

Accidental Surrogate for Alpha

Chapter 227

#Chapter 227 - Stress

Ella

After the meeting ends and Sinclair and I are safely ensconced in the privacy of our bedroom, I start to change out of my dress. No sooner is the delicate fabric pooled around my feet than my mate sidles up behind me, sliding his arms around my bare waist. "I can't decide what made me prouder." He rumbles in my ear, "Watching you put all those Alphas in their place about the humans, or seeing you go after James that way."

I lean back against him with a contented sigh, turning my head so I can rest my cheek against his hard pec. "I don't appreciate people criticizing you, when all you've ever done is serve and sacrifice for your people."

He purrs, dropping his lips to the curve of my neck, "Leaders who can't receive and accept criticism aren't worth a damn, little wolf."

"I don't care." I sniff, resting my hands over his where they rest on my belly. The baby is sleeping, but his heartbeat is strong and steady. "You don't deserve to be treated that way."

He chuckles, "Your wolf is really riled up, isn't she?"

"Can you blame her?" I respond tartly. "After you've been gone for so long and then all of these cold-hearted alphas and the attacks? It would push anyone to the brink."

Sinclair kisses his way down my shoulder while his wolf tries to appease my cranky canine in our shared mental space, lavishing her with nuzzles and kisses. "Such a feisty mate." He praises, "Your spirit has always been one of my favorite things about you, but it's not good for the baby for you to get so worked up. I can't have you avenging my honor if it means putting stress on your body and the baby."

"Well I don't want to stress Rafe either." I answer, feeling my mood swing abruptly, leaving me guilty and dejected. Tears well in my eyes and I stomp my foot in frustration, annoyed that I'm crying yet again and hating the Alphas and James for provoking my wolf. "It's their fault, Damon and James and every one of those pack leaders who don't give a damn about anyone but shifters. If they weren't such assholes I wouldn't be in this position."

"I wasn't blaming you, baby." Sinclair croons, a steady purr vibrating against my back, "I know you can't control being stressed. I just worry about you - now more than ever."

"I feel so raw." I confess, wishing I could hug him properly - without my baby bump getting in the way. "I can't decide if I want to keep our pup safe inside me forever, or get him out so that my weakness won't be a threat to him anymore."

Sinclair goes very still, and then I'm being turned, his strong hands guiding my body to mirror his. He takes my face in his huge hands, and I gnaw on my lower lip, not wanting to look him in the eye. I don't think I can bare to see his disappointment right now. "Look at me, little wolf." He instructs firmly, and my gaze jumps up reflexively - even if it is blurred with tears. "Now listen to me very carefully." Sinclair continues, gentle but stern. "You are not weak. You are making a miracle in the middle of the apocalypse."

I sniffle pitifully, and his purrs renew. "You need to give yourself a bit of grace, sweetheart. I know that's easier said than done, but I won't accept that kind of talk." Sinclair declares fiercely, his deep voice full of emotion. "You are amazing. You are the strongest wolf I've ever met and this pup is so lucky to have you for a mother. Not to mention that I'm the luckiest man in the world to be able to call you my mate."

"But I can't even keep our baby safe and he's not even born yet." I counter, feeling myself begin to spiral despite his love and reassurance. Once again I'm caught in a current of emotion I can't control or escape, "And you can't focus on the war because I can't cope on my own and you're always comforting or worrying about me." I

Sinclair's purr roughens, and he unleashes his enormous power, letting it wash over me. "Our baby is going to be just fine -"

"You don't know that." I argue, piping up before he can get another word in.

"Maybe not, but you'd better believe I'm going to do everything in my power to guarantee it." He proclaims. "And if you think I could cope without you, you're out of your beautiful mind."

"You made it this far without me." I remind him petulantly.

"So did you." Sinclair answers. "We got through our struggles independently, because we didn't have another choice. We didn't know what the future would hold, and we survived so we could discover it one day. But we have each other now - so why would we ever try to go it alone? Having a support system only makes you more resilient,

sweetheart. It's not something to be ashamed of." His lips caress my salty-streaked cheeks, kissing away my tears. "Would you ever be this hard on me or Cora, for letting you help us? Would you ever hold your worries for our safety against us?"

