

The Alpha King's Human Mate by HC Dolores

Chapter 13

“People who think they know everything are a great annoyance to those of us who do.” 2

Isaac Asimov

“Clark, is it?”

I'd watched almost everyone deal with the brunt of the Alpha King's stare, but now that I was the one feeling it, I understood just how crushing it was. It made me feel like I was on stage in front of a hundred people trying to deliver a speech, only I had no idea what the speech was about. 1

I almost felt a little sympathetic for Ezra almost.

“Yes, Your Majesty.” The honorific felt foreign on my tongue, but the last thing I wanted to do was go back home in pieces because I used the wrong title.

“Tell me,” the Alpha King leaned back in his chair, sipping his wine, “How does it feel to be so fragile?”

“I'm sorry?”

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I've spent enough time

“Fragile. Breakable. Delicate. Whatever word you fancy around humans to know weak your kind is,” the Alpha King said.

Glad to know he thinks so highly of us. 1

I felt like I was treading on thin ice. Judging from the way the King had talked to Angel and my general knowledge of male werewolves, I knew they didn't think highly of humans – let alone human women. We had even less to offer than a female werewolf did, and no matter what, I couldn't allow my distaste for the werewolf world to show. I didn't know much about the Alpha King, but I was pretty sure badmouthing werewolves was a one-way ticket to the dungeons.

With my heart thumping in my chest, I finally said, “I don’t know if I can answer your question accurately, Your Majesty. I’ve only ever been human, but I have witnessed the immense strength that werewolves do. It’s amazing what your kind is capable of.”@

The Alpha King hummed thoughtfully but he didn’t look displeased with my answer. “Yes, I suppose you’ve had plenty of time to see how incapable humans are. How long have you lived with your father?”

“About six years.’

‘I

“You know,” the Alpha King chuckled, looking at Beta Williams, “This story has always fascinated me. There were plenty of rumors floating around about Marcus Bellevue’s affair with a human woman and their human child. A powerful Alpha cheating on his destined mate with a human of all things? It’s almost unbelievable.”

“It is quite unusual,” Beta Williams replied, “I can’t say I’ve ever heard of that happening. I’ve known werewolves that have had affairs with human women and gotten them pregnant – but never a powerful Alpha and never a mated one.” (2

I tried not to squirm in my seat at the direction the conversation had taken. If the Alpha King’s goal was to make me as uncomfortable as possible, he was definitely exceeding.
3

“Why did he cheat on his mate?” The Alpha King turned back at me. He was genuinely asking me as if I had some sort of secret insight into my father’s psyche.

“Uh, I’m not sure,” I stumbled out, trying to keep my composure, “I know it wasn’t a long-term thing, but he’s never told me much about it.”

“Ah, I see. A one-night-stand left him saddled with a child?” The King laughed,

“How unfortunate.” He took another long sip of his wine glass and I prayed that my part of the interrogation was done. I hated feeling everyone’s eyes on me, waiting to see if I’d keep my cool or slip up and say the wrong thing.

“There’s something else I’m curious about, Clark,” the King continued and my stomach dropped. “Humans do not have mates, do they?”

“No, Your Majesty.”

He looked thoughtful for a moment. "I've always wondered what that must be like," he said, "To not have the pull of a soulmate like us wolves do. You don't even understand what you're missing, I suppose."

I held my tongue – although a part of me wanted to tell him that I had seen how their supposed soulmates treated each other and the last thing I wanted was to have some flesh-and-blood anchor weighing me down.

"Then again," the King mused, "I suppose you'll never have to experience the crippling loss of a mate either. I lost my own over twenty-five years ago and the pain feels as fresh as yesterday. My own son has never met his mate and I see how it weighs on him – it's like missing a limb you've never had."

"You almost sound poetic, Alaric. Your love for the late Queen is inspiring to all mated couples," Beta Williams said, "Where is Prince Griffin tonight?"

Yes, let's direct this conversation to someone else's family.

The Alpha King sighed deeply. "Who knows?" He said, "My sons less and less time around the castle these days. He prefers to go settle pack disputes in person, he likes to get his hands bloody. That's at least one trait he's picked up from his father."

