfied when this one bounces off of her head.

Both of us turn towards the door when it opens though, and twin smiles light our faces when both Sinclair and Roger come in.

"Hey!" Cora calls, sitting up and waving to her mate.

"Welcome to the slumber party!"

"I'm jealous," Roger says as he and Sinclair cross to us. Roger easily slides onto the bed next to Cora, wrapping an arm around

her shoulder. "You three look so comfortable. And cozy." "Yeah well," I mutter, leaning against Sinclair as he settles on the bed behind me and drops a kiss to my cheek before leaning

forward to tickle Rafe's belly. The baby giggles eagerly, which makes me smile, just a little. "You wouldn't be so happy about it,

Roger, if you were forced to be cozy because you're on house arrest. Or suite arrest. Or whatever."

"Well, Ella," Roger says, looking at me with wide, innocent eyes, a wicked grin starting on his mouth. "I mean, you could always,

you know, leap out the window if you're feeling too contained

Cora bursts into laugher as I throw a pretzel at Roger now, hard. But he just snatches it out of the air and pops it into his mouth, grinning at me. "Settle, settle," Sinclair says with a sigh, wrapping an arm around my waist and pulling me close against him. He rubs his cheek

warmly against my head and passes a great deal of warmth and love down the bond, knowing that I need it. It hasn't been easy

on me, these past few days. Even if Tempest article did a great deal of work to shine the truth on the situation? Well, I know that it's rather an understatement that I've been living up to my nickname.

"Ready for your update, trouble?" Sinclair asks, planting a kiss on my cheek. "Or do we need to bring you more snacks first, so

you have something to temper the anxiety?"

"Just tell me," I sigh, popping another pretzel in my mouth. I have indeed been snacking a lot these past few days. Anxious

eating has never really been my thing but...well, I've never been the focus of international attention before, have I?

"All right. The justice systems have decided not to press charges against you, calling you a political agent and a technical

extension of the military. Since Xander was a war criminal and was actively committing a violent crime that would have resulted

in an order to use lethal force to stop him, your actions have been marked as an extension of that order."

"Wow," Cora says, her eyebrows going up. "How the hell did you manage that?"

"It took some doing," Roger says, "dad was behind a lot of it. But, as a result, the role of Queen has been officially marked as a

military and political figure in this nation, which is... pretty cool."

"I got lucky," I mutter, looking down at the blankets and sighing, feeling guilty.

"You didn't," Sinclair says, giving me a nudge. I look up at him, meeting his frown with my own. "It's right, Ella. The Queen should

have political and military power in the nation if the King does, and no one who truly understands this situation believes that you

did anything wrong. All right? So stop blaming yourself." I shake my head at him, giving another sigh. "You're not telling me everything," I say, knowing that I'm right. And Sinclair grimaces, which just makes me groan and lay down on the bed next to my baby. I close my eyes and breathe in

Rafe's sweet baby scent as he reaches out a pudgy little hand and grasps at my cheek, making me smile just a little bit. "Go on,"

I say, my eyes still closed. "Let's have the whole story." I hear Sinclair sigh again before he begins. "The Atalaxians, as we guessed are...displeased." "Understatement," Roger adds, his voice dry.

"They're...using this so-called offense as a rationale to go to war."

"What?" I hear Cora breathe, shocked, and my own eyes fly open. "Does this mean," my sister asks, hesitating, "that...that we're

at war?"

"Not yet," Sinclair says, his voice serious. "They haven't declared war. They're just saying that this is an offense worthy of it.

It's...a bullshit move, and everyone knows it – Xander is barely their citizen. But they're taking advantage of it, trying to back us

into a corner so that we give them whatever they want in exchange for not going to war."

My lips draw into a thin line as I stare at my little baby, my sweet Rafe, wondering what his future holds. War.

War is the last thing I want for our world right now, for Rafe's future.

And yet, somehow, I'm at the heart of it.

I rack my brain, wondering if there was anything I could have done to stop it...

"Don't," Sinclair murmurs, reaching out a warm hand that settles on my hip. I look up at him as he shakes his head." It's not your

fault Ella. It would have happened no matter what."

"Do you think that's true?" I ask, holding my mate's gaze. "I mean, Prince Calvin confirmed as much, the night of the wedding.

That the Atalaxians encouraged Xander that night so he would overstep. Was this a setup from the start?"

"Is that what that Prince said?" Cora asks, fascinated.

I turn a little so I can see her and I nod, confirming it.

"That's so...odd..." Cora says, her voice wondering.

"Why?" Sinclair asks, and I sit up, because I want to be able to easily look between them now.

"Because," Cora says, her mind clearly working through it. "If that was their plan all along, to force your hand, then why on earth

would Calvin tell you it? It gives you all the power to point it out – to pass the blame back to them."

"Well, we don't have any proof," I say, giving a little shrug. "It was just...a personal conversation. Nothing written, nothing

recorded."

"Still," she says, looking at Sinclair now with a little frown. "It is...odd. Either there's something else going on here? Where like,

the Atalaxians want you to think that they set you up? Or, more simply..."

She cocks her head to the side, confused.

Sinclair finishes for her. "...that the Prince is up to something else," he murmurs, his voice quiet, considering.

