

It takes a little over two hours, but finally the last of the doctors leaves, the door clicking shut behind them.

“Finally,” Roger sighs, falling back into the linens of the freshly-changed bed.

“Now we just have to get our stupid family to leave and we’ll get some sleep –” “Excuse me,” I say, glaring over at him. “If you think you’re tired -” “Fine fine,” he sighs, turning his head to grin at me. “You’re right. What can I get you, my love? Do you want anything?” The doctor officially gave me and Jesse a clean bill of health after I delivered the placenta and Jesse had his first feeding and full check- up. It was, of course, a relief to have everything turn out right and relatively easy -especially in comparison to Ella’s experiences – but now that they’re all gone?

Honestly, it all feels very real.

Like now I have to be a mom, and Roger has to be a dad all by ourselves.

“I don’t know,” I say, laughing a little and looking between Roger and our little baby. “Honestly, it’s all kind of weird, isn’t it? All of this fuss and then they just... leave you alone with a baby. To do what you will.” “I know,” he says, looking at me with wide eyes. “I’m glad you know what to do.

I’m totally lost.” “I don’t know what to do!” I protest, laughing and shaking my head.

“What!?” he breathes, sitting up sharply.

“I’m just a doctor, Roger!” I say, laughing harder now and feeling a little hysterical as well as exhausted. “People come to me pregnant, but then I send the babies home with them! I don’t know what to do with a kid – that’s Ella’s department.” “Well then,” he says, looking anxiously towards the door. “I

take back my previous words. Ella has to stay – for like, ever.” “Or at least until this kid is six -” “Can we push to seven?” Roger asks, looking at me with real anxiety that just makes me laugh harder.

There’s a little knock on the door but suddenly Roger and I are laughing too hard to answer it. It cracks open anyway and Ella again peeks her head in.

“I thought I heard the hysteria of new parents,” she says, shaking her head at us and smiling as she comes into the room. “Are you totally freaking out?”

“Full meltdown,” Roger says, wiping a tear of mirth from his eyes. “What are we supposed to like...do with him?” he asks, gesturing to the baby as Sinclair comes in after Ella, shutting the door and grinning at us. Rafe fusses, starting to blink awake in Sinclair’s arms.

“You’re suppose to love him,” Ella says, coming close and reaching for the baby, which I gladly hand off to her. ” And, you know. Keep him alive.” “Loving I can do,” Roger sighs as Ella folds her legs beneath her on the bed and Sinclair pulls a chair up to the bedside, completing our little group of six. “The rest... we’re going to need some help.” “It’s not so hard,” Sinclair says kindly, smiling down at Rafe who yawns and looks around at us sleepily, a little confused. “They sleep a lot their first couple of weeks. And then, after that, they find ways to tell you what they want.” “Maybe we should trade,” Roger says, looking dubiously between Rafe and Jesse. “Yours looks...sturdier.” Ella grins suddenly and looks at me like she’s considering the idea but I just laugh and shake my head. “You can’t take my baby, Ella,” I say, crossing my arms.

“Even if Roger is inept, I still like him.” “I didn’t say I didn’t like him,” Roger murmurs, sighing and leaning against me, happy.

Rafe lets out a surprised little screech all of a sudden and all of our eyes turn to him as his own gaze fastens on his cousin, his eyes going wide like he’s noticing him for the first time.

Which, I mean, he honestly probably is.

“Do you want to see the baby, Rafe?” Ella coos, leaning forward so that Rafe can meet Jesse face-to-face for the first time.

I smile in surprise and delight when my sweet nephew really does lean forward to see Jesse, his face very curious. Rafe lets out another little squeak, more demanding this time, and reaches out his hands towards the baby.

“Oh my god,” Sinclair murmurs, looking down at his son with a fascinated and pleased expression. “He really does want to go to him!” “This is Jesse,” Ella says, laughing a little as she beams at her own baby. “He’s your new cousin! And I think you’re going to be best friends.” “They’d better be,” Roger murmurs. “Because they’re going to be together a lot.

It’s going to be very inconvenient if they don’t like each other.” “Oh,” I scold, giving him a light smack on the chest. “They will. Besides, shut up, I want to watch this...” And the two of us lean forward as Sinclair sits Rafe on the bed, letting him lean forward and continue to reach for the baby.

“Lay them down,” Ella says softly, her voice a little awed, “next to each other -” “What?” Sinclair asks.

“Please,” Ella says, almost beyond herself, as if she’s speaking from instinct.