Chapter 14

The King grinned.

"Will he be at the meeting tomorrow, Your Majesty?" Sebastian asked. It was the first time he'd spoken since the Alpha King walked into the room.

"Yes," the Alpha King said, "He has a vested interest in the meeting. I have no doubt he'll be there."

Well, that just confirms that most of this meeting is just a rouse for the Prince to find his mate.²

Fine by me.

If the Prince is too busy hunting down his mate, I can do what I do best at these sorts of things and make friends with the wallpaper (and hopefully whoever is in charge of the food).

Suddenly, my mind flashed back to my conversation with the elder from the pack.

the old man who had told me that there was a miniscule chance I could be a

wolf's mate given my bloodline.

No, there's no way.

If I was someone's mate, I'm sure I would've felt it some sort of mate pull like the wolves do.

I'm only human, there's no way I'm going to end up someone's mate, let alone the prince of wolves.

It's such a miniscule chance, and as unlucky as I may be sometimes, there's no way I'm unlucky enough to be the mate of some possessive werewolf prince. That's the kind of stuff you see in books and TV shows, not real life.

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But no matter what I tried to tell myself, my stomach was in the knots the rest of the dinner party.

"I do not wish women to have power over men, but over themselves.")

Mary Shelley

You'd think if there was any time that you'd be able to sleep like a baby, it'd be when you're lying on a luxurious king-sized bed with sheets that probably cost more than my college tuition would.

But I was wide awake that night.

Lily was snoring just feet away from me, in the other bed of the castle suite. Sebastian was probably asleep too, although I couldn't tell since he was separated by the large sliding glass door. {1}

Since the dinner party, I'd been riddled with anxiety and I couldn't articulate the source of it. Was I nervous that my biology meant I could end up saddled to a werewolf forever? A little bit. But really, I just felt out of my depth at this place. It was like I was walking on pins and needles everywhere. People like the Alpha King and Ezra saw my genetic makeup as a weakness, something they could poke and prod at like a science experiment.

There was nothing I could do about it, not really. All I could do was wait it out. Once I was back home and away from the castle forever, I was sure I'd feel better.

But what I am going to do about sleeping tonight?

I took another glance at Lily. She was out like a light and Sebastian was probably passed out even harder.

When I had trouble sleeping at home, I'd drink a cup of tea and walk around the pack grounds. It was safer than it sounded. My dad ensured that Blacktooth's lands were patrolled by wolves around the clock, so there was no real danger for me to encounter.

It's not like I could take a walk here. I didn't doubt that the place was guarded, but I didn't know my surroundings. The last thing I needed was to get lost or encounter someone like Ezra, who thought it would be fun to mess with the human.

I could step out on the balcony though.

On the way back from the dinner party, I had spotted a door that led out to a

balcony. I doubted anyone would be out there in the middle of the night, and it was close enough to the suite that I was confident I could find my way there and back without getting lost.

It only took me a moment to make up my mind. As quietly as I could, I threw off the thick covers and sat up. My pajamas, one of Sebastian's old t-shirts and a pair of cotton shorts, were definitely not very royal but hopefully, nobody was going to see me in them.

I kept my eyes on Lily's peaceful face the entire time I put on my slippers and tip-toed out the door. I couldn't hold back my cringe when the door squeaked as I was opening it, but thankfully, Lily kept on snoring.

Time to find that balcony.

As I maneuvered the hallways, I couldn't believe how beautiful the castle was at nighttime. There weren't any electric lights that I could see but moonlight shone in through the big, stained glass windows and bounced off the hallways. It looked magical.

Up ahead, the door to the balcony came into view.

Success! And not a single soul had to see me in my old PJs.

Fortunately, the door was unlocked and I closed it behind me, savoring the fresh

air. Don't get me wrong it was freezing out. There was still snow on the ground from our earlier arrival, but the cold didn't feel so biting right now. If anything, the chilly air in my lungs and the goosebumps on my skin felt marvelous compared to the suffocating castle.

