

The Alpha King's Human Mate by HC Dolores

Chapter 9

"Fate will find a way." (2

Virgil

The moment my feet touched Canadian ground, there was a change in the air.

I couldn't put words to it, but I felt it in my bones – and it wasn't just the freezing Canadian breeze either.

As we headed to the sleek black SUV that was supposed to transport us to the King's castle, I had the instinctual urge to run. To climb back into the plane and beg the pilot to take me home. What was wrong with me? Sure, I'd been dreading this trip for the past week, but now that I was actually here, it felt like somebody had shoved my body into flight-or-fight mode.

Now is not the time to freak out, Clark.

Pull yourself together.

I took a long, deep breath and climbed into the SUV after Lily and Sebastian.

"Everyone ready?"

Our driver was a thin, old man with wispy white hair who barely greeted us at the airport.. He was all business, and he kept his eyes on the road as he drove. I hadn't even realized that the Alpha King or more likely, one of his pack members – would arrange transport for us, but it made sense. The palace was in the middle of the snowy Canadian mountains, so it's not like we could just take a taxi there. C

"How long is the drive?" Lily asked. She was seated between Sebastian and I and she was already pulling her fluffy pink travel pillow out from her suitcase.

"Two hours," the driver replied, and his voice sounded just as old as he looked.

I guess the Alpha King isn't big on retirement plans or 401Ks. (8

"Cool," Lily muttered, "I'm going to take a nap. If my head ends up on anyone's shoulder, too bad. You can deal with it." Sebastian and I shared an eye roll, but neither of us said anything.

At least someone is getting sleep here. (4

The plane ride had only been a couple of hours, and although I had wanted to sleep, I couldn't bring my body to settle down enough. My heart was pounding and my stomach was twisted in knots. It's like my body had recognized some sort of invisible threat, but my brain hadn't caught on yet. 3

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There was a part of me that wanted to speak up to tell Sebastian or even Lily how incredibly anxious I was, but what was I actually supposed to say? I couldn't pinpoint anything that was specifically causing me anxiety, and if anything, I wasn't the one who should be worried.

Most of the pressure was on Sebastian's shoulders. He was the one who would be expected to interact with other Alphas, to say the right thing during the meeting. All it would take is one bad joke to the wrong Alpha to end an alliance or make an enemy.

Lily was in the line of fire too. Every single Alpha child above the age of thirteen was going to be here, and there was a decent chance Lily would meet her mate. That would be at least thirty different kids, and since most of them would probably be men, that gave her nearly thirty opportunities to meet her mate. C

As much as I was anxious, the real burden lay on Seb and Lily. Whatever my stakes were, theirs were ten times higher.

With that thought in mind, I tried to push the anxious feelings away and focus on something else – like the gorgeous Canadian scenery.

I'd never been outside of Washington in my life, and while the circumstances might not have been my favorite, I couldn't deny how beautiful this place was.

The afternoon sky was covered in thick, dark clouds and it was snowing. As far as the eye could see, there were large Evergreen trees that led into a forest. It was snowing too hard for me to see beyond that, but I could tell it was expansive. We

it hadn't made it to the mountains yet, but judging by how rural the area was, couldn't have been far.

As I watched the scenery blur by, I felt a sudden pressure on my shoulder.

I glanced down – it was Lily. She was passed out, her eyes screwed shut and her hair splayed in her face. I guess my shoulder made a more comfortable position. than her travel pillow did. Beside us, Sebastian was shuffling through some sort of folder about pack business that he brought from home.

Gently, so as to not wake her, I brushed some of the hair out of her face and used my other hand to pull my earbuds out of my pocket. She might've turned me into her designated pillow, but that didn't mean I couldn't entertain myself with music.

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Seeing the castle for the first time left me speechless.

As the driver pulled up to a large iron gate with several security guards, I must've looked like an idiot my eyes were wide and my jaw had gone slack. It was massive, bigger than I thought it would ever be.

It looked like the kind of castle you'd see in a Fairytale – it was situated on a literal mountaintop, and the actual castle was all white stone and stained glass windows. The entire palace was coated in snow, but from a distance, it almost looked like powdered sugar.

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Below the castle and all down the mountain, there was a forest covered in

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Evergreen trees. It was beautiful and secluded. For a moment, my brain.

registered just how isolated this place was. The last hour of the drive had just been windy mountain roads under the thick cover of clouds, snow, and trees. No wonder the Alpha King wanted to live in the middle of the Canadian mountains. Nobody was going to be able to leave without his say-so. 3

Stop being paranoid, Clark. This place is probably easier to navigate if you're a wolf. These people actually like the outdoors, they're not indoor hermits like 2

you.

All three of us sat in the back seat in silence as the driver spoke with a brawny

security guard or what I assumed was a security guard. He was one of many large men that stood in front a massive, closed iron gate. "I'm transporting three guests from the Blacktooth Pack," our driver said.