“Let’s just...try it...” Sinclair looks at me and Roger and I just shrug, fine with it if Ella is. I don’t see Roger’s response, but I don’t hear a protest, so I assume it’s okay.

And so Sinclair gently flips Rafe on his back and lays him out on the blankets, and Ella very gently, very tentatively places Jesse next to him, close enough for Rafe to touch.

To my shock, the usually rambunctious Rafe stays very, very still for a moment as he stares at his cousin. And then he begins to turn, and almost

gently reaches for Jesse – And the moment they touch, when Rafe’s fingers brush against Jesse’s cheek, and Jesse’s little eyes flutter open – All four of us parents take a sharp intake of breath.

Because we all feel it – each and every one of us.

We look around at each other for a split second and then all of our eyes dart back to our kids, who are still touching, just barely, skin to skin.

Rafe babbles a little, saying hello to his new cousin, who just sighs and closes his eyes again.

“Oh...oh my god...” Ella says, her hands going to her mouth for a split second before she reaches down and gathers Jesse back up into her arms. ” Did you guys...” “Um, yeah,” Roger says, and I turn my head to see him staring wide-eyed at Ella.

“Yeah, I think it’s fair to say we all felt that.” “What was it?” I breathe, fascinated and confused but...not at all scared.

“It’s a bond,” Sinclair murmurs, pulling a now-giggling Rafe into his lap and stroking his broad hand over his son’s hair as he looks around at the rest of us.

“Can’t you all feel it?” Each of us, I think, shifts our minds inwards to that place in our hearts or our minds or our souls where our wolves live, where we access our bonds. And Dominic is right – it’s not a bond with me, not really. But the bond between me and Jesse, which shines rich and bright between us? There’s... something new there, another bond that I can sense beyond it. I can’t reach it, or touch it... But I know it’s there.

“Oh...weird,” Roger murmurs, his eyes bright now as he smiles at his brother.

“Our kids have a bond? Do...do we have a bond?” “Uhm, only the bonds of brotherhood that we forged sharing a bedroom for ten years,” Sinclair says,

shooting Roger a little glare. "I mean, siblings are bonded through their parents, of course, but a bond like this? And between cousins?" He shakes his head.

"I mean," Ella says, giving a smug little shrug. "We knew they were special." "Just because you like them doesn't mean they're special," I say, rolling my eyes at my sister and reaching out for my baby. Ella laughs and leans over to pass Jesse back to me. I smile when he's back in my arms, dropping a kiss to his perfect, tiny little cheek.

"I like them and they're special. What do you think it means?" We all look to Sinclair, who just gives a little shrug. "I have no idea," he says, "why should I know?" "Because you're the one who figured it out," Roger says, laughing a little.

"Well," Sinclair says on a sigh. "That's all I've got. Maybe it has something to do with being grandchildren of the goddess. Or...their gifts, or something. I have no idea." "I wonder if any future kids will be likewise bonded," I murmur, smiling a little as I think of that possibility. Because, honestly, even though I'm bone tired...I'm already starting to forget some of the miseries of pregnancy.

I know that I've only been a mom for a couple of hours now but...I already really love it. I'm starting to understand Ella's mania for more, honestly. I smile down at my baby, thinking that if he's this great already... Well, then I probably want like...five more. Maybe not anytime soon...I want to enjoy this one first. But yeah. Quite suddenly, I definitely want more.

"Only one way to find out," Sinclair says, and I don't miss the way that he smiles at Ella. I grin privately to myself, but my smile quickly turns into a yawn.

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Chapter 482

– New Baby Cousin

Ella

I see a yawn stretch over Cora's face and immediately start to get to my feet. "You're exhausted," I say, "we'll let you get some rest – "

"No," Roger says, suddenly a little frantic again. "You guy can't leave what if – what if the baby cries and Cora sleeps through it – I have no idea what to do "

I laugh at my brother-in-law and shake my head at him. "We're not going far, Roger," I say, pressing myself to Sinclair's side as he, too, stands up. "We're going to sleep across the hall after we make sure Henry gets home safe. You'll be able to shout if you need anything."

"Oh, thank god," Roger murmurs, slumping back against the pillows and putting a weary hand over his face.

"So dramatic," Cora says, rolling her eyes but laughing anyway. I grin at my sister and then move to her side, pressing a kiss to her cheek and blowing one to the sleeping Jesse, my new perfect nephew.

"You guys sleep tight, all right?" I say. "And really – we're here if you need us. Or even if you want us to take the baby in the rolling bassinet – he can sleep in our room – "

"We'll be fine, Ella," Cora says, rolling her eyes at me now.

