

The Alpha King’s Human Mate by HC Dolores

Chapter 43

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“The most seductive thing about art is the personality of the artist himself.” (=

Paul Cezanne

Ive never thought of myself as explicitly beautiful. Pretty, maybe - if I was having a good day. But I had never seen myself as a supermodel or even the kind of gir! that people looked twice. Growing up around tall, thin and chiseled people for most of my life might’ve had something to do with that.

However, as I stared at the art studio littered with paintings, sketches, and drawings of me, I couldn’t help but think I looked beautiful in them. The artist had captured my likeness from every angle ~ there was a large oil painting of me sprawled out in bed, a sketch of me smiling in the distance, and many more. Some of them were done in different styles but all looked like candid moments, like the artist had been there and recreated them from memory.

Istared at a particular sketch of me staring down at a dinner plate. I recognized the food in the photo and the dress I was wearing. That had been taken the night of the dinner party with Griffin.

Oh my God...he made these. He made all of them. I suppose I shouldn’t have been surprised that he was the artist. I doubted that anyone else would consider me such an interesting subject, and now that I was looking closer, these were all moments I’d shared with Griffin in the castle.

All I could do was stare in awe. What were you supposed to do or say in a room full of beautiful artwork...that’s of you? He was so talented, it felt like I'd slipped into Van Gogh or Picasso's private studio.

“What do you think?”

I whipped my head around. Griffin was standing in the doorway of the studio with intense eyes.

Td been so caught up in my analysis of the artwork that I hadn’t heard the door open behind me.

For a moment, we just stared at each other. There was an emotion in his eyes that I couldn’t recognize but I could feel the tension in the air. ‘Was he nervous?

“These are of me,” I said, “You made these?” I already knew the answer but I needed to hear it from him.

Griffin nodded and that’s when I clocked the intense emotion in them. Vulnerability. He averted his eyes from me but there was a dark blush coating his cheeks. I’d never seen Griffin act embarrassed or bashful as long as I’d known him, and that in itself was almost as surprising as the room full of artwork. “They’re beautiful,” I told him. “You’re incredibly talented...I just can’t

believe they’re of me.”

I could almost see Griffin sag with relief from across the room. Like he'd been gearing up for some rejection or tantrum. Had he expected me to tell him that I hated his art?

Regardless of how I felt about him, I couldn’t deny that the work was stunning — he'd captured my likeness in a way that was even brighter than real life. The girl in the paintings and the sketches were supposed to be me, but she was a vibrant and more beautiful version of me.

“Im glad you like them, little fox,” he said, and slowly approached me, “Although I don’t think they compare to your real life beauty.”

I couldn’t stop the blush from covering my cheeks at that remark — even if it was definitely not true. “Did you do all of these since we met?” I asked, “How long have you been an artist?”

Griffin hummed thoughtfully and came up behind me, pulling me to his chest. I didn’t protest or try to fight his touch, and if I’m being honest, being pressed against his toned, warm chest struck something

in me.)

“Since I was a child,” he said, rubbing his hands up and down my arms, “But I’ve done it less and less the past few years. I’ve been too busy with my duties as the heir and lacking any kind of real inspiration.”

Suddenly, he twisted me around to face him until we were only inches apart. His dark eyes were on fire with some sort of emotion, and I felt my heart go into overdrive.

What is this man doing to me?

“And then I met you,” he continued, “From the second I saw you, all I wanted to do was paint you. Capture you at every angle, every position. You’ve been my living, breathing muse, Clark Bellevue. Even when you left me, I could see your face so clearly in my mind. Every beauty mark on your face, every wrinkle.”

My face was definitely on fire now and Griffin’s expression was so heated that I had to avert my eyes. The way he was speaking, what he was saying to me - I had never had anyone make me feel this way.

He was igniting me.

As Griffin leaned in, every thought about the past twenty-four hours vanished. The fact that he'd hunted me down thousands of miles away, drugged me, and essentially kidnapped me didn’t seem to matter at that moment.]”

It was just me and Griffin - the man who set my heart ablaze. Griffin, who had an entire art studio filled with paintings of me and who'd just called me his muse.

“[have a feeling,” he continued, “That even after a lifetime together, I'll still have your face etched in my mind. I'll be trying to capture your beauty on paper for as long as I live, little fox.” He was so close that I could feel his breath on my lips, and even up close, his eyes were just as dark. Just as heated.

T glanced at his lips. They're so full. I wonder what he tastes like.

Before the logical side of my brain could pipe up and tell me that I was just letting the mate bond get the best of me or being swept up in a grand romantic gesture, I closed the gap between us.

Griffin was so tall that I had to practically jump on my tip-toes to reach his lips, but as soon as I did, he was hauling me up and pulling me close. |

And the kiss?

It was sparks, it was fireworks, it was every magical, cliché description that you could use to describe a kiss. It was nothing like the kisses I'd shared with Aiden when I was sixteen. That was just two people awkwardly mashing their lips together. |

But Griffin was an excellent kisser. His lips were soft and firm against mine, and we seemed to find our rhythm almost instantly. There was no learning curve, no initial awkwardness. Like we'd been made for each other. 7) I hadn’t even realized that I’d tangled my hands into his cropped, dark hair but it felt soft to the touch. And while I kept my hands in his hair, Griffin’s hands roamed across my neck, my lower back, and any piece of skin within reach.

He swiped his tongue against my bottom lip, and instinctively, I gave him access to my mouth. And he took it. With no hesitation, Griffin’s tongue explored every inch of my mouth, tangling his own tongue with

mine.

When he started sucking on my tongue, I couldn’t help but moan. God, what is he doing to me?

Is kissing supposed to always feel this good?

At the sound of my moan, Griffin paused and pulled back but kept a tight grip on my waist. He rested his forehead against mine, and we were both breathing heavily. His eyes were blown and wild.

“My God,” he whispered, “If I don’t stop myself, I’m going to take you right here, little fox.” (=

The impulsive, hormonal side of me wanted to tell Griffin to keep going, not to stop. If his lips felt practically magical, what did other parts of him feel like? Would every physical interaction be this consuming and heated?

“But I have a feeling you’re not ready for that yet, little fox,” Griffin continued. He screwed his eyes shut like the idea of stopping was physically painful for him.

While part of me certainly didn’t want to stop, I also knew he was right. No matter how I felt in the heat of the moment, I wasn’t ready to take that step with him yet. I hadn’t even made my up about him yet.

“No, not yet,” I agreed, and then I pulled myself away from him. Every part of my body practically screamed for his touch, and if I didn’t put a little bit of space between us, I was going to do something I’d regret.

Pull yourself together, Clark. Yes, kissing him felt amazing but you’re not an animal — you can ignore your impulses and hormones.

The extra space between us seemed to clear Griffin’s head too. His eyes looked a little less wild now. “Besides,” he said, and he smiled crookedly, “There’s another matter we need to settle between us...and I doubt you’re going to like me very much afterward.”

“What do you mean?” Griffin’s crooked smile widened.

“T still need to punish you, little fox.”