

# The Alpha King's Human Mate by HC Dolores

## Chapter 80

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"Nothing like watching your relatives fight, I always say." Rick Riordan

Eventually, after several more minutes of kissing and touching and running my hands through Griffin's hair, we finally made our way to the reception hall. Griffin had wanted to finish what we'd started, but I also didn't want to miss my own coronation party. That was just bad taste, right?

So, with Griffin leading the way, we made our way to the reception hall — another part of the castle I hadn't seen yet. Nadia had briefly mentioned the room in meetings before, but this was the first time I was laying eyes on it.

Really, it wasn't so much a room as it was a ballroom. ( )

With marble floors that shined so brightly I could see my reflection in them, I wasn't sure what the most impressive part of the space was. If it wasn't the grand staircase that led into the center of the room, it was the high, coved ceiling and Corinthian columns. It looked like something you'd find in a fairytale.

Well, I do live in a literal castle built centuries ago. Chapter 80

As Griffin and I made our way down the staircase, the chatter and activity of the room ceased to a momentary halt. "Your new King and Queen," Nadia's voice carried over the room and many of the Alphas began clapping for us.

I managed to spot Nadia and the sight of her - and who she was with — made me smile. She was tucked into Ivan's side, smiling and greeting those around her. Ivan looked less enthusiastic about being here, more like a grumpy guard dog on watch duty.

Griffin and I descended the stairs together, but as soon as we'd reached the bottom step, Alphas that I did not recognize were gunning for his attention.

"My King," a middle-aged bald man with a thick beard said, seeming to appear out of thin air, "There's a matter I wish to discuss with you."

"actually, if there's something I could get your opinion on first, Your Majesty," said an Indian man who popped up from the other side.

They were like hungry dogs nipping at his heels and desperate for his attention.

A little bit of annoyance sparked in me. We'd only gotten here and they were already trying to steal my mate away. But then I remembered that these men didn't get to see Griffin all the time, not when some of them lived across the world. Getting to speak with the Alpha King might be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for some of them, so it was understandable they'd want to monopolize him. Chapter 80

Griffin looked down at me, and I could see the silent question behind his eyes. He was asking if it was okay to leave to deal with whatever this royal business was.

I simply nodded. While the thought of navigating a room of mostly strangers on my own didn't sound appealing, I reminded myself that they wouldn't be strangers for long. These were my people now.

Besides, Queens aren't supposed to get socially anxious...right?

"Pl'll be back shortly," Griffin said, leaning down to peck my lips, "If you need anything, if anyone bothers you...I'm here." The hard edge of his voice said it all.

"Don't worry, I'll be fine," I said, lightly pushing him away. He shot me one last look before joining the two men. I could see them beginning to babble into Griffin's ear although their words got lost in the chatter of the room.

Sighing, I turned back to the room full of strangers, scanning the room for my mom and Steve. As the only two other humans in the room, I could only imagine how out of place they felt amongst the wolves.

Where are they? "Oh, Clark! You looked so beautiful up there!"

I barely had time to turn around before the scent of vanilla perfume and pale arms enveloped me. Mom. Chapter 80

Well, that answers the 'where' question.

After squeezing me in a hug hard enough to rival wolf strength, she pulled back to look at me with misty eyes. "You looked so strong up there, sweetheart," she said with a watery smile. "You have no idea how

proud I am."

"Your mother was getting all kinds of looks because she couldn't stop crying," Steve suddenly butted in, coming up beside mom. He was decked out in a suit and a tie that matched her dress.

"Hey Uncle Steve," I said, giving him a hug.

To see both of them here, happy and unharmed, brought me more relief than I'd expected. Their embraces were comforting and familiar, and the fact that they'd come all this way for me left my heart full.

"You did look good up there, kid," he said, tucking a loose strand of my hair behind my hair. "Real grownup and everything." He paused to look around the room full of Alphas. "Besides your mother, I'm pretty sure you're the most good-looking one in here." [?]

"Considering the room is mostly full of middle-aged men," I said, "Not sure that's a super high bar, but thanks." (1)

"That Griffin is a looker too!" Mom said, lowering her voice as if she was confessing a secret, "You two looked good together. I was a little confused about one thing though..." Chapter 80

"What's that?"

"Is it werewolf custom for the King to crown the Queen? I thought he was getting crowned too," she said, furrowing her eyebrows. "Just seems a little odd to me, that's all."

"There's no coronation for the King or anyone in the original royal line," I told her, echoing the same explanation that Nadia had given me when I'd asked weeks ago, "But it's a big deal when the heir or heiress has a mate, so that's why there's a coronation only for me."