"They do this all the time in hospitals, take the baby to the nursery so the mom can get some sleep! I could

"Stop trying to steal my baby," she laughs, flapping a hand at me, "just because you miss having a newborn."

"I do," I sigh, again clutching my hands beneath my chin. "They're so cute and tiny then..."

"Come and take your meatball, Ella," Sinclair says on a laugh, holding out my perfect little Rafe to me. And I laugh too, taking Rafe in my arms and holding him tight against my chest.

"You're perfect too, Rafe," I say, kissing his head, "no matter how big you get."

And then Sinclair and I call our soft goodnights over our shoulder and close the door behind us as we pass out of the room, letting my sister and her mate have a peaceful night alone with their new baby.

As soon as we're alone in the hall, I fall back against the wall with an excited little sigh.

"What is it this time," Sinclair says, stopping and grinning at me as I hold Rafe close to my chest.

"I'm just so excited," I say, smiling up at him. "I get to do that again in what, six months!? I love the newborn stage! I love the first night, when you can't sleep because you can't bear to close your eyes and stop looking at them! I'm so excited. I'm not going to be able to sleep."

"You really were born to be a mom, trouble," my sweetheart mate says, stepping forward and running his hand over my hair. I grin up at him, nodding fervently. "Luckily," he says, raising an eyebrow at me. "I do not at all mind the process of knocking you up. Not one bit."

"Dominic!" I gasp, swatting at him a little and covering one of Rafe's ear with my spare hand. "Not in front of the baby!"

"Ella," Sinclair says, laughing at me as I start down the hall. "We have sex in front of the baby all the time – "

"Yes, but that's natural," I say, laughing and throwing a haughty look at my mate over my shoulder, pretending to be more bothered than I am as I open the door to the guest room. "Baby Rafe doesn't need to hear all of your lewd innuendos about what it is you enjoy."

"It wasn't even an inuendo," Sinclair murmurs, stepping close to me in the dark of the room and pulling me to him, a little more roughly than he needs to, just the way I like it.

"Well, mind your manners," I murmur, my voice low and throaty. "Because we have competition now for best Sinclair parents. And I am not losing to those two idiots in there."

"Not a chance," my mate says, laughing his dark little laugh. "We've got them beat hands down."

"I know, right?" I say, wrinkling my nose at him. And my mate kisses me swiftly before giving me a swat on the rump.

"You get the baby ready for bed, I'll make sure dad gets home?" He asks, heading for the door.

"You got it," I say, giving him a quick thumbs up and a wink. Sinclair nods to me, smiling, and heads out the door, leaving me in the dark with the baby.

"Well, Rafey," I say, laughing as I swing the baby up over my head, making him give a new cousin today, and a new bond! What do you think?"

Rafe babbles happily as if in reply and I smile at him as I carry him over to the little changing table I set up a few hours ago, starting to get him ready for bed.

"I'm very happy for you, Rafe," I say sternly as I change his diaper and start to put his pajamas on. "But if you like your new cousin more than your new little sister, just because you have some weird kind of bond?" I look at him for a long moment, shaking my head. "If that happens, we're going to have big problems. Okay?"

Rafe just grins at me, babbling as I pull up his tiny zipper.

"I'll take that as a yes," I say, smiling as I pull him up into my arms. "And I'm holding you to it, even though you don't even really speak English yet."

When Sinclair comes back into the room about half an hour later, Rafe and I are cozily settled on the bed, each of us warmly wrapped up as he plays with some of his soft blocks and I lay quietly by his side, talking to him and giving him a cuddle whenever he looks for it. But I grin when my mate shuts the door behind him, smiling at us.

"Don't let me interrupt," he says, starting to pull off his blazer as he comes to the bed.

"Please do," I say, sitting up a little. "We missed you."

My mate comes immediately to bed, pulling off his shoes and slipping into the bed fully dressed so he can be with his little family sooner. I smile when I see his eagerness, knowing he feels precisely the way that I feel: that this is our happy place, when we're all cozy together with no great pressures or problems weighing on us.

"Are you sleepy?" he asks. "Hungry?"

"Both," I say, giving a little shrug. "But, we should wait until Rafe falls asleep to attend to either."

Sinclair nods, glancing at his son before opening his arm to me, inviting me in. I accept immediately, scooting over so that I'm curled up by my mate's side, a thrill running through me at the warmth and closeness of him.

"I'd love you anyway," I say quietly, " but I have to say, I really love that you're basically a furnace of body heat that always keeps me warm."

