

The Alpha King's Human Mate by HC Dolores

Chapter 73

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“Make peace that there will be those who bitch no matter what you do.”)

Ariel Meadow Stallings

Two weeks into Griffin's absence, I was called into a meeting with a woman named Nadia. Apparently, she was in charge of preparations for my coronation, which was news to me. I'd known someone - or someones ~ was handling the preparations, but I hadn't known more than that.

Truthfully, the idea of the coronation - as well as my parents being in the same room for the first time in more than six years ~ made me nervous. I wasn't sure which thought made me more uneasy: Griffin getting hurt or killed while he was away or my coronation turning into a family bloodbath. [“]

Still, this Nadia woman had requested to meet with me and I wanted to cooperate. That's why I'd agreed to meet her in of the spare conference rooms after another grueling training session with Ivan. (!)

I almost felt bad for meeting her like this — still in training clothes with sore muscles and frizzy hair. It probably didn't give the best impression, but as packed as Nadia's schedule was, this was one of the few times she'd been able to pencil me in. Chapter 73

“We've arrived, Your Majesty,” the guard who had escorted me to the meeting room said. Like many of the guards who waited outside the bedroom suite or just escorted me around the castle, he was stone- faced.

I wondered if that's how they were trained. If they were just taught to say everything with a straight face or discouraged from showing emotion.

The guard opened the door for me and I walked in, catching sight of who must've been Nadia. She was a thin woman with long, glossy black hair and high cheekbones, sitting on one side of the conference table.

She looked up when she saw me enter, shooting me a wide smile. “Your Majesty,” Nadia said, bowing her head. “Please sit.” She gestured toward the head of the table. I noticed immediately that she had a European accent ~ it reminded me of Ivan's.

As I sat down, I glanced at the blouse and pencil skirt she was wearing, feeling more underdressed than ever. “Sorry if I'm a little underdressed,” I said, “I just came from a training session.”

“Oh, yes, I know,” Nadia smiled, and then I watched her take out a large binder, flipping through it at a speed I could barely follow.

“What's that?”

“It's what I've been using to organize the plans for your coronation,” Nadia explained, “I'm not sure how familiar you are with a Queen's

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coronation. We had the last one over thirty years ago ~ long before I ended up at the castle.” Her eyes flickered to the side as she said it as if she was remembering something she didn't say.

That would've been the coronation for Griffin's mother.

“I don't know much,” I confessed, “I know that a lot of people are usually invited to them. That's about it.”

“Yes,” Nadia said, “Usually every Alpha in the world as well as their immediate family are invited to the coronation ~ although not all of them may attend. Those who don't will send gifts to welcome their new Queen.”

“Gifts?”

“Oh, yes,” Nadia said, “The crowning of a new Queen doesn't happen very often so it's a huge deal. Some wolves don't live to see a coronation in their lifetime, you know.” Nadia paused for a moment and then looked me over. Her dark brown eyes assessed me silently.

“Usually the guest lists for these events are very cut and dry,” Nadia said, “We extend formal invitations to every established pack in the

werewolf world and just wait for the RSVPs to roll in. But you, your

human heritage, add an extra component here.”

“Let me guess,” I said, “You're not used to inviting humans to coronations.” Chapter 73

Nadia nodded. “Yes, it's unusual. I wanted to confirm with you about which family you'd like to invite — if you'd even like to invite your human family at all.”

When I didn't immediately reply, Nadia kept talking. “Your human

family...they know of the werewolf world?”

“Yeah, they do,” I said, “Well, it's just my mom and her boyfriend. I consider him family too, he's certainly been around long enough.

‘They're very aware of the existence of werewolves.”

Nadia took a moment to ask a few more questions about my mom's name and address, presumably information they'd use to contact her or invite her to the coronation.

I mulled over whether it was a good idea to invite her. It wasn't that I didn't want to see my mom or Unele Steve, but I also wasn't sure how the encounter with my dad would go either. Would he or Luna Grace be hostile toward my mother? Should I even take the risk? I would already be throwing my mom into a room full of werewolves. I didn't want her to get hurt.

But it's not as if I'm going to ever get the chance to have a coronation again. This will be one of the most important moments of my life - I want her there for it. Who knows when I'll even get to see her next?

