

The Alpha King's Human Mate by HC Dolores

Chapter 68

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"Pain was the body's way of telling them they'd pushed themselves to their limits — which was exactly where they were supposed to be."

Richard Marcinko

True to his word, my first training session with Ivan began later that week. Although I knew he was going to teach me self-defense, I had no real idea what that entailed. I'd never taken private lessons before, and certainly not with anyone of Ivan's caliber. Would he be a harsh teacher? He had seemed pretty strict the first time I stumbled upon him yelling at a room of young wolves.

Griffin did threaten him pretty heavily though.

Ivan had only given me two instructions for our first session: dress comfortably and have one of the guards to escort me to the second training room in the East Wing at 3PM sharp.

His directions were easy to follow. I'd dressed in sweats that didn't restrict my movement and had asked one of the guards stationed outside of Griffin's suite to escort me.

When we arrived at the open wooden door, the guard didn't linger. He simply nodded at Ivan, bowed his head to me, and left. Chapter 68

Ivan stood in the center of the room, standing tall with his arms behind his back. "Please come in, Your Majesty!" The way he addressed me was completely different than it was the first time we met. He had been nothing but mockery and arrogance the first time we met.

Today, he was stiff and respectful — like he was afraid that looking at

me wrong might cost him his life. (7 Unfortunately, it wasn't a completely irrational fear.

I strolled into the room, the door banging shut behind me. My eyes roamed over my surroundings - this training room was much smaller than the one I'd first seen him in. It was still spacious with big mats covering the floor and large windows that filtered natural light into the room. "This room is designated for private lessons," Ivan told me. "Do you do a lot of private lessons?"

"Not often," he said. He still looked stiff and uncomfortable, and I

noticed that he avoided eye contact with me.

"I don't know what your typical teaching style is," I said, "But you don't have to look so...uneasy. I'm not going to turn you into Griffin if I

end

up with a paper cut."

He didn't respond to that, but the sharp angles of his face seemed to soften. Chapter 68

"Let's begin," he finally said, clearing his throat. He stood up even straighter like he was settling into the role of a teacher. "During our first sparring session, I made a few observations that I'd like to test today."

"And how are we testing these observations?"

"I'd like you to see if you can land a hit on me," he explained. "You don't have to worry about me striking you at all. This isn't an official sparring session. Your only objective is to hit me."

I nodded. The fact that I wouldn't need to worry about dodging a hit was a relief, although I already knew Ivan wouldn't be an easy target to hit.

The only hit I'd ever managed to land on him had been a fluke - and probably not something I'd get away with a second time.

We both moved to the center of the large mat. Once we'd positioned ourselves a couple of feet apart, Ivan gestured for me to attack him.

I didn't put a lot of thought into my attack. I simply dove for him, my closed fist preparing to meet his face.

It didn't.

Ivan effortlessly dodged me, and I stumbled past him instead. I managed to catch myself before I fell onto the mat, but even so, my cheeks still flushed with embarrassment. Chapter 68

"Try again."

I did. This time, I tried to land the hit on his stomach, but he dodged that too.

"Try again."

I made two more attempts ~ both failures. By the time he'd dodged the fourth attack, I was even more embarrassed and breathing heavily.

"That's enough," Ivan finally said, "You proved my observation." "And what observation is that?" "That you have no idea what you're doing."

"Yeah, no kidding," I said. Ivan handed me a water bottle and I took a few gulps.

"I suppose I shouldn't be surprised you don't have any fight training," Ivan said, "You are human."

"Well, despite my terrible fighting abilities," I said, "I did attend a bunch of warrior training classes back home. So I do have some training, just not good training I guess."

Ivan's eyes narrowed, and it looked like he was mulling this new information over. "No, definitely not good training," he said, "Although it does make sense." Chapter 68 "What do you mean?"

"You fight like you're a wolf;" he explained, "Not a very well-trained wolf, but a wolf."

I don't think that's supposed to be a compliment.

"Had you actually been as strong and as fast as a wolf," Ivan continued, "Those attacks might've been a little more successful. But you're not a wolf. You're a human and you need to fight like one."