Sinclair laughs with both pleasure and surprise when I say this. "Glad I can be of service," he murmurs, dropping a kiss to my cheek and pressing closer. " What made you think of that?"

"Don't you feel it?" I ask, turning to look at him. "It got so cold suddenly. I don't know what happened."

"I guess I didn't," he murmurs, "but, apparently I'm a furnace, so maybe it makes sense that I -"

But suddenly he stops, his jaw falling open a bit as his gaze falls on the window.

"What?" I ask, but I don't tense because the feeling he passes down the bond is joy and wonder. Eager, I turn, trying to see what he sees

And suddenly, my eyes light on the window to. "Oh my god," I say, my voice a little breathless. "It's – it's snowing

Huge, gorgeous flakes of pure white snow drift slowly down from the sky, dancing gracefully across the window pane.

I watch them for a long, fascinated moment before I frown a little. "Isn't it ...isn't it way too early for snow?" I ask, confused.

"Well," Sinclair says, laughing a little. "When your mom is a demigoddess who controls the weather, probably not."

"Ohhh," I say, finally getting it. "Oh, that is so special," I murmur, pressing a hand to my heart, "what a wonderful way to welcome your baby to the world

"Welcome, baby Jesse," Sinclair sighs, pulling me close against him and smiling at me as we watch the snow. Rafe crawls over to us and puts up his arms so that I will pull him into my lap, a request which I happily oblige.

"And welcome Princess Babygirl," I murmur, smiling and laughing a little at the ridiculous placeholder of a name. Sinclair laughs along with me. "Cora doesn't know it yet, but this is for you too. We love you so much already."

I sigh, feeling the warmth of my mate behind me, and my sweet baby in my lap, and the new bond with my little girl growing within me -And I close my eyes, feeling totally, completely blessed.

[HOT]Read novel Accidental Surrogate Chapter 483

– Growing Family Ella

“What do you mean I made it snow?” Cora frowns at me as she bustles around the kitchen, making mimosas. ” That’s ridiculous – you must have imagined it.”

“It totally snowed!” I protest, laughing and shaking my head at her, turning to Sinclair at the table for support.

“It did,” he says, raising his eyebrows at Cora even as he hands Rafe another slice of apple. “The news is completely baffled by the sudden cold-snap that immediately disappeared by morning. They’re calling it the duke’s miracle.”

“What!?” Cora gasps, spinning to stare at Sinclair wide-eyed.

“That’s so cool,” Roger says, grinning at baby Jesse in his arms, who peers up at his dad with sleepy eyes.” Mom’s magic, Jesse,” he whispers. ” It’s very cool.”

“You guys are just teasing me,” Cora sighs, leaning against the counter as I turn the knob on the stove, cutting off the fire beneath the pan of eggs, sausage, and bacon that I’ve finished frying up.

“Dominic is dead serious,” I say, nodding to Cora eagerly with raised eyebrows. “Seriously, word got to the media that the nation’s beloved duchess had her baby and that night it snowed unseasonably early – people are freaking out.” I laugh a little as I starting to portion our breakfast out onto plates.

“Oh my god,” Cora says, covering her face with her hands. “I didn’t even mean to do that – do you really think it was me?”

“You tend to affect the weather when you’re emotional,” Roger says, grinning at his magical mate with a happy shrug. “I think it makes a lot of sense.”

“Oh, that’s so weird,” Cora says with a sigh, shaking her head at Roger and then at me. “People are going to start figuring out what we can do, Ella,” she says. “We’re going to need to have some sort of story.”

“I think my secrets kind of already out,” I say, giving a little grimace. ”

And why do we have to tell anyone anything? Just let the rumors fly – it’s not anyone’s business but ours.”

“Yeah,” Cora says, rolling her eyes at me before turning back to her previous task of adding the world’s tiniest amount of orange juice to nearly-full glasses of champagne. “Until they burn us at the stake for being witches or something.”

"We won't let them do that," Sinclair murmurs, smirking a little as he focuses his attention on Rafe's breakfast.

"Plus," Roger says, shrugging at Cora as if it's inconsequential, "it's not like it will work. You can just rain on the fires, Cora."

I burst out laughing at this and Cora, despite herself, laughs too.

"Well, whatever," she sighs, carrying a mimosa over to Roger and Sinclair first, who murmur their thanks. "I guess you're right and it doesn't really matter at least not until our children develop some weird gifts that end up being dangerous or something. Or make them social pariahs."