“You can go ahead and invite her,” I told Nadia. “I want her there, but I want to make sure she — as well as my Uncle Steve — feel welcome here.” I knew all too well how it felt to feel out of place in the werewolf Chapter 73

world, even if my mom would only be hanging around for a few days.)

Maybe can have a talk with my dad too, Make sure he behaves himself

The conversation I'd had with my mom flashed through my mind ~ the one about how my dad had kept me away from her all those years. He'd led me to believe she'd simply never cared to reach out, but that hadn't

been the reality. It's long overdue for my dad and I to have a little chat anyway. “Of course, Your Majesty.”

Nadia spent a few moments flipping through her notes and silence crept over the room. “So, did you enjoy your training session?” she asked, finally breaking the quiet.

“Oh, yeah,” I said, “It was good. Hard but good.” “And your instructor? Do you like him?”

I thought of the way Ivan had spent a good five minutes yelling at me to “stop punching like a weakling” during today's training session.

“He's, uh, growing on me.”

Nadia laughed a little harder than I expected her to at my words.

The smile stayed on her face as she flipped the binder closed. “Well, I believe that I can handle it from here, Your Majesty. Thank you for the Chapter 73

information about your family, and if I have any further concerns, I'll let you know. The coronation will take place in three weeks.”

Three weeks? That feels soon, especially since Griffin isn't even back yet.

He'd been gone long enough that he should be coming back any day now ~ not that I had any contact with him to stay in the loop.

I shook off the thoughts of Griffin and stood up from my chair, Nadia following my lead. “It was so lovely to meet you, Your Majesty,” she said, “My mate speaks highly of you.”

My eyebrows shot into my hairline. “Your mate?”

The amused smile on her thin lips grew wider. “Yes, I believe you know him as your instructor. He's been teaching you self-defense”

My eyes widened. “Ivan? He's your mate?” | wasn't sure why I was so surprised. She looked to be around the same age as Ivan and she even had a similar accent. They even both worked in the castle, so the logistics made sense. Not to mention that Ivan had mentioned having a

mate to me before. Maybe I should have clocked the similarities before.

“Yes,” she said, “We've been mated for, well, decades at this point. We

both hail from Russia, but we've been living in the Canada and working for the crown for several years.” As she spoke, I tried to picture her with Ivan. Although Nadia was a lot more polite than Ivan ever seemed to be, Chapter 73

the image of them together...fit.

“Ivan told me he was mated,” I said, “I just didn't realize you also worked in the castle. So, I guess you've probably heard all kinds of trash-talk about me from your mate, right?” I could only imagine some of the complaints Ivan might have about me.

Nadia laughed. “Oh, no! Quite the opposite. He really only has positive things to say about you, my Queen. He's very impressed with the progress you've made, and he considers it an honor that he gets to work with you.”

Well, this is news to me.

I wasn't completely sure that Nadia wasn't just BSing me for the sake of being polite, but something about her felt genuine.

Nadia's smile turned a little sheepish. “I know that my mate is a bit of a...hard man,” she said, “You must understand that he's spent most of his life having to fight for everything he has. The pack we grew up in was slaughtered by a power-hungry Alpha, and we - but mostly himm - lost everything. He has no sympathy for those he considers weak, who aren't able to claw their way up like he was.” Humans, was the word I could tell she wanted to add but didn't.

“But you have challenged those beliefs,” she continued, “You have provided him with a new perspective. You have grown on him as well.”

I'd had no idea about Ivan's past, but in some ways, it made sense. Chapter 73

From everything I'd seen, Ivan had a hard shell. People weren't born with those hard shells. They were made, built from constantly

scratching yourself on the sharp edges of life. I saw Alessia's face in my mind ~ she'd built herself a hard shell too.

“Well, I'm glad to know he doesn't totally dislike me,” I said, “I have come to respect your mate quite a bit. He's a good teacher and I'm glad to have him — no matter how rocky our beginning might've been.”

Nadia bowed her head again. “We are the lucky ones, Your Majesty. It makes me happy to know that my Queen is just as kind and forgiving as Ivan described.”

Okay, either Ivan is a total softie on the inside or Nadia is exaggerating. I simply cannot imagine him talking me up so much ~ the man literally laughed when I tripped in our lesson today.)