"Who is this guy?" Roger asks, leaning forward, curious. And bizarrely, almost as if in answer to the question, a knock comes at the door.

Sinclair calls for whoever it is to come in, and an aid peeks through the door with an odd look on her face. "A note," she says, holding out a little envelope. "For the Queen."

Sinclair stands and moves over to the aid, taking the note from her hands. "Who is it from?" he asks, turning the paper over in

his hands.

"From...Prince Calvin of Atalaxia," the woman says. We all go a bit still at that moment. Then Sinclair thanks the aid, dismissing her, and slowly crosses the room to hold the

envelope out to me.

"Well, Ella?" he says as I take it."

What does your Prince have to say for himself now?"



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Chapter 456

### Accidental Surrogate for Alpha

Chapter 456

#Chapter 456- Ella Gets a Note Ella

I snatch the note out of my mate's hand, muttering "he's not my prince," but no one really acknowledges the words as I tear the

envelope open and eagerly read the short letter inside.

When I see what it says, my eyebrows arch almost to my hairline.

"What is it?" Cora asks, leaning eagerly forward.

"He wants to...go to dinner," I say, frowning a little.

"Dinner," Sinclair says, frowning and sliding his hands into his pockets."

Why on earth would he want that? We have three more dinners with the Atalaxians scheduled over the next few nights, he could

go to any one of those

"No, Dominic," I say softly, looking up at him. "The note is only addressed to me."

My mate goes still as my words, and their implications, sink in. And then his face goes dark.

"Okay!" Roger says in too-cheerful tones, wrapping his hands around Cora's arms as he stands up, dragging her with him. "Time

for us to go! It's been a pleasure, Dom – we'll see you later – "

"What?" Cora gasps, fumbling to her feet and looking between Roger and me. "No, I want to stay!"

"Nope!" he says, moving her hastily for the door. "We're out of here!"

"Roger, I'm in pajamas – "

"If you don't kill anyone, Cora, no one will care what you're wearing -"

My eyes follow my protesting sister as Roger pulls her from the room, shutting the door behind them. And then my eyes snap up

to my mate who glowers silently down at me, the only sounds in the room our little baby happily cooing next to us.

"You know I didn't do this, Dominic," I say, my voice stern as I slowly start to shake my head at him.

"I didn't say you did, Ella," he snaps, his voice a low snarl. But he's pissed — I can tell by the stiffness of his shoulders, the tense

set of every single one of his muscles.

I move slowly, not wanting to set him off. I mean, I'm not scared, not at all I didn't do anything wrong to begin with, and he'd

never hurt me. But still, I don't want him to lose his temper, not when he's clearly working so hard to contain it.

So, quite calmly, I reach for the baby and gather him close to my chest before standing up and moving to my mate's side.

"What do you want me to do?" I ask, my voice perfectly calm. Because...

I mean, honestly? Even if I only ever admit it to myself? I want to go. I'm not only eager to make a connection with the only

Atalaxian who has even hinted that he might want to build bridges between our nations, but even more than that? There is some kind of connection between Calvin and I and I'm dying to know what it is. I want very much to go to this dinner and

find out more.

But Sinclair – he's my mate. And he is about ready to tear this man apart for asking me to dinner – especially because Sinclair

thinks that he's into me or whatever.

As Sinclair stares down into my face, I can tell all of these thoughts are rushing through his mind as well. But then he looses his

breath and wraps an arm around my waist, pulling me close to him as he softly raises a hand to my cheek. "What do you want to

do?"

But I shake my head, not letting him get out of it that easily. "I am your Queen, Dominic," I say quietly. "I am done taking things

into my own hands for now. If you want me to go, and to see what I can do to make a connection with Atalaxia, or if I can learn

anything new from him, I'll do it. But if you want me to stay?" I shrug. "I'll stay."

He growls a little, his arm tightening, and even though I know he's upset I can't help but smile a little. I like it when he's

possessive like this. Warmth coils within me, heating me from the inside out.

Sensing that heat, Sinclair moves his thumb to my mouth, tracing the line of my lower lip with the edge of his finger.

"Let me think on it," he murmurs.

"What's there to think about?" I ask softly, genuinely curious.

"The pros and cons," he answers, taking a deep sniff of my scent, apparently relishing it, "of ripping him to shreds for daring to ask you out on a date."

I burst out laughing here, earning a little smile from my mate. "Dominic," I say, shaking my head at him, "it's not a date -"

"Then why didn't he invite me?"

"Because every time you talk to him you get all growly!" I say, laughing. "I'm nice to him, which is beneficial for international relations!"

"Well," Sinclair murmurs, snapping his teeth at me a little, "maybe you should be a little less nice to him." I shake my head up at him, stepping closer to that my body lines as flush as it can against his with the baby in my arms. "First

you tell me that you'd prefer I didn't kill the enemies, now you're telling me not to be nice? Honestly, Dominic, mixed messages over here – "

"How about," he murmurs, moving his hand from my face and slipping it to my shoulder and then down my back, "you just stay in

bed, all the time? Then no foreign princes will ever hit on you, and I'll get a great deal more peace

I laugh again, raising myself onto my tiptoes and tilting my chin up, silently begging for a kiss and sending a little pulse of love

and desire down our bond. Sinclair growls in response and lowers his mouth to mine, kissing me roughly, claiming me as his. I

open my mouth to him, eagerly giving into it, letting him know that I'm his-his-his-

The kiss deepens and I'm a little frantic suddenly, wondering how to simultaneously get the baby to his crib while continuing to

kiss my mate, because no part of me wants to break away any time soon

But Sinclair groans, and lifts his face from mine, even though I'm still pressed tight to him.