She returns to the counter, handing me a glass of mimosa and taking one for herself, raising it to all of us in a toast. The rest of us raise our glasses as well, toasting baby Jesse and then drinking deeply

Well, they drink deeply. I fake mine, just letting the bubbles of the champagne press against my lips before putting the drink down on the counter, neatly tucked away where Cora can't see it.

Because as much as I would usually love to toast my nephew's birth with a festive breakfast beverage...

Well, my reasons for not drinking are so much better. Still, it's Cora's day, and I don't want to steal her thunder just yet. Not that I think she'd mind, just...one happy announcement at a time.

"How did he sleep?" I ask, raising my chin towards Jesse.

"Fitfully," Cora says, crossing her arms and frowning over at him. "But that's normal, right?"

I nod, smiling at her a little. "He'll find his patterns soon, don't worry. How did you sleep?"

"About the same," she says, giving me a little smile. "I kept waking up every time he like...moved."

I grin at her, remembering that habit in the early days of a new baby. "You'll get used to it too."

"Well, some people," Cora says, laughing already and glancing over at Roger, "are already used to it."

"You cannot begrudge me my sleep, Cora," Roger says, looking at her completely unashamed of himself. "It is self-care. I will not apologize for it."

“You have a baby to care for now,” she throws at him, though she smiles. I grin, truly appreciating their teasing relationship. “You need to be a little more self-less.”

“I will care for the baby during the day,” Roger says, gesturing to the baby cradled in his arm. “At night, he’s your son.”

We all laugh again, mostly because we know he’s not serious. Roger, like Sinclair, will certainly do his share of childcare without complaint, day or night. He’ll just tease Cora about it more, mostly because he knows that it makes her laugh.

“How can you take care of the baby all day,” Sinclair asks, turning mischievous eyes on his brother, ”

while you run the military from the palace?”

“I’ll bring him with me,” Roger says, grinning down at Jesse like it’s obvious. “Never too early to get the boy used to a war room.”

I grin, picturing Roger in his admiral’s uniform with a baby asleep on his shoulder, a little barf dribbling down his back. And honestly, I don’t mind it as much as I probably should. These Sinclair dads – I don’t think they’re going to have any hesitation about incorporating their children into the day-to-day activities of their lives.

As I consider it, though, my hand passively drifts over my stomach, because I wonder quietly if the same will be true when there’s a girl in the picture. Would Roger have said the same thing – that it’s never too early for the child to get used to a war room if Jesse had been a girl and not a boy?

I sigh a little, hoping that it’s not true. Because this little girl – she’s going to grow up with two big Alpha boys who are barely a year older than her, and I’m damn well going to have a word with them if they try to cut her out of their activities just because she’s a girl.

You all right? Sinclair says, passing the words discreetly into my mind but keeping the breakfast plates that I forgot about in my musings.

Yes, I say, letting him see my light worry but also letting him know that it’s not about anything big. Just...mom thoughts.

He nods to me, giving me a little smile as I take my seat next to him.

Our breakfast is lovely, but it goes far too fast. Sooner than I’d like, Sinclair puts a hand on my knee and looks at me with a sad expression, silently letting me know that we really have to get back to the

palace. He's a King after all and while our family comes first and we'll always make time for them, we do have responsibilities.

"Oh no," Cora says, pouting as she looks between us. "So soon?"

"I'm sorry," I say with a sigh. "I mean, if you'd just take me up on my offer to move into the palace while Jesse is a baby

But she just laughs and waves a hand at me as she gets up and clears our plates, dumping them in the sink. "Not a chance – you just gave us this house, we're not moving again just to have a free nanny."

"A free auntie," I say, getting up and moving around the table to say goodbye to Roger and Jesse. "Which is much better. Bye baby Jesse! See you soon!" I leaning down to kiss my baby nephew while Roger holds him safe in his arms.

"Ella," Cora says, frowning as she holds up my undrunk mimosa, which she has found still sitting by the sink. "

Why didn't you drink this?"

At the same moment, just as I'm standing up straight, Roger suddenly grabs my wrist, his eyes flaring wide as he looks up at me. "Wait a second..." he says, his voice suspicious.

I go still, my eyes flicking to Cora, who looks at me in confusion, and then to Sinclair, who starts to grin at me a little bit, shaking his head as he stands with Rafe in his arms.

"Ella," Roger says, slowly turning my wrist over and giving it a long sniff. " Oh my god!" he gasps, staring up at me in sudden delight. "You are! You totally are! How did I miss this!?"

"Miss what?" Cora asks, her eyes flicking around at us.

"You were distracted," Sinclair says, laughing and shrugging.

