

# Accidental Surrogate for Alpha

Chapter 224

## #Chapter 224 - Welcome feast

### Sinclair

The entire capital seems to have turned out to welcome the delegations from around the continent, for beyond the palace gates there is a sea of excited onlookers, clamoring to watch the parade of Alpha's approach the summit. Gabriel and I lead our party down the palace steps to await them, and though our group is small, we're surrounded on all sides by guards and courtiers. Servants gather just out of sight, ready and waiting to rush forward and collect the traveller's bags or do their bidding.

I keep Ella tucked under my arm, watching as the first delegations begin to stream in. Though none of the visitors have done anything too extravagant, given the somber tone of the event, they've certainly gone out of their way to show off their power and wealth. The flood in dressed to the nines, driving their most luxurious cars and flanked by their fiercest looking men. Vanarium gleams everywhere the eye can see, and I have to squint against the glare of the metal in the hot sun.

It appears they all want to show off, but their reasons are undoubtedly varied. Some of the war's opponents probably want to rub their prowess in our faces - to show us what we can't have. Others are doubtless trying to curry favor with their king, or simply win a leading role in the battles to come. However no matter their motives, I see all eyes gravitating to Ella. They stay glued to her in a way that betrays their curiosity and admiration, and suddenly I wonder if they aren't showing off for her sake.

We greet the Alphas, their families and Betas one by one - first Gabriel, then Ella and me. They bow for us all, but none so deeply as for Ella, the one wolf among us who was not voted into power, but chosen - created by the Goddess herself. A new hope sparks in my chest, a prayer that my mate's heritage might be enough to overcome our recent challenges. I always knew she was going to be my secret weapon- right from the very beginning - but I hadn't expected everyone else to recognize it so quickly.

The welcome process takes the better part of the afternoon, but finally every delegation is settled in their suites, and their staffs dispersed among the palace. Ella is practically sleeping on her feet by the end, leaning her slight weight into my side and resting her cheek against my chest, sweet sighs falling from her lips. I carry her inside for a brief nap before dinner, but she wakes fresh and eager to get to the feast.

It's a good thing too, because the event isn't the apolitical meet and greet we'd originally planned. Instead the Alphas dive straight into discussions of the war, and as enamored as they may have been to meet a living demi goddess, the consensus is far from supportive.

"Alpha Dominic, we were all extremely concerned when we heard of the attack on your convoy and we're beyond relieved that you're alright." The Storm Forest leader begins. I sense the 'but' coming already, though it's no surprise - I'd feared this Alpha would pose difficult. "But the fact remains the incident proved your war is already bleeding over into our territory."

"It's not my war." I correct him coldly, ignoring my food and leaning back in my chair. "It's all of ours - all shifter kind." I glance around at the others, trying to gauge their reactions and finding a room full of poker faces.

Surely you don't believe Damon will be satisfied with conquering one continent, especially not if all his subjects flee here."

"We can deal with Damon," The FrostFang leader interjects, brushing off this concern. "Or leave him for the humans to crucify."

"Dominic, we know you came to us looking to novelxo rally support, and we applaud your determination to return home and defeat the Usurper - it's what any good leader would do." The White Claw Alpha commends." However you must recognize that things have changed since the Secrecy pact broke.

"You aren't wrong when you say this war belongs to all shifters now - but it's not because of the threat Damon poses," The Black Alder leader proclaims evenly. "It's because of the human threat. Every shifter on the planet is at risk now, so we have to look beyond the tragedys in your homeland and think about the future of our entire kind."

"He's right." The Midnight Alpha adds, "A war is short sighted. Even if we win against Damon, it would only be a temporary fix, a distraction from the human problem." Ella shifts uneasily in her chair, and I can sense her displeasure with this framing. "At this point it makes more sense to brace for all shifters coming here, rather than funding a war that will only lead to more strife if you manage to win." 2

"That's ridiculous." Gabriel assets, "every shifter in the world cannot possibly be accommodated in Vanara - and even if they could, it would only be a matter of time before the humans began searching for us."

"Then let them search, they've never found us before." The Storm Forest leader scoffs.

"They've never known we existed before." The King reminds him, a warning note in his voice.

At that point, a silken voice pipes up beside me. "Not to mention the damage which would be done to the human communities left behind."

Every eye in the room turns to look at Ella, and Goddess love her, she stares back at them with unflinching determination. I don't know a single she-wolf alive who could stare down this room of intimidating wolves, but Ella doesn't even bat an eye. When no one says anything, she continues, "I've been amazed ever since I arrived in this land - from the freedom your people are privileged enough to enjoy, to your technologies and advancement. It's truly remarkable, but I wonder how many of you have spent time in our homeland?" She asks, resting her hand over mine.

No one moves or speaks, and I wonder if they're merely stunned she interrupted them, or confused by her statement. Again she forges on, not waiting for permission. "What you must understand is that our worlds are completely intertwined. There is no separating the human and shifter economies - everything is interdependent. All the businesses, the industries and stocks - the only things which truly remain separate are the governments. Humans and wolves live side by side, even if they did not previously realize it."

"Is there a point to this?" The Storm Forest leader inquires, earning himself a growl from my wolf. The others look chastened, but Ella only kisses my cheek, "It's okay, my love." She tells me, before turning back to them. "What do you imagine will happen if one third of the societies around the world suddenly disappear?" She inquires, "Your territories may be hidden, but they are not self-sustaining. You rely on imports and exports from across the globe. So if every economy, if every society other than yours collapses, what do you think will happen to trade and security? Are you prepared to take in millions of new citizens, just when all the international relationships you've built for centuries collapse?"

Her statement is met with potent silence, and I can see the Alpha's reflecting on the undeniable truth she speaks. It was a calculated argument, and not the one I expecte from my mate - at least not entirely.

"Well what are we supposed to do?" The Silver Dawn leader demands. "The humans are already talking of pre-emptive strikes."

"From their perspective nothing is preemptive." Ella corrects him. "The first blows have already been stuck - the first hundred blows even. You forget that it is not only shifters suffering at Damon's hands. Millions of humans are being displaced and murdered - they have every right to fight back, and it's not their fault that they have no information about us or our perspectives to help guide them. It's ours. How are they to know we're not all bad, when everything they've seen of us has been horrific?"

"They have years of peaceful living as proof that it doesn't have to be that way." The Wind River Alpha argues.

"That's not what it feels like to them." Ella insists. "You've always known that both societies existed, so you can see the harmony we once struck. They are just finding out that everything they believed their entire lives was wrong, and it's happening right as the world explodes. That trauma would be enough to skew anyone's perception. All these politics are games of guessing the intentions of others and forming misconceptions based on our own biases. So I'm telling you that your understanding of their view is wrong, we have to acknowledge and appreciate that if we have any hope of getting through this without dismantling society as we know it."

There's another pregnant pause, "So what do you suggest?" Gabriel prompts her, hiding a smile.

"We've already reached out to some of their leaders, and we're waiting for a response. But I suggest that this summit should be the first of many. We need to send delegations to the humans, to show them that we are not all Damon. Hell, we ought to bring them here if they'll agree, let them see the suffering our own kind are experiencing. We have the same enemy - we need to show them we can be allies." Ella states, loudly enough for all to hear.

"That's madness," someone mutters.

"Or genius." Another adds wryly.

"Whether it's madness or genius, I guarantee it's right." Ella states confidently, offering them a Cheshire smile. "But you don't have to agree with me yet. I've got all week to wear you down."

The other Alphas exchange astonished glance, and the man beside me leans over to whisper in my ear, "Well you've certainly got a live one there."

I chuckle, "And I've never loved her more.