

Accidental Surrogate For Alpha By Caroline Above Chapter 121

Accidental Surrogate for Alpha Chapter 121

Trigger Warning: This chapter contains experiences of abuse and sexual assault nothing explicit, but please take care reading..

Sinclair

Ella's small body is completely stiff in my arms, even though we're in her favorite

place. I've only bathed with her once before, but it didn't take a rocket scientist to

figure out how much she loves a bubble bath. She takes at least four a week, and

when she's upset I've known her to have a bath even after showering.

Until I spoke

with Cora about Ella's self-care practices, I didn't understand the connection to her

childhood experience of neglect, but now that I know I'm determined never to deprive

her of the comfort even if my water bills go through the roof and the city goes into a

drought.

"Are you ready to talk this out, trouble?" I inquire, resting my hands on her round

tummy and feeling a pulse of stress from the baby. A fresh spark of worry assails me,

and I know that Rafe is channeling his mother's fraught emotions. Ella doesn't

respond to my question, and I press on, realizing that the poor little wolf isn't going to

relax until she knows I'm not going to reject her"

Sweetheart, it never even crossed my mind to end things. I love you

Ella's muscles tighten further, though I didn't think such a thing was possible.

"But..She stammers, twisting around to look at me, "but you left!"

Im sorry that I walked out."I reply gently, grazing my knuckles over her

cheek. “But it wasn’t because I ever had doubts about us.” I share, wondering about my sweet mate’s reaction. I know some survivors of child abuse view any confrontation as a disaster or threat, but Ella has weathered my anger in the past without any signs of a trauma response. “I was angry that you thought you don’t contribute anything to our relationship, and my wolf lost it when you suggested you couldn’t be my Luna. The idea of losing you pushed me over the edge, and I needed to calm down before continuing.”

Ella’s brow furrows, and I can see her grappling with her emotions. “Dominic, I didn’t just think you might end things.” She whispers, staring at the water. “I wasn’t even sure you’d come back.. think.. I think maybe I have some abandonment issues I wasn’t completely aware of. And Mike’s betrayal and learning that I’m a wolf has thrown them into very sharp focus.”

Understanding washes over me, and I gently flip her body the rest of the way over.

When Ella is facing me completely, I snuggle her to my chest, lowering my knees so

that she can straddle my lap. “I’m so sorry, baby.” I profess, kissing her head and stroking her spine. “I shouldn’t

have left you when you were already upset, I just don’t trust myself not to say things I

don’t mean when I’m that angry. The same way I would never make a pack ruling or

deliver a punishment in the height of a fury. I think taking some space in

the heat of
the moment can be healthy, but maybe we can find some way to take
breaks in fights
without too much physical distance.” I suggest. “But even if we can’t,
you need to
know that no matter how far I go or how long I stay away, I will always
come back to
you, Ella.”

Ella whimpers, and her arms tighten around me. “
Thank you,” She hiccups, “and I’m sorry I said I couldn’t be your Luna,
but you have to
admit that I’m not pulling my weight here. This isn’t the first time I’ve
tried to be there
for you and failed.”

“Ella, look at me for a moment.” I order, sliding my finger under her
chin and pulling
her eyes up to mine. “First of all you take care of me all the time. You
saved my
campaign. You keep me calm
when I’m being an ogre You stand up to bullies like the Prince and
Lydia, and you
share my burdens even when I don’t want you to. Moreover, I need to
dominate my
mate. It’s in an Alpha’s DNA to nurture and protect. If you didn’t let me
comfort and
take care of you, I would be a mess.”

Ella frowns. “But I didn’t let you. I panicked.
“That’s the other thing.” I sigh, recalling the terror that came over her
beautiful face
when I suggested tying her up. I’ve growled and grumbled at Ella a
thousand times.
I’ve put her over my knee and overpowered her countless times without
any issue. In
fact most of the time her wolf responds to my bossiness like a bee to
honey. “I think

we both know this didn't happen randomly. I accidentally triggered something specific, didn't I?"

I'm still holding Ella's chin, but her eyes look anywhere but at me.

Slight pressure

nudges my fingers as Ella gives a slight nod, and then her wide gaze returns to mine,

suddenly so vulnerable that my heart aches. "Do we have to talk about it?"

I wish I could tell her no, promise that she won't ever have to relive her painful

memories, but I know that wouldn't help anything. "We're in a sexual relationship, Ella.

I can't avoid your triggers if I don't know what they are." I reason, "and keeping these

things buried only causes them to fester.

Tears well in those brilliant gold orbs, and I hate knowing that I'm causing my mate to

cry for the umpteenth time today. "Do we have to talk about it now.

I think so." I resolve gravely. "It's never going to hurt any less, and the sooner you tell

me, the sooner it will be over with."

Ella nods again, and I let her rest her cheek on my chest as she begins to speak. "The

orphanage had these dormitories that were divided by age. So the youngest children

would share a room, and the older we got, we would move up accordingly. Cora is a

year older than me, but when she turned eleven and was going to be moved into a

dorm with the older girls we both panicked a bit. We'd always been together and didn't

want to be separated, and she also used to crawl into my bed at night when she had

nightmares – which was most nights. She was afraid that the older girls

would make
fun of her, and I didn't want to leave her without a friend when monsters
visited her
dreams. Long story short, I pitched a fit so they would allow me to move
with her."

"I remember being surprised at how easily they agreed, but the
dormitory matron
seemed really pleased to have me." Ella pauses, taking a deep breath.

"She was
always telling me how pretty I was.. and that she'd had her eye on me
for some time. I
didn't understand what she meant, but she always gave me a really
uneasy feeling. In
hindsight I think that might have been part of why I was so determined
to stay with
Cora... I think my instincts were warning me that the new dorm wasn't
safe."

As Ella speaks, my wolf is growling louder and louder in my head, his
energy
becoming more vicious and unhinged by the moment. We both know
what is coming,
and suddenly I'm doubting whether or not I'll be able to stay calm
enough to hear this.

"The first night in the dorm seemed normal at first. Lights out was at
eight, so
everyone got in bed and everything shut off. But when the clock struck
midnight,
everything changed. I remember waking up with Cora beside me, and all
the other
girls were out of bed and slinking away."

"I watched them sneak behind curtains, in cupboards, behind furniture
and into any
nook and Cranny they could find... They were hiding." Ella explains
hoarsely. "I tried
to ask what was happening, but no one answered. I had enough sense to

realize

something was very wrong, so woke Cora and told her to hide. She climbed into the laundry basket, and I got under my bed and held myself up off the floor, balancing my

hands and feet against the underside of the bed frame”

“The matron came in about a minute later, and she didn’t say a word, she just began

searching. She must have been excited that there were new children to prey on,

because she found some of the veteran girls and just ignored them. She would open a

cabinet, peer inside, and cluck when she saw the trembling child inside, then close it

up as if nothing happened... Then she found Cora.”

Ella’s eyes are clenched shut, and I’m trying to calm myself down enough to purr for

her, but it isn’t easy. “I didn’t know what was going to happen, but every instinct I

possessed was screaming with alarm. I knew that it was bad and I didn’t want Cora to

be hurt. so I jumped out of my hiding spot and made sure she saw me. I told her...

I told her to take me instead.”

Accidental Surrogate For Alpha By Caroline Above Chapter 122

Sinclair

Don’t shift, don’t shift, don’t shift. I think manically Ella needs you.

Listening to Ella recount her childhood always makes me furious, but this time is

worse than all the others. I’ve suspected that Ella suffered terrible traumas for some

time now, but before this night I’d been able to pacify my outrage with

the hope that

I'm wrong.

No longer.

As Ella speaks, I wonder how she could ever imagine herself weak. I

can't even stand

to listen to her story, but she actually lived it. She sacrificed herself for her sister, and

she survived things I can only imagine

"When the matron realized it was me, she smiled so cruelly that my stomach turned she was only too glad to take, me instead of Cora." Ella continues, shuddering with

the memory. Her unease gives my wolf the push he needed to put aside his own rage

and comfort her. I finally manage a weak purr, and Ella presses her nose to my chest,

breathing in my scent.

"She took me to her own room and put me in her bed, and then she got in with me

and.. started touching me in ways I didn't like or understand.

She made me touch her too, and she never stopped talking She told me how pretty I

was over and over, and kept asking me if I liked it. I said no, but she just insisted that

this was a special, secret game I was lucky to play. She said everything I was feeling

might be confusing, but it was good and right and natural. She said it took practice,

but that we'd have plenty of time.. Afterwards she took me back to the dorm with a

reminder not to share our secret. Cora asked me what happened but I didn't know

how to explain."

"The next day I went to the doctor in residence, and I told him what the matron had

done. I'd never liked him much, but in my heart I knew what had

happened was
wrong, and I didn't know who else to tell. I thought that since it was
about my body,
the doctor was the one who could help. There was no such thing as sex
ed at the
orphanage and no one else ever talked to us about our bodies. At first I
was relieved
to tell someone. The doctor seemed very concerned, and agreed that it
sounded
strange.”

“Then he told me that he needed to examine me..

Ella's words are coming in starts and stops now, and her shaking is
getting worse. The
bath is still steaming around us, so I know she isn't cold and I know the
worst isn't

over yet. “He took off my clothes and put me on the exam table. and
then I'll never

forget the way he said, ‘now it's very important that you be still, Ella.

This is a different

kind of exam than you're used to, and if you move too much I could hurt
you.

