

The Alpha King’s Human Mate by HC Dolores

Chapter 63

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“Fathers — half of anyone’s life seems to be about who fathered them.” Nancy Springer

Although I could tell that some of Griffin’s councilors looked uneasy at the thought of not being able to commemorate his father’s death with a funeral, none of them voiced their disagreement.

As I listened to one of the councilors continue to drone on about a minor pack dispute, the situation nagged at me. I knew Griffin and his father didn’t have a close relationship. He’d confided in me that his father blamed him for his mother’s death, how his father spent most of his time in the bottom of a bottle.

And there was clearly enough distance between them that Griffin could slice the former Alpha King’s head clean off and not even bother to give the guy a funeral. He’d said it was because the former King had threatened me - and maybe that was part of it - but I knew Griffin’s disdain went much deeper. Whatever it was, it was more than just resentment for a neglectful father.

I was curious, but I also wasn’t going to question him in the middle of a meeting with his councilors. Even I knew that wasn’t going to end well. Those questions could wait till later when we were alone. Chapter 63,

Instead, I kept still and tried to soak up as much information from the councilors as I could.

If I’m going to be Queen, I’ve got to know everything about this world. I didn’t take my werewolf education very seriously when I lived with my dad, and I’ll probably be paying for it now.

But in my defense, I had no idea I’d end up here.

By the time the meeting was over ~ almost two hours later ~ I had a splitting headache from focusing too hard. I asked a few questions about some of the disputes the councilors brought up, and as far as I could tell, nobody seemed upset that I was trying to learn. And if they were ~ well, at least they were smart enough not to become frustrated

with me in front of Griffin.

“told you that the meeting would be boring,” Griffin said as we walked back to our bedroom. When we reached the large set of bedroom doors, he dismissed the guards standing watch and led me inside.

“[mean, it wasn’t all bad,” I said, following him in, “Some of those

pack disputes seem like real issues. Especially that Alpha Liam guy.”

“He’ll be dealt with soon enough,” Griffin said. He walked towards the closet and began shedding his clothes like it was no big deal.

Technically, it shouldn’t have been a big deal - I’d been sharing a bedroom with Griffin for almost a week now. I’d seen him strip down a couple of times, and each time, the sight of Griffin’s bare skin always Chapter 63 seemed to fluster me. I wish I could’ve blamed my red cheeks or the quick beating of my

heart on the mate bond, but I was pretty sure I’d be having this reaction even if Griffin wasn’t my destined mate.

Griffin was attractive. There was no denying it. The moonlight creeping through our open window cast soft light onto his dark hair and bronze skin. Even across the room, I could clearly see the outline of his toned abdomen and his sharp jawline.

I didn’t often think of men as being beautiful, but Griffin was beautiful.

“something distracting you, little fox?” Griffin’s teasing voice tore my eyes away from his body.

Guess I wasn’t as subtle as I thought.

Before I could reply, Griffin - still shirtless - crossed the room in a few strides and pulled me into a searing kiss.

“I love knowing that you’re affected by me the same way I am by you,” Griffin said when he pulled back from the kiss, raking his eyes down my body.

Focus, Clark! Yes, he is shirtless but there are actual things you wanted to talk to him about. You can make out with him any time you want.

When Griffin went to capture my lips in another kiss, I pressed my Chapter 63,

hand into his chest, stopping his movement. “What’s wrong?” He asked, worry flickering through his eyes.

“As much as I want to continue this,” I said, “There’s something I wanted to talk to you about.”

“What do you want to talk about?” “Your dad, actually.”

Griffin raised an eyebrow. “I’m trying to kiss with you, and you’re thinking about my dad? You’re wounding my ego, little fox!” Despite his teasing tone, I could see Griffin’s body tense up at the mention of his

father. If I didn’t want him to shut me down, I’d need to tread carefully.)

“Griffin,” I started. I moved to take a seat on the bed, but he didn’t join me. He remained standing and watching me like he was trying to figure out where this was going. “I don’t want to pry into something you’re not ready to talk about, but the stuff with your dad...it seems like it’s weighing on you. You’re not even entertaining the idea of a funeral.”

Griffin’s eyes narrowed, “You want me to give him a funeral? After he threatened your life in front of me?” He crossed his arms over his chest, glaring at me. “If anything, you should be happy that I’m not giving him a funeral. You shouldn’t have to attend the funeral of someone who threatened you.”

It felt like I was trying to navigate through a minefield, but I continued to press on. “Look, I won’t deny that your dad was a dick,” I said, “I Chapter 63,

mean, clearly he was...and I’m glad you protected me that day. But I also don’t think this is just about me. And even if it was, I’d never want you to call off a funeral just because of me. But if I’m being honest...I don’t think you’re calling off the funeral because of me. I think it’s because of your own unresolved baggage with him, which is okay. I just want you to know that it’s okay to talk about it, whatever that baggage

may be.”

