

# The Alpha King’s Human Mate by HC Dolores

## Chapter 41

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“The world consists of predators and prey. You are either hunting or running.” (1)

Unknown

Lused to volunteer at the animal shelter with Uncle Steve when I was seven or eight. Most of my time there is a blur, but I remember how we captured feral cats so they could be spayed or neutered at the shelter.

We'd buy those live traps, stick a little cat food inside, and wait for the next hungry stray to wander by. I remember how those feral cats would look when they stumbled upon the trap.

First, they'd wander into the trap cautiously and sniff out the food. There would be a split second where their animal eyes would light up, and you could tell they thought they'd just found the cat-version of the lottery.

But just as they began digging in, the trap would swing shut. The cats always knew they were trapped immediately. They would paw at the door and hiss when you got too close. But they knew they were caught.

The terror in their eyes used to bother me as a kid — even if Steve was always quick to remind me that we were helping these cats. Sometimes I would wonder what it felt like to be that afraid, to know there was no escape.

But as I stared up at Griffin, I felt exactly like one of those feral cats. I'd wandered into a trap without realizing it, and just for a moment, I had believed I'd gotten away with it unscathed. I had believed that I could live a life away from werewolves and mates and crowns.

But now that I was looking into Griffin’s eyes, I knew there was no escape. Nowhere for me to run or hide. He'd caught me.

“Griffin,” I breathed his name out. As scared as I was, I couldn’t help but notice how gorgeous he was. The streetlights of Yorba Linda illuminated his bronze skin and highlighted his dark hair. His jawline was sharp enough to cut glass, it made him look like some kind of beautiful sculpture crafted by an artist, not a real person.

He was also dressed just as casually as the first time I'd met him ~ a hoodie, light jacket, jeans, and boots.

I didn’t miss the way his eyes lit up when he heard me say his name. “Little fox,” he said, and I'd forgotten how husky his voice was.

He looked like he was about to say something else, but just as he opened his mouth, a laughing couple walked by us. There was one of the outdoor benches just feet away and they looked like they were making a pitstop there.

Adrenaline was pumping through my veins. Fight or flight, Clark?

I barely had time to think, but just as Griffin’s eyes flickered to the strangers walking by, I stepped back.

Flight it is. I pivoted on my heel, getting ready to run. But I never got the chance.

Just as I tensed my body to run, Griffin’s hands ensnared me like a cage. He pulled me back toward his chest, and I felt him push his nose into my hair, breathing in my scent. (2)

My heart continued to pound like a drum, and I wondered if he could hear it. Probably ~ werewolves did have heightened senses.

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you,” Griffin whispered in my ear. I held back a shiver but it wasn’t one of fear. It was something else his voice was doing to me. “You can’t see them, but I have my guards surrounding us. You won’t get away from me, not again.”

I practically deflated in his arms. I had known it was fruitless even to try, but part of me had been hopeful after seeing the strangers walk by.

But I also should’ve known he wouldn’t come alone. Of course, he’d bring guards with him.

Griffin’s grip on me was gentle but firm. His hands were running up and down my arms and I tried to pretend I didn’t feel the sparks.

“Don’t you think it’s time to go home now, little fox?” He whispered and I could feel his breath on my ear.

I couldn’t judge if he was angry by his voice ~ his tone was even and calm. But I couldn’t imagine that he was happy after chasing me across the country.

The time was fighting was over. He had me now. (1) So, I just nodded.

I couldn’t see his face, but I could practically feel his smug smile. Just as I knew I'd been beaten, he knew he'd won.

“Good,” he said, and then he turned me around to face him. I had to crane my neck upwards to make eye contact, but just as I'd suspected, he was wearing a victorious smile. “Let’s go.” (2)

He removed his arms from me, and instead, grabbed my hand in his. I hated to admit it, but his large hand felt soft and warm and utterly perfect in mine.

“How are we getting back?” I finally asked him. I couldn’t bring myself to call the castle “home,” but I assumed that’s where he was planning

to take me.

Griffin’s eyes flickered to the main road and I watched as a sleek black SUV pulled up to the sidewalk. It wasn’t unlike the ones I'd ridden up and from the castle in.

Of course he has a car waiting.

As he tugged me towards the car, I took one last glance back at my shattered phone sitting on the sidewalk. I'd never gotten to send that message to my mother, and now, I was going to just disappear into thin air. How was I supposed to contact her and let her know I was okay?

I didn’t fight or protest when Griffin placed his hands on my hips and helped me into the SUV (even though I totally did not need it).

I slid back into the leather seat closest to the far window and watched Griffin climb in after me. Even in a spacious SUV, his broad form and height were more than noticeable.

“Welcome back, my queen,” the driver suddenly spoke and I felt my face go red with embarrassment when I saw who it was ~ the same driver who had driven Alessia and me away from the castle. (\*)

Had he known who I was the entire time?

Griffin closed the car door behind him and it felt like he was sealing my fate. I'd never get away again, I could feel it. If he was willing to chase me to another country, he wouldn’t let me go.