Tears stream down Ella's cheeks as she quotes the doctor, and it takes all
my

strength to contain my wolf. “Then he said, T know little girls can have
a hard time

staying still, so I have these nifty straps to help you. He pulled out
restraints from

under the table and strapped me down. and then he asked me exactly
what the

matron did, and when I explained he would touch me exactly how she
had, saying like

this? and if I didn't answer, if I cried or objected, he would only do it
rougher and

demand I tell him”

“After the first minute or so I figured out what he was about, and I didn't

want to
answer his questions anymore, but if I didn't speak he would start
guessing more and
more abuses, always demonstrating them on my body. They were far
worse than
anything she'd done.. So I answered. I told him how to hurt me." Ella is
interrupted by
my ferocious snarl, and she looks up at me for the first time since she
started
speaking. Her eyes are overflowing, but she offers me a bitter smile and
reaches up to
stroke my jaw. "It's okay, big bad wolf, it's almost over.
My snarl becomes a whine, and Ella determinedly forges on. "I was too
young to
understand why they did those things, but I knew how it made me feel:
guilty, tainted,
defiled.. I never wanted it to happen again, but I was already broken, and
there were
other girls like Cora who weren't yet.
Oh no. No, no, no tell me she didn't! I have a horrible sick feeling in my
stomach, and I
wish could go back in time and whisk Ella away from that horrible place
before anyone
could hurt her.
Of course, that only would have meant other children would be hurt,
which is how I
already know what Ella did. My brave, brilliant little mate would never
stand by and let
another child be abused... even if it meant being abused herself.
"So I stopped hiding at night. I gave myself up so the others wouldn't be
touched.. I
figured I couldn't be ruined more than I already was, and it was better
than allowing
someone else to be destroyed." Ella shares, confirming my fears but also
magnifying

my despair by explaining her logic. “The matron came almost every night... and the doctor would call me in for check ups every few weeks. I hated those visits worse than anything. the matron was sort of gentle, and she never tied me down or gagged me. She didn’t want to inflict pain, she seemed determined to make me like it.”

The doctor was different. He was a true sadist; he loved my fear, loved my pain. And he escalated over time.” Ella hides her face in my neck as she concludes her horrible tale “When I was twelve he r*ped me, and that’s when Cora and I ran away. I invited the other girls to run with us, but most were more afraid of living on the street than they were of the matron. Luckily they didn’t know about the doctor, and I warned the ones who stayed behind to never confide in him.”

My hands are clamped so tightly on Ella I’m afraid I must be hurting her, but she doesn’t complain.

She’s still crying, but her muscles have unwound now that her story is complete.

There are tears in my own eyes, and I can only kiss and caress my sweet mate as I

process everything she shared. “

Are they still there? The matron and the doctor?” I finally ask, my voice a dangerous hiss.

“No.” Ella replies. “Cora and I could only live outside during the summers, and we tried

to stay away through the first winter, but eventually the police found us squatting in an

abandoned building and returned us to the orphanage. When we got back

they had
both been fired. Apparently a state inspection was run and the entire
staff was booted
out. The new regime wasn't much better, so we kept running away in the
summers,
but it was safe enough to return each winter.. I have no idea where those
two are now.
I'll hunt them down." I decide, bloodthirsty fantasies already racing
through my mind. If
it's possible, my wolf is dreaming of even gorier revenges than I am,
particularly for
the doctor.
We'll just see how he likes being tied up and gagged. How much he
enjoys pain and
having things shoved.
"You don't have to do that." Ella interrupts his disturbing plans, nuzzling
my throat. "I
survived, and I'm safe now." She says it almost as though she's trying to
remind
herself more than me, and I scold myself for turning to vengeance when
she still
needs comforting.
"You are safe." I confirms, stroking her hair and depositing kisses
everywhere I can
reach. "You're safe and loved and the only way anyone will ever hurt
you again is over
my dead body." I don't add that I still plan on finding her abusers, if not
for vengeance
than to ensure they never harm another child. I'm painfully aware of the
fact that other
children might be in their grasps at this very moment, but Ella doesn't
need to hear
that Ella pulls her head up, narrowing her red eyes at me "Dominic, I
would rather be
hurt than lose you.

No. I proclaim, the corner of my mouth twitching up. “I will lay down my life before I allow you to get so much as a paper cut. I will throw myself to the wolves if you even stub your toe.

Ella manages a small laugh, and the pain in my chest eases slightly She peeks up at me from beneath her lashes “But if you’re not here then who will kiss my injuries better? Who will keep me from bumping into furniture and bruising myself?

“Hmm, you make a good point.” I decide, “perhaps we can negotiate the level of injury that warrants my death.”

“How gracious of you” She smiles, sighing as I run my hands up and down her sides.

I’m infinitely relieved that Ella has finally relaxed, but I can’t get over what she told me.

“You’re incredible, you know that? I inquire, knowing she doesn’t want to hear it, but shushing her objections. “I mean it, Ella. I know you were angry with yourself for panicking when you were trying to help me, but the fact that you did is the direct result of the sacrifices you made to protect your family. It’s not a sign of weakness Sweetheart. It’s evidence of your strength your resilience. I lean down to kiss her You were born to be a Luna, and you will be mine.

Previous Chapter

Accidental Surrogate For Alpha By Caroline Above Chapter 123

#Chapter 123 – Rogue Attacks

Sinclair

After Ella shared her story with me, we spent a long time just kissing and cuddling, talking through our feelings and reaffirming our love. Still, Ella wasn't entirely soothed.

I could tell she was still beating herself up about her panic attack, no matter how many

times I promised her it was all right

I just want to be able to give you what you need.

Ella moans after a while, sounding as miserable as ever.

"I don't need to tie you up, baby. I promise, wondering if I'll ever be able to convince

her that she's enough for me exactly as she is. "There are plenty of other things we

can do."

"But the idea of being tied up with you doesn't frighten me." Ella confesses, surprising

me. "I think it was just the way you asked. Because it wasn't about you and me, it was

about what had been done to me in the past.

I frown, unsure if she's being completely forthright. "That's possible." I agree. "But the

chances are that if the question was that upsetting, feeling it would be worse."

"Not if I know it's coming, and not if I'm handcuffed or something. The straps on a

medical table are different." Ella argues. "I'm not saying I want to try it right this

second or when you're really stressed. It would probably be better when things are

calmer so that if I do panic it doesn't ruin everything, but I think I would like to try

sometime."

"You really don't have to, Ella." I assure her "Not for my sake. It should

be fun for both
of us, not something you have to endure.”
“I’m not just saying it for you Ella insists. “I don’t like thinking that they
still have so
much power over me. Maybe if I can get over that fear by replacing the
bad memories
with some good ones I can take my power back.”
I narrow my eyes at the little minx, wondering if this is another tactic to
convince me.
Ella knows I’d do anything to help her, and it would certainly be clever
to turn the
tables on me this way.
However when I look into her shining eyes, I see only sincerity. “Okay,
one day when
things are calmer, we can try” I decide, running my hands over her slick
skin. “But if
you give me reason to think you’re just humoring me, you’re going to be
in big trouble,
baby.”
“I’m not” Ella insists indignantly, sitting up and giving me a delectable
view of water
dripping down her bare breasts. “I don’t know if it’s my wolf coming
out or what, but
the more time that passes, the more I find myself craving your.. well,
your dominance.”
She flushes bright red as the words leave her mouth, and I’m relieved to
see that all
the heavy emotion of the last hour is starting to fade in favor of
flirtation.
“It might be your wolf.” I confirm with a grin, sliding my palms up to
cup her sensitive
mounds running my thumbs over the tight buds at their center. Ella
shivers and arches
into my hands, delightfully sensitive amidst her raging hormones.
“Or maybe you’ve always been a secret sex friend, and you just needed

time to tap
into that part of yourself.”

Ella blinks, dropping her gaze for a moment before looking back up at me in surprise,
as if she’s just realized something. “Do you remember when we first found each other,
and I was confused because I felt like a different person with you? You said I was
becoming the person I was always meant to be, and it just hadn’t been safe for me to
come out of my shell before.”

“Mmm,” I rumble fondly, needing no help to recall our food fight. “As I recall you
thought I was full of it.”

“But you were right.” Ella muses, sliding her arms around my neck. “My wolf
recognized you even before I knew she existed.”

“Are you saying I’m right now too, and you are a sex friend?” I joke, beyond pleased
when her beautiful laugh meets my ears
“only for you. Ella grins, making my inner wolf swell with pride.
“

Well you never have to worry about getting my dominance, trouble.” I tease, dragging
her forward for a kiss. “You know exactly how to bring it out” I nip her plump lower lip
and claim her mouth again, the passion always simmering for this incredible woman
surging to a sudden boil. I’m already fantasizing about how I can create the most
pleasure for us both without losing the stranglehold I’m keeping on my mating
instincts.

when the bedroom door crashes open in the distance
I smell Hugo before I see him, which is the only reason I don’t react

more forcefully.

Instead I simply pull my mouth lips from Ella's, my wolf going into high alert. If Hugo is barging in this way it must be an emergency. Ella yelps when my Beta stalks in a moment later, Ella is hiding her face in my neck, almost as though she thinks Hugo might not be able to see her if she can't see him. I offer her a soft purr, but I look up at my second-in command with instant anxiety, "What's wrong?" He glances nervously at Ella, but I nod for him to continue. "One of our spies in the border territories just called in an urgent warning. Apparently a coalition of rogue wolves is planning an assault on Moon Valley. Their numbers are in the hundreds and they're coming at us from all sides. This isn't just some raid it's a highly coordinated attack and you can bet they didn't organize it on their own. "When?" I demand sharply, already reaching for a towel. I slide Ella's body off of mine, concealing her beneath the bubbles of the deep bath and rising out of the water. "Tonight." Hugo sighs in exasperation. "We have maybe two hours to get reinforcements to our scouts." I swear viciously, the borders of Moon Valley extend for hundreds of miles, we don't have enough time to reach our most remote outposts, and those are probably the ones the rogues will be targeting first. "Call in everyone you can and immediately deploy those already on duty. Send them to the most vulnerable outposts first, and make sure everyone is fully briefed. Deploy the warning sirens and

release a bulletin
to all the media outlets in the city, order an immediate lockdown and roll
out the
emergency helpline for anyone who sights or encounters rogue
aggressors. Tell them
to issue reminders on shelter locations, and set closing times for two
hours from now
Have the hospitals initiate their own emergency protocols and put out a
call to any
willing and able wolves who want to help defend the city, but make the
dangers damn
clear. No one under 18.

The words flow from my lips out of pure reflex, and Hugo immediately
turns on his
heel to carry out my instructions. When he's gone, I turn back to Ella,
who is looking
up at me with wide eyes. I pluck her out of the bath and wrap her in a
towel. “

Listen to me, Ella. Your guards are going to take you to a safe house and
it's critical
that you stay there until the danger has passed. I'll come for you as soon
as I can, but
listen to the guards and don't set a single foot outside until the all clear
orders have
been given. Don't open the door for anyone, and don't even think about
doing
anything heroic.