"Miss what!?" Cora demands again, standing up straight. But then her eyes go wide as she looks at the undrunk mimosa in her hand. "Oh my god!" she gasps.

"Well," I say, turning to grin at my mate. "Secret's out now, isn't it?"

Read Accidental Surrogate Chapter 484

Ella

It takes us longer than I know Sinclair would prefer to get out of Roger and Cora's house that morning, mostly because Cora spent so much time freaking out, hugging me, and scolding me for not telling her immediately. But in the end they let us go, Cora wiping her eyes and Roger giving us a big smile, baby Jesse asleep in his arms.

I hold Sinclair's hand the whole ride home, squeezing it, so happy and excited. We're just so blessed right now, and I'm doing everything I can to bask in that glow. My mate, my baby boy, my baby girl on the way?

What more could I ask for?

When we get back into the palace, Sinclair walks me back to our suite of rooms, though I can tell his mind is already on other things.

"You can go," I say, balancing my little meatball Rafe against my elbow while I give Sinclair a little shove on the shoulder. "You don't have to walk me back into the rooms – I'm already inside our house!"

"Indulge me, Ella," he says, giving me a little glancing smile as he pushes open our door and holds it open for me. "I can feel my instincts kicking in already – I'm not going to want to leave your side for the next six months."

"Oh sure," I say, rolling my eyes at him and carrying the baby over to his changing station. "Like overprotective pregnancy Alpha is so different from overprotective new dad Alpha."

"It is different," he says, smirking at me as he leans against the wall, watching me make quick work of Rafe's dirty diaper, our little baby happily babbling as I do. "Or at least, it feels different to me."

“Well, whatever keeps you eagerly at my side,” I say, smiling at him with a wink.

“What about you?” he asks, raising his chin towards me. “Are you feeling any different yet? I feel almost bad, honestly – you barely got finished breastfeeding. You didn’t even get to do any of the fun non-pregnant things, like shots of tequila. Or a whole lot of sushi.”

“That’s okay,” I say with a sigh, snapping Rafe’s onesie shut and lifting him back up into my arms, where he squeals and reaches for me, grabbing fistfuls of my hair. “I’ll just take a raincheck on those,” I say, stepping close to my mate and letting him wrap me in my arms. “After this next one is born and ready for solid foods, you owe me two children’s worth of debauchery.”

“Done,” he says, smirking and cupping my face in his hands, planting a little kiss on my mouth. “Except, knowing you, you’ll probably be planning baby 3.”

“We’ll see,” I say, giving a happy little sigh. “But do you know? There is one thing that I’m particularly excited about.”

“What is it?” he asks, genuinely curious.

I break into a broad smile and turn towards the bed, striding to it as Rafe gives an excited little giggle. “The re- establishment of the nest!” I say, throwing one hand in the air. Sinclair bursts into laughter as I start tugging at the blankets, arranging them into a comfortable circle that looks incredibly cozy. Honestly, I want to climb in right now.

“This is going to be the second version of the nest,” Sinclair comments, and I can tell by his happy tone that he’s pleased. “Next 2.0. Are you planning innovations? Improvements?”

“Well, it’s a Queen’s nest now,” I say, sinking happily down onto my bed, taking Rafe with me. “And it has to accommodate a Prince as well as a growing Princess,” I say, grinning at my son. “So yeah, I’m going to need

some funds,” I continue with a sigh, looking seriously up at my mate. “Like, five to ten thousand dollars?”

“For pillows?” he protests, laughing.

“Oh no,” I say, grinning. “That’s just the blanket budget, and the snacks. The pillows are going to be extra.”

He shakes his head at me, still laughing, but comes over and again takes my face in his hands. “Whatever you want,” he says, smiling.

“Exactly what I like to hear. Do you have to go?” I ask, a little mournful. I mean, I just made this nest, and it does look so cozy...

“Yes,” he murmurs, leaning down to press another kiss to my mouth. “But I’ll be back to help you christen the nest later.” He sighs and steps away, handing me a tablet off the bedside table. “Order whatever you want, but please, Ella, try not to bankrupt us.”

“No promises!” I sing, leaning back against the pillows and settling Rafe in next to me as Sinclair laughs and heads for the door. “Come on, baby,” I sigh as I start to click through the tablet, Rafe starting to crawl around in the blankets next to me. “Let’s start by ordering you and Sissy some matching outfits...we’ll get some for baby Jesse too...”
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Two Weeks Later

“Cora!” I call into our little closet. “Is he ready!? Let’s go!”

“It’s my party, Ella!” Cora calls back, though I can hear her laughter.