"I can't," he sighs, panting a little as he looks down at me. "What!?" I say, aghast.

He shakes his head, glancing over at a clock. "I'm already late, Ella – we've got more negotiations with the Atalaxians, and I

have to find Roger -" he rolls his eyes and glances towards the door, "who the hell knows where he went..."

I pout up at my mate, disappointed. "Fine," I say, my voice a little mean. "But you owe me, all right?" Sinclair laughs, taking my chin possessively between his fingers and shaking his head at me. "Tonight, trouble. I'll make it up to you tenfold."

I sigh but step away, disappointed but knowing that it's necessary to be patient, even though patience has never been one of my

strong suits. I glance over at the bed, where the invitation sits discarded.

Sinclair follows my gaze and we're both silent for a moment, looking at it.

"Do you want me to reply to that?" I ask quietly.

"No," he responds, and I look up to see him shaking his head. Then he leans forward and kisses me again, softly, just for a

moment. "Let that bastard wait. I'll be seeing him this afternoon anyway – maybe I'll get a better idea of what he wants. Are you

all right with that?"

"I am if you are," I say, meaning every word.

And my mate kisses me again, and then drops a kiss to our baby's head before murmuring his goodbyes and heading again out

of the room, off to his King's business.

I sigh more deeply this time, looking down at my happy baby. "Just me and you, little meatball," I murmur, smiling at him. Rafe

squeals a little in happiness, waving his fists at me, and I laugh.

"You're right," I say, turning back to the bed to flop back down and spend some time with my little guy, "it's not so bad, is it?"

But even as I play with Rafe, my eyes drift over to the discarded invitation on the bed.

And deep down? I hope that whatever Calvin and Sinclair say to each other today means that I get to say yes to that. Because something at the center of me is urging me to go and speak to this Prince alone, to hear what it is he has to say.

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#### Accidental Surrogate for Alpha

Chapter 457

#Chapter 457- Negotiations Sinclair

I storm down the hallway on my way to the meeting, but I'm gratified to see Roger waiting there for me at the door, leaning against the wall. I nod to him, not breaking my stride, but he falls in with me as we head inside.

"So, what'd you bring?" Roger asks, his voice serious.

"What?" I ask, half turning to him in my confusion.

"To kill the prince," Roger says, his face deadpan. "Like a gun, or something more dramatic like a morning star? Or are you just

going to like, tear him limb from limb -"

"Roger," I sigh, shaking my head as I arrive at the head of the table but his face just breaks out into a grin.

"What is it?" our father asks, looking between us. I know that he can tell from my serious face that something's up, and from

Roger's joking one that it's well enough under control that we don't need to take major action now.

"Don't worry about it, dad," I murmur, not wanting to get into it with the Atalaxian delegation already filtering into the room.

"Prince Calvin asked Ella on a date," Roger says, leaning close so that dad can hear but speaking loud enough that I know what

he said. I sigh deeply, grabbing a packet of papers off the desk and flipping idly through them, making a mental note to beat the

crap out of my brother at the earliest opportunity.

"What?" dad says, looking at me with wide eyes.

"It's not like that," I growl, glaring at Roger. "Can we just drop it for now? We've got more important things to worry about."

Dad glares at Roger too, taking my side as the majority of the persons attending this meeting begin to take their seats. Roger

laughs a little but comes around to my other side, sinking into the chair on my right while my father takes his place on my left.

King Gabriel is here as an advisor on our side, ready to argue staunchly against war, as well as six other pack members from our

territories. My eyes scan the room, noting the presence of nine Atalaxian delegates with one empty chair.

Just as an aid begins to close the door, the final delegate appears: Prince Calvin, slipping into the room and heading for his chair

without even looking at me.

I glare daggers at him, unable to help it, willing him to look at me, to face me.

But he doesn't raise his eyes.

Inwardly I sigh, because I want him to look at me - I want him to know that I know what the hell he's up to, even if Ella doesn't

see it, or pretends she doesn't.

But he's either clever or a coward, because he keeps his eyes down.

So, I move on and begin the meeting by greeting everyone and thanking them for their presence. I express my sincere hopes

that we can find a path to peace, stating that neither of our nations will truly benefit from a war. Then, with opening statements

behind me, I take my seat, opening the table to conversation from both sides. The conversation is long, and drawn out, and

largely unproductive. The Atalaxians are well prepared and clearly seeking war. I sigh inwardly as I start to realize that my

suspicions were correct: that they came here wanting war, that they likely hoped Xander would do something to give them a

reason to push for it, and now that they've sunk their teeth into it? They're unlikely to give up.

And frankly, it makes a lot of sense for them to want to go to war with us. Atalaxia is a large, conservative nation with deep

pockets and excellent military powers. Moon Valley is smaller, and while we have better technology, better strategic location, and

a fantastic set of national resources, we've also recently been gutted by civil war.