If you see an injured child lying in the street, leave them for the guards
to help. Do you
understand me?”

Ella furrows her brow, unease flowing off her in waves “But where will
you be? What
are you going to be doing?”

“I have to stand with my men.” I explain. “We're going to need all the
help we can get.”

“Fighting, you mean.” Ella clarifies. “You’re going into battle?”
Yes.” I answer simply, knowing I can’t shield her from the truth. “I wish I didn’t have to
leave you, but I can’t let other wolves defend my city without me.”
Ella’s lower lip, still swollen from my kisses, is trembling. “Do you
promise that you’ll
come back to me?”
“I’m not going to let some dirty rogue get the better of me, baby.” Taking
her face in my
hands, I continue, “Now give me your word that you’ll do as I’ve
asked” I command.
“Go to the safe house, listen to the guards, and wait for me.”
Ella nods shakily, and I pull her into my arms. Our lips collide with
sudden desperation
as if we’re both thinking the same thing. Just in case it’s for the last
time. Suddenly I
realize I never walked Ella through the contingency plans she requested,
like what to
do if I’m killed. Unfortunately there’s no time for that now. Her guards
know what to do
if the worst happens, and that will have to be enough for the time being.
“I love you.” I profess, stealing one last kiss. “No matter what.”
“I love you too. Ella answers, tears spilling down her cheeks. “Please be
safe,
Dominic.”
“Don’t worry, trouble. We’ll be together again before you know it. I
answer, but we both
know that’s not a promise I can make. Every time I go into battle, I do so
knowing it
might be the end, but I’ve never had more of a reason to survive than I
do now, and I’ll
be damned if I’m going to let this be my last moment with Ella. I’m
going to make it – I
have to.

Accidental Surrogate For Alpha By Caroline Above Chapter 124

#Chapter 124 – Lydia Gives Advice

3rd Person “Another rogue attack?” Lydia scoffed, circling the Prince as he studied his plans for the invasion, “haven’t you attempted enough to realize they aren’t going to work?” “This one is different.” The Prince grouched in reply. “I’m not just targeting Sinclair’s bitch or a few tourists. The entire pack will be in shambles and Dominic will be held responsible.”

A moment later the emergency sirens began blaring through the city, and the Prince surged to his feet, “What! No! How did he find out?” Lydia swore under her breath, “because he keeps spies in the neutral territories, just like you do – just like all the Alpha’s do.” She promptly crossed the floor and snatched up the television remote, flipping to the news where an emergency bulletin was dominating the screen.

An anxious reporter read off a teleprompter, his voice full of urgency. “Moon Valley is facing imminent attack from rogue actors. Take shelter in your home or at your nearest designated safety point. Alpha Sinclair has ordered an immediate lockdown until the “all clear” chime can be rung. Pack enforcers are on their way to meet the threat and hopefully force back the rogues before they can breach the city, but extreme caution is advised for all citizens. The human mayor has been informed and

is instituting a city shut down under the guise of a gas leak..."

The reporter carried on in the background as Lydia turned back to the Prince,

annoyance dominating her features. "How much time is there before the attack?"

"They won't reach the city for another three hours at least, if they make it into the

territory at all." The Prince explained, overflowing with agitated energy.

"Where are they striking?" Lydia pressed, her mind racing for a solution to this crisis.

"Their scouts have identified half a dozen stretches along the border with the least

patrols and easiest access." He shared, pressing a button on the underside of his

desk to summon his beta.

"That's exactly where Dominic will go." Lydia gritted out. "They should be targeting

more mid-level outposts." "But they'll have a harder time breaching those." The Prince

argued obstinately.

"Yes, but they might actually get through with a few losses. The way you've organized

this, all the reinforcements are going to meet them head on and they won't actually be

able to get into the city!" Lydia exclaimed, losing her patience with the man's stupidity.

"Well it's too late to change plans now, so I don't know what you expect me to do!"

Prince Damon exploded, equally sick of the bossy she-wolf's criticism.

He paced back

and forth, dragging his hands through his hair in frustration. "He'll be out there fighting

with them... the self-righteous bastard..." He mused after a moment. "I could send

some of my own enforcers under the guise of helping fend off the attack.

With enough men, they might be able to kill him and frame the rogues.” Lydia’s heart fluttered nervously. She wanted to destroy Sinclair, but he was still her fated mate. The idea of his death made her wolf writhe inside her chest, still, she might have gotten over that. She couldn’t get over the idiocy. “It will never work. Even if they were strong enough to overpower him, he’ll have an entire army at his back. Besides,” She pointed to the television, where the bulletin still flashed violently on the screen. “They’re calling for able-bodied wolves to join the fight, which means there will be dozens of witnesses even if you do somehow manage to succeed!” “Then I’ll go after his whore!” The Prince lashed out, slamming his fist into his desk. “He won’t be there to protect her this time!” Lydia shook her head, “She’ll be in a safe house. Besides, haven’t you learned your lesson by now? Think of your own situation, if she dies he only looks more sympathetic.” “But he won’t have an heir.” The Prince insisted. “But people know he’s not sterile now – he can make another.” Lydia explained. “Look, you can’t defeat him. Every time you try, he manages to outmaneuver you. You can’t overpower him because he’s too strong. You can’t outsmart him because he’s too clever. And you can’t outcharm him. Look at everything that has already happened.” Lydia gestured to the television again, as camera footage of Sinclair leading a charge of wolves to the border played across the screen, looking like scenes

from some high
-octane action movie. The Prince's beta finally entered as they watched
the video, his
mouth set in a hard line as he assessed the scene.
"What are your orders, sir?" He asked hesitantly, seeing the obvious
jealousy and
rage on the other man's face.
The Prince looked to Lydia, who he was coming to hate for her
intelligence, but whom
he also realized he needed. When the campaign was over he'd cut her
down to size,
but for the time being he needed her on his side." Your ratings are at an
all time high
and he's still beating you." Lydia reminded him, trying not to think
about how powerful
Sinclair looked on the screen and keep her attention on the matter at
hand.
"So what? What am I supposed to do?" The prince thundered, not
needing this
reminder.
"If you can't beat him, the only option available is to force him to step
down. Make him
take himself out of the running." Lydia advised slyly, clearly pleased
with herself.
"How?" The beta inquired curiously.
"You weren't wrong about his weakness." Lydia answered coolly,
thoroughly enjoying
making these powerful wolves stew. 'You've just been going about it
the wrong way.' "I
don't understand." The Prince growled, losing his patience.
Lydia rolled her eyes. "Use Ella. Don't kill her, hold her hostage and
make the ransom
his campaign. Tell him that unless he steps down, he'll never see her
again, you'll do
terrible things to her."

The Prince paused, liking the sounds of this – particularly the opportunity to have Sinclair’s beautiful mate at his mercy. “What makes you think he won’t give her up?

The self-righteous bastard might sacrifice her for the greater good, and that’s

assuming I can even get my hands on her.” “Trust me, I was married to the man for

more than a decade. He’s not as much of a goody two shoes as you think. He’s

extremely possessive and he won’t be able to help himself – his wolf will get the better

of him. Either he’ll give up the throne or he’ll try to stage a rescue.

Either way, you’ll

win.” Lydia shrugged.

“How do I win if he stages a rescue?” The Prince demanded sharply.

“You make it a trap.” Linda answered, thinking that it wouldn’t be very hard to arrange

with someone in possession of a brain behind the wheel.” Assemble enough forces to

overpower him, ensure he has to go in alone, and don’t leave anything to chance.”

“It’s not a bad idea.” The beta approved. “We need to stop trying to fight him and just

play dirty – shoot him with a tranquilizer and kill him while he’s unconscious.” “That’s a

coward’s move.” The Prince countered fiercely.

“Maybe, but it’s also the only way you’ll ever kill him.” Lydia responded, becoming

more and more immune to the idea of Sinclair’s death the more they discussed it.

After all, he rejected her publicly, he humiliated her, chose that little bitch over her.

“Fine. Let’s say we can make all that happen – we still need to get to Ella and you just

said she'll be in a safe house." The Prince reasoned.

"She will, until the 'all clear' is given." Lydia answered with a diabolical smile. "But

Sinclair isn't the only one who can give the "all clear." She reminded him. As Prince,

Damon also had the power to raise alarms and call off the danger, though he had

never before needed to do so.

The Prince's eyes lit up, if I can make the city think the attack is over, they'd all come

out of hiding before it's actually safe. The attack could still work – and Ella will return to

the pack house." 1 "And she'll barely have any guards because they'll all still be out

fighting." Lydia nodded smugly. "This is the best chance you're going to get to take

her." "We'll have to wait a while, if we call the all clear too soon, they won't believe it."

The beta warned.

"And the news coverage?" The Prince asked. "Won't people be able to see the danger

isn't passed?" "It doesn't matter if some of the pack don't come out, the one who really

matters is Ella, and I know for a fact that all of Dominic's safe house are off the grid.

They have no technology, nothing that might be used to trace the location." Lydia

replied smoothly, more than a little pleased with her own cunning.

A terrible smile stretched across the Prince's face as he observed the calculating shewolf. "You might be of some use to me yet." He

informed her arrogantly.

Lydia smirked. "Just you wait. Before this is over you'll be wondering how you ever

survived without me."

Accidental Surrogate For Alpha By Caroline Above Chapter 125

Ella

The waiting is horrible.

I did exactly as Sinclair asked and followed the guards to the safe house, taking only a

few essentials. We left our phones and technology behind, and then I was piled into

the back of a car and hidden under a blanket just in case someone found a way to

glimpse through the black out windows. We drove for more than half an hour, making

all kinds of twists and turns. I'm sure some of it was just evasive driving to make sure

we weren't being followed, which worries me more than I'd like to admit.

As I lay there I realized that Sinclair must have been afraid that this attack might be

used as a distraction for the Prince to make a move against me, and that possibility

seems more and more likely the more I think about it. Hadn't the Prince been planning

a distraction just like this before the Queen died? It's no wonder Sinclair hadn't

wanted me to stay at the house even though it's the most secure building in the city

next to the Royal Palace.