My mother nodded at my words, her lips forming a small 'o.' I could tell she was still a little confused, but she seemed to accept my explanation.

Before I could clarify, a new voice spoke from behind me. "Clark"

My stomach dropped.

I knew that voice. Dad.

I swiftly tuned around to find the two people I'd dreaded seeing at my coronation — dad and Luna Grace.

My father looked just as stern as I remembered him. After a few months away from his house, I'd forgotten how piercing his blue eyes were or

how it seemed like they were always trying to poke beneath the surface.

Tucked into his side, Luna Grace's soft features were a complete Chapter 80

contrast to his seriousness.

Beside me, mom and Steve stiffened, and he placed a hand around her

waist. My father's eyes darted to the two, widening just enough for me to know that he recognized my mom. Even after all those years, it was

unmistakable that she was my birth mother. We looked too much alike, and if nothing else, her human scent would give her away.

Dad's face twisted into something between a forced smile and a frown. "May," he said, and the word sounded like it came from gritted teeth, "I was not...expecting to see you here."

My mother didn't bother to hide her frown and neither did Steve. "It's

been a long time, Marcus," she said.

"This is...May? Clark's mother?" Luna Grace's soft voice interrupted them, and her face went white as a sheet. \*

"An awkward pause settled between us, and then I watched my mom compose herself and muster up a smile. "That's me," she said, and she offered up a hand to Grace, "You must be Marcus' mate."

A lesser woman might not have handled meeting their husband's one-night stand so well, but this was Luna Grace. For as long as I'd known her, a polite smile was her favorite accessory. She could teach a master class in faking them, and she had years of experience learning not to embarrass my father in public.

So, it didn't completely shock me when Grace schooled her features and Chapter 80

placed her own dainty hand in mom's. "Yes, I am Marcus' true mate," she said, and there was an edge to her voice.

Another awkward pause, but this time, Steve was the one to break it. "Look, uh, we all know this is a little awkward to meet like this," he said, sounding sheepish. "But we're all here for Clark, right? That's what matters — celebrating her." I sent a grateful smile his way. At least I could count on Steve to try and keep the peace.

"I'm sorry, who are you?" Dad asked, narrowing his eyes at Steve. "I'm here for my daughter, but I'm not sure who you are." (7)

"Our daughter, you mean," mom said, her eyes flashing angrily, "Not

that you seem to remember my contribution to her life."

"Your contribution?" Dad asked, his voice barely above a growl. "You're going to lecture me about contributions? After you kept her from me for nearly twelve years?"

Mom stepped closer to my dad, leaving Steve's umbrella hold. To my surprise, Grace reacted first, stepping in front of my father like she was physically protecting him from mom. The polite smile had dropped from her face and was replaced by something like anger — or as close as Grace could get to expressing anger.

Mom didn't seem to be intimidated in the slightest by Grace. "Oh, please," she scoffed. "You did the same thing! As soon as I did tell you about her, you did the one thing I was worried you would. You cut her off from me and isolated her from her mother." Chapter 80

"No, I kept her away from a drug addict," dad shot back, "And it was the right choice." > )

"Do you even see how far up your own ass you are, Marcus?" Mom said, "Even after all these years, you haven't changed. Goes to show you what happens when you're surrounded by people who do nothing but kiss your ass all day!"

"Who are you to speak about who he is or how's he changed?" Grace said, and her facade completely cracked, showing just how livid she really was. "I've known him for two decades. You knew him for one night. You were just some random woman who approached him at a bar and happened to catch him in a moment of weakness. I will not just stand here and let you talk down to my mate."

It was silent for a moment and then my mother quietly said, "Is that what he told you?"

Grace just blinked at her. "Clark may have been the result of a single night, that's true," mom said, "But Marcus and I were friends for months before that. I even

thought I was falling in love with him...God, I was naive." She let out a bitter laugh before continuing. "I had no idea you existed, you know."

"May," dad growled. ( )

"At least not until after he'd gotten into my pants," mom added, "That's when he finally told me he had a mate waiting for him at home - that Chapter 80

he had you. And do you know what he said when he finally told me about you? That some part of him had wished he was free to choose his own destiny. And his own mate." (=

Whatever remnants remained of Grace's polite mask chipped and fell away, leaving pure devastation in their wake. She looked broken as she pulled herself away from my father's grip.

"Grace," he said, reaching for her, "Please..." As angry as he was, there was desperation in his eyes now. My mother had taken a baseball bat to the carefully constructed lies that my father had been feeding Grace for years.

Suddenly, my childhood made a little bit more sense - why we never talked about my mom, why he never talked about how he knew her. He was pretending she was a stranger he'd met to preserve Grace's feelings.