“I knowww,” I whine, a tuxedoed Rafe sitting calmly on my hip. He also looking curiously towards the closet where Cora and getting Jesse dressed in his own little tuxedo. Jesse’s two weeks old now, and

just the cutest baby in the world – Rafe excepted, of course – and I can't wait to see how he looks in the matching tuxedo I got him.

"You know it's ridiculous, Ella," Cora says, coming out of the closet finally with her happy little boy, who is all smiles pretty much all the time. I squeal when I see him, just barely able to hold his little bald head up. "He's just going to barf all over it, plus he's only going to wear it for an hour! He has to be naked when you present him to mom."

"It will be the most elegant barf!" I laugh, hurrying close and tickling Jesse's fancy little belly. "And I don't care if he wears it for an hour or a minute, it was too cute to resist." I laugh, completely undone by the sight of Cora's and Jesse, all dressed up. Rafe babbles happily and reaches forward, trying to touch Jesse, which he always does. I grin when I see it, as I always do these little boys, they really do have a bond already. Rafe gets so excited whenever Jesse comes into a room.

Jesse, even though I don't think he really understands what's going on, smiles when he hears Rafe and gives a happy laugh.

"Your guests are gathered," Roger calls from the door to the living room, raising an eyebrow in our direction. "Are you going to come out here, or just hide in here with the kids all night?"

"We're coming," Cora calls, rolling her eyes at him and pretending to be exasperated even though I know she's not. "Sorry you had to entertain guests for like, ten seconds alone, Roger."

"It was absolute torture," he says, crossing the room to us, a half-drunk glass of champagne in his hand. "Why do you think I came in here? I missed my buddies."

Rafe gurgles and waves to Roger, which makes me burst into a happy, proud smile. He hasn't said any words yet, but he's getting there.

“Ohhh, you’re looking very dapper,” Roger says, bending down to peer at his son. “The Goddess will be very impressed, I’m sure.”

“How could she not be,” Cora says, smoothing down the very little bit of hair that Jesse has on his head. “He’s very perfect.”

“Yes, he is,” I say, laughing a little as Roger slips an arm around Cora’s waist and we together head for the door. ” And very excited for his baptism, I know.”

“We all are,” Cora says, grinning at me. And in this moment I know she’s remembering Rafe’s baptism, and her own experiences there.

But this time? It’s my turn. Because I’m the godmother, and I’m the one who gets treated to a little insight into baby Jesse’s future world.

And I absolutely can’t wait to see what’s in store for him.

Read Accidental Surrogate

Novel Accidental Surrogate has been updated Chapter 485:

Chapter 485: Jesse’s Baptism

Ella

A few hours later our entire party is gathered in the forest close to midnight, sipping champagne and mingling quietly as we wait for the hour to be right for Jesse’s baptism. We have a priestess here as well, of course, though this one is much more thoroughly vetted than the last.

I’m in incredibly good spirits as I look around at our party of loved-ones, truly enjoying my night, but when my eyes fall on Cora I see that she’s gnawing her lip a bit with anxiety.

“Oh, Cors,” I sigh, reaching out and putting a hand on her shoulder. I glance over at where Roger is standing a few feet away next to Henry with the baby in his arms, both of them talking with Sinclair, who has a sleeping Rafe held tight against his shoulder. “It will be all right!”

“I know it will,” she sighs, twisting her hands together and speaking softly to me. “And that even if it’s not, it’s not like I can change anything, you know?”

“I know,” I say, remembering how anxious I was at Rafe’s baptism. “But mom she can’t have anything really bad in store for him. It’s going to be all good things!”

“Oh, come on, Ella,” Cora says, shooting me a little glare. “It’s not like mom gave us the easy road just because we’re her daughters. We grew up in an orphanage. We had dark priests stalking us our whole lives.”

“But we had each other!”

“I just want my baby to have a good life,” she sighs, looking anxiously up at the sky, almost as if she can bully our mom into giving her baby a blessing if she glares at the moon enough. “It tortures me to think that he’s going to have to go through...half of what we did.”

“He’s going to have ups and downs, like the rest of us,” I say, wrapping my arms around my sister. “You can’t spare him from that.”

“Yes, I can,” she growls. “I’ll just... lock him in a very comfortable little basement. Very safe, very cozy.”

I laugh and shake my head at her. “Your baby is going to have a big life, Cora,” I say, giving her a squeeze.