Damn it, Damon, I think to myself, scowling inwardly. You set us up for this.

Because it's true – Damon's war is what tore us apart, made us a wounded animal ready for Atalaxia to come in for a kill. While

they're pretending that they want this war because we've moved against them, everyone knows it's bullshit. No, what Atalaxia

really wants is to wipe our nation out, to annex this territory and all of its resources into itself.

Not only would this be strategically and financially profitable for Atalaxia, but it would be an ideological coup as well. A lot of

powerful men in that nation have some truly awful ideas about gender and humanity; they would see it as a very personal victory

to come to our nation and teach our women, and our humans, their "proper" place in the world.

I grit my teeth as I think about it, the warrior in me wanting to go to war, to wipe the Atalaxians off the face of the earth in turn.

But the King? Who is responsible for his people, and who knows that this nation has no where near the resources, currently, to

take on this larger force?

Damn it, but I know we'll lose. Or if we even have a shot of winning, that the war will stretch on for years – that, damn it, Rafe

might be grown by the time it comes to a close –

I squeeze my eyes shut for a moment as I realize that...that Rafe could even fight in this war, if it goes for as long as I think it

could. That if I fail in these negotiations, I could be signing my own son's death warrant on the battlefield A shudder passes through me and beside me I feel my brother lean closer. It's a very subtle move – he doesn't touch me, or give

any indication that he knows what I'm thinking. But still I can tell. He knows that I'm upset, and in his own way he's trying to be

there for me, however he can, without letting the Atalaxians see how much they're tearing me up inside. I take a deep breath, grateful for him.

And suddenly I remember...that Roger knows more than Ella and I do about Rafe's future. That he didn't tell me everything he

and Cora saw at the moonlight baptism we asked him not to but he told me that Rafe's life isn't a tragic one, even if it has hard

parts.

If my son died young on a battlefield, Roger would have seen it. And the fact that he didn't...

A great deal of relief rushes through me at the thought and I send a prayer up to the Goddess, thanking her both for my brother

and her insight, begging her again to keep my child safe.

Because Rafe – in the end, this is all about him, isn't it? About the world in which he'll grow to be a man, about the Kingdom I'll

one day hand over to him.

And as I raise my eyes I look directly at Calvin over the table, who I find looking right at me for the first time.

Because he has a

son too – just about Rafe's age, does he not?

And is this what we're doing? Two men a King and a Prince – choosing to send our sons to war against each other?

Is this really what we want in the world?

Slowly, as if he can read my thoughts, Calvin nods.

And then, to my surprise, he stands up and leaves the room. The man speaking one of the Atalaxian delegates falters in his

speech for a moment, clearly confused at Calvin's abrupt departure. And I glare too, because this man-

Well, he's certainly got balls, doesn't he?

Because his message can't be plainer in this moment.

He wants exactly what I want – to save our children from war – but he's not willing to talk to me about it.

No.

For some reason only he understands, Calvin only wants to speak to Ella.

I grit my teeth as I lean back in my chair, watching the Prince leave the room and close the door behind him, glaring a little at the door once he's gone.

This man he's played his hand well, forcing me to put my Queen in play when my strongest instinct is to protect her. And even though I know that Ella can handle herself? God damn it, but I know something else is at play here – something

beyond international relations.

This man? He's got more at stake with my mate. And I just don't know what the hell it is.

• • •

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Chatper 458

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Sinclair's clearly all worked up as he slams the door behind him, his eyes instantly fixed on me, looking me up and down. "Why are you dressed like that?" he asks, his voice angry, though I can tell that he's not mad at me he's just worked up at what

must have been a very stressful day.

"Like what?" I ask, looking down at myself. I'm wearing what I think is my most conservative dress – black, floor length with a

little bit of a train behind me, with long sleeves and a crew neck that cuts across my collar bones, showing nothing beneath.

"Well, you look beautiful, Ella," Sinclair bites out, glaring at me a little like it's an accusation.

I blink at him for a moment, my eyebrows raising. "Is that a problem, Dominic?"

"Why are you all dressed up?" he growls, crossing to me.

"I just thought that I'd get ready, in case I am supposed to go to dinner –"

"And you decided to wear that!?"

"Okay," I say, keeping my voice calm and doing my very best to keep my own temper now, because my mate? He's pushing it. I

put one hand out, resting it against his chest. "All right, Dominic. I'm going to give you a minute now to rethink your words, and

then we'll start again."

He narrows his eyes at me, not liking at all that I'm talking to him like a kindergartener. But I cock my head to the side, asking

him to consider the irony that at this moment I need to talk to him like a kindergartener.

After a long moment he sighs and turns away from me, hanging his head and putting his hands on his hips. "I'm sorry," he

murmurs, pulling himself together. Then he drops his face in a hand. "It has been a long day, Ella."

"Oh, sweetheart," I murmur, taking a step forward and putting a hand on his back, stroking up and down, wanting to bring him

comfort. "Tell me," I say, and my mate turns and puts his arms around me as he tells me all about the meeting.

I sigh when he finishes. "I'm sorry, Dominic," I say, looking up at him. "I know you tried."

He shakes his head, looking down at me with his gorgeous green eyes. "It doesn't matter what I tried – they've already decided."