When we arrived at the safe house I was relieved to discover it was a veritable

fortress. It didn't even look like a house, In fact, when the car pulled to a stop in front

of a huge rock wall on the side of a mountain, I assumed one of the guards needed to

use the restroom or something. I couldn't have been more surprised

when they all
exited the car and began pressing on the rocks, moving their hands
around on the
granite until they found the right spot and pushed in. It took all four of
them, each
pressing on a specific spot in perfect unison, before the mountain itself
opened up.

The rock wall slid inward, even though it had looked completely solid
from the outside.

One of the guards lifted me out of the car and carried me inside, and all
but the driver

entered with me. Just before the wall closed behind us, I saw the car
speeding away

again. It had all happened in about 30 seconds, and when I look around
I'm amazed

to discover that the interior of the mountain is as luxurious and
comfortable as the

mansion. Despite being an actual cave, electricity lights the sprawling
rooms, which

are fully furnished and decked out with amenities.

When I look back at the entrance I discover a keypad mounted in the
rock, but no sign

of the door. A flash of claustrophobia overtakes me and I worry about
how I'll get out

again, but I take a deep breath and try to comfort myself with the
knowledge that no

one could possibly find me here.

There are books and games filling the bookcases, as well as a space to
exercise, but

little other entertainment. I investigate the kitchen and find only a pantry
full of canned

goods, as well as a freezer full of frozen food. I decide to try and distract
myself by

baking, thinking that I might be able to welcome Sinclair home with
some homemade

cookies or something similar. However when I move towards the pantry,
my head

guard Gabriel crosses his arms over his chest. “You’re still on bed rest,
Luna.”

I arch my brow at him, experiencing a familiar rush of annoyance to be
bossed around

by someone who is not my mate. “I can be on my feet for twenty
minutes. After that,

I’ll sit at the counter.”

He rumbles wordlessly, as if he’s unsure whether or not he should allow
me this work

around. I notch my chin up defiantly, cradling my belly. As if he could
ever care more

about my baby’s well being than I do. I think grumpily. Besides, an
extra five minutes

on my feet when I’m doing something that relaxes me.

“If you’re that concerned then you can bring me all of the ingredients
and do the clean

up.” I suggest slyly, perfectly happy to let him take over the less fun job.

“Alright.” Gabriel agrees, seeming pleased to have a task. “What do you
need?”

I rattle off a list, and begin opening ingredients as Gabriel collects bowls
and

measuring cups. “Has something like this ever happened before?” I ask
after a

moment, wondering if he resents the fact that he’s trapped here with me
instead of out

fighting with Sinclair and the enforcers.

“Not in my memory.” Gabriel replies grimly.

Centuries ago this sort of thing wasn’t that uncommon. Bands of rogues
would join up

and even form coalitions at times. Under a powerful rebel leader, rogues
have tried to

take down entire packs before, but the idea that this is happening in this
day and age

is unheard of.”

“How bad is it going to look for Dominic?” I inquire, measuring out flour and sugar.

“Im not sure.” He answers, taking a packet of butter from the freezer and setting it in

the microwave for me. “If he’s able to prevent the attack entirely he’ll get celebrated

for protecting the pack, but it doesn’t look good that the rogues felt emboldened

enough to take him on.”

“Like people might think he’s not providing enough of a deterrent to keep them out,

that he looks weak to outsiders?” I clarify, trying to understand.

“Exactly.” Gabriel confirms. “I can guarantee that’s how the Prince will spin this.”

“That isn’t fair.” I argue glumly, beginning to cream the thawed butter.

“I hate that he

keeps causing all this trouble but Dominic is the one who pays the price.”

Gabriel frowns. “Being Alpha is a thankless job most times. When every thing goes

right no one notices, because he’s just doing his job. But if something goes wrong

then he gets dragged through the mud.”

I catch myself growling, “Dominic does everything for his people, they ought to

recognize that.”

“I agree.” Gabriel replies, smothering a smile.

“How long will this all take?” I inquire after a pause.

“The state of emergency? It could be hours, or days,- depending how serious the

situation is.” Gabriel explains with a grimace.

“Do you wish you were out there with them?” I ask, watching his expression closely.

Gabriel blinks, looking surprised. “Of course not.”

He answers, seeming amazed that I should even ask.

“You have to admit this is a lot more boring than being in the thick of it.”

As the words

leave my mouth I realize how insensitive they might sound.

“I mean I know battle is a terrible thing, but it can’t be easy babysitting me when

everyone you care about is out risking their lives.”

Gabriel had been carefully closing the bags and boxes of ingredients once I finished

with them, but now he goes still. “Do you have no idea what an honor it is to be

assigned to guard you? The men in this room are here because the Alpha has

deemed us the fiercest warriors in his guard – the ones most trusted to protect you if

he can’t. Our positions are second only to his beta.”

“Oh.” I breathe, processing this information. “I didn’t realize.” This information dances

through my head, trying to make sense of this. “And you don’t resent the fact that you

might be hurt for my sake?”

He shakes his head, giving me a look that says he thinks I’m crazy.

“You’re new to all

this, but you have to understand that without you, the pack is weaker. A pack’s Luna is

incredibly important sacred not only because she gives us heirs and the next

generation of Alphas, but because she leads the she-wolves, she is the Alpha’s rock.

The Alpha might be the pack’s backbone, but the Luna is its heart. Any of us would

gladly lay down our lives for you.”

“But I don’t want anyone to die for me.” I murmur softly, staring at the cookie batter in

front of me.

“of course you don’t.” Gabriel smiles. “That’s what makes you a good Luna.’

I find myself blushing, barely able to utter my thanks. Gabriel and I continue baking in companionable silence, and soon cookies are coming out of the oven piping hot, with melting chocolate sticking to the baking tray. The other guards appear as the scent

wafts through the house, and before long I have to confiscate the remaining cookies

so that there will be some left over for Sinclair.

Soon after the cookies finish, a deafening chime sounds outside, and all the guards sit up in surprise.

“That was fast.” One of the other guards, Sean remarks in surprise.

“Is that the all clear?” I ask curiously.

“Yes, but maybe we should wait for Sinclair.”

Gabriel suggests.

“He told us to bring her home at the all clear.” Sean counters.

“I don’t know,” Gabriel hesitates. “Something feels off.”

“We have our orders.” Sean insists. “I say we follow protocol and take her home.”

“Alright.” Gabriel agrees with a heavy sigh.

We move into a room I hadn’t noticed before, which leads to a small garage. We climb

into a waiting vehicle and Gabriel presses a button on something which looks

suspiciously like a garage door opener. For the second time that day, the mountain

opens, and we take off into the night.

Of course, this is a decision I’ll come to regret terribly. I wish we hadn’t left the safe

house. I wish we’d waited for Sinclair to come for us. If we had, my guards might still

be alive... and my own life might have gone very differently.
But we did leave.. we left, and walked straight into the Prince's trap.

Accidental Surrogate For Alpha By Caroline Above Chapter 126

Ella

The streets were all but empty as we drove through the darkened city. I suppose

everyone is still inside watching the news or waiting for more information to be

released about the attack. I understand that we needed to be off the grid so no one

could track us electronically, but I wish I had my phone. I wish I knew what had

happened. I'm impatient to see Sinclair, to hear what happened and make sure he

isn't wounded.

My wolf is whining in my head, eager to be reunited with her mate. I've been trying to

avoid thinking about the danger Sinclair has been facing while I was safe and sound

with my guards, but now that the crisis has passed the possibilities consume me. I'm

imagining returning home to find Sinclair covered in blood, his powerful shoulders

crumbling under the weight of the lives he took tonight. He's going to need me, and

I'm already wondering how I can possibly comfort him when I don't have the first clue

what it's like to go to war.

My guards are clearly focused on a very different train of thought.

"Something still feels off to me."

Gabriel grumbles, scanning the deserted streets "f the all clear is ringing,

why hasn't

anyone come out yet?" He mutters, dragging a hand over his face.

"I think it feels off because it was a crazy situation to begin with." Sean answers.

"There's never been an attack of this size in living memory."

"Which is precisely why this is too soon for the danger to have passed."

Gabriel

shakes his head, slowing the car. "I don't like this. I think we should go back"

Just as the words leave his mouth, the sound of screeching brakes shatters the quiet.

A black SUV with tinted windows skids to a stop in front of us, cutting off our path.

Gabriel slams on the brakes and the car lurches to a violent stop. The guard beside

me throws his arm out to prevent me from slamming into the back of the driver's seat.

His hand catches me in the sternum, stealing the air from my lungs.

Before anyone can say a word, Gabriel curses and throws the car into reverse. We

only make it a few meters when the vehicle slams to a stop again, this time colliding

with a deafening crash. My body is jolted and jostled, and I whip around to see what

we hit. A second SUV is behind us, blocking our escape route. "Fuck."

Gabriel

explodes, "It's a set up."

I realize that there are other cars around us, blocking our path. Terror slices through

me as understanding sets in. The battle isn't over yet.

We've walked into a trap, and Sinclair isn't here to protect me this time.

He's so far

away that there's no chance he might make it back in time to help me. I have to trust

that my guards will keep me safe, even if my pounding heart and the

blood rushing in
my ears warns me that this is all going to end very badly.
“Ella, hold on.” Gabriel instructs. “We’re not going to get out of this
without a few
scrapes.” He forces his foot down on the accelerator, and the car surges
backward at
full speed. There’s nowhere to go, so our only option is to try and push
the other car
out of the way. It rocks and slides, nearly toppling, becoming dented and
smashed
inward as it hops up onto the curb.
The noise is deafening, and I feel like a ragdoll as my body is thrown
around wildly,
yanked back and forth by gravity. I’m restrained by my seatbelt and the
guard’s arm,
but we’ll all fairly helpless to do anything but try to minimize the
damage to our bodies.
Glass shatters somewhere on my left, but I’m still just trying to get my
bearings. I’ve
never been in a car crash before, and I’ve heard people say that time
slows down in
this sort of accident. I wish time would slow down, everything is
happening all at once,
and I can’t keep up.
The car behind us is almost out of the way now, but the SUV on our
right rams into the
passenger side door, pushing us further away from safety.
Gabriel keeps trying to maneuver the vehicle around to give us an
escape route, but
the other cars have us completely surrounded. My head cracks against
the window
when the car ramming our side slams into us right as Gabriel attempts to
reverse
through the tiny opening between the rear car and the bollards protecting
the footpath

from errant vehicles like our own.

