

The Alpha King's Human Mate by HC Dolores

Chapter 74

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“Maybe if you can’t get someone out of your head they were never meant to leave.” .*

Shannon L, Alder It happened only two after my meeting with Nadia,

I'd just finished getting ready for another night in an empty bed when I felt it: a warm tug deep in my chest. It reminded me of the warm, fuzzy feeling I'd felt after the nightmare several nights ago, but this was different. That feeling had been general warmth spreading across my body until I'd relaxed.

This was something else — it was centered, grounded in my chest.

This has to be the mate bond, but I didn't do anything to trigger it.

Does that mean Griffin has triggered it?

I stood in the center of the bedroom suite for several minutes, clad in fuzzy pajamas and rubbing my palm over my chest. I wasn't sure why it

was happening, but it was the first time I'd felt connected to Griffin in days. I didn't want it to fade or disappear.

A knock on the door suddenly echoed throughout the room. Chapter 74

“Your Majesty? Are you still awake?” It was the muffled voice of one of the guards stationed outside. I felt my heart speed up ~ the guards never bothered me once I headed to bed. Was something wrong? Was Griffin hurt? Was that why I was feeling this way?

No, don't panic, Clark, Don't panic until you know what's going on. “Yes!” I called back. “You can come in.”

Not a moment later, one of the large doors opened and a tall guard walked past the threshold. He was as stone-faced as ever, his face betraying nothing.

“Your Majesty,” he said, “I've been informed that the King as well as his warriors have just re-entered the grounds. Would you like me to escort you to him?”

I let out a soft breath I hadn't known I was holding. Griffin was back? Was that why I'd felt the tug in my chest? Was my own body recognizing that my mate had returned?

I didn't hesitate. “Yes, please,” I said. The guard nodded and he gestured for me to follow him.

We started down the long, hallways and I noticed that there was more activity than usual. At this time of night, it was rare to encounter anyone in the castle beside the guards. Yet as we weaved through the castle, headed somewhere I didn't know, I could see plenty of people Chapter 74

out and about.

Some of the castle staff were bustling about in a hurry, others hovered in small groups to whisper. There were more guards too, more than the normal amount I'd see patrolling the halls.

This must be for Griffin's return. These people seem as anxious to see him as I am.

“Do you know if he's okay?” I asked the guard. “Like if he's injured or hurt at all?”

“The guard glanced down at me. “Not that I've been informed of, Your Majesty?”

Relief spread through me. Not only had Griffin come back, but he'd hopefully made it back unharmed too.

It took several minutes of walking, but eventually, we made it to a massive room where a crowd of people had gathered. I'd never been in this room before, but I recognized its purpose immediately - this was

the throne room.

There were marble floors and large pillars placed around the room, but that wasn't the most impressive part. It was the two empty thrones sitting atop their own platform that caught my eye. The throne on the right was placed high and large with the golden wolves' heads carved into the arms. No doubt that was the King's chair. Chapter 74

Beside it, the Queen's throne was even more elegant with tiny little moons all over the arms and backs of the chair.

I can't believe I've never seen the actual throne room. To be honest, I wasn't even sure there was a throne room.

“Your Majesty,” said the same guard who escorted me, snapping me out of my thoughts, “Would you like to sit down while you wait for the King?” He nodded towards the Queen's chair.

Logically, I suppose I could've sat down. I was the Queen - even if I hadn't been crowned yet. But something felt awkward about sitting in that chair right now, especially with all these people in the room. There were all sorts of castle staff and guards milling about, no doubt waiting for Griffin's arrival. Sitting on the throne would only draw more attention, and that's not what I was here for. I just wanted to see Griffin.

And I don't think I need to make my fuzzy pajamas the center of attention anyway.

“No, that's alright,” I told the guard, “I'll stand.”

He nodded, positioning himself a few feet away with one of the other guards. Although I recognized the uniforms, most of the faces in the room were new. They were all talking in hushed, excited whispers, and for a moment, I felt like the socially-awkward, out-of-place human

again. Chapter 74

“My Queen.”

I whipped my head around to find Ivan standing behind me, a grumpy look on his face.

“Ivan,” I greeted, “What are you doing here?”

He rolled his eyes. “I'm doing the same thing you and everyone else in this room are doing. Waiting for the King.” He stepped closer to me, crossing his arms over his chest. “I was nearly half-asleep when I got mind-linked about his return.” Ivan's face portrayed just how unhappy he was to get dragged out of bed at this hour.

Looking at Ivan, I was reminded of the meeting I'd had with Nadia a couple of days ago. I'd learned a lot about him then. Not just the fact that Nadia was his mate, but also that Ivan was from a war-torn pack in Russia. I'd never thought much about Ivan's past, but knowing what I knew now, it was hard not to look at him in a new light. His cold exterior wasn't just a personality trait ~ it was something he'd forged to protect himself from the world. !!

“Pm surprised you even got up at all,” I told him.)

“Well, there are warriors coming back too, some that I've trained,” he explained, “I wanted to be here to welcome them back.” .!)

I nodded.

There was a moment of silence between us and then Ivan said, “So, Chapter 74

you've met my mate.” I was surprised to hear Ivan bring it up, but it was a pleasant surprise.

“She's very nice,” I said, “She said you guys have known each other for a long time. Decades.”

Ivan nodded sharply. “Yes.”

I couldn't resist using this opportunity to tease him a bit. me that you constantly tell her how great I am.” (:

Ivan whipped his head around to look at me, his eyes narrowing. “I have done no such thing.” =)

“Not according to her,” I shrugged, smiling playfully, “So does this mean we're friends now?”

Ivan looked offended at the very thought of that. “I do not have friends. And if I did, they would not be my students.”

“I don't know, it kind of sounds like we're friends now.” \°

I would've continued teasing Ivan, but then I felt it again ~ a sharp tug in my chest. Griffin. He was close, I could feel it.

I kept my eyes locked toward the entrance, waiting for any physical sign of him. The people around me continued to carry on, but Ivan seemed to pick up on my sudden awareness. He turned his attention to the door too. Chapter 74

My entire body was practically buzzing with anticipation, my stomach light and fluttery. Although Griffin always had an effect on me, it seemed to have grown with his absence.

Not a moment later, the doors opened and my breath caught in my throat.

Griffin was the first one through the doors, a couple of warriors and Beta Williams following close behind. The chatter in the room ceased as soon as they saw Griffin, but he seemed to the crowd very little mind. }

His eyes roamed over the room, searching for something. Or someone.

And when they landed on me, I saw his dark eyes light up. I hardly registered the fact that I'd started approaching him as if the tug in my chest was physically pulling me to him.

Not that I got very far — in a matter of seconds, Griffin had closed the distance between us and pulled me into his arms.

I sunk into his embrace. His head fell to the crook of my neck, breathing me in and grazing the bite.

“I've missed you so much, little fox.”