I nod, understanding, but knowing that he's going to take the blame on himself no matter what logic presents itself. Then I bite my lip a little, considering. "Does this mean I'm going to dinner?"

He sighs again, more deeply this time and steps away from me, putting a hand on my shoulder and turning me around. I do as

his hands tell me to, spinning so that my back is to him, and then I sigh a little as he clasps my zipper in his hands and starts to

pull it hastily down.

"Yes," he says, and I sigh in disappointment – But then I frown, because...wait, what?

"I'm going?" I ask, trying to turn, but my mate holds me still until he has the zipper all the way down to my ass.

Then he starts to

push at the gown at my shoulders.

"You are," he says. "I already sent word to the Prince, accepting in your stead." A shiver passes through me at the warmth of

Sinclair's palms against my shoulders, my upper arms, but

"Well then what are you doing?" I ask, turning and frowning at him even as he tries to stop me. "I'm already dressed! I'm -"

"I'm taking this damn dress off you, Ella," he says, gruff. "Don't you have like, a dirty old sack you can wear? Or a saggy

sweatsuit?"

I laugh but I take a step back from him, starting to pull my dress back on. "Dominic! I'm not going to dinner with our enemy

looking like a slob. This dress is so matronly -"

"Matronly?" he says, slipping his hands into his pockets and raising a single eyebrow at me. "Ella, I was hard the moment I

walked in the door and saw you in that dress – "

"Yeah," I say, waving a dismissive hand, "But that's every dress—"

"Damn right it is," he growls, stepping towards me again, the predator in him coming out.

But this just makes me laugh, as much as it turns me on. Because Sinclair – I like him like this. Maybe we should keep this

Atalaxian Prince around if it gets my mate all worked up...

"No, Dominic, I'm wearing this," I say, struggling to pull my dress back up over my shoulders while I hold the baby.

"Fine," he says with a little sigh, taking the baby from me.

"But take it off anyway. Just for a few minutes."

"What?" I ask, confused as Sinclair kisses Rafe, murmuring a greeting to him as he carries him over to his little crib and placing

him down inside. When that's done, Sinclair stands by the bed and raises a hand, beckoning me closer with his fingers in a way

that gets me even more worked up.

"I'm going to scent mark you," he says as I start to walk slowly over to him.

"What?" I say again, though I don't stop moving, wanting to be in his arms as he shrugs off his suit jacket and starts to unbutton

his shirt. "Dominic, you haven't had to scent mark me in months – I'm your mate I already carry your scent all the time -"

But my words falter a bit as Sinclair gets his shirt off, revealing his broad, muscled chest. My mouth goes a little dry as his hands

move to his pants, unbuckling his belt and shoving them down to the floor.

"Do it, Ella," he commands, his voice low and bossy. I do as he says, raising my hands to my shoulders and pushing at the dress, slipping it off my arms and letting it pool on the floor

around me.

"On the bed," he orders, nodding to it, his voice brooking no argument.

I obey, stepping out of my dress and over to the bed. And then I slowly start to crawl across it, wearing nothing but my black

pumps, and my panties, and my lacy bra.

A growl rumbles in my mate's chest as he watches me crawl to him, as I sit up with my knees apart, looking up at him with my

hands resting on my thighs.

"Well?" I say, flicking my eyes down over my nearlynaked body. "If you're going to do it, Dominic -" But he doesn't let me finish my sentence, climbing onto the bed himself in a flash, grabbing me to him and then laying me slowly

out onto the bed so that I'm stretched beneath him the way I used to be, at the beginning of all of this, when he would take his

time rubbing his body over every inch of mine.

I moan a little as he begins the ceremony again, starting by pressing a lingering kiss to my neck and them moving downwards

over me, pressing his skin to mine, making sure that every inch of me bears his scent.

I do my best to stay still not because I can't touch him but...well, because part of me enjoys reliving this experience, thinking of

when I was too scared to touch him, when I tried to deny what he did to me, physically, and how desperately I wanted him.

"Dominic," I say quietly as his hips settle between my legs, pressing himself against me as he works his hands slowly up and

down my arms. "Not that I'm complaining, but...why are we doing this?"

"Because," he murmurs, lifting his body and then sliding a broad hand beneath me before swiftly flipping me over onto my

stomach in one move that makes me laugh, just a little, before he starts on my shoulders and my back. "If I'm going to send you

out there with him, I'm going to make sure he damn well knows you're mine."

And I laugh again, shaking my head even though it's resting comfortably against the pillow. Sinclair works his way down my

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But I turn over a little, looking up at him, reaching out a hand to touch his arm, making him listen to me. "No," I say softly, holding

his gaze. "Dominic, because everyone knows that no one could ever convince me to walk away."

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"Well then," I whisper, leaning close and pressing my lips almost against his. "I guess I'm going to be late to dinner then, aren't I?"

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And then my mate kisses me, and presses me down into the mattress, and I relish every moment I'm in his arms.

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### Accidental Surrogate for Alpha

Chatper 459

#Chapter 459 – Changes

Cora

I blow lightly on my cup of tea, doing my best to cool it and concentrate on the book that's open in my lap. But even as I try, my

eyes continually drift to the picture window in front of me that overlooks the front of our property, including the driveway where

Roger's going to pull in any minute now.

