

The Alpha King’s Human Mate by HC Dolores

Chapter 33

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“Families are like branches on a tree. We grow in different directions yet our roots remain the same.”

Unknown

As I stood inside the crowded LAX terminal, I couldn’t remember

the last time I’d felt so lost.

After Alessia and I had gotten off the plane, our goodbye was brief. She’d promised me that she’d tell my family I was safe and wished me happy hunting — I’d rolled my eyes at that — and then left. Apparently, one of her pack members was already waiting outside the terminal for her, so she had no reason to wait around.

And now I was alone in a state I hadn’t been in for nearly seven years ~ not since I’d lived with my mother. (7

When Alessia had first told me her pack lived in California, it had felt like fate. It was the state my mom lived in, the state I’d lived the first eleven years of my life in. However, now that I was actually sitting on a bench inside the LAX airport, the whole thing felt ridiculous.

Thadn’t seen my mom in seven years ~ I hadn’t even spoken on the phone with her since she’d dropped me off at my dad’s house all those years ago. She’d made it clear she wasn’t interested in any contact with me, so why did I think she’d take me in now?

She knows about the existence of werewolves, so maybe she’d be willing

to hear me out if I told her I was trying to escape from one. *

There was a small part of me that didn’t even want to contact my mom at all. If she could go so long without even a phone call, did she really deserve to be in my life now?

But whatever pride or ego she had wounded with so many years of no contact would have to wait. I was desperate. I didn’t have a lot of options.

Unfortunately, I also had no current address or phone number for my mom. When I had lived with her as a kid, we spent most of our time on the move - living in shitty apartments, motels, or just crashing on the couch of some “aunt” or “uncle.” There was no telling where she’d be now. It was even possible that she might not live in California anymore but I doubted it. My mom had lived in California her entire life, and she had never been fonder of leaving

those roots behind. *! I bet Uncle Steve knows where she is.

Given my lack of current contact information for my mom, I knew my best shot at getting in contact with my mom or finding her whereabouts was through Uncle Steve.

Steve - or Uncle Steve as I’d always called him as a kid ~ was a family friend of mom. They had gone to school together and stayed in touch throughout the years. Living with my mom had never felt very stable as a kid, but Steve was one of the few things that didn’t change. No matter what motel we were staying at the week or what new boyfriend she had, Steve stuck around. |

Sometimes he’d bring us food or babysit me while my mom was strung out on something. There were even a few times when he’d run off some of her unsavory boyfriends.

Most people considered Steve to be the point of contact for my mom too. You could never trust that my mom was living in the same place or that she had even paid her cellphone bill, but you could always trust Steve to know where she was. (*)

When she used to drop me off at friends’ houses so she could go on a bender or splurge with some new boyfriend, I always had Steve’s number in case I needed something. I’d had his phone number

memorized by the time I was ten.

I can only hope Uncle Steve and mom are still running in the same circles.

Given that it had been seven years, I couldn’t rule out that things changed ~ maybe they’d had a falling out or just didn’t talk as much anymore.

However, Steve and my mom’s friendship had gone back twenty years before I was even born. He was the only constant in her life then, so I could only hope he’d still be one.

And if he doesn’t know where she is, maybe Uncle Steve would be willing to let me stay for a while. (*

With a final sigh, I pulled my phone out of my pocket. There were a couple of text messages from my family, but none of them were urgent. They didn’t know I’d left the castle yet. Still, Lily and Sebastian had made it back yesterday — which meant my dad and

Grace knew that I was now the mate of the Alpha King. I skimmed through the list of text messages. Is everything going okay? That was from Sebastian.

Told mom and dad about your mate. Pretty sure dad almost had a heart attack but I think he’s proud, Lily had written.

Please call me when you get the chance. We should talk about what this means for the pack. That was from my dad.)

I scoffed at that last one. Of course, he wasn’t worried that his human daughter was chained to a werewolf forever — he just

wanted to know how he could use this to his pack’s advantage. “= 1 ignored every message and dialed a number ~ the same number

T’d had memorized since the age of ten.

With bated breath, I listened as the phone rang. By the third ring, I was beginning to worry that he wouldn’t pick up or maybe he had a new number when — “Hello?”

It was Uncle Steve. His gruff voice was unmistakable. | almost couldn’t believe it, and I felt my throat go dry. God, what did I say to a man I hadn’t spoken to in seven years?

“Hello? Is someone there?” Steve repeated. “I’m going to hang up n

“Uncle Steve,” I finally said.

Now he was the quiet one. Silence hung over the line but it was

louder than ever.

God, he probably doesn’t even know who I am.

Maybe this was a mistake.

“Clark?” He whispered, his voice hoarse. “Clark Marshall? Is that you?”

I felt my chest go tight. Thadn’t heard someone call me by that last name in years — my mom’s last name, that is. I had been Clark Bellevue since the minute I’d stepped into my dad’s house. Hearing Marshall felt foreign but not unwelcome.

“Yeah, it’s me,” I said. Now that I was on the phone with him, it felt like everything I wanted to say had fallen out of my head. I couldn’t remember the original explanation I’d concocted.

“I can hardly believe it,” Steve said, and I could hear the disbelief in his voice. “It’s been years since I’ve heard your voice, kid. You sound

so grown-up now.” “You sound exactly the same,” | told him.

“Yeah, ‘suppose so,” he chuckled, “I just can’t believe it. I didn’t think I’d ever hear your voice again.”

Yeah, me either.

“Uncle Steve,” I said, “I know it’s been a long time, but you wouldn’t happen to know how to get in contact with my mom, would you? I need to reach her.”

“are you okay, Clark?” he asked, “You’re not in any trouble, are you?”

I guess it depends on whether you consider escaping from the most

dangerous werewolf in the world to be “trouble.” I didn’t want to scare Steve or get him too involved in my mess so I tried to choose my words carefully. “I’m okay, it’s nothing too serious,” I said, “But I do need to reach my mom. I know it’s been a long time, so if you don’t know ~”

Steve chuckled. “Oh, come on, kid,” he said, “You know me. How

long have I stuck by your mom’s side? That hasn’t changed.”

I breathed a sigh of relief — thank God. Steve having current contact information for my mom made my life a hundred times

easier.

“In fact,” Steve continued, “She’s been staying with me for a little while now. I know that she’d love to see you. I could give you the address if you want to come by.” “)

It was slightly surprising to hear that my mom was living with Steve (and it certainly ruined any plans I had to keep him out of this mess), but at least I knew where she was. This was a good thing.

“Yeah, sure. I’d love to come by. What’s the address?”

As the words came out of my mouth, I couldn’t believe that I was about to see my mom for the first time in seven years. And according to Steve, she would love to see me. (2