"I don't know what fighting 'like a human' means. That's kind of what I thought I was doing until you said otherwise." (*)

Ivan shot me a frustrated look, and I had a feeling he would've been yelling if he didn't think it would cost him his head.

"Because you're human," he said, "You'll always be at a disadvantage when you're fighting a wolf — no matter who it is. Your opponent will always be bigger and stronger. You can't rely on brute force to beat them like a werewolf would. But there are other ways you can take down someone stronger than you.") "Like?" "Like fighting dirty and aiming for sensitive targets."

I handed him back the water bottle and Ivan placed it aside. "I thought 'fighting dirty' was frowned upon. Not good fight etiquette or Chapter 68

whatever."

Ivan rolled his eyes. "Maybe in human movies or boxing matches, but in this world, you should never be afraid to fight dirty. Remember our first sparring match? When you kicked me?"

I nodded, smiling sheepishly. I certainly remembered kicking Ivan right between the legs.

"That was a good example of fighting dirty," he said, "And it worked too. For a moment. You surprised me. Had you been more of a trained fighter, you could have used that opening to incapacitate me further."

"So, I should just aim to kick a guy between the legs if I'm in a fight?"

"It may not work every single time," he said, "But if it's an option, you should take it. The groin is one of the most sensitive areas of the body. There are other pressure points you can target too. I'll show you."

Standing in front of me, Ivan placed his hand on his abdomen. "Hit me here. Aim your hit upwards"

hesitated for a moment, but when he didn't move away, I shot my fist out. Ivan didn't even stumble but he did flinch. "That area you just punched," he said after I'd struck him, "Is where the kidney is - right below the ribcage. There are no hard bones there and it doesn't take much force to inflict damage."

Ivan moved his hand to the middle of his abdomen next. "This is the Chapter 68

solar plexus, located beneath the sternum," he said, "Another weak spot. Hit me here." I didn't hesitate this time. Once again, there was no visible reaction besides a slight flinch when my fist connected with his skin.

"This next one won't require a demonstration to show you where it is," Ivan said, and he touched his own neck, "A throat punch is one of the easiest ways to incapacitate your opponent. Most people aim for the face, which is where your attacker will expect you to target as well. But striking the throat is much more effective. Most people can take a hit to

the face, especially from a human. A hit to the throat? Not so much.")

I felt like a sponge, trying to absorb the information that Ivan was providing me with. A punch to the kidney, the solar plexus, the throat ~ I tried to memorize it all.

"No matter what you do," Ivan said, "When you are fighting a wolf, you cannot forget they are stronger, faster, and superior!"

Trained an eyebrow at that last adjective - it reminded me of the elitist attitude that Ivan had the first time we met.

Ivan seemed to understand how it sounded too and he jumped to immediately correct himself. "I don't mean it in a demeaning way," he clarified, "Strong people don't win fights, desperate people do. And as long as you can remember that you're at a disadvantage, you'll be the desperate one. Fight like you've got nothing to lose and strength won't matter." Chapter 68

Before I could respond to that, Ivan turned away and gestured for me to follow him. We walked across the room and I noticed that a punching bag hung from the ceiling, situated in one of the corners. It looked exactly like one of those punching bags you'd find in some old-school gym. It was covered in a thin layer of dust too, like it had barely been used.

"You want me to punch this thing?" I asked, "I thought you said strength didn't matter. I just had to hit the right spots."

Ivan rolled his eyes, and for the first time since we'd started the training session, he actually looked relaxed. Like he was dealing with any other student, not a human Queen he'd been threatened into treating well.

"That is true," he said, "But you still need to be able to hit well to inflict damage. The punches you landed on me a moment ago were sorry excuses for hits."

Good to know Ivan isn't so scared of Griffin that he can't be brutally honest with me.

His words didn't hurt. He was honest, and I'd spent most of my life feeling weak and fragile compared to those around me. The only difference now is that maybe, in some small way, that would be changing.

"This will help," Ivan said. He paused for a moment, looking me over. "We'll make...something of you. Not a warrior, but maybe a human who Chapter 68

will be able to stand her ground long enough to scream for help." (!")