I dug my fingers into the polished stone railing. The balcony was at least two stories, if not more, but it was hard to make out much of the view. There was a reflection of the moon in the snow, but other than that, it was all inky darkness.

That might've freaked me out on another day, but right now, the isolation felt nice. There were no rude Kings or annoying wolves to deal with out here. Just me, the moon, and the below-freezing temperature.

Just two more days, Clark.

"I don't think I've ever seen somebody look so happy standing in zero-degree weather in a t-shirt," a female voice piped up from behind me.

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I whipped my head around immediately and spotted a newcomer on the balcony.

Guess I spoke too soon about getting to enjoy my time alone out here.

The first thing I noticed about her was the scar on her face.

It stretched from her eyebrow to her chin, and although I could see that she was smirking at me, the scar seemed to tug her skin into a frown. The girl didn't look hardly older than I was. She had dark hair that hung in ringlets about her face, startling green eyes, and tawny brown skin.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to scare you," she continued to smirk, taking a few steps closer to me. She must've had at least five or six inches on me and the height difference became apparent the closer she got.

Despite being caught off-guard, I tried to recover quickly. "No worries," I said, "I was just taking a bit of a late-night walk. I didn't expect anyone else to be out here."

She glanced up at the moon, crossing her arms. Unlike me, she was dressed a little bit more appropriate for the weather. a leather jacket, jeans, and thick boots.

"Me either," she said.

"I'm Clark."

Perhaps I should've been uneasy around a stranger on a secluded balcony, but some instinctual gut feeling told me this girl didn't mean me any harm.

there was a

"You're the human, right?" she asked, and her eyes lit up with curiosity, "I think I was supposed to meet you tonight. Well, you and a couple of others dinner party for the Alpha King, but I didn't go."

"Yep, resident human here," I said, unable to keep the sarcastic tone out of my voice, "The dinner party? Wait a second...you must be Alessia. I think I remember them mentioning your name, but they said you weren't able to come. You were sick. or something?"

"That's what I told them," she said, rolling her eyes, "But really, I had no interest. in spending my evening at some stuffy dinner party getting interrogated by the King. That guy is an ass." (

The laugh flew out my mouth before I could stop it.

Alessia grinned. "You don't like him either?"

Deep down, I knew I should be careful about badmouthing the King with anyone, especially a werewolf I didn't know. But after that fiasco of a dinner party, all I felt was sheer relief that somebody else felt the same way.

"He's, uh, interesting," I finally said.

"Let me guess. He found a way to ask you super personal questions that would make anyone uncomfortable and you had no choice but to answer."

"Uh, pretty much...yeah. I'm guessing you've met the guy."

A curl fell into her face and Alessia huffed, moving it out of the way. "Yeah, a couple of times," she said, "They haven't exactly been the most comfortable encounters. That man definitely enjoys trying to make his guests as uncomfortable as he can. I think he gets off on the power of knowing they've got to be nice to him,

no matter what crazy shit he says. He's a sadistic dick."

"Given how I just spent my evening, I think you're 100% correct."

Alessia laughed. "Oh, and by the way, it's technically Alpha Alessia."

Wait, Alpha?

There's no way this girl is an Alpha, right?

Female Alphas are extremely rare and she's practically my age!

"You're an Alpha?"

"You don't need to look so shocked," she smirked, "Most people don't believe me when I tell them that."

"Because you're a woman or because you're a teenager?"

"Usually both," she shrugged.

I gave Alessia a second glance. I wouldn't have pegged her as Alpha without her

telling me, but now that she'd said something, I could see it. She was lean and well-built and she held herself like most Alphas did like she had all the confidence in the world (and she'd tear your throat out if you suggested otherwise). The scar certainly added the toughness factor too.

"Nah, you definitely look like an Alpha," I said, "You've got the signature glare down pat."

She chuckled. "Glad you think so."

"If you don't mind me asking, how is it possible you're an Alpha?" I asked, "My

dad always told me that female Alphas were extremely rare...although I will admit. I'm not Werewolf Wikipedia, so I might be missing something."

