

The Alpha King's Human Mate by HC Dolores

Chapter 34

Chapter 34 “There is no land like the land of your childhood.” Michael Powell

My heart was a drum pounding in my chest as I stood on the porch of a tiny white house. It was tiny and tucked into the suburbs, so much so that even my Uber driver had missed it. There wasn't anything glamorous about it but I could tell it was well-loved. The tiny garden by the front of the house was blossoming and the white picket fence looked freshly washed. |)

This was the address Steve had given me. It was nearly an hour from the airport in a tiny, suburban town called Yorba Linda. It was a relatively easy trek from the airport even if the Uber ride had been costly.

This is it, Clark. Just ring the doorbell.

As I pressed the doorbell, I could feel the adrenaline pumping

through my veins. Fight or flight, Clark? It's not too late.

Part of me wanted to turn around and take off. Where I'd go, I'm not sure. But now that I was actually standing in front of the door, all I wanted to do was flee. I felt completely unprepared. It had been seven years — what was I supposed to say to the woman who abandoned me seven years ago?

Unfortunately, I didn't have any more time to mull it over. I heard the echo of footsteps on the other side, and then suddenly, the door opened and I was face-to-face with Uncle Steve.

Fight, it is.

A knot settled into my stomach. He looked almost identical to what I remembered him to be - with just a few more wrinkles and a thinner face.

“Clark!” His deep voice boomed, and then he pulled me into a crushing hug. “It's so good to see you, kid! You look so grown up!” I managed to wrap my arms around his large frame, and inhaled his scent. He smelled just like I remembered too — like tobacco smoke and citrus. The man had always had a thing for citrus fruits.

Steve was a large man. Not as tall as my dad or most of the male wolves I'd known, but he made up for it in bulk. He was a gym rat and even with my head buried into his shoulder, I could tell his biceps were still as big as tree trunks. *)

His bald head and heavily-tattooed arms didn't make him look any

less intimidating either. While I'd always known him as a big softie, he certainly looked the “tough guy” part.

“Uncle Steve,” I breathed, “It's good to see you.” He pulled back and I caught a glimpse at the big, wide smile on his face.

“You have no idea how much I've missed you, kid,” he said, and I could see tears pooling in his eyes, “But enough of this sappy stuff. Let's get inside. I'm sure you could use something to eat or drink.”

After hours of traveling, | couldn't deny that a homecooked meal sounded divine.

I followed him into the house and took in my surroundings. The interior was just as cozy as the outside, and the house definitely looked like it had seen a woman's touch. Was Steve seeing

someone?

“You got a secret wife or girlfriend you didn't mention, Uncle Steve?” I asked, eyeing the pink plush pillows on the couch. For as long as I could remember, Steve wasn't much of a relationship guy. He spent too much time looking after my mom to really devote a lot of his time to anyone else.

It's been seven years, Clark. A lot has clearly changed.

Steve flushed and scratched the back of his neck. “Well, there is someone,” he said, “We've been together for, uh, awhile. Years, really. We can talk more about that later, but she makes me happy, Clark.” *

I smiled. “I'm glad you're happy, Steve,” I said, “I used to worry about you as a kid. You were also rescuing my mom from every little piece of trouble she got herself into. I'm glad you found someone

for yourself.”

Steve gave me a half-hearted chuckle. “Speaking of your mother,” he said, “She'll be getting home from work any minute. Why don't you take a seat at the table and I'll whip you up some food? I can practically hear your stomach growling from across the room, kid. You still like box mac and cheese?”

“That sounds wonderful,” I said, taking a seat at the small wooden

kitchen table.

I couldn't hold back the smile, it did sound wonderful. Box mac and cheese had been one of my favorite meals a kid, and one of the first things I'd learned to cook for myself. I couldn't always count on my mother to provide dinner when she was on a bender or just running around with another boyfriend, but I could always count on the cabinets to have at least one box of mac and cheese.)

However, once I moved in with my dad, the days of box mac and cheese were over. Worrying about dinner was no longer my responsibility. That was now Grace's responsibility. | traded Kraft mac and cheese for homecooked roasts and steak with mashed

potatoes. If we did have macaroni and cheese, it was always made from scratch. I think Grace would've had a heart attack before she willingly made her family box mac and cheese. \^)

I watched Steve prepare the mac and cheese in content silence. He hummed while he did it, and I tried to wrap my head around the fact that I was even sitting in this kitchen with Steve. For so long, I had worried that I'd never see him again - or anyone else I had known before I stayed with my dad.

When I had first come to live with him, my dad hadn't liked talking about my mom, Uncle Steve, or anyone else. He was upset for a long time that she had kept me from him, and it felt like he just wanted me to forget about her. I learned pretty quickly that discussing my

mom or bringing up Uncle Steve at the dinner table was a no-no.

And, after awhile, I stopped wanting to remember. When months went by without so much as a phone call or a visit, I just felt abandoned. I didn't want to talk or think about someone who would just abandon me without another word.

At least now I can get some answers. I can ask her why she never bothered to call.

The sound of the door opening and footsteps entering the house echoed around the room. Steve looked up from the stove and smiled. “That would be your mother,” he said. “In here, May!”

The door to the kitchen swung open and I caught my first glimpse of the mother I hadn't seen in seven years. She had aged but I could tell it was her. The same red hair, brown eyes, and freckles were unmistakable.

We're still the spitting image of each other.

Her own eyes widened as she looked over at me. “Clark? Honey, is that you?”

“There was a lump in my throat that I barely managed to swallow. “Yeah, mom, it's me.”

Her eyes were watery as she smiled in disbelief at me.