

# The Alpha King’s Human Mate by HC Dolores

## Chapter 39

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“Good friends, good books, and a sleepy conscience: this is the ideal life” (2

Mark Twain

It had been nearly two weeks since I'd arrived in Yorba Linda, and each day that passed without incident allowed me to slowly relax. I felt like I was slowly sinking into the easy routine that came with living here.

Neither my dad nor Griffin had shown up, banging on the door and ready to drag me back. Even if my dad had known I was visiting mom, he still wouldn't have found me ~ not unless he'd been keeping close

tabs on her whereabouts for the past seven years.) There's no way Luna Grace would've been cool with that.

And if Griffin hadn't been able to find me yet, maybe he'd already given up. I knew he'd gone to Blacktooth Pack a week ago - that's how my dad knew I was even missing at all — but I hadn't heard anything more about him since.

He's probably already moved on. Maybe he's taking applications for his new Queen. !|

Somehow, that thought didn't feel comforting to me. By the time Friday, the day I had agreed to see the movie with Aiden, rolled around, I was more relaxed than ever. It no longer felt like Griffin was going to be waiting to abduct me every time I left the house.“

Steve and mom seemed to pick up on my relaxed mood too. “So, tell me about this boy,” mom said teasingly.

She was chopping up an onion for dinner while I washed dishes. I couldn't deny that her cooking skills had vastly improved in the past seven years.

“There's nothing to tell,” I told her, “He's just an old friend. We dated for, like, a couple of months two years ago but it never went anywhere. We ran into each other at that little cafe and he asked me to catch up ~ as friends.”

I left out the part about how Aiden and I had been frequently texting since our reunion at the coffee shop. Most of it was casual, but there was some light flirting too. 7

“Hm, okay,” mom said, hiding a smile. “I'm just glad you're settling in and making friends here. I was a little worried about you those first few days. You were very jumpy and nervous.”

“Yeah, well, I am on the run,” I told her, “Coming here was a risk. Part of me was terrified that Griffin was going to just show up and drag me back to the castle, but it looks like laying low has paid off. I'm in the clear.” “Griffin,” she tested his name out like she was sampling a new dish, “That's your mate? And he's the King?”

I nodded. It felt weird to discuss Griffin with my mom. Truthfully, thinking or talking about Griffin left an odd, uncomfortable feeling in my stomach. It also inevitably led me to think about things I shouldn't — like how expressive his dark eyes were, how lean and tall he was, or his infuriating nickname for me.

I wanted to leave Griffin in the past. That's where he belonged now.

“What was he like?” she asked.

Despite how uncomfortable I was with the subject, my mom didn't seem to pick up on any of my unease.

It took me a moment but I managed to answer her. “Well, I didn't know him that well,” I said, “I only spent a day with him before I left. But he was definitely domineering...but still affectionate. He always had his hands on me.” I hadn't meant to say that last part out loud, but

somehow, it still slipped out.

“Wolves are always domineering,” she told me with an eye roll, “Your father was that way too, even though we spent most of our time as friends. It can be hard to handle.”

“Yeah, you got that right.” As it turned out, the movie theater that Aiden wanted us to meet at was within walking distance. Yorba Linda was that tiny of a town.

But I didn't mind. The temperature was just cool enough to warrant a jacket but not uncomfortable, and the fresh air felt nice. Since this was definitely not a date, I'd kept my outfit casual: a light dress and a cardigan from my mom's closet. Since I'd come here with only a backpack to my name, I'd been stealing a lot of her clothes and making a few visits to the thrift store.

I'd brushed my hair and done a little bit of makeup but nothing too time-consuming. Minimal makeup for my definitely-not-a-date-night.

As I turned the corner to see the tiny movie theater and its bright lights, I smiled - Aiden was already here. He was leaning against one of the pillars, staring at the bright screen of his phone.

“Hey,” I called out and he looked up. He was dressed just as casually as me in a hoodie and jeans. He gave me a bright smile as soon as he saw me and I tried to pretend like I didn't notice the way his eyes roamed over my body.

“Hey,” he said, “You, uh, look good.” As soon as I reached him, he leaned over to give me a quick hug. I barely had time to think about how awkward it was before he was pulling away.

It was clear that both of us felt awkward and a little out of place. We hadn't seen each other in two years and most of our original time together had been making out in his cramped Honda. And now we were both seeing a movie “as friends,” even though the charged air felt more like a clumsy first date.

“Thanks,” I gave him a small smile, “You look good too.” Aiden practically preened at my praise, and I was struck again at just how blue his eyes were. They were so unlike Griffin's dark ones.

Why are you thinking about Griffin right now? You're hanging out with Aiden.

“You wanna grab our tickets?” Aiden asked. I nodded and he directed me to the booth.

We both paid separately and I almost let out a sigh of relief when Aiden didn't offer to pay for mine.

We made small-talk all the way into the theater. Aiden told me about what he was studying in school - economics - and we chatted about how pricey the concession stand was. None of it was very deep, but by the time we were seated in our chairs, I definitely felt more relaxed. It felt like we were finding our groove and some of the awkwardness had dissipated.

There was even some banter.

“I remember when you made me watch, like, ten of Hitchcock's movies two years ago,” Aiden whispered to me as the previews played. We tried to stay quiet given how full the theater was. I was surprised to see so many people here, but then again, it was a small town. It's not like Yorba Linda had clubs or bars to hang out at.

“Oh, please,” I hissed back playfully, “It was ten. We watched, like, three. You were just such a drama queen.” )

Aiden chuckled but the title credits began to play so he didn't reply. )

I tried my best to pay attention to the movie and ignore the way Aiden's hand kept brushing against mine or how he shifted in his seat like he was mustering up the courage to hold my hand.

Please don't.

To silently make my point, I moved my arm from the armrest to my lap. He stopped fidgeting after that and I let out a silent breath, fixing my eyes on the black-and-white screen.

But it was halfway through the movie when I felt it.

Suddenly, the hair on the back of my neck stood up and my entire body tensed. I felt exposed and vulnerable, like prey sitting out in the open while her predator waits in the bushes.

Something is off

I didn't want to make a scene, so I tried to discreetly turn my head to look around. Nobody was paying attention to me. Everyone, including Aiden, was completely engaged in the movie. I peered into the dark corners of the theater but there was nothing there. Nobody was looking at me. 7

Still, I couldn't shake the feeling that something was different. Every bit of relaxation I'd felt before had been sucked from my body. All I could feel now was the twisting of my gut and the beating of my heart.

Just as I'd decided I was just being paranoid and anxious for no reason, I felt it again.

A change in the air. Like some powerful predator had stepped into the room and we were all exposed sitting ducks. (1)

My stomach dropped.

I recognized that power, that tangible tension that came from a certain someone's presence. I had felt it before.

Griffin.