Alessia's smile dropped and her face became blank as she stared at the moon. "No, you're not missing anything," she said, "Female Alphas are rare. It pretty much never happens, even when you've got the right blood. I was my dad's only child, the only heir with Alpha blood in my veins. I spent my entire life training and preparing for the Alpha position, but when he died, it didn't matter. All the pack elders wanted to give the position to my dad's Beta. They insisted that I'd be happier "not on the battlefield." That's code for them telling me I needed to stay inside the house, find a mate, and pop out a bunch of babies like a docile female

wolf."

Alessia's face was blank but I could see the rage burning in her eyes.

"I'm sorry," I said, "That's awful that they tried to toss you aside like that. But if everyone was against it, how did you manage to become Alpha?"

Alessia's mouth twisted into a bloodthirsty grin as she turned to look at me. "That Beta they wanted to put in my place? I slaughtered him in front of the pack. They changed their tune pretty quickly after that.

My jaw hit the floor.

I was not expecting that.

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It took me a moment to regain my composure after that bombshell. "Oh, I...see."

Alessia laughed like she'd been expecting that reaction. "Come on, Clark. I know you're human but don't tell me a little bloodshed makes you that uncomfortable. I've heard about you, and if the rumors are right, you've spent too much time around wolves to have a weak stomach. Or are all humans just weak?"

I couldn't stop myself from lashing back at her – even if it probably wasn't the best choice to give attitude to a girl who had just described her kill to me.

"I'm not weak," I retorted, "And humans aren't either. We might not have the physical manpower but at least most of us aren't still living in the 18th-century with a monarchy. Human women are actually allowed to hold positions of power without murdering someone for it...or at least, in the past twenty years they can." O

As soon as the words were out of my mouth, I wondered if I'd made a mistake. Was she going to physically retaliate? Even the hot blood and adrenaline pumping through my veins didn't give me enough confidence to think I could stand a chance against her.

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I might've had held my tongue in another setting, but I wasn't tired of feeling pushed around like I was somehow inferior for just existing. What was so bad about being human? At least humans had options. We could carve out our own destinies, some more than others. Wolves would never have that power. Everything

was bloodlines and hierarchies and dominance to them.

"Well, well," Alessia whistled lowly, "You have more bite than I thought. Maybe not all humans are just weak babies."

I let out a sigh of relief, grateful that she hadn't taken any real offense to my words. "Gee, thanks. What a high compliment."

“Coming from me, it is. I promise.”

There was a lull in the conversation, and for a moment, we both just took in the bright moon and the inky night sky.

“So, why were you on a late-night stroll?” Alessia asked.

“I couldn’t sleep. Walks usually calm me down, but I didn’t want to get too lost, so I ended up here. What about you?”

“Oh, I followed your scent out here,” Alessia said, shrugging casually.

I whipped my head around. “Wait, my scent? You followed me out here?”

Alessia closed her eyes and inhaled sharply. “Yeah, I wasn’t trying to stalk you but I caught a whiff of your scent in the hallway. You smelled ridiculously good and I was curious.” [2

“I smell good? In like a flattering way, or in a you-would-like-to-eat-me-for-dinner kind of way?” (3

Alessia seemed to ponder the options as if she wasn’t sure. “More in a flattering way. I almost thought you were my mate for a second if I’m being honest but the scent wasn’t strong enough and I would’ve known when we made eye contact.’

I blushed.

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“But there is something about you. It’s like your natural scent is fine but it’s mixed with something else something that smells amazing,” Alessia looked at me curiously, “I’m not sure what it is.”@

I knew enough about mating bonds to know that a wolf’s mate was supposed to smell irresistible to them.

“Well, I’ve come across a few different wolves while I’ve been here,” I said, “Maybe I interacted with your mate along the way and that’s what you’re smelling?”

“Maybe,” Alessia hummed, and then began to walk back to the door, “I think I’ve gotten enough fresh air for tonight, and unless you want to add a layer of frostbite to those jammies, you might want to come in too.”

Although talking with Alessia had been a nice distraction, the goosebumps were starting to reappear on my skin and my teeth were beginning to chatter. D

“Yeah, I think you’re right. Will I see you tomorrow at the meeting?”

