

# The Alpha King's Human Mate by HC Dolores

## Chapter 98

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"Pm a lover, not a fighter...but sometimes those things overlap." Unknown

It took talking to three servants, two guards, and nearly an hour for me to finally hunt Griffin down. I'd been expecting him to be in some sort of meeting, surrounded by advisors, but that's not where I found him.

Instead, he was holed up in some office I'd never seen before, stacks of paperwork in front of him. His head shot up when I opened the door and I could've sworn they looked puffy.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, his voice raspy. His face was blank, portraying no emotion. It stung. He didn't look at me with softness or playfulness like he usually did — right now, he was looking

at me like I was just another subject.

"I wanted to talk," I said. My voice came out meeker than I intended it to.

"About what?" "About our last conversation," I said.

He looked down at his paperwork. "There's nothing to talk about," he Chapter 98

said with a flat tone, "Although I suppose we can discuss the details of your departure now if you want."

That sentence might as well have been a punch to the gut.

For the past hour, all I'd felt was sadness and desperation. Desperation to work this out, to make him understand that he didn't need to send me away.

But suddenly, I felt that sadness and desperation give way to anger. Rage swelled up in me like a wave. How dare he? He couldn't even look me in the eye as he nonchalantly discussed sending me away like you'd rehome a misbehaving puppy.

"The details of my departure?" I repeated. "Why don't you call it what it really is?"

Griffin didn't even glance at me. "And what is it really?"

"You being a coward," I said. >

That got his attention. Griffin looked up at me with narrowed eyes. "I'm doing what's best for your safety," he said, "If you're able to disappear into the human world, nobody will be able to use you against me.

Besides, you wanted a human life not so long ago."

"What would you know about what I wanted? It's not as if you've asked me what I've wanted since I returned. All you've done is tell me what I need to do and tell me what's best for me," I seethed, "In fact...that's Chapter 98

pretty much what you've been doing since the moment we met."

From across the room, I could've sworn I saw Griffin's gaze harden. Perhaps I should've stopped there but the pent-up emotions were spewing out of me now.

"Do you remember what you told me when we met?" I asked. "You said you'd waited almost a decade for me. That you'd spent enough time without me and you weren't going to let anything keep us apart...not other wolves, not your father, and not me -"

"Yes, and I failed!" Griffin cut me off with a growl. "I was supposed to keep you safe - the one thing any mate should be able to do ~ and I failed at that. I thought that I could be enough to protect you, but I realize now that I can't."

"That's not true," I argued.

"Yes, it is," he said, "You were kidnapped. I couldn't even protect you in my own home. I didn't sleep for days, wondering if I'd be able to save you in time, if they were going to hurt you in ways I wouldn't be able to stop..." His voice cracked as he trailed off, and he averted his eyes from me.

I took a few steps closer until I was standing right in front of his desk. "You did save me in time," I said, "You keep saying you failed, but you didn't. You saved me. I'm standing here right now because you saved me, and you're still trying to send me away." Chapter 98

"It's the only way I can make sure that nobody will ever be able to use you against me again," he said, "It's the only way I can ensure your safety."

I took a step around the desk until I was just inches away from him. He turned to look at me. "I know you don't want to leave, but I'll make sure you never want for anything. A house, college, anything you want

No."

"No?" he repeated, raising an eyebrow.

I crossed my arms. "No, I'm not leaving." (2 "You can't ~"

"I can," | cut him off again. | moved even closer — our faces so close | could feel his cool breath on my lips. "You said you'd let nothing keep us apart - not even me," I continued, "Well, I think that includes you too." i

He didn't reply, but I saw his eyes flicker to my lips.

"I never got to choose, you know," I said, "I didn't get to choose living with my dad or knowing about werewolves. I didn't get to choose having a mate. | didn't get to choose when you dragged me back here. Even right now, you're trying to take my choice away again by thinking you know better." Chapter 98

I paused before adding lowly, "But you don't. I'm making this choice, and I'm choosing to stay. I'm choosing you."