My vision goes black for a moment, and the next thing I know, everything is still. My guards are climbing out of the car and shifting into their wolves, and Gabriel gives me one last order. “

Whatever you do, stay inside, Ella.”

The world around me has gone very fuzzy, and I'm horrified when I look out the window and see how many wolves are waiting to fight my guards. I count at least three dozen, and part of me is furious that the Prince chose to send his best fighters here, when the people he hopes to rule are facing an imminent threat. I know he's the one who created the threat, but he could at least put on a show and pretend to care, to help defend the city I feel very nauseous all of a sudden, and it only gets worse when the fighting begins. I've seen more than a little violence in my life, but not like this. Never like this. Gabriel, Sean and my other guards form a tight circle, their backs to one another as they bare their fangs and snarl at our attackers. The Prince's men shift, and then they're clashing viciously with my guards. Blood sprays over the pavement, and I see flesh ripped and torn, bodies tossed onto the street like bags of bones.

There are a couple of sick bags tucked into the seat-back pocket in front of me, and I snatch one up, emptying the contents of my stomach into the plastic sack. I blink tears from my eyes, unsure whether I want to close my eyes and hide from the

horrific

scenes outside my window, or if I should watch.

When I peek outside I'm proud to see that Gabriel wasn't exaggerating when he told

me how fierce he and his men are. It's obvious that they truly are Sinclair's best,

because they look entirely unharmed even though half a dozen wolves already lay

dead around them. Of course.. they're still vastly outnumbered, and the longer they

fight, the more tired they become.

Sean is the first to die. I clasp a hand over my mouth to try and smother my scream

when I see the other wolf rip out his throat. I'll never forget how his eyes swung to me

with regret, even as the light winked out of them. Sobs burn in my throat, and when

the second guard dies, it becomes too much.

I can't just sit here and let them die for me. I'm the one they want I think desperately. I

have to do something.

If you go out there now you'll distract them, and then they will die. My wolf responds.

Let them do their jobs!

But they're completely outnumbered. It's only Gabriel and two others now. I shake my

head stubbornly. I have to!

They'll kill us! She reminds me ferociously, they'll kill the baby.

They're going to kill us anyway. I argue desperately, undiluted fear writhing in my belly.

But my guards don't have to die too.

As I look back out the window, I see Gabriel thrown through the air before he lands in

a heap near the back of the car. He tries to get up, then crumples with a groan Six

wolves descend on him, and he tries to rise again, only for his legs to give out.

I'm out of the car before I know what I've done.

Stop!"

The descending wolves turn to look at me, and I hear a warning snarl from Gabriel. If

he was in his human form I'm sure he would be yelling at me to get back in the car,

but I can't make myself do it. "

Leave them be – I'm the one you want."

I'd like to say I sounded strong or brave in this moment. Instead, I'm speaking through

tears with the hoarse tone of a woman who's just been violently ill. I'm sure I look as

intimidating and powerful as a door-mouse, with blood seeping down my cheek, and

my hands shaking with fear.

One of the wolves who stayed in his human form comes forward with a cruel grin. "I'm

glad to see you've come to your senses." He tells me smugly.

Unfortunately though, we can't have any witnesses, can we?"

He nods to the wolves by Gabriel, and I scream when they lunge forward and tear

their teeth and claws into his tender belly. Blood and organs spill out of him, and I

charge for the wolf who gave the order, trying to claw his eyes out with every ounce of

wrath I possess. He catches me around the waist, laughing at my rage. I thrash

against him, calling him every foul name I can think of, threats and curses pouring

from my tongue.

I'm still wriggling and fighting when they push me into the car, and though I should be

trying to escape, all I want to do is destroy them. "Goddess she's a pill."

The man in
charge mutters, climbing into the car after me. I snarl and lunge for him,
but he cocks
his fist back and brings it down on my head, knocking me out cold.

Accidental Surrogate For Alpha By Caroline Above Chapter 127

#Chapter 127 – Sinclair Comes Home

Sinclair

The battle lasted for hours.

By the time we reached the border, rogues were already pouring into the territory. I

fanned my men out in a wide net to intercept them, hoping that Hugo, Roger and my

other squadron leaders were doing the same at the other borders. This was the first

time I'd been in a fight without Gabriel and Sean, and though I was confident my

warriors were up to the task, it felt strange to be in battle without them.

Of course it

was completely worth it, I wouldn't trust Ella with anyone else.

Just before the fighting began, I forced myself to put Ella and the baby out of my

thoughts. If I let myself worry about them I would be distracted from the battle, and

that could be deadly. What's more, if I focused on my sweet mate or what she might

think of the violence I was committing, I might not be able to do what was necessary

to win. War is brutal and ruthless – there's no room for softness or tender feelings, and

Ella inspires nothing but.

I told myself that I'd let myself feel the toll of violence when it was over. I had to turn

off my emotions in the moment in order to protect my pack and my family, and I could live with the callousness of being a cold-blooded killing machine for a few hours. I wouldn't be able to live with myself if I failed. I lost count of how many rogues I killed, how many lives I ended with nothing more than my fangs. As the fighting dragged on, I focused only on the next step, the next target. I took my fair share of blows, becoming beaten and bruised as the night continued. Claws sliced into my ribs, teeth dragged down my back, and my own blood and sweat blended with the mud and fluids of dying rogues. When it was all over the earth suddenly seemed too quiet. I'd gotten so used to the sounds of aggression and pain, the blood rushing in my own ears, that I worried something might be wrong with my hearing. Shaking myself, I recall that the wilderness should be serene and still – if anything is abnormal it's the blood soaking into the ground as far as the eye can see. I look around the forest, watching my wolves patrol for signs of survivors with a sense of grim pride. It hadn't been easy, but we did our job. For the first time I take an inventory of my own injuries, noticing the lingering pain in my ribs, and the beginning of a wicked bruise on my leg. I can't relax until I know that the other fights succeeded as well, so I shift and race back to the car to retrieve my phone. Roger, Hugo and the other commanders all sent messages saying that their areas were secure, and the former two are

already on
their way here to provide backup in case we need it. I call them off,
instead turning to
the reporters who followed us into the field, filming the battle.
I look into the nearest camera, trying to hide my impatience. I want to
send the pack
reassurance, but I need to get back to Ella too. I know she made it to the
safe house
alright and that nothing will happen as long as they're there, but this
entire ordeal has
been incredibly unnerving. "I'm pleased to report that the invasion has
been
successfully stopped. My enforcers have pushed back and eliminated the
rogue
threat, with minimal losses on our side. I will provide more details in the
hours and
days to come, but I want to assure everyone that Moon Valley is safe,
and the all clear
signal will be issued as soon as possible."

The reporter standing next to the cameraman frowns, raising his hand to
his ear.

"Alpha, headquarters is saying the all clear was already given – hours
ago."

"What?" I demand, my face crumpling into a grimace. "That's not
possible."

"I don't know how it happened, but they're certain. It doesn't sound like
anyone took it
seriously because they could see from our footage that the threat was
ongoing, but
the signal was definitely given."

I pause, trying to wrap my head around this idea. The only people in the
territory who

can issue emergency orders (or call them off) are myself, the Alpha
council and the

King. As I process this, something else occurs to me. Everyone with

access to
technology would see the footage, but we keep the sirens and all clear
signal systems
for people who don't or who aren't connected in the moment. My safe
houses are
technology free for very good reason – because when the Prince
attempted to
assassinate my father, the hitman tracked him through his devices.
A horrible possibility enters my head then. If the all clear went out then
Gabriel and
Sean would have followed protocol and taken Ella home.
What if our fears were right, and this was a distraction? My wolf growls.
If the King can
call for the all clear the Prince probably found a way to use his father's
authority to
give the order, and then Ella would have come out of hiding.
Damn it, this is Lydia's doing! I think bitterly. She knows our protocols,
she knows the
systems. If everyone else was still inside hunkering down, the Prince's
men could
have intercepted Ella or waited for her at the house, and no one would
notice a thing.
"I have to go." I declare gruffly, turning on my heel and striding back to
the cars. I call
Hugo and Roger and brief them along the way, beyond furious with
myself for not
foreseeing this possibility. They try to assure me that it's probably
nothing, but I won't
have it. I can feel that something is wrong in my gut.
We race back to the city, breaking every speed limit possible along the
way. I'm
silently praying to the Goddess the whole journey, begging her to let me
be wrong.
Of course, I wasn't wrong.
When we get back to the house, I discover one of the guards in charge of

protecting

Ella lying in a bloody heap on the doorstep. “Alpha.” He groans, clutching a wound in

his stomach. “I’m sorry.”

“Shit, help him.” I order, slipping my hands under his arms while Hugo takes his feet

and we cart him inside. We lay him out on the couch and Roger leaves to call for a

doctor. “Jeremy, where are the others?” I ask sharply, trying to stay calm even though

I’m fairly certain my entire world is about to end.

“Dead.” He moans, tears burning in his eyes. “Gabriel, Sean... they’re all dead.”

“What happened?” I inquire, my hands clenched in fists at my sides. He hadn’t said

Ella’s name, but if her protectors are dead and she’s not here... only a fool would hold

onto hope in such circumstances.

“They ambushed us, surrounded us so we had no choice but to fight.” He coughs, and

crimson liquid stains his lips. “We were so outnumbered... we never stood a chance.

And then Ella... they were about to kill Gabriel and she must have known we’d lost.

She got out of the car and told them to leave us alone, she gave herself up to save

us.”

That did it. The leash I’d been holding on my emotions snapped as my entire world

shattered. An agonized roar bursts from my lips, and I crash to my knees, unable to

believe my ears. I’ve never known such pain, to not only lose my mate but our pup,

and to think it happened when I left her alone.

No! She can’t be gone. My wolf howls desperately. I would feel it, I

would sense it.