“Not sure,” Alessia shrugged, “I haven’t decided whether I’m going to be ‘sick’ or not. Either way, I have a feeling I’ll definitely be seeing you again, Clark.”

“Funny. I’ve got that same feeling, Alessia.” O

Chapter 15

“I am no bird, and no net ensnares me; I am a free human being with an independent will.”

Charlotte Bronte

After my impromptu walk and my conversation with Alessia or Alpha Alessia as I’m sure she’d rather be called – I was out like a light.

That night, I dreamt of the same man I had a week ago. I couldn’t see his face but the large griffin tattoo that wrapped around his forearm was as prevalent as ever.

I wanted to see more of him. If I could just see his face then maybe

“Clark! Clark! Clark!”

The screeching sound of my lovely sister’s voice felt like a dose of cold water pulling me from my dream. I screwed my eyes shut and groaned into my pillow. “Just five more minutes, Lil.”

For a moment, she didn’t respond and then I suddenly felt her snatch the covers out from under me.

I shot up in bed, trying to grab them back before I felt the morning chill on my bare skin. My human reflexes were no match for Lily, of course, and she moved back before I could snatch them from her. (1

“Did you have to take the covers?” I whined, “It’s cold.” I hugged myself to preserve what little warmth I had left and glared at Lily’s smirking face.

“Yes, I did,” she said, “It’s time to get up, Clark. The meeting is in a couple of hours and there’s only one bathroom in the suite. I’m not going to be late just because you wanted to sleep in.”

“Fine,” I grumbled but I knew she was right.

As her words sunk in, I felt another wave of anxiety wash over me. Today was the day. It was the big meeting. I’d be stuck in a room with forty other Alpha kids, the Alpha King, and the Prince. I wasn’t even sure what I was worried about. The meeting had nothing to do with me, nobody would be looking at me. It’s not like they’d be asking my opinion on the pack dispute. D

Maybe you’re just worried that you’ll accidentally say something stupid and someone will rip your throat out. 4

That’s always a possibility.

“I call dibs on the shower first,” Lily called.

“Too late!” Sebastian shouted back, ducking into the bathroom before Lily could stop him.

“Seb! You better not use all the hot water!” She snarled but I could already hear the water running. O

I rubbed my eyes, still blinking away the last moments of sleep and Lily plopped onto her bed.

It was quiet for a moment and then she spoke. “Clark?”

“Hm?”

“You don’t think the Alpha King is right, do you?”

“About what?”

“About the fact that Alpha daughters only make their families proud if they’ve got some strong male wolf as their mate,” she said. I turned to look at her and there

was an emotion I didn’t see on Lily’s face very often. Insecurity. G

“No, of course not, Lily,” I said, “The Alpha King may believe what he wants but it’s not the reality. You’re more than just who you’re mated to.”

“But he’s right, isn’t he?” she said, furrowing her eyebrows, “I mean, that’s what I’m supposed to do, right? It’s why I’m at this meeting because there’s a possibility I might be the Prince’s or the mate of some other Alpha son.”

“You didn’t have a say in coming here,” I shot back, “If it was just up to dad, I’m sure you and I wouldn’t even be here.”

She huffed. “Please, let’s be honest. If it was up to dad, you might not be here but he’d love for me to come back home with some strong future Alpha on my arm.” Her face scrunched up like the idea disgusted her. O

I wanted to tell her that wasn’t true, but if I wasn’t sure. I’d watched the kind of pressure that my parents put on Lily growing up. I had never experienced the

mate pressure” myself but she had. When Lily turned sixteen and gained the ability to recognize her mate, my dad had lined up every of-age boy in the pack for her to look at.

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When that hadn’t turned up any results, dad and Luna Grace were thrilled. I remember them telling us over a family dinner that this was good news it meant Lily might be mated to an Alpha or even a future Alpha from another pack. A strong mate could mean a strong alliance.

So, as much as I didn’t want to admit it, Lily had a point. If she came home with an Alpha on her arm, our dad would be thrilled.