I should’ve just listened to him the first time when he told me that he'd never let anything get between us. Clearly, he hadn’t been lying. (! Part of me felt like I should’ve stopped the entire escape plan when Alessia

escort recognized us. It would’ve saved me plenty of time.

But then you would never have gotten to spend time with your mother. )

That was something I'd never regret. No matter how short our time together had been, I would always be glad that I got to see her again — and to know the truth.

Thinking about my mother only made me think about how worried she'd be when I never came home from the movie. Maybe she'd connect the dots about my disappearance, but maybe not.

My phone is dead, but maybe there’s still a way for me to contact her.

“Griffin,” I said, and he immediately turned to me. “I know you must be angry at me right now, and I don’t blame you...but I was hoping I could ask for a favor.”

Griffin raised an eyebrow and his eyes lit up with amusement. “Oh, I'm not angry with you, little fox.”

That surprised me. The guy had just spent the past couple of weeks tracking me down and he wasn’t angry? I found that incredibly hard to believe.

“You’re not?” I asked him with furrowed eyebrows.

“No,” Griffin said, and then he smiled at me. It wasn’t a happy smile. It was the smile of a predator who’s finally ensnared his prey. His ‘no’ did nothing to ease my mind. It felt like he was trying to lure me into some false sense of security so he could pounce on me later.

“You’re sure you’re not mad?” J asked again.

Griffin brought his hand up to caress my face. His fingertips left tingles everywhere they touched. “No, little fox,” he repeated, “But I am disappointed in you.” 7

My stomach dropped.

I suppose you could argue that disappointment was better than anger, but somehow, I could just feel that Griffin’s disappointment was going to be worse than his anger.

“Now, what was the favor you wanted to ask of me?”

After hearing that he was disappointed in me, I felt foolish for even asking. In fact, I just felt embarrassed. How could I have ever been so naive to think I'd get away from him? Everyone had warned me that he wouldn’t let me go, wouldn’t give up so easily, and I'd just ignored them. 'd been too blinded by the possibility of a life without werewolves and mates.

Pull yourself together, Clark.

Despite how much I wanted to just curl up into a ball and hide my face in the corner, I managed to swallow down my embarrassment and speak. “I was wondering,” I said, not meeting his eyes, “If I could possibly just text my mother from your phone to let her know I'm okay.”

Griffin was silent but his eyes narrowed.

“[ know you're disappointed in me right now,” I said, “But I'm with you...for good now. I didn’t get the chance to tell her I'm leaving. I just don’t want her to worry when I don’t come home.”

Griffin remained silent and after a few moments, I wondered if he just wasn’t going to answer me. But then he sighed and pulled out his phone. “Here,” he said, “Text your mother. Tell her you won't be able to see or speak to her for a while.” (°

“Thank you,” I breathed, grabbing his phone before he could change his mind. Fortunately, I had my mother’s new number memorized and it only took me a few seconds to type out a similar version to what I'd been trying to send before my phone shattered.

T handed the phone back to Griffin when I was done and he pocketed it.

“Driver,” he suddenly said, and he tapped on the back of the driver’s seat with his hand. The driver didn’t respond but I watched as a privacy partition ~ something I hadn’t seen before ~ separated the backseats that Griffin and I were in from the front seats. (7

I could no longer see or hear the driver anymore, so it didn’t take a genius to figure out that Griffin wanted privacy with me. For what?

“Come here, little fox.” I didn’t have a lot of time to dwell on it as Griffin reached out and tugged me into his side.

The move happened too quickly for me to even think about squirming away, but even as he tucked me into his side, I didn’t try to get away. He was warm and being pressed into his side fel

“You have no idea how much I've missed you,” Griffin sighed, digging his nose into my hair and inhaling my scent. “I didn’t get nearly enough time to look at you before, to touch you. That'll change.” As if to make his point, one of his hands ran up and down my arm while the other played with my hair.

“Do you know how it felt when I came back to an empty room and you were no longer there?” Griffin asked. There was a hard edge to his voice but also sadness too. I could hear in his voice that my absence had affected him deeply.

The thought of upsetting Griffin - of disappointing him - felt like a heavy weight on my chest. It was uncomfortable. Now that I was here with him, I could no longer pretend that leaving hadn’t affected him. I'd told myself that he had probably just moved on, but that wasn’t reality. This was reality.

“Lm sorry,” I blurted out, “I'm sorry | left. I'm sorry I disappointed you.”

Griffin’s hand stopped playing with my hair for a second and I could tell Thad surprised him with my apology.

“It’s okay, little fox,” he said, “You're my mate, I will always forgive you.”

That weight on my chest seemed to lessen ~ was it really that easy to earn his forgiveness?

Man, he’s more even-tempered and patient than I realized.

“But once we get back to the castle,” he suddenly added, “I'm still going to have to punish you.” 2

Okay, I definitely spoke too soon.