At least, that's what I've been telling myself for the past two hours.

I sigh, frustrated. I sent him a text a while ago asking him to let me know when he'd be home not that I really need to know, I

just...wanted to know.

But Roger is notoriously bad at keeping an eye on his phone, and I know that he and Sinclair have had a particularly stressful

day today. So, I'do my best to just...exercise my patience. But I sigh because, even though patience is usually one of my virtues...

Today? I'm finding it a little hard.

Happy!

The baby's little tap comes skipping down the bond out of nowhere, and I burst into a grin, looking down at myself. "Oh, so are you liking the ginger tea, little guy?" I ask, laughing a little as I stroke a hand over my belly. He doesn't respond because...well, because I asked him out loud, and he can't hear me, but I smile nonetheless, taking another sip.

Happy? I ask, sending the word and the feeling down the bond to him.

His answer comes back in an instant. Happy happy! I laugh again, desperately pleased at this, and wondering what's going to come next with him. Because he's getting bigger, I can

almost feel him growing by the day, and soon he's going to start feeling all sorts of new things. But will he even have words for

them? Will we feel them before he does, and be able to pass the same emotions back and forth, asking questions like we do with

happy? Will it be –

But even as I ponder it, excited, headlights flash across the drive and my face bursts into a grin.

"Daddy's home, little baby," I murmur, taking another sip of my tea before putting it down on the coffee table as I watch Roger

park the car, and step out, and storm for our front door.

"Ut-oh," I sigh, watching his every step and continuing to stroke my stomach. "Daddy's in a mood, baby..."

Happy! The baby pulses, making me laugh for real now.

Because daddy is anything but happy, isn't he?

This kid – already with his jokes. God, I love him so much.

Roger throws open the door, scowling as he storms through it, pushing it shut behind him and already looking up the stairs,

clearly intent on going right up and not even noticing me sitting here.

"Hey!" I call cheerfully, and Roger whips towards me, stopping so fast in his tracks that he almost trips over his own feet.

"What are you doing in here?" he asks almost growls.

I lean back a little in surprise, looking him up and down.

"I'm sorry," I say, my voice deep with sarcasm. "Am I... not allowed to sit

in our living room?"

Roger scowls, hanging his head for a second and running a hand through his hair before looking up at me again." I'm sorry," he

says, and I can tell that he means it even though his voice is clipped. "You just surprised me – it's been..."

"One hell of a day?" I offer.

And he sighs, and nods.

"Come here," I say, reaching for him and folding my legs to make space on the couch.

"Actually, Cora," he says, glancing up the stairs. "Can we just go to bed?"

"Really?" I ask, going a little still. "You're not hungry, or..."

"Please," he says, hanging his head again, almost begging for a moment. "I just want to go to bed. With you. And just...be there.

All right?"

"Okay," I say, a little disturbed now. Because I don't frequently see him like this. Once we broke into Roger's tough shell, he

revealed himself to be funny, and sweet, and full of jokes. This Roger, which exists even beneath that? Earnest, vulnerable

Roger?

Well, if he's showing me this side...he must really be upset.

I'm on my feet and moving to his side in a second.

"Sure," I say, nodding to him and taking his hand. "Let's go."

And my mate nods to me once, tugging on my hand and pulling me up the stairs with him.

We don't say much as when we get up to the bedroom, instead moving smoothly through our evening routine.

Roger gives a

quick kiss before heading to the bathroom to take a short shower, washing off the day. I'm silent as I change into my nightgown,

laying out a pair of pajama pants on the bed for him, because I know that's all he'll sleep in.

Then I turn on the fire because I want the warmth and a little light to see by, but otherwise shut off all the lights and climb into

bed, waiting, idly stroking my stomach.

I watch my mate as he comes out of the bathroom a few minutes later, his face serious and his eyes far-off, thinking through

something that I know he'll tell me about in a few minutes when he's ready. I can't help admiring him a little when he drops his

towel and reaches for the folded pajama pants on the edge of the bed.

Feeling my desire down our bond despite my efforts to keep it to myself, Roger raises his head a little and smirks at me. But I

just shrug, because I mean, it's not a secret.

My mate's hot. What am I supposed to do when he shows up all naked in bedroom, the fire highlighting the carved lines of his

body in a flickering orange glow?

His smirk turns into a full smile by the time he gets the pajama pants on and moves to his side of the bed, pulling back the covers

and slipping beneath them. I scootch across the mattress, pressing myself to his side, and Roger lets out a wicked little growl as

he wraps his arms around me and pulls me close, resting his cheek against my chest and letting out a long sigh of comfort.

"Poor Roger," I murmur, running my fingers through his still-damp hair and cooing softly to him in a way I rarely do.

Because most of our relationship is based on a great deal of laughter and teasing. But tonight? Tonight, I can tell he needs

something different.

I start to run my fingernails lightly over the skin of his back in a way that I know he likes. And Roger, to my content, starts almost

to purr with the pleasure of it. Interestingly, for how much we usually want to tear into each other, there's not too much that's

sexual about this moment. Instead, it's simply comfort freely offered and gratefully accepted by two people who love each other

very, very much.

"Tell me everything, baby," I murmur, hoping he will. And Roger, to my pleased surprise, comes right out with it.