It took a moment but Grace managed to compose herself, forcing her face into blankness. "I think I need some air," she said quietly, beginning to move away. My father turned to follow her but she shot him a withering stare. "Alone."

Dad didn't look happy about Grace disappearing into the crowd, but as soon as she had, he was turning back to my mother. If looks could kill, he would've suffocated mom to death with his glare.

From the corner of my eye, Steve tugged mom closer to his side.

"What is wrong with you?" Dad growled, his eyes flashing dangerously, Chapter 80

"As if ruining my chance at a relationship with my daughter wasn't enough, you've got to take your shot at the one with my mate too."

Mom's hands were balled into fists at her side and I knew she was gearing up for a fight. My parents were beginning to make a bit of a scene too, with some of the nearby Alphas glancing our way.

So, before my family drama became the main event of the night, I finally stepped in. "Both of you need to stop," I said, pushing myself between them.

"They both glanced at me like they were remembering I was there for the first time ever. "I know that you've got a lot of bad blood between you," I continued, "But you only have to tolerate each other for one night and then you can go back to pretending each other don't exist."

Dad glared at me. "You expect me to play nice with her after what she just said to your stepmother? That woman kept you from me for years and poisoned you against me. She did everything in her power to damage the relationship between us. I cannot understand why you'd even bother speaking with her, let alone invite her to an event like this!"

"She didn't poison me against you," I said, "And you did a pretty good job of causing damage to our relationship all on your own, so you don't need to blame mom for that." Anger flooded my veins ~ the kind of cold, hard anger that builds up over time and then finally overflows.

"You -" Chapter 80

"You resent her for keeping me from you," I cut him off, "But you did the same thing. As soon as you found out about me, you cut me off from my mother so you could punish her."

"I was doing what was best for you," he interrupted, "She was a drug addict. You didn't need that kind of influence in your life."

"But did you ever think that I needed my mom?" I asked, "Regardless of what she was going through, she was still my mom...and she was trying to better herself so she could be a better one. She might've gotten the chance if you weren't so determined to make her pay for keeping you in the dark about my existence."

Dad opened his mouth to argue, but I didn't give him the chance. The floodgates had opened now. "I mean, she was just gone," I said never even told me why. You were so angry, so worried about Grace's feelings...you wouldn't even talk about her. I thought she abandoned

"You

me. I thought she didn't want me anymore, that maybe there was

something wrong with me. And you let me think that. Cutting off mom

might've punished her, but it punished me too. I didn't deserve that." (2)

For once, my dad was silent. His face was blank but his eyes were brimming with an emotion I didn't know. My mother placed her hand on my shoulder. "Oh, Clark -"

"and you," I said, whipping around to look into my mother's watery eyes, "I know that you didn't get a choice in the way that dad cut you Chapter 80

off from me these past six years, but you had a choice before then. You made the choice to keep me away from dad, to never even give him the opportunity to get to know me."

My mother's face contorted into a sad expression, but it didn't phase me enough to stop talking. As angry as I was with my dad, she wasn't innocent in this either. "Not getting to know my father for eleven years?" I continued, "That affected me too. I deserved to know my dad was before I hit puberty."

"You're right," mom said, grabbing my hand and squeezing tightly, "I thought I was doing what's best for you, but it was out of fear that he'd take you away from me. That wasn't right." She paused to glance up at my father. "Even if my fear turned into reality."

"Is that supposed to placate me, May?" Dad sneered, "I'm not going to apologize for putting a roof over my daughter's head and three meals a

day into her belly ~ something you could never do." (1)

Steve stepped in. "She's still the mother of your child," he said, "And you've done nothing but disrespect her tonight."

"I don't owe her respect," dad shot back, and then he turned to me, "I'm done having this conversation, Clark. We have other things to talk about." His crossed arms and stern tone were tell-tale signs that he was gearing up for a lecture. Three months ago, I would've had no choice to listen to him.

But now? I was on more than equal footing with my father and his Chapter 80

Alpha-ness didn't intimidate me. I'd dealt with more than enough of that in the past several weeks.

"Oh, and what's that exactly?" "Let's start with the way you've ignored me for weeks," he said, "Or how about the way you embarrassed your pack by running away from your

responsibilities."

I opened my mouth to speak but I was cut off by a new voice joining the conversation.

"alpha Marcus."

Dad's eyes widened and he bowed his head instantly. A hand slid over the small of my back, a familiar scent enveloping me.

"Your Majesty, [ -" -" ] think we're long overdue for a chat, don't you, Marcus?" Griffin said.

"Maybe we should start with the disrespectful way you like to speak to my mate and your Queen." (8)