“You don’t want to end up with an Alpha?” I asked.

She looked down. “It’s not like I’m completely against the idea...but mates are supposed to be perfect for you, right? They’re your other half. Knowing me, I just don’t think my other half is going to be some strong Alpha. I don’t know, maybe I’m overthinking it. The dinner party just got the wheels turning last night and I just realized that I’m probably going to end up disappointing mom and dad.”

My heart ached. I knew that feeling all too well what it felt like to be a

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disappointment, to never measure up to what you thought dad wanted you to be. Lily didn’t deserve to feel like that. She didn’t deserve any of this.

“Lily,” I said, and I moved from my bed to hers, “You’re not a disappointment. I don’t know what the future holds but the BS coming out of the Alpha King’s mouth last night? That’s exactly what it was. bullshit. You’re so much more than just who you’re mated to.”

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Lily looked up at me and I could see her blue eyes wet with tears. “You think so?”

I hugged her. “Yeah, I know so. I’m your sister, I know you better than anyone. You don’t need some strong mate to make dad or anyone else proud. You’re going to great things regardless of who your mate ends up being.” (2)

She laughed and hugged me closer. “God, this feels like such a rom-com moment right now,” she said, “You are literally the cheesiest person I’ve ever met, Clark. Maybe you should write motivational posters or something.”

She pulled back and her expression seemed a lot lighter. “But thanks... I guess I needed whatever motivational mojo you just pulled out of your ass right there.” O

I rolled my eyes. “Yeah, whatever. I’m going to find my clothes for the meeting. Your wanna do my makeup? I wouldn’t want my dark circles to reflect poorly on the pack.”

“Oh, I’m definitely doing your makeup. We don’t need you looking like a troll.”

I smiled and grabbed my suitcase. As I sorted through my clothes, I couldn’t get my mind off what Lily had said to me. All this pressure that she and every other female werewolf felt? It was real and as long as someone like the Alpha King was in power, it’d never stop. There would never be progress. 4

At least Lily could recognize that she didn’t want to be defined by her mate. What about girls like Angel? She wasn’t self-aware to realize what kind of sexist teachings had been shoved down her throat, and why would she? When she did find her mate, he’d probably just enforce everything she’d learned.

Maybe there will be a shift in power one day and someone will change this kind of stuff.

If I was Queen, that would be on top of my to-do list.

But I’m not, so I’ll just settle for getting the hell out of dodge the minute I graduate.

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Lily, Sebastian, and I marched to the diplomatic meeting like we were marching to war. Esther was our guide and she was just as smiley as she’d been the first two times I’d seen her. I wondered if she could pick up on the tension in the air way I kept rubbing my sweaty palms on my green romper, how Lily kept clicking her teeth, or the stiff way Sebastian walked. 4

She must've sensed our nervousness but she just kept on smiling, smiling, smiling.

"When we get there," Sebastian said, turning to Lily and me, "It's probably best if none of us speak unless we have to. I don't mean to sound like an ass, I'm just not sure how intense this whole thing's going to be. I do know there's going to be a lot of people there."

"You mean the King and the Prince, right?" Lily said, "We already know that, Sebastian."

"Not just them. Forty other Alpha kids are going to be in that room too plus the Alphas who are actually in this pack dispute. I doubt they're going to be a couple of happy campers. Just stick close to me, right? I'm supposed to protect you guys. I just don't want anything bad to happen."

I nodded. I had no plans of speaking or trying to do anything other than sitting quietly for this entire meeting. No protests here.

"Whatever," Lily said but she didn't argue. Her face was completely blank again, bordering on a scowl. There was no trace of the girl who had tears in her eyes just an hour before.

It felt like we'd been walking for hours but finally, Esther stopped in front of a large, ornate door.

"We're here," she said, and then her eyes glazed over. She was using the mind link. "Look like almost everyone is inside. You can enter now, the Alpha King is ready for you."

Here we go.

I took a deep breath as Esther opened the door.

Little did I know my life would never be the same after this meeting. Had I known what was going to happen, maybe I would've played "sick" like Alessia had the night before.

