

# The Alpha King's Human Mate by HC Dolores

## Chapter 108

The Alpha King's Human Mate

Bonus Chapter - Aria & Sebastian (8) Bonus Chapter - Aria & Sebastian (8)

"The good news is that you survived. The bad news is that you're hurt, and no one can heal you but yourself."

Clementine Von Radics

Just as she'd expected, the moment of comfortable silence was short-lived. Just as Aria was spooning mashed potatoes into her mouth, Alessia broke the quiet. "So, Aria," she started, "We all had to deal with that loser Liam, but you're the one who had to actually live with him. What was that like?" The question was phrased so casually, like she was asking Aria what the weather was like - and not loudly announcing her greatest shame.

Everyone else at the table tensed immediately ~ Aria, Sebastian, the King, and the Queen. Alessia might as well have presented a ticking time bomb for dinner.

To her surprise, it was Sebastian who answered. "Alessia," he said, his voice low and frustrated in a way that Aria had never heard it. "We don't need to talk about that."

Alessia shrugged. "What? I'm curious. I want to know if the guy was as delusional in private as he was to the rest of the world." She leaned closer to Aria from across the table, her eyes lit with curiosity. "So...was Bonus Chapter - Aria & Sebastian (8)

he?"

Aria wasn't sure why the mashed potatoes in her mouth - which had melted against her tongue moments ago — now tasted like she was trying to choke down sand. "I -"

"Sebastian is right," Queen Clark cut her off, shooting Alessia a pointed look. "We don't need to talk about it. Aria doesn't need to explain anything to you."

Alessia rolled her eyes. "You're right. She doesn't have to do anything. She could tell me to fuck right off if she wanted to, but the poor girl hasn't been able to get a word in edgewise since I've met her. Everyone around her treats her like glass." Her voice was taunting as she turned to Aria. "Is that what you are, Aria? Glass? Are you going to break into a million pieces if someone says Liam's name?" (!

Part of Aria ~ no, most of her ~ wanted to crawl under the table and never come out. She wanted to hide from the curly-haired girl's hard gaze and her taunting tone.

But another part, much smaller, wanted to wipe that cold, teasing smile off her face. (")

"Alessia, this conversation is over," Sebastian said, his eyes dark and his

voice a growl.

"The sound of his anger sent Aria's heart racing and her stomach twisting into knots. Bonus Chapter - Aria & Sebastian (8)

Alessia rolled her eyes again, but she stopped pressing the topic. It took every bit of Aria's courage to pick up her silverware and keep eating her now-bitter mashed potatoes with shaking fingers.

The rest of the dinner passed in uneasy silence.

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Aria almost felt bad when she dodged Sebastian's hug after dinner and scurried back to her room, but the relief of being alone again was palpable. That dinner had to have been one of the most uncomfortable experiences she'd had in years. Going into it, she'd been worried about the King and Queen...but they hadn't made her feel anxious.

If anything, Queen Clark continued to show her a level of compassion she was sure she didn't deserve.

And Sebastian - he'd stood up for her.

Aria knew that's what he'd been doing. He was only trying to protect her, and yet, when he got upset on her behalf, she'd wanted to crawl under the table and hide.

No matter how good his intentions, no matter how gentle he was, he

was still capable of anger.

And that meant he was capable of being angry at her. It would only be a matter of time before she pushed him over the edge, and he was growling at her, not Alessia. Bonus Chapter - Aria & Sebastian (8)

She tried to push the thought from her head as she changed into a pair of pajamas, but a knock on the door made her freeze in her tracks ~ especially when she realized the scent on the other side wasn't Sebastian.

"Who's there?" She called out. "Alessia," a gruff voice answered, and her stomach dropped.

What did she want now? Had she come to continue taunting her now that Sebastian wasn't here? Alessia must have felt her hesitation from the other side of the door, and Aria could almost imagine her rolling her eyes as she said, "Look, I'm not here to piss you off. I'm here to apologize."

Whatever she thought was going to come out of Alessia's mouth, it wasn't that. Was she joking, and just trying to convince Aria to open the door so she could insult her again?

Or was she really trying to make up for the tension at dinner?

She still didn't want to open the door, but it might upset Alessia even more if she rejected a genuine attempt at reconciliation...

"Come in," Aria said, sitting on the edge of the bed with her back straight. Whether her intentions were good or not, it was probably best to just get it over with.

Alessia strolled through the door, her footsteps heavy and her hands in Bonus Chapter - Aria & Sebastian (8)

her pockets. Aria didn't miss the girl's easy confidence ~ or the way that she entered every room like she already owned it.

Alessia took in the guest room as well as Aria's casual PJs. "Sorry to interrupt your bedtime," she said, her voice tinged with sarcasm. "I didn't really want to do this."

Frustration swelled in Aria, and she fisted the expensive bed sheets as she replied, "It's no problem. You said you wanted to apologize?"

Alessia's face twisted like she'd just swallowed an entire lemon. "Right," she said, and she averted her eyes to the decor. "Your mate cornered me after dinner, and told me I should apologize for how I pressed you at dinner." Aria's breath caught. Even after the way she dodged him, he'd still asked Alessia to apologize?