“Names?”

“Sebastian Bellevue, Lily Bellevue, and Clark Bellevue, son and daughters of Alpha Marcus Bellevue.” (1

I could only peer at him from the window, but I saw the security guard nod before he looked away and his eyes glazed over. It looked like he was just zoning out, but I'd been around werewolves long enough to know better he was communicating through a mind link. Pack members could communicate telepathically with each other in both human and wolf forms.

That had always fascinated me, but from what I understood, the mind link was only used for communicating pack orders or business not casual conversation.

“Alright,” the guard finally responded, “You're all set to go through. Your escort has been notified of your arrival, and they'll be waiting for you at the south entrance.” The driver nodded, and I watched as the large iron gates creaked open. Not only was the gate massive, but it was elaborate too. Intricate designs covered the top of each bar, although it was hard to make them out since they were coated in snow.

Beside me, Lily and Sebastian were just as in awe as I was. Lily had woken up twenty minutes ago from her power nap.

As soon as the gates opened completely, the SUV was entering the castle grounds. The gates clanged shut behind us. 3

Even though everything was hidden beneath a layer of thick snow, I could tell the castle lawn was beautiful and well-kept. There was a large fountain that was frozen on one side and an elaborate garden on the other.

The Alpha King really took the monarch thing a little too literally, this place makes me feel like I time-traveled back to the middle ages.

It took us close to twenty minutes just to reach the south entrance of the castle. Up close, the baroque architecture was even more incredible. The battlements felt like skyscrapers and the towers were so tall that they disappeared into the clouds.

“This place is really something, huh?” Sebastian commented.

Lily nodded, still taking everything in, and I made some sort of noise of agreement.

The SUV stopped in front of what must've been the south entrance a wide, arched wooden door that must've been at least ten feet tall.

“Welcome to Lupine Castle,” the driver said, “You can get out here.”

"Thank you for the ride, we appreciate it," Sebastian replied, but the driver merely grunted in reply.

Not a big talker, this guy.

It took us a few minutes to grab our luggage and clamor out of the car. After spending two hours in a heated SUV, the bitter Canadian cold felt like a slap in the face.

I definitely should have worn my thicker jacket.

I pulled my jacket closer and tried not to shiver. Almost immediately, Lily latched onto my arm, her teeth chattering.

"Geez, this place is fuh-reezing," she ground out. She was even less dressed for the cold than I was just a pair of ripped jeans and one of her favorite designer hoodies.

"Tell me about it," I muttered back, trying to absorb as much of her body heat as possible.

I might've been from Washington, but Canada was an entirely new level of freezing – especially during this time of year. 2

"You kids are certainly not used to the cold, are you?"

All three of us whipped our heads around to see a middle-aged woman approaching us. I'm not sure if she came from the castle, but I hadn't heard any

doors open.

She was tall with fair skin and dark hair that was just starting to grey. She wore a kind smile a maroon wrap dress with no jacket. If she was cold, she certainly didn't show it. Everything about her screamed dignified. Her back was straight and she held her head high.

"I'm Esther," she said, smiling at us, "I'll be your escort during your stay in the castle. Why don't we get out of this cold and move inside?"

None of us needed to be convinced. Esther used the intricate iron knocker to open the large wooden door, and all three of us immediately scurried inside.

It took me a moment to soak in the precious heat before I registered what the inside of the castle looked like. We were standing in an arched hallway. The ceiling must've been at least twenty feet high, and the walls and floors were both smooth stone. I could make out a couple of pillars in the distance and there was a large statue at one end of the hallway. Judging by the marble crown sculpted into the statue's head, I figured it must've been a former king.

“Incredible, right?” Esther smiled at us, “People are always taken aback during their first visit here.”

“This castle is beautiful,” Sebastian said. E

Esther turned her an

to him. “You must Sebastian,

“Yes, ma’am.”

correct?”

“And that must make you Lily,” she said, and my sister nodded.

Finally, her curious eyes settled on me. “And you’re Clark, the human.”

She didn’t say it in a mean or condescending way

any other fact.

“Yeah, that’s me,” I gave her an awkward smile. Q

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it was just as if she was stating

She grinned brightly and clapped her hands together. “Perfect, I’m so glad all three.

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you made it without delay. As I said outside, I will be your escort while you are here. Any questions you may have while you’re here can be directed to me. I’m sure you’re all tired from your travels.”

We nodded.

“That’s what I thought. The diplomatic hearing will not be until tomorrow, but the Alpha King is hosting an intimate dinner party tonight. He has selected a few guests to join him and he’s requested the presence of you three.”

My throat went dry.

There’s no way this lady just said we’re having dinner with the Alpha King tonight.