I don't believe this. I spiral into denial right along with him, It can't be true. It's too

horrible. What was she thinking – impossible, noble little fool. Why would she sacrifice herself!

‘They killed Gabriel anyway, and she was so furious... she just attacked them.’ He

shakes his head, as if he still can't believe how fearless she'd been. ‘I'm so sorry,

Alpha.’ He groans, ‘they took her.’

I've entered a strange fog, and it takes me a moment to understand. My head jerks

up, ‘Wait a minute – they took her?’

‘Yes.’ He nods, ‘They put her in the car and drove off.’

‘They didn't kill her?’ I demand, needing to be certain I understood him correctly.

‘If they did, they didn't do it in front of me.’ He murmurs regretfully.

‘Dominic?’ Roger says, looking at me with obvious concern.

‘This is Lydia.’ I hiss. ‘The Prince isn't this strategic.’ A moment ago it had felt as

though everything I knew and loved was breaking into a million tiny pieces, but now

the destruction halts. Nothing is fixed or restored, the collapse is simply stalled, with

my heart hanging in the balance. Now the ridiculous kernel of hope burgeoning in my

chest surges forward, and I find myself forming a plan. ‘I want to talk to them – right

fucking now!’

Accidental Surrogate For Alpha By Caroline Above Chapter 127

#Chapter 127 – Sinclair Comes Home

Sinclair

The battle lasted for hours.

By the time we reached the border, rogues were already pouring into the territory. I

fanned my men out in a wide net to intercept them, hoping that Hugo, Roger and my

other squadron leaders were doing the same at the other borders. This was the first

time I'd been in a fight without Gabriel and Sean, and though I was confident my

warriors were up to the task, it felt strange to be in battle without them.

Of course it

was completely worth it, I wouldn't trust Ella with anyone else.

Just before the fighting began, I forced myself to put Ella and the baby out of my

thoughts. If I let myself worry about them I would be distracted from the battle, and

that could be deadly. What's more, if I focused on my sweet mate or what she might

think of the violence I was committing, I might not be able to do what was necessary

to win. War is brutal and ruthless – there's no room for softness or tender feelings, and

Ella inspires nothing but.

I told myself that I'd let myself feel the toll of violence when it was over. I had to turn

off my emotions in the moment in order to protect my pack and my family, and I could

live with the callousness of being a cold-blooded killing machine for a few hours. I

wouldn't be able to live with myself if I failed.

I lost count of how many rogues I killed, how many lives I ended with nothing more

than my fangs. As the fighting dragged on, I focused only on the next

step, the next
target. I took my fair share of blows, becoming beaten and bruised as the
night
continued. Claws sliced into my ribs, teeth dragged down my back, and
my own blood
and sweat blended with the mud and fluids of dying rogues.
When it was all over the earth suddenly seemed too quiet. I'd gotten so
used to the
sounds of aggression and pain, the blood rushing in my own ears, that I
worried
something might be wrong with my hearing. Shaking myself, I recall
that the
wilderness should be serene and still – if anything is abnormal it's the
blood soaking
into the ground as far as the eye can see.
I look around the forest, watching my wolves patrol for signs of
survivors with a sense
of grim pride. It hadn't been easy, but we did our job. For the first time I
take an
inventory of my own injuries, noticing the lingering pain in my ribs, and
the beginning
of a wicked bruise on my leg.
I can't relax until I know that the other fights succeeded as well, so I
shift and race
back to the car to retrieve my phone. Roger, Hugo and the other
commanders all sent
messages saying that their areas were secure, and the former two are
already on
their way here to provide backup in case we need it. I call them off,
instead turning to
the reporters who followed us into the field, filming the battle.
I look into the nearest camera, trying to hide my impatience. I want to
send the pack
reassurance, but I need to get back to Ella too. I know she made it to the
safe house

alright and that nothing will happen as long as they're there, but this entire ordeal has been incredibly unnerving. "I'm pleased to report that the invasion has been successfully stopped. My enforcers have pushed back and eliminated the rogue threat, with minimal losses on our side. I will provide more details in the hours and days to come, but I want to assure everyone that Moon Valley is safe, and the all clear signal will be issued as soon as possible."

The reporter standing next to the cameraman frowns, raising his hand to his ear.

"Alpha, headquarters is saying the all clear was already given – hours ago."

"What?" I demand, my face crumpling into a grimace. "That's not possible."

"I don't know how it happened, but they're certain. It doesn't sound like anyone took it seriously because they could see from our footage that the threat was ongoing, but the signal was definitely given."

I pause, trying to wrap my head around this idea. The only people in the territory who

can issue emergency orders (or call them off) are myself, the Alpha council and the

King. As I process this, something else occurs to me. Everyone with access to

technology would see the footage, but we keep the sirens and all clear signal systems

for people who don't or who aren't connected in the moment. My safe houses are

technology free for very good reason – because when the Prince attempted to

assassinate my father, the hitman tracked him through his devices.

A horrible possibility enters my head then. If the all clear went out then Gabriel and Sean would have followed protocol and taken Ella home. What if our fears were right, and this was a distraction? My wolf growls. If the King can call for the all clear the Prince probably found a way to use his father's authority to give the order, and then Ella would have come out of hiding. Damn it, this is Lydia's doing! I think bitterly. She knows our protocols, she knows the systems. If everyone else was still inside hunkering down, the Prince's men could have intercepted Ella or waited for her at the house, and no one would notice a thing. "I have to go." I declare gruffly, turning on my heel and striding back to the cars. I call Hugo and Roger and brief them along the way, beyond furious with myself for not foreseeing this possibility. They try to assure me that it's probably nothing, but I won't have it. I can feel that something is wrong in my gut. We race back to the city, breaking every speed limit possible along the way. I'm silently praying to the Goddess the whole journey, begging her to let me be wrong. Of course, I wasn't wrong. When we get back to the house, I discover one of the guards in charge of protecting Ella lying in a bloody heap on the doorstep. "Alpha." He groans, clutching a wound in his stomach. "I'm sorry." "Shit, help him." I order, slipping my hands under his arms while Hugo takes his feet and we cart him inside. We lay him out on the couch and Roger leaves to call for a

doctor. “Jeremy, where are the others?” I ask sharply, trying to stay calm even though

I’m fairly certain my entire world is about to end.

“Dead.” He moans, tears burning in his eyes. “Gabriel, Sean... they’re all dead.”

“What happened?” I inquire, my hands clenched in fists at my sides. He hadn’t said

Ella’s name, but if her protectors are dead and she’s not here... only a fool would hold

onto hope in such circumstances.

“They ambushed us, surrounded us so we had no choice but to fight.” He coughs, and

crimson liquid stains his lips. “We were so outnumbered... we never stood a chance.

And then Ella... they were about to kill Gabriel and she must have known we’d lost.

She got out of the car and told them to leave us alone, she gave herself up to save

us.”

That did it. The leash I’d been holding on my emotions snapped as my entire world

shattered. An agonized roar bursts from my lips, and I crash to my knees, unable to

believe my ears. I’ve never known such pain, to not only lose my mate but our pup,

and to think it happened when I left her alone.

No! She can’t be gone. My wolf howls desperately. I would feel it, I would sense it.

I don’t believe this. I spiral into denial right along with him, It can’t be true. It’s too

horrible. What was she thinking – impossible, noble little fool. Why would she sacrifice

herself!

“They killed Gabriel anyway, and she was so furious... she just attacked them.” He

shakes his head, as if he still can't believe how fearless she'd been. "I'm so sorry, Alpha." He groans, "they took her." I've entered a strange fog, and it takes me a moment to understand. My head jerks up, "Wait a minute – they took her?" "Yes." He nods, "They put her in the car and drove off." "They didn't kill her?" I demand, needing to be certain I understood him correctly. "If they did, they didn't do it in front of me." He murmurs regretfully. "Dominic?" Roger says, looking at me with obvious concern. "This is Lydia." I hiss. "The Prince isn't this strategic." A moment ago it had felt as though everything I knew and loved was breaking into a million tiny pieces, but now the destruction halts. Nothing is fixed or restored, the collapse is simply stalled, with my heart hanging in the balance. Now the ridiculous kernel of hope burgeoning in my chest surges forward, and I find myself forming a plan. "I want to talk to them – right fucking now!"

Accidental Surrogate For Alpha By Caroline Above Chapter 128

#Chapter 128 – Ella wakes

Ella

When I wake, I'm amazed to realize I'm alive. I was sure the Prince's men were going to kill me.

My hands immediately got to my middle, running over my slight baby bump with urgency. Everything feels normal, but I wish I had Sinclair's link with our pup. I wish I

could feel what he's feeling, know for sure that he's unharmed. I'm sure the events of the last 12 hours or so haven't helped my preeclampsia, and I'm worried for my son.

Even as I think this, a tiny thump meets my palm, and I clamp my eyes shut with relief.

"Hello angel." I greet him gently. "You can tell Mommy's freaking out, huh?" Another

kick flutters beneath my hand and I hiccup with unshed tears. "I love you so much." I

whisper. "I'm going to find a way out of this, I promise."

After my baby, Sinclair is my greatest concern. Fear for my mate permeates the fog of

confusion, worry and grief consuming my overwrought mind. At best he'll be beside

himself with guilt and rage that we've been taken. At worst he never made it out of the

battle at all. I'd been anxious for his well being when the all clear rang out, but now I

realize we might have lost.

I stagger to my feet, cradling my stomach and wincing as a dozen aches and pains

assail me all at once. I hadn't noticed them when I was lying down, but upright I feel

as though I've been flattened by a steamroller. My vision blacks out as blinding pain

pierces my skull, and muscles I didn't even know I possessed are screaming at my

brain, my eviscerated nerve endings begging we cease moving. I slump back onto the

edge of the bed, trying to breathe through the agony.

Of course, as soon as I close my eyes, images of all my slaughtered guards fill my

mind. I moan as I recall Sean's remorse in the second before he dies, and Gabriel's

agonized howl as his insides were spilled into the pavement. I'm so lost in my thoughts that I barely hear the door open. "Oh good. You're up." Lydia's familiar and wretched voice cuts through my thoughts and I crack my eyelids open to see the she-wolf prowling into the room with a smug smirk on her face. "How are you liking your rooms?"