"It's war, Cora," he sighs.

"Really?" I ask, unable to keep the dread from my voice.

"Did they declare it?"

"No," he says, shaking his head and wrapping an arm around my waist, wanting me as close as I can get. "Butwe were in

meetings with the Atalaxians all day and it's very clear that's where they're headed. Dominic could tell, I could tell, dad could tell.

They've got us in a bad spot, and they want war. So? They're going to declare it the minute this delegation gets back."

I sigh, dread filling me, but still...

I mean, we knew it was heading for this, didn't we? So, what has him all wrapped up?

"Tell me," I say quietly, nudging him a little down the bond, letting him know that I know that there's more.

He doesn't bother to deny it, instead heaving a big sigh.

"Dominic and I talked a lot tonight about what it is we need to do. He

sent Ella to that damn dinner -"

"Really?" I ask, my eyes going wide.

"We're grasping at straws, Cora," he says, defending his brother even though he should know he doesn't have to. I'm actually

glad Ella's going to that dinner – there is something weird between her and that Prince, and I for one want her to figure it out.

Plus, I know she'd never, ever betray her mate.

Even if...

Well. No point in voicing my suspicions now, especially if they're likely to be wrong. No need to raise trouble that's not already there.

"Everyone's got to do their part," Roger says next, sounding a little bitter about it.

Worried, I move down in the bed so that we're laying next to each other in the dark, face to face so that I can see his eyes. "Tell

me what you mean when you say that," I reply, knowing that there's something there.

Roger sighs again, closing his eyes as if he can't bear to look at me when he says it. "Dominic asked me to take the military," he

says, shaking his head. "To train the armies, to run them, to...to be at the front lines of this war, Cora." My blood goes cold as I hear him say it, and dread fills me at the idea of my mate at the front of this war the King's brother, in charge, a clear target. And for the first time...

My baby passes me the same emotion back: worry.

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### Read Accidental Surrogate for Alpha by Caroline Above Story Chatper 459

Read Accidental Surrogate for Alpha Chatper 459
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Caroline Above has been updated to chapter Chatper 459.
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how Mike has been secretly feeding her emergency contraceptives to prevent her from conceiving. Ella pulls the smoke

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# Accidental Surrogate for Alpha by Caroline Above Story Chatper 459

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Chapter 460

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### Accidental Surrogate for Alpha

Chapter 460

#Chapter 460 – Dinner with the Prince Ella

Conner opens my car door and gives an odd little bow as I get out of it.

"What on earth was that?" I ask, grinning at him. Conner, to his credit, blushes a little as he gives me a shrug. "I don't know, you're a Queen now. Aren't I supposed to bow?"

I wrinkle my nose at him. "I have no idea," I say, laughing, pleased when he laughs with me and closes the car door behind me.

"But since neither of us know, maybe we should cut it out?"

"All right," he says with a grin, looking up towards the restaurant where Calvin asked me to meet him. I'm a little thrilled, honestly,

to be out of the palace for the first time in weeks and also pleased that this was kept quiet enough that there is no press here to

capture the moment.

"I'm glad you're here, Conner," I say quietly, taking a deep breath to steel myself.

"Anytime, Luna," he murmurs, and he keeps close by my side as I walk up the stairs.

I'm relieved to see, when I get inside, that the restaurant is dark and only about half full, all of the patrons gathered in deep

booths so that I can only see the tops of their heads. I smile to myself, thinking that the Prince chose his venue well.

"This way, Highness," a young woman says, smiling at me and leading me not into the dining room but towards a small elevator.

The three of us are a bit packed in, but the ride is short – just to the second floor. When the door slides open, the young woman

smiles and gestures forward into a very small, very pretty private dining room. There's even a little balcony terrace outside that

looks absolutely gorgeous in the moonlight.

Calvin is sitting alone at a table, looking at his phone with a half-full glass of wine in front of him. When I step into the room he

looks up and he smiles.

And damn it, but I have to admit...he's really good looking. Not as good looking as Sinclair – I mean, at least not to me but the

way that smile lights his face, and those cheekbones, and those violet eyes?

Damn.

But I don't have much time to think on it as he stands up and holds out a hand to me, inviting me to the table.

I smile myself, not needing to force it as I cross the room to take his hand. That buzz of electricity passes between us as he

leans forward, murmuring a greeting and intending to brush the barest kiss against my cheek — nothing inappropriate, nothing

that wouldn't pass between an ambassador and a Queen But he flinches back at the last moment, and I smirk a little, considering that he probably got a whiff of precisely how much

Sinclair has marked me as his tonight.

Calvin hesitates as if tempted, but then he pulls away.

Still, something flutters in me at the nearness of this man. What the hell is going on?

"I'm so glad you came," Calvin says, gesturing towards my seat. Then, to my surprise, he looks beyond me at Conner, who is

standing a few paces behind. "Will you be joining us?" I turn to look at Conner, my eyebrows raised

"No," Conner says, nodding and smiling a little in recognition of the graciousness of the invitation. "I'm fine over here," he

gestures towards a little couch in the corner of the room, where he'll be close enough to protect me but far enough to give us our privacy.

Calvin nods to him and Conner moves away. I smile a little as I sit.