He glanced at my lips again, swallowing. "I —"

"No, I don't want to hear it. I don't want to hear whatever justification you have for trying to send me away. I don't care. You've spent most of this mate bond fighting for me, and right now, I'm going to fight for you."

I leaned even closer, my lips brushing against his. "You said you'd chase me across the world if you had to. You don't think I'd chase you too? Even if you managed to send me away, I'd just come right back. P'd never give up. I would chase you until you saw common sense, until you got it through your thick skull that you're my mate and I'm never leaving."

I could see a war in his eyes, the mask he'd tried to put up cracking between us. He tried to turn his head and look away, but before he could, I grabbed his chin with my fingers and held his face in place. He looked surprised by the gesture, but he didn't pull away.

"Lam your Queen," | continued firmly, "You bowed to me. You gave me your loyalty and devotion when you left this claiming mark on me and when you crowned me. I didn't get kidnapped and sleep in a dungeon just so you could try and throw all that away. Do you und ~"

It was his lips on mine that cut me off. Chapter 98

His soft lips moved against mine fervently, and I could barely keep up with his pace. His tongue swiped against my bottom lip for entrance, and I didn't even hesitate in giving him access. I wanted to be able to taste as much of his mouth as I could.

The argument we'd just had, Griffin trying to send me away — all of it seemed to fade into the background as he kissed me passionately.

My hands roamed his hair and neck, touching every inch of skin I could manage. When Griffin pulled me onto his lap, I didn't resist. If anything, I tried to move closer. To be as close as I could to him.

By the time he pulled away, we were both breathing heavily. His pupils were blown wide as he looked at me.

We both breathed in silence for a moment, and then he whispered, "I understand."

"You're mine," I murmured. "Pm yours," he said, "And you are mine." "You're not going to try and send me away then?"

He shook his head, and for the first time since I'd walked into the room, I saw the mask completely shatter. I caught a glimpse of the raw pain that lay underneath, of just how much guilt he'd been wracked with. Chapter 98

"Lm sorry," he finally said, his voice low and strained, "The one thing Pve always prided myself on as man, as a mate, is my ability to protect. I thought there was nobody in the world that could protect you like I could, It's how I justified some of those choices I made in the beginning ~ like bringing you back to the castle when you went to see your mom. Even if you hated me forever, I told myself it'd be okay because you'd be

safe. I'd keep you safe."

He swallowed, and his grip on my waist tightened. "But the night you got kidnapped, that changed," he said, "I didn't keep you safe. Even worse, I couldn't keep you safe in our home, the one place you should've been safe."

"You couldn't have predicted what happened that night," I told him, "It wasn't just you here. There were guards, guests...nobody could protect me, not even myself. If you want to blame yourself for that night, then you have to blame me just as much. You have to blame me for walking out on that balcony alone, for talking with Ezra at all, for taking the drink he offered..."

"I don't blame you," Griffin said firmly.

"And I don't blame you either," I replied.

"But I still failed."

"Griffin," I said, "Being able to protect me is not your only worth as a

mate. If protection was all I wanted, I would've just stayed with my dad's pack. But you do so much more than protect me - you challenge Chapter 98

me, you teach me things, but most importantly, you make me happy. Even if you were human, even if there was no mate bond, I think we would've still faded up together. You probably would've had to chase me a few more years, but it would've happened eventually."

I could see the faint outline of a smile, not a smirk, on his face. "You make me happy too," he said, "And I think you're right. I would've eventually won you over." He leaned in to kiss me again but I pulled back.

I could already tell where this was heading, but we were also sitting in a small office with an unlocked door. Not exactly the best place for sex.

"Shouldn't we go back to our bedroom?" I asked, "There's no space in here and anyone could walk in."

I saw his wide smile before he captured my lips with his again. "You're not going anywhere," he murmured against my lips, "Never again. You're mine, little fox." \*