For the first time I look around and realize I must be in the Royal Palace, because my surroundings are actually quite lovely. "What, no dungeons?" I quip snarkily, trying not to let her see how much pain I'm in.

I'm baffled at how Lydia could possibly march in here sounding like an attentive hostess when I've just been kidnapped, but she manages without any visible difficulty.

"Don't be silly. You're a Luna. We have to show you due respect... even if you are a conniving little whore." Lydia announces, sounding more and more bitter with every word out of her mouth.

"More like you need to keep me in good condition so that Dominic doesn't gut you like a fish when he finds me." I counter sharply. It's mostly a test, a trick to get her to reveal Sinclair's fate. If she tells me he's dead, I'm not sure I'll believe her – surely I would feel it if he was no longer here? Still, if she acknowledges that he's still alive then at least I know there's hope.

Lydia snorts. "You don't get it, do you?" She snipes. "Dominic isn't going to find you at all." A stab of fear stops my heart, but it eases as she continues. "And

this isn't some
shoddy shake down. We're brokering a deal, and you're simply out ace
in the hole. I
think you'll find it's all very civilized. Just wait, in a few weeks, you'll
be back with
Dominic safe and sound."

Relief and distrust war for control in my heart, and my wolf snarls at her
suggestion.

"Civilized?" I grit out. "Is that what you call hiring rogues to attack your
own people
and murdering my guards?"

"I call that an unfortunate necessity – collateral damage." Lydia shrugs,
showing so
little concern for the loss of human life I wonder if she has a heart at all.

"And what exactly am I supposed to leverage for you? If you expect
Dominic to give
up his life for mine then you're going to be sorely disappointed." I bluff,
smothering a
terrible feeling that this isn't actually true. I'd like to think that Sinclair
knows his
survival is much more important than my own, but matters of the heart
rarely bend to
logic.

Lydia scoffs, "Of course he would. Dominic has always been too noble
for his own
damned good. Besides – weren't you listening. I said you'd be together.
We just need
him to give up his campaign, that's all."

I shake my head. "What the hell happened to make you this way? Don't
you care
about what will happen to the pack if the Prince wins? To all the packs?"

I hiss, not
understanding how anyone who had been part of the Sinclair family –
who believe in
nothing if not selfless duty – could be so heartless.

Lydia rolls her eyes, “Why should I care about a bunch of commoners – I’ll be on the throne.”

“You can’t control him, you know.” I warn, feeling only the tiniest ounce of concern for the psychotic creature in front of me. “He beat his last wife, only a fool would think he’ll be different with you.”

Lydia turns her nose up. “Angeline was weak, she didn’t know how to manage him like

I do.” She reasons stubbornly.

“And your own husband?” I demand. “What will he have to say about this?”

Lydia blanches. “He’s out of sight and out of mind. The Prince outranks him, he can

dissolve our marriage when the time comes.”

I don’t miss the flicker of uncertainty on her lovely face, and I store away that

knowledge for the future. “Is power really worth all this?” I inquire, gesturing to the

rooms around us. “You’ve been seeking it your whole life, and where has it gotten

you? Are you happy, Lydia?”

She bares her teeth at me. “Happiness means security, and security means power. If

you had any idea what it feels like to be powerless you might understand that. But no –

here you are having skated through like on your looks, everything and everyone falling

at your feet because you’re perfect Ella,” She sneers, “but it doesn’t work that way for

everyone. I’ve had to struggle, I’ve had to fight every day for what I have.”

It takes all my willpower not to laugh in her face. She’s far from the first person to

assume I've had a charmed life because of my beauty, but this is the first time anyone

has ever been quite so far off the mark.

'You know, I find that those who have truly struggled tend to learn a little empathy. It's

only the self-centered narcissists who try to blame their cruelty on being a victim.' I

observe coolly.

"How dare you -" Lydia begins, color flooding her face where moments before she had

been as pallid as a sheet.

"How dare I what?" I interrupt, mocking her haughty demeanor, "Tell you a truth you

don't want to hear? Tell me what is your great tragedy? Have you never gotten over

being born as one of the dirty commoners you so revile? Never got over your jealousy

that some people were born luckier, and so you decided to steal what they had? Or is

it your infertility? Is that what all this hatred comes down to? The fact that I am giving

Dominic what you never could?"

I'm not proud of myself for this. I promised myself a long time ago that I would never

assume I knew someone's pain based on appearances, or weaponize their

heartbreaks. Even with Lydia, I've always refused to bring up her fertility struggles,

knowing how difficult these things are. But today she pushed me too far. She killed my

guards, she probably cost Sinclair any number of his men, and she would have

thrown the entire valley to the rogues – shifters and humans alike -the elderly, women

and children.

Before I realize what she's about, Lydia storms forward and slaps me across the face with all her strength. My head snaps back, my ears ringing, but when the shock passes and I look up at the fuming woman above me, I only blink. "Is that the best you can do?" Lydia screeches and lunges for me, her claws extended in threat. I brace myself for the impact, wondering what I was thinking, pushing her so far when I don't have a wolf to defend myself. Just then a masculine voice interrupts her, "Lydia!" We both freeze, looking to the open doorway and the man framed at its center. The Prince has arrived. "How dare you -" Lydia begins,

Accidental Surrogate For Alpha By Caroline Above Chapter 129

#Chapter 129 – Ella Plays Politics

Ella "What the hell are you doing?" The Prince snaps, his usually cold features alight with rage. He storms forward, aggression pouring off him in waves. "Nothing!" Lydia squeaks, whirling around and adopting an innocent expression. "Ishe..." The she-wolf stammers, red faced and shaking. "You're the one who went on and on about leaving the bitch unharmed so as not to further provoke Dominic!" Prince Damon rumbles furiously. He looks down at me with cold disinterest, and I immediately recognize that I'm dealing with two very different kind of monsters here. Lydia is pure cunning and lacks any sense of conscience, she'll do anything and hurt anyone to achieve her goals. The Prince however,

he gives off
the energy of a man who enjoys hurting others – not as a means to an
end, but for the
pure pleasure it inspires.
I look back to Lydia, still too angry to bite my tongue and wanting his
attention
anywhere but on me. “Or maybe she just meant those rules for you. I get
the sense
she expects special treatment – even above royalty.”
I watch as my word lands, feeling more than a little smug when Prince
Damon sneers.
“Leave us.”
Lydia gapes, horrified to be ordered away. “But-”
“I said leave.” He repeats fiercely. Lydia hurries out grumbling under
her breath, and
my heart clenches with newfound anxiety. Maybe it was my inner wolf,
but I felt the
strongest compulsion to challenge Lydia, to establish dominance. Of
course, I feel no
respect for the Prince, but my instincts warn me that he has no qualms
about hurting
me. In fact, I’m sure he would enjoy it. Lydia might want to harm me,
but she
attempted to show restraint in the interest of avoiding Sinclair’s wrath,
but I have the
impression the Prince has never had an impulse he didn’t indulge.
At the same time, I don’t want to show him any weakness. Next to
Sinclair, he’s
nothing, and the more my wolf comes out, the more determined I feel
not to submit to
anyone but my mate. So instead of cowering, I give him my defiance.
Notching my
chin up, I glare at the despicable man. “This won’t work, you know.” I
tell him,
wondering if I’ve lost my mind. “Dominic will never give up the

campaign for me.”

“You doubt his devotion so much?” prince Damon remarks, arching a brow.

“Would you have given up the throne to save your mate?” I ask curiously, a new idea occurring to me now. If I can sow discord between Lydia and the Prince, maybe I can distract them enough to escape. He doesn’t have any clue that Lydia is probably responsible for the Princess’s death, but if anything could tear them apart – that will.

“Of course not – but Dominic is a sentimental fool.” The Prince chortles to himself.”We are a completely different caliber of wolf.”

“I agree.” I state simply, knowing he probably won’t catch the inference that my mate is far superior. “Though I am sorry for your loss.” I share, channeling the sympathy I feel for his motherless children, if not for himself. “It was such a shocking death – and poison!” I exclaim. “What kind of man deploys such a cowardly weapon? Do you have any leads on the suspect?” I worry I might be laying it on too thick, but when he doesn’t bat an eye, I know I need to press harder.

“I’m not here to talk about Angeline.” He grits out, beginning to pace back and forth in front of me. “And if you think you can help yourself by playing on my own loss, you’re sorely mistaken.”

“That wasn’t my intention.” I refute honestly. “I just thought it was interesting that she was killed in such a feminine manner.”

“Feminine?” He repeats, bewildered. “Are you saying you think a woman killed her?”

His eyes narrow and too late I realize that he'll probably assume I'm trying to take credit, 'You?'

"Of course not!" I hold up my hands. "I've been on bed rest, and besides, why would I help your campaign? I don't stand to gain anything by making you a winner."

I hope I've said enough to get the gears working in his tiny brain. I don't want to come out and accuse Lydia. He'll assume I'm making things up to distract him or help myself somehow. Of course, that's exactly what I'm doing, but it's also true. He needs to reach the conclusion on his own.

'Then who?' He inquires, as if I'm not the one who's been asking the questions.

'Well, who would benefit?' I ask simply, folding my hands in my lap. I try to telepathically force Lydia's name into his thoughts, but I'm not sure it's successful.

He pauses thoughtfully, then he shakes his head, disappointing me. "I don't have time for this. I came to tell you not to get any bright ideas about escaping. We're calling a meeting with Dominic. If he agrees to our ransom then you'll be back home in no time, so just sit tight and behave yourself. We even brought your things for you from the scene of the accident." He gestures to the go-bag I'd taken to the safehouse, which now sits on the bureau.

"The accident?" I repeat coldly. 'You mean the kidnapping? How did you even cover it up? A confrontation of the size, with all that noise?'

He snorts, 'The pack was under lockdown, and we it was on a block in

the commercial
center with no residences.”

“How did you even know we’d be there?” I hiss.

“We set up a full perimeter around Sinclair’s mansion, we just got lucky
with the route

you chose. There were no witnesses to silence, and we cleared it so well
no one will

ever know anything happened there.”

