

# Accidental Surrogate for Alpha

Chapter 238

## #Chapter 238 - Human Meeting

### Sinclair

It's no easy feat to calm my wolf.

The moment he sees the cold-hearted human who confronted us after Damon's rogue attack at the Solstice, he begins clawing at the surface of my skin, begging to get out. I desperately work to keep my face blank, though I know my mate can sense my surprise and fury. She rests one small hand on my thigh, gently caressing my tense muscles. My wolf relaxes slightly, but not nearly enough. He's growling in my head all the way through the introductions, which take much longer than I'd like.

When it's my turn to greet her, I summon my strength. "Madame Mayor." Somehow I manage to say it without enmity, "I didn't realize it was you who would be joining us."

"I think you'll find I'm the only reason anyone is joining at all." The former Moon Valley mayor, a woman by the name of Sabina Kelly, replies coolly. At first her words don't make sense, but then the video pans out, revealing that she is far from the only guest joining this call. Grim-faced men line the table on either side of her, and though some are as unknown to me as any stranger, others are surprisingly familiar. I see legislators, governors and leading activists from the human world, even a few politicians to whom we reached out with no reply. I can scarcely wrap my mind around the assembled delegates before Sabina is speaking again. "Nor can I rightly claim the title of mayor since Damon saw fit to depose me."

"Well with all due respect, you are an elected official - Damon is not." I reply, falling back on my diplomatic training to smooth the troubled waters between us. "So I would prefer to call you by the title your people afforded you."

I'm thankful my mouth is still working, because my mind is reeling. The last time I spoke to this woman she seemed to truly hate me - not that she cared for shifters in general. I'll never forget the way she sneered the words "your kind" at me that day, foisting blame for the attack onto all wolves as if we've all been cut from the same cloth. Of course that was merely one incident in a hundred. I can't remember ever having a productive conversation with her throughout the entirety of our acquaintance.

"Thank you." Sabina answers hesitantly. "Though I want to be very clear that we only agreed to this meeting to hear what you have to say. Those of us in power have known about shifters for some time now, but the last month has inflicted lasting scars on our people. We cannot overlook the violence you have inflicted upon our communities as of late."

"I understand, and I must tell you that humans are not the only ones suffering under Damon's rule." I reply steadily. "Our own people are suffering gravely under his tyranny, and it is our greatest wish to remove him from power." I turn my gaze on each of the humans individually. "Whatever Dmaon has led you to believe about humans and wolf-kind, I'm here to tell you that he does not speak the truth. We are not all so backwards and violent - we do not all think as he does."

"Then how do you think?" A man I don't recognize inquires.

"Perhaps it would be best if you heard from someone to whom the knowledge of wolf-kind came as a very recent surprise." Gabriel suggests, nodding to Ella.

My mate leans forward, resting her clasped hands on the table. "Thank you, Gabriel," She begins hesitantly, "It might surprise you to hear that, despite my current position, I was raised among humans in Moon Valley. In fact, I believed I was human until a couple of months ago, so there are actually a few of you who have been in on the secret even longer than I have." I watch the humans closely as Ella's words hit home, noticing a few confused expressions and curious grumbles.

"When Dominic told me about shifters I thought he was out of his mind, until I saw proof which made it impossible to deny. It took a lot of time for me to adjust to the new reality, to understand the way of wolves and my place in this world. I'm still learning every day, and it isn't easier just because my wolf is now awake. But part of what makes adjusting so difficult is that shifters are as varied and diverse as any other society." She pauses, making eye contact with each of the faces on the screen. "I would never dream of meeting someone from Sevka and assuming that they represent every being on that continent. There are good and bad people in every community, and even those designations are misleading, as each of us is the result of the experiences which shaped our lives."

Ella glances at me for reassurance, and my wolf purrs through our bond as she continues. "The point is simply that while shifters share a great deal in common biologically, culture and personality are different matters entirely. Damon is, in my opinion, the worst of the worst. It would be a mistake to judge him for being a wolf, because that isn't the proper frame of reference. He didn't take over our home because he's a shifter, he did it because he's a power-hungry narcissist with too many resources in reach." She purses her lips, uncertain about her next piece of advice. "Instead, I would beseech you to remember the centuries of peace we enjoyed living among shifters without ever knowing it."

"You mean the centuries and centuries you lied to us?" Another human counters gruffly.

"I'm sorry," Ella sighs, "But what nation hasn't lied to one another in order to advance their own peoples? Have you all announced every technology, innovation and defense strategy your country employs? Or have you safeguarded sensitive information to avoid greater competition or harm?"

"But we aren't all separate nations." One of the activists objects, "as you said, we lived side by side."

"Side by side, with independent governments." I chime in, holding my mate a bit closer. "Besides, the secrecy pact did not apply universally. Your leaders knew of shifters, and select humans were brought to work with shifters because of their expertise in their fields. Our governments have been working together all along, and though the secrecy among the general public may not inspire trust, any rational actor can understand why it might feel necessary. We wanted to avoid precisely this scenario."

"Has it occurred to you that this scenario only occurred because of the secrecy, not despite it?" A legislator asks shrewdly.

"Yes." I confess. "You have no idea how that very question has kept me up at night. And though we may all be guilty of perpetuating it, like you we were born into a system our ancestors created. We did what we thought was best, however misguided." I exhale, letting them see the full weight of my guilt. "The point is that right or wrong, shifters only want what is best for our families and our people. We do not want violence and war, we do not want Damon in power."

Sabina clears her throat, and I hold my breath - praying she won't say anything to undermine our message. "The reason I asked you all to join me today is because I have insight from the experience of working with both the Usurper and Alpha Sinclair. Before the coup and my exile to Sevka, I thought much like you did. I put up with shifters because I had no other choice, and I didn't like it." She confesses. "Frankly, I believed that Alpha Dominic was full of it. Damon convinced me that his public persona was all a show - that he was nothing more than a con artist who hoped to steal the crown by acting like a moralizing, bleeding heart, charmer."

"Then the war came, and I saw that I'd believed the wrong man." Sabina carries on, shamefaced. "Alpha Dominic tried to expose Damon's crimes, but instead of answering for them the Usurper sped up his plans for takeover. In truth, I've come to believe that Dominic's accusations are the only reason we've held off as well as we have - they forced Damon to rush and act before he was ready."

My jaw drops, and Ella sweetly sets it back in place with one small finger.

Perhaps I'm an idiot, but that possibility - the idea that I might have helped lessen the damage by speaking out when I did - has never occurred to me before. I can't express how badly I want it to be true, though I know wishful thinking can be a dangerous thing.

"I made the mistake of believing Damon when he told me you weren't a fit ruler." Sabina forges on, speaking directly to me now. "When he told me that he would protect humans and wolves alike if he came to power. It isn't easy to admit just how wrong I was, but it would be an even greater betrayal of my people to do nothing now, when you have reached out to us in friendship."

Again Sabina looks to the other humans. "We have a common enemy with these shifters, and the situation is dire enough that we cannot be choosy. Luckily that's not a problem, because Dominic is the ally I would choose above anyone else. He is a good man, a selfless leader who cares more about wolves and humans alike. He is brave enough to stand for the things that truly matter, strong enough to defend us, and smart enough to know when to fight and when to hold off. I encourage all of you to give this alliance your full consideration and spread the word throughout your network. We do not have to be alone in this fight."

To my amazement, a number of the other humans are nodding in agreement. I can scarcely believe this is really happening, but when I look to my mate, she's sending me an incandescent smile. "I couldn't have said it better myself."