“Yeah well, we’ll see how cheerful you are six months from now,” she says, reaching out to trail a little finger down my baby bump. I grin as I look down at it, tapping on my little bond with babygirl to say hello. But she’s sleeping or

something at the moment and doesn't reply, which is fine. I'm distracted anyway, and I like to give her my full attention when she nudges the bond.

"I know," I sigh, happy but knowing that Cora's right. "I'll be a mess then, I'm sure."

My pregnancy thus far has gone really well. In many ways it's not that different from my first two weeks with Rafe, except with significantly less drama in my personal life. And while I treasured every single moment I was pregnant with Rafe, this pregnancy? Well, it's kind of been a dream – the kind of pregnancy I used to fantasize about. Safe, comfortable, sharing the experience with my little family?

I'm so grateful to have gotten here.

But still, tonight is about Jesse – and as much as I could gush about my pregnancy for days, I want to focus on him.

"The hour grows close!" the priestess calls an old woman this time, dressed in the silvery-white robes of the goddess. She gives us a warm, motherly smile and holds out her hands.

"Go time," I say, slipping my arm to Cora's waist and walking forward with her. Our mates meet us there in front of the goddess, and Henry draws close as well. Our guests gather around, everyone quieting

now so they can hear the words.

Cora reaches to take Jesse from Roger's arms and Roger hands him over readily. I dip my head and give Rafe a little kiss on his sleeping cheek before Sinclair hands our baby over to Henry for safekeeping while we're in the forest.

"I'll keep him warm and safe," Henry says, giving us a wink. "Enjoy yourselves."

“We will,” Sinclair assures him, running a hand over Rafe’s dark head before turning back to the priestess.

“I can’t believe you’re going to take my little baby into the forest without me,” Cora whispers, her voice breaking a little. “I haven’t been away from him in...ever...”

“It’ll be fifteen minutes,” I say, laughing and touching my sister gently on the cheek, even though I remember precisely what she’s feeling. I feel emotion stirring in me as well, the product of the special day combined with my memories, combined with my love for our growing little family.

I take a deep breath and sniff, turning towards the priestess.

“You can’t start crying already,” Sinclair murmurs, his hand warm on my back.

“I can do whatever I want,” I mumble back, laughing a little. “I’m a Queen.”

He laughs with me, but we turn our attention to the priestess, who reaches out her arms for Jesse. Cora gives a half -hearted little sigh, but passes him over, making many of our gathered friends laugh a little in understanding.

The priestess smiles down at the wide- awake little Jesse, who looks like he peers back at her curiously, seeming to understand, somehow, that it’s an important day.

“Who presents this child for dedication?” the priestess says, smiling at the four of us.

“We do,” Roger replies, his voice steady and more serious than it usually is.

“His mother and I.”

The priestess nods, and I smile, recognizing the words and the process from Rafe’s ceremony. “And who will carry him to meet the Goddess?”
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“We will,” Sinclair answers, nodding down at me. “Ella and Dominic Sinclair, his godparents.”

The priestess smiles at us and bids us to take the baby, giving us instructions that are more ceremonial than anything else. After all, Sinclair and I know what to do, even if we haven’t done it before. Together we step forward, and Sinclair takes baby Jesse in his arms. I loop my arm through his elbow, take one last look over my shoulder at Cora, and then together my mate and I carry our nephew into the darkness of the forest.

We walk for what feels like...too long.

“Is it supposed to be this far?” I ask, peering into the darkness for the pool that’s supposed to appear ahead.

“I don’t know,” Sinclair says, his voice perfectly calm. “It’s a magical forest, Ella. Maybe it takes everyone a different amount of time to get to the pool.”

“What!?” I hiss, looking around suddenly. “I thought it was just...the woods!”

He laughs, giving me a glance before turning his eyes back to Jesse, shifting the baby in his arms so that he can look around. “Look how interested Jesse is,” he laughs. “Maybe it’s taking a while because

Jesse’s having a good time. Maybe he wants it to take longer.”

“Well, hurry it up, little baby,” I say, giving Jesse a little poke in the belly that makes him smile. “Auntie’s wearing heels, and her feet hurt in this rough terrain.” Jesse’s just wrapped in a little swaddling blanket now, but Sinclair is right – he’s very cheerful and interested, though I don’t think his eyes can actually see much.

Almost as if on cue, a light suddenly appears ahead of us in the forest pretty silver haze. a

“Looks like it worked,” Sinclair murmurs, reaching out to take my hand. I press my palm to his, giving it a squeeze.

“Good job, baby,” I say, smiling and Jesse. And then the three of us together move forward, ready to introduce him to his grandmother and get a little hint about his fate.

Read Accidental Surrogate Chapter 485