I cross my arms over my chest, beyond outraged that he’s getting away
with so much

violence and corruption. All the while Sinclair plays by the rules, even
though the odds

are stacked against him. I once asked him why he didn’t publicly accuse
the Prince of

his crimes, and he merely answered that we didn’t have a leg to stand on
without

proof. The Prince would call it a smear campaign and Sinclair would
look weak for

lobbing accusations rather than taking action to stop him. There are just
some things

I’ll never understand about wolves, but I suppose I know better than to
think an

accusation can stand alone. How many powerful men in the human
world have

actually been held accountable for their crimes when there isn’t evidence
against

them?

“Fine. I won’t do anything stupid.” I finally agree. “Is that all?”

“For now.” He says, looking me up and down one final time before
stalking out. “And

Ella,” he adds, pausing at the door. “If you do try to get away... I will
make you regret

it.”

“I believe you.” I reply, smothering the urge to shiver.

When he’s gone I creep after him on tiptoe, hoping I might be able to

hear something
through the door. Sure enough, after a few moments I hear his voice
raised with
Lydia's as they argue in the hallway. "She doesn't think it will work!"
He growls in an
accusatory tone.
"Of course she says that. She's trying to throw us off. Besides, we know
this was a
possibility." Lydia counters reasonably. "If he refuses the ransom and
tries to stage a
rescue we'll simply plan another ambush.
Either way, we get rid of him."
'This had better work.' The Prince snarled.
"It will, you'll see, Damon. You can trust me." Lydia simpers, and I can
imagine her
batting her lashes at him.
"Can I? It seems you've been getting a lot of perks out of this friendship
of ours." He
observes, and a flash of triumph pulses inside me.
"What are you suggesting?" Lydia's offended voice replies.
The Prince growls, "I've got my eye on you." I hear his footsteps
retreating, and then
Lydia's shaky breath.
Just in case she decides to come back, I move away from the door,
heading straight
for my go bag. I don't think I have anything inside which might help me
out of this
situation, but it's worth double checking.
I pull out my clothing and toiletries, doing a quick inventory of the
items. I shake my
head with disappointment as I sort through the bag, but there at the
bottom is the
ornate tin holding the herbs to trigger my wolf's awakening. I've been
keeping them
with me at all times – just in case – and when we packed for the safe

house I tossed in
the tin, I clasp it tightly in my hand, wondering if I'd somehow known I
might need to
defend my life in the near future.
I press my hand to my belly, feeling guilty for even considering it. I'm
not in any
imminent danger, though I am terrified about what I just heard between
Lydia and the
Prince. I know our situation just got incomprehensibly worse, but I'm
not so desperate
that I think I need to waken my wolf. At least... not yet.

Accidental Surrogate For Alpha By Caroline Above Chapter 130

#Chapter 130 – The Prince's Ransom

Sinclair

I'd been ready to storm the Royal Palace when I learned the Prince had
taken Ella,
and if I had been sure of her location, I would have already done it. It
would be the
very definition of hubris to imprison her within his own home, though I
don't put
anything past the Prince. More importantly, my mate and my pup's lives
hang in the
balance, and I can't be too careful.

After I calmed down enough to stop envisioning all the ways I'd like to
maim the other
man, I had Hugo call in my best warriors, even though they've only just
come off the
battlefield. Next to Gabriel, Sean and the rest of the slaughtered team,
the chosen
men are the best fighters I can assemble at my back – and I have no
doubt I'm going
to need them. When they arrived I was still too rabid to conjure actual

words, so Hugo explained the situation to them. I watch the horror and outrage spread across their weary faces and I'm touched when – one by one – they all stand and promise me their allegiance in the fight ahead. I didn't even have to ask, and a tiny part of me had been afraid they would view the assault on my mate as a reflection of my own weakness. It was bad enough that the Prince was able to find enough rogues to take on the city, and now this? What kind of Alpha can't even protect his mate? I feel like an utter failure for not keeping Ella and Rafe safe, for not considering that the royal family might declare the danger passed in order to target my mate. My wolf hasn't stopped howling in my head, in between bursts of deadly snarls and pitiful whines, he simply howls and howls as if he's hoping her own wolf might hear him telepathically. He's drowning in his pain, but I'm drowning in my guilt. I promised she would always be safe and I couldn't do it. Goddess only know what they're doing to her at this very moment. My father is here too – he came at Roger's request after we arrived home, and I'm grateful for his steady presence. My own wolf might be on the verge of going completely berserk, but I know my father will talk me down if I start to truly lose it. He must think I'm nearing that point, because he wheels over and rests his hand over mine. "Whatever you're thinking, stop. Beating yourself up about this

won't help
anything." He frowns sympathetically, letting me know he understands
even though
he's not going to condone my wallowing. "Ella needs your strength, not
your self-pity."
I nod, appreciating his calm reminder. Feeling sorry for myself won't fix
anything. "I've
already called the Prince's beta." Hugo is explaining to the men.
'They've asked for a
meeting, and we agreed to let them set the time if we set the place. We
won't release
the location until fifteen minutes before the rendezvous."
"What's the plan once we're there?" The biggest wolf in the group
asks." Are they
bringing her along?"
"Unlikely." Hugo sighs, 'This is just to collect intelligence. They're
probably going to
request a ransom, and we need to try and glean as much information as
we possibly
can in the meantime. Everybody needs to be observing every detail
possible – the
words he uses, the way he organizes his own guards. Watch their facial
expressions
as the Alpha's speak, try to pick up on any ticks or body language that
might hint at a
clue to her location or their plans."
"When is the meet?" The same guard inquires, nodding along with the
instructions.
"It's in half an hour, which means we only have a little while to prepare.
I know it's
soon, but we didn't want to give them any time to scheme further or try
to figure out
the destination in advance. It means we don't have time to set up an
ambush as well,
which is unfortunately a concession we had to make."

“But we can call for backup.” Another wolf suggests, “I bet you they’ll do exactly the same thing once they know where it is.”

“We will, but this is a very delicate situation. In all likelihood they’ve set up some kind of contingency in the event that the Prince doesn’t return from the meeting or they take too long before checking in. Your Luna’s life is at stake – we can’t be too careful.”

Hugo explains.

I step forward, pleased to see how eager my men are to help. “I appreciate your dedication and your bravery tonight. We’ve already been through hell in the last few

hours, and I want to make sure that everyone here is up to another fight if things come

to a head. This isn’t the time to play the hero – if you’re too exhausted, injured or

simply unable to be at your best, tell me now. I don’t want any more unnecessary bloodshed.”

The first man steps forward, a hard look on his face. “All do respect, Alpha, but

Gabriel trained me, he was one of the best fighters I’ve ever seen, and he saved my

life more than once over the years. That cowardly bastard probably had to outnumber

them five to one just to take him out. And targeting a breeding she-wolf is as low as it

gets. I won’t step a toe out of line, but I’d be lying if I said I’m not hoping he’ll give us a

reason to cut him down where he stands.”

“I agree.” The wolf beside him nods, “We all want to make him pay, and we’ll be

damned if we’re going to let you go in there alone.”

‘Thank you.’ I profess earnestly, feeling genuinely touched by their support. ‘Now let’s move out.’

By the time the Prince arrives at the meeting point half an hour later, I’ve got more than a hundred wolves spread out around the periphery of the scene, just waiting to move in or track the Prince after he leaves. When Damon enters, sniffing at our surroundings – a deserted warehouse in the old industrial district – I can’t stop myself from prowling forward with lethal intent.

“Where is she?” I thunder, feeling as though my wolf is clawing at my skin, actually spilling my blood in his desperation to get out.”

“Uh, uh, uh,” The prince mocks, wagging his finger at me. “If anything happens to me, I guarantee you’ll never see her again.”

“What the hell are you up to?” I change course, my gaze flitting to the bastion of guards at his back. He’s got about a dozen men around him, but I know his guards are second-rate fighters compared to my own men.

It would be so easy. My wolf suggests hungrily. He could be dead in an instant, and then we could hold his men hostage and torture them until they tell us where she is.

The Prince is eyeing me closely, undoubtedly reading my bloodthirsty thoughts. “You should know I’ve arranged to check in with your mate’s guards every fifteen minutes like clockwork. If they don’t receive my call – they’ll kill her and your unborn whelp.”

I silently curse. We figured something like this would happen, but it’s still fucking

inconvenient. “I see you’ve been taking pointers from my ex-wife.” I remark harshly, hoping to piss him off enough to put a dent in their alliance. “I didn’t think you had it in you to take a woman’s advice... then again, when she’s ten times smarter than you are, you’d be a fool not to. Still, it’s a bit embarrassing – don’t you think?”

Damon’s face flushes with color, and his jaw clenches tight. “I admit she’s a tiresome creature, but even I have to admit she’s had a few good ideas... like this one.”

“And what was her brilliant idea? To distract me with the rogues, to make me look like a fool for losing my mate?” I inquire, prodding for information more than anything else.

The Prince scowls. “You’re going to give up your campaign, Dominic. Resign, abdicate – whatever you want to call it. Take yourself out of the running and leave the territory. If you do that, I’ll give your little mate back and you two can run off in the sunset together.”

“Why should I believe you’d actually return her to me?” I press. My insides have been tied into knots since this all began, but they clench even tighter now, settling in my stomach like rocks.

“Because I am nothing if not a man of honor.” The Prince replies haughtily, “You have my word that she will be safe and sound as long as you play by my rules, Dominic.”

“I don’t believe you.” I say sharply, even though I have no intention of agreeing to his ludicrous terms.

‘You should. I’ve shown her nothing but kindness so far and I’ll

continue to do that.”

He shrugs. “I have nothing against either of you as people – the problem is that you’re

in my way.” He growls, his eyes flashing. “You have always been in my way.” I

“How do I know she’s really unharmed? She could be in some dungeon at this very

moment, suffering Goddess only knows what.” I snap. “If I’m going to consider this

offer, I want proof of life.”

“Alright.” He shrugs. “Give me 24 hours. We can set another meet. I’ll bring proof of

life, and you can tell me your decision. Just no that if you say no to me – I’ll kill her

faster than you can blink.”