"and I laughed in his face, of course," Alessia said, her full lips curving

into a smile.

Aria's eyebrows furrowed, but Alessia wasn't done yet. "But then," she continued, "My mate told me I needed to apologize to you, and well, she's a lot more convincing."

Alessia heaved a loud, dramatic sigh and stared at the window behind Aria's head. "So, this is me...apologizing," she said, making it sound like the very word pained her. "Sorry if asking a couple of innocent questions triggered you. You were shaking like a scared kitten for the rest of dinner. It was pretty pathetic - you even got my mate's pity, which isn't the easiest thing to obtain, trust me...but I'm sure I'll be out Bonus Chapter - Aria & Sebastian (8)

of the doghouse once I tell her we're cool."

Alessia sighed again before finally turning her bored gaze to Aria. She remained silent, clearly waiting for the blonde girl to reply.

Aria blinked at her, and then she started shaking — but this time, it wasn't from fear.

Anger, fresh and hot, ran through her veins.

Before she could reel it in or swallow it down, that anger, for the first time in years, boiled over like a pot on the stove.

"What is wrong with you?" She hissed, standing up from the bed and marching over until her and Alessia were only a few feet apart. "You call that an apology? Your questions at dinner weren't innocent, and you know it! You were taunting me, and now, you come in here, do it again, and expect me to just nod my head and hug it out?" She pointed her index finger at the door. "Well, I don't. I have no desire to hear any kind of apology from you, especially one as poor as that. So, if that's all you have to say, you can leave now. And no, we're not cool, regardless of what you may try and tell your mate."

By the time she was done, Aria was breathing heavy, her finger still pointed towards the door.

It took her a moment to realize what she'd done, but as soon as it registered, her eyes widened and her heart jumped into her throat. Bonus Chapter - Aria & Sebastian (8)

She'd just yelled at someone.

And not just someone, but a woman with enough muscles to break her in half like a toothpick.

She couldn't remember the last time she'd ever lost control of her anger like that, and for it to be now...

She was screwed. Alessia was going to tear out her throat.

Aria opened her mouth to begin stuttering out apologies, but as she looked at Alessia, she realized the curly-haired woman didn't look like she was about to break her in half. She didn't even look angry. At all.

Alessia was grinning ~ and not a sadistic one - but a genuine grin that pulled at the skin around her scar.

Aria nearly jumped when Alessia let out a low chuckle, her grin widening. "There you are. I knew you had it in you."

Although she was still cautious that Alessia's claws might come out any second, she couldn't help but meekly ask, "Had what in me?"

Alessia's hazel eyes glittered. "I knew you had a backbone in there somewhere ~ just had to push the right buttons for you to use it."

Aria flushed. "That...you intentionally antagonized me with that

apology?" Bonus Chapter - Aria & Sebastian (8)

"Sweetheart, I've been 'intentionally antagonizing' you all night, starting at dinner," she replied.

Fresh anger swelled in her, but she managed to swallow it down. "Why? Just to get me angry?" She asked, "If so, mission accomplished."

"Pretty much," Alessia shrugged, "I still meant what I said at dinner. Since the moment you got here, everyone has been treating you like glass, especially that mate of yours...and you let him do it. You let him treat you like this meek little thing that might just shatter on the floor if he says the wrong thing or looks at you a certain way. I guess I just wanted to see if you really were made of glass."

"[m not glass," Aria retorted. She was beginning to hate that analogy.

"Oh, I know," Alessia cut her off, "Right now, you just proved you weren't. But you know what else I think?"

Alessia didn't bother waiting for a reply, and instead, moved closer to Aria until they were face to face. "I think if you don't start trying to get better, you're going to actually shatter one of these days."

"Better?" Aria echoed, "I'm doing my best."

Alessia scoffed. "No, you're not, and we both know it. You float around this place like you're a ghost, constantly stuck in some pity spiral. I get it - you've had a rough go of it. But guess what? That victim mentality isn't going to help you." Bonus Chapter - Aria & Sebastian (8)

Aria sputtered. "Victim mentality? I -"

"Yeah, yeah," Alessia cut her off, "You've had a rough go of it, I'm sure. You were essentially living in a cult led by a megalomaniac. I'm sure you've got enough trauma to pay some therapist's bills for the next decade. I'm sure you're fucked up and you think that makes you unlovable." She narrowed her eyes at Aria. "But I'm going to tell you something nobody else has the guts to."

Alessia inched closer until Aria could see the green specks of her eyes. "Your pain doesn't make you special. We've all been through pain. We've all got trauma and we're all fucked up ~ just in different ways. What matters is your perspective. You can keep doing what you've been doing. Tell yourself you're a victim whose too damaged to ever move on, and spend the rest of your days letting everyone else treat you like glass. Eventually, you'll become it."

"Or," she continued, "You could remind yourself that Liam is rotting dead in the ground right now, and you're not his victim anymore... you're a survivor."

Alessia finally stepped back, and Aria felt like she could finally breathe again as the curly-haired girl pulled open the door.

Before she stepped outside, she turned back one last time, her eyes intense. "It's up to you, Aria," she said, "Victim or survivor?"