"Honestly," Calvin says, his voice hesitating a little, "I wasn't sure if you were coming."

"I'm sorry I'm late," I say, though... well, I'm not really sorry, am I? My mate needed a little reassurance and I'm happy to give it to

him, even if it's at Calvin's expense.

"Are you hungry?" he asks, peering at me, truly trying to assess what he can do to make me comfortable. "I know that nine in the

evening is late for a dinner in your culture -"

I smile at him, pleased at his solicitousness – because I honestly get the impression that he cares. He wanted to have this dinner

so that we can talk, but if I'm hungry? He wants me to eat.

"Actually, I am a little hungry," I say, leaning forward with a laugh. "And thirsty, if there's more wine."

"Always more wine," he murmurs, raising a hand and signaling to a waiter I didn't see. The waiter comes forward and fills a

waiting glass for me.

"I haven't had much to drink lately," I say quietly, raising the glass to my lips and savoring the taste of the rich red.

"But one can't

hurt, can it?"

"Can't hurt what?" Calvin asks, leaning forward in his curiosity. He frowns at me, genuinely not getting it.

"The baby," I say, looking at him like it's obvious while he takes a long sip of his drink. "Rafe's only a few months old – I'm still

breastfeeding, Calvin

And then I stop, and burst into laughter, because Calvin chokes a little on his wine and turns beet red.

"Seriously?" I say, leaning forward, unable to stop my grin. "Is that should I not have said that? Is that embarrassing for you?"

He clears his throat and looks down at the table, embarrassed, though I see him smiling and shaking his head. "No, Highness,

it's -"

"Ella," I correct, my voice pleading.

"Ella," he says, looking up at me a little now, growing more comfortable. "It's just honestly, I've never heard a woman say that

before."

"Really?" I say, leaning forward and looking at him with wide eyes, setting my glass down on the table next to me.

"I mean, did

you know - "

"Of course I know," he says, laughing and rolling his eyes at me. "I understand the mechanics of how young babies are fed, it's

just..." he leans back, running a hand through his hair, "honestly, Ella, women in my world never, ever talk to men about that sort

of thing. And it's not that I agree with that, or think they shouldn't I was just...surprised."

Slowly, I shake my head at him, holding his eyes. "You know I think that's crazy, right?"

He laughs, nodding, and I laugh with him.

"I do know that," Calvin says on a sigh. "And I agree. It is...crazy, that in my world women and men are so separate. It is

something which I'd like to see changed, but which is so ingrained in our culture that it's going to take generations to really shift."

I nod, understanding. And then I tilt my head at him, interested to see how easy this conversation already is.

Because even if

we're talking about a really complicated subject that's difficult for him? The way that we're talking – it's like speaking with an old

friend, someone I've known my whole life.

I'm not surprised for a moment, then, when the conversation from there flows easily. Calvin asks questions about my life and I

tell him everything, readily, easily – all about Cora, and my sweet baby Rafe, and growing up in the orphanage and the strange

way I met my mate. Some details I keep back – he doesn't need to know all about my powers, or the fact that my mother is a

deity – but the rest? The rest I share.

It doesn't pass my attention that he moves on readily whenever I begin to speak about Sinclair, but honestly? I don't ask a whole

lot about his wife. And I wonder at myself there, trying to figure out what part of me is holding back. Because I am interested in

her fascinated, really, dying to know – but for some reason?

Somehow, I just don't ask.

We go for hours, learning a great deal more about each other. Food comes, and we eat it, and I'm sure that it's good but honestly

I don't know if I taste it because I'm lost in this conversation, which contains a great deal of laughter and joy.

When a clock in the corner chimes midnight, though, my jaw drops open. "Has it really been that long?" I say, marveling and

shaking my head at my companion – my friend now, undeniably.

Calvin grimaces a little. "We have a saying," he says with a shrug, "that mice wait for good friends lose themselves in each other,

and that's when they eat all the grain."

"Really?" I say, wrinkling my nose, charmed a bit.

"Yes," he says, leaning back and laughing. "So, when you have a mouse problem in your home, people dismiss it as a sign of a

house full of friendship and laughter."

"Oh," I say, smiling now and nodding. "Like how we say it's good luck, if a bird poops on you."

He blinks at me, shocked. "Wha-what!?"

I burst into laughter yet again, leaning back in my chair and letting the joy sweep through me because of course, if you didn't

grow up hearing that, it really is just gross, isn't it?

"Just something we say," I say, wiping at my eyes a little, my body still shaking with mirth. "I think to make people feel better

when that happens to them."

He laughs too, grinning at me and understanding.

I sigh then, and look back at Conner, who is still sitting on the little couch flicking through his phone. "I guess I should -"

"Stay," Calvin says suddenly, his voice serious now in a way it wasn't a moment ago, and I feel his hand suddenly on top of mine

on that table.

Whatever it is between us that thing that happens when we touch – it sweeps through me, making the hair on my neck stand on end.

Calvin stares up at me, his eyes pleading, and I know that he feels it too. "Please, Ella," he says quietly, glancing towards the

terrace next to us. "One more drink – just to round out the night."

I bite my lip, knowing that I shouldn't but...

"All right," I say quietly, nodding to him, and not moving my hand away from his.

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