Griffin stared at me for several moments, his body still tense and rigid. “When I killed him,” he started, and there was a tightness to his voice that I’d never heard before, “I thought I’d be able to leave him behind. Forget about him and move on with my life. I’ve never told anyone the entire truth about him. There’s nobody alive that can remind me of him, and yet, he still feels like he’s haunting me. My own councilors want to throw some lavish celebration of his life - as if there’s anything to truly celebrate.”

Griffin moved to sit beside me on the bed, and I grabbed one of his hands. I wasn’t sure if holding his hand would be much comfort to Griffin, but right now, it felt like one of the only ways I could comfort him, He didn’t reject the gesture. He only wrapped his other hand on top of mine.

“Keeping those memories to yourself isn’t going to erase the pain he caused,” I said gently, “It’ll just make you feel more alone.” While I’d never experienced the kind of neglect Griffin seemed to have gone through, I was speaking from experience. How many years had I internalized my father’s disappointment? Or his pack’s disregard for me

just because I couldn’t shift? Chapter 63,

If there was one thing I’d learned recently, it’s that you couldn’t shut out an entire part of your life and move on. One way or another, you’d have to confront it eventually.

It’s a bit ironic that the person who taught me that lesson is sitting across from me, trying to learn it all over again.

“Perhaps,” Griffin said, and his grip tightened on my hand, “I told you that my father blamed me for my mother’s death and spent too much time drinking...but that’s just the tip of the iceberg.”

I stayed quiet, waiting for him to continue talking. Griffin’s face was twisted into a pained frown like he was fighting to even form words at all.

“L never knew my mother so I can’t say for sure if he was a good man

while she was alive,” Griffin told me, “But he certainly wasn’t one after her death. Much of my father’s views aligned with the traditionalists - he thought humans were weak and a female wolf’s place was breeding and pleasing her mate. He believed that male wolves could never show weakness, not to their mates and not to their packs.

My eyebrows rose at that. The former Alpha King had struck me as traditional the two times I’d interacted with him, but I hadn’t realized he was that radical.

“He wasn’t allowed to be as radical as he would’ve liked as King,” Griffin continued, “The council would’ve fought against him. But in private, he tried to instill those same beliefs in me. Even as a child, he Chapter 63,

would not tolerate the slightest bit of weakness ~ or what he perceived as weakness — in me. Showing affection or being vulnerable? My father thought those were some of the biggest weaknesses a man could have.”

I swallowed the lump in my throat.

“When I reached the age of twelve, he began taking me on trips abroad to settle pack disputes,” Griffin said, “On one of the trips, we helped a pack hunt down a group of rogues that had been stealing from them. They weren’t vicious or evil, just a group of hungry people who didn’t have anywhere to go for supplies. But that didn’t matter to my father. He wanted to turn them into an example, so he pulled me aside and told me to kill their leader. I was horrified. I was just a kid - one who hadn’t even shifted yet. I didn’t want to kill anyone, especially not a rogue who was just trying to survive.”

Griffin paused for a moment, clutching my hand so tight that it was starting to become uncomfortable. “When I tried to tell him that we should show mercy,” he explained, and his tone became bitter, “He told me that showing mercy as a King was a form of weakness that people would take advantage of. To punish me, he killed the entire group of

rogues himself.” I couldn’t suppress the gasp that made its way out of my throat.

“That was just the start,” Griffin continued bitterly, “There were a lot more lessons to come, all like that one. When he discovered that I skipped a training session so I could draw, he tore up my entire studio and every piece in it. As I got older, it got easier to deal with him. I Chapter 63,

could go on missions by myself, find reasons to stay out of his way.”

The hardened expression on Griffin’s face left my chest feeling so tight that I had to blink away tears.

“That man has done nothing good for me - or the werewolf world. Threatening you was the last straw,” Griffin finished, his dark eyes meeting mine, “That’s why I refuse to have a funeral for him. There’s nothing to celebrate as far as I’m concerned.”

“Lm sorry you went through that,” I told him.

My words seemed to have the opposite effect than what I’d intended. Griffin dropped my hand and turned away from me, even sliding farther down the bed to put more distance between us.

“Griffin?” I asked, eyebrows furrowed.

“I don’t need pity, Clark,” he said, “I just wanted to explain why I vetoed the funeral.” (*

I watched the tick in his jaw, but it felt like I was really watching Griffin close himself off. I never thought the sound of my own name in someone else’s mouth would actually upset me. But in Griffin’s, it just meant he was putting his guard up. He’d just experienced true vulnerability — maybe for one of the first times ever - and now he was trying to push me away.

And I’m not going to let him push me away. Chapter 63,

Funny - that’s another lesson that Griffin taught me.

Without much thought, I closed the distance between us and pulled Griffin into a hug. My arms wrapped around him and I buried my face into his neck. Griffin simply kept still, letting me hug him.

“Just because he’s dead doesn’t mean you’re not still affected by him,” I murmured into his skin, “There are some things that we carry with us for a long time...but you don’t have to carry the pain he’s caused you alone.”

Griffin was silent for a moment, and then I felt him shift, wrapping his arms around me and hugging me so tight I could hardly breathe.

“I love you, little fox.”