

The Alpha King's Human Mate by HC Dolores

Chapter 96

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“The human brain works slowly; first the blow, hours afterward the bruise.”

Walter de la Mare Tm not sure when I passed out.

I remembered Sebastian locking eyes with Aria. I remembered being wrapped in the warm cocoon of Griffin's arms as I drifted off.

When I opened my eyes again, I jerked awake,

All I could picture was being back in that cell, my heart hammering as Ezra choked the life out of me.

My hand shot up to protect my own neck just as I registered my surroundings and realized two things: one, I was lying in Griffin's bed and no longer in the cell. And two, I was alone. There was no Ezra lurking about in the shadows of Griffin's bed, no Liam waiting to rip my heart out.

I'm safe.

That's what I told myself as my fingers lightly touched my throat, still

moist from whatever salve the healer had given me. Fortunately, the Chapter 96

painkillers seemed to have been doing their job as the pain had lessened from an intense sting to a dull ache.

I'm safe.

That thought echoed through my head again as the door to the bedroom suddenly swung open and I caught sight of Griffin. He was wearing fresh clothes and as exhausted as he looked, his eyes lit up when he saw me.

“You're awake,” he said, striding towards me.

He stood in front of my side of the bed, examining my throat. “You were out for about ten hours,” he told me, “I applied some more of the salve to your throat, but you're definitely due for another dose of painkillers soon. How do you feel?”

Ten hours?

I could hardly believe that I'd slept through an entire trip back to the

castle...but I'd also been hurt and barely sleeping for days in that dark cell. Perhaps my captivity and a large dose of painkillers had caught up to me.

My throat was tight as I formed the words. “A little better,” I said, “Less painful. When did we get back?”

“A couple of hours ago,” he said, sitting down on the edge of the bed. He took one of my hands in his. “After we did a head count and the Chapter 96

healers treated the injured warriors, we headed back. Things have been

settling down ever since.”

“Pm surprised you're not tied up in meetings,” I confessed, “To think things have already settled down so soon after a rebellion.”

“I don't care about meetings,” Griffin said sharply, “You are my only priority right now.”

“Ym fin -”

“You're not fine,” he cut me off with narrowed eyes, “You were kidnapped and hurt. They hurt my mate.” The last word came out as a dark growl as his eyes roamed over my injured neck. “I want to know how it happened.”

His eyes softened and he added gently, “Please. I need to know.”)

I swallowed sharply. “There's not much to it,” I said, “They kept me alone in the same cell most of the time I was there, only coming down to bring me small meals. That's how I was able to use the bond to contact you - I had a surprising amount of free time on my hands. And when you came to save me...Ezra came into my cell to confront me about it.”

Something dark flashed through Griffin's eyes as I recounted the event to him. “He was as angry as you'd expect...and he thought maybe he could kill you by killing me first. He did some damage, of course...but I managed to get a lucky shot at the last minute.” Chapter 96

I could see the rage boiling underneath his skin, but he didn't interrupt. “I'd gotten ahold of a silver comb the night before, and I managed to put it through his neck.”

His eyes widened in surprise. “A silver comb? You killed an Alpha werewolf with a comb?”

I nodded. “It was a lucky shot...but I do think those self-defense lessons with Ivan paid off.” Even now, I could still hear Ivan's voice echoing through my head as I embedded the comb into Ezra's neck.

“You killed an Alpha with a comb,” he repeated again. The look that Griffin was giving me now was something I'm not sure I'd ever seen before ~ sheer amazement. *)

“as I said...lucky shot.” Suddenly, he was on top of me, his lips pressed against mine fervently.

T'd never felt so much passion from him — not when we'd kissed for the first time, not even when I told him I loved him for the first time. There

was passion in his kiss, but there was also desperation.

I could feel it in the way his lips moved against mine and his hands gripped my arms like I'd disappear from his grip if he let me go. I tried to keep up with his pace, the desperate movement of his lips, but he was practically devouring my lips.

Then, just as I thought 'd finally caught up to his speed, he pulled Chapter 96 away quickly. He was breathing heavily as he rested his forehead

against mine.

“It's my fault,” he whispered. His eyes were closed, eyebrows scrunched together.

“What do you mean?” “Them taking you,” he whispered, “It's my fault.”

This time, I pulled away, cupping his chin as he finally opened his eyes to look at me. “It's not your fault,” I said.

He let out a half-hearted scoff. “Of course it is,” he replied, “They took you out from under my own roof. With me here. With my guards.”

Before I could respond, he added so quietly I almost didn't hear him, “I failed to protect you.”

“You didn't fail to protect me,” I immediately said, “You're the one who. saved me. You killed Liam. You did protect me.”

“No,” he growled back, “Had I protected you the way that a mate should, you wouldn't have been taken in the first place.”

Topened my mouth to refute that, but he stood up suddenly and began to pace around the bedroom. His eyebrows were furrowed again. “You know, the entire time they had you,” he said, “All I thought about was getting you back. How I'd never let you leave again, that maybe I'd just Chapter 96

keep you locked up in this bedroom where nobody but me could ever see you again.”

I certainly didn't like the sound of being locked up in Griffin's room like I had when I'd first come here, but I had a feeling he wasn't done talking, so I let him continue. “But I've already proved that I can't protect you in my own home,” he said, “If I can't take care of you in the basic way that every mate, let alone a King, should be able to, what good am I?”

“Griffin

“I think you should leave,” he cut me off. He turned away so his back was facing me and I couldn't see the expression on his face.

I wasn't sure I was capable of feeling trepidation after how I'd spent the last several days, but that sentence made my blood run cold.

“Leave?” I choked out.

He nodded, and I could see his fingers form into tight fists, his knuckles turning white. “When we first met,” he said, his voice strained, “You wanted to go to college, to live a human life. I didn't think I could bear the thought of that — of you being out in the world alone, where I was unable to protect you, to see you, to spend time with you.”

My heart hammered in my chest as I listened to him talk.

“But now I wonder if you might be safer out there,” he finished quietly, Chapter 96

“away from me. Away from my enemies, those who might wish to do you harm to hurt me.”

“I don't want that anymore,” I shot back tightly. “And where would I go?”

There was silence and then he said, “You could live a human life without werewolves. Go to college. Settle down in some nice little town. I'd pay for everything. You'd never want for anything, and you'd be safe

“It's safe for me to be with you,” I said. “This is where I should be. How many times have you told me that? That I belong here?”

“Lve changed my mind,” he said and turned just enough that I could see the side of his face. His expression was all twisted up like it physically pained him to say this. “Your siblings came back with us. I'm sure they'll want to see you. After that, we'll work out the details of your departure.”

“Griffin, please,” I said, and I managed to stumble off the bed to reach for him but by the time my feet hit the ground, the door had closed behind him.