At last the combination of his tender touch, soothing sounds, steadying power and wise words take hold, and I feel the tension drain out of my body. I shake my head, my voice thick as I utter, "No."

"Of course not." Sinclair murmurs, offering me a soft smile. "Now, on a scale of one to ten how exhausted are you?"

"Why?" I question suspiciously, recalling his sultry warnings when my wolf was flirting so outrageously before the meeting.

"Well, I thought we could have some fun." He shrugs, a devious glint in his green eyes. "After I teach your mischievous wolf what happens when she tries to arouse me in public."

"In that case, I'm much too tired." I lie, even as heat pools low in my belly. Sinclair chuckles and shakes his head, flashing his sharp fangs in promise. "Nice try, baby. Have you forgotten I can sense your feelings?"

"Then why did you ask?" I exclaim indignantly.

"I thought I'd give you a chance to be good, but I should have known that was a lost cause." He teases, pulling me in for a kiss. I start to protest but he silences me with his lips and tongue, and suddenly I can't remember why I was so outraged a moment ago. Everything else disappears, and I melt into my mate's arms, my heart pounding with excitement.

3rd Person

The nursery was dark by the time James made it downstairs, the pups all sleeping safely in their beds and cribs. He could hear Isabel's heart beating slow and steady through her door, a clear sign that she was already asleep. He wanted to see her so badly it hurt, and though he'd made his intentions about her very clear, their relationship hadn't advanced to the point where he could walk into her room and climb into bed with her.

Naturally, Sadie was also confined in Isabel's room, and as much as James enjoyed seeing the other pups, it wasn't the same as holding his newly bonded daughter. He was sorely tempted to barge into the room anyway - he was dead on his feet and on the verge of a mental breakdown. He hadn't ever been so stressed in his life, and the only thing that could ease his troubles were the she-wolves on the other side of that door. James needed to see them, to hold them and be comforted by the fact that at least something was right in the world.

However as he pictured their serene faces poised in sleep, he knew he couldn't disturb them. Instead James sunk onto the floor, deciding that listening to their sleepy sighs and gentle breathing would have to be enough. As if he'd willed it, Isabel's heartbeat suddenly jumped and sped up as a light flicked on under the door. James' spirits soared as the door swung open a minute later, and Isabel appeared.

"What are you doing?" She yawned, framed in the amber light of her doorway and dressed in a long silk night dress, her auburn hair loose and disheveled around her lovely face. James' heart stopped and started again, butterflies fluttering in his stomach.

"I didn't want to disturb you." He stated honestly, not able to put the rest of his feelings into words.

Isabel crossed her arms over her chest. "Did you really think my wolf wouldn't sense a strange man in here with my pups?"

James only smiled, loving her protectiveness. "I'm not strange."

"Hmph, says the wolf sitting alone in the dark watching children sleep." Isabel quipped, slowly approaching him. "Why are you still up?"

"We only just finished." He explained, "and I wanted to see you and Sadie."

Isabel narrowed her eyes. "What's wrong?"

"It was just a very long day." He answered, scrubbing a hand over his scruffy face. "I don't really want to talk about it just now."

"What do you want to do?" Isabel inquired, sidling nearer with obvious interest.

James huffed out a humorless laugh. "I'd counted on cuddling Sadie, I don't suppose she wakes up much at night?"

"Thankfully not, but what about me?" Isabel asked, sounding mildly offended that he hadn't considered her.

"Would you let me?" James countered, arching his dark brows.

"You've comforted me when I'm upset more than once." Isabel replied simply.

"And if you recall you weren't very happy about it." James reminded her wryly.

"But you did it anyway - because I needed it." Isabel added, moving to stand directly in front of him and extending one graceful hand. "Let me give you the same."

James accepted her hand without hesitation, but rather than getting to his feet, he pulled Isabel down into his lap. She yelped in surprise but soon found her entire body surrounded by warm, firm muscles. Of course, once he was touching her, it was so much harder for Isabel to resist the burly wolf. She tried not to feel the affection and desire quickly overtaking her body, but she quickly realized she was fighting a losing battle. So just this once, she surrendered and lost herself in James' arms.