

The King's Tainted Mate Chapter 14 - Tips

I scurried down hallway after hallway hoping I was not going round in circles. Having been at it for longer than I had hoped to be, I was beginning to think this would turn out to be a fruitless endeavour. The place was huge and there was simply no telling which way would lead me to the outside world or which one would lead me into trouble. I had been fortunate enough not to have encountered any royal guards, but the possibility still made me uneasy each time I came to the end of one hallway seeking to walk down another. The sight of another turn up ahead brought me to an abrupt stop as my heart quickened once again. The lengthy corridors had suddenly begun getting shorter and shorter and I hoped that would be a sign of me getting closer to my door to freedom.

Hands resting on the edges of the cold wall, I listened before deciding to peek and checking for the presence of guards. Having thought twice about shifting, I had still let my wolf take over my senses, so I would be able to pick even the faintest of sounds.

The hallway was empty, thank the gods, but my heart raced still when I noticed the one thing I had been hoping to encounter. A door! Make that two doors. Right at the end of the short hallway, they stood like beacons of hope, making my heart race at a full gallop. I made it! This had to be it. I had encountered many doors as I raced down the hallways, but each one of those had clearly been leading to rooms I did not wish to open and waste precious time on. These two, however, would be the first ones whose position, appearance and size matched doors fitted in spaces that served as main entrances to buildings. I had definitely made it and all I needed to do was to walk through them. But what if there were guards posted outside? My wolf hearing could help with that, but my own heart was too loud as it thundered in my chest at the opportunity that lay before me.

I was still worrying about encountering those guards when my wolf perked up. Someone was fast approaching. Two pairs of boots walking in sync. Guards! I couldn't help think that I had been found out. Had Liira been to the garden and found it empty?

The doors burst open before my mind could ponder on that thought, revealing two royal guards. I held my breath as both men swept their surroundings, afraid they were really searching for one pregnant she-wolf. I was only too glad when they turned away from where I hid and disappeared from my view. I

did not care for where they went either as everything in me was set on slipping through those open doors. Without a second thought, I dashed for the doors and in a few quick strides I breathed in my air of freedom. It was cold as night had fallen, but I was not complaining. This was my chance to get away.

Knowing I had no second to waste, I got moving, making use of the shadows to keep from being seen. Not that there was anyone to see me. Just like the inside, this part of the palace was unguarded too. Apart from the two guards I had seen, there were no signs of men keeping watch anywhere. Why that was did not concern me as I was only too glad to be able to make my escape. To be able to get away from him. I was tempted to think of how long it would take for him to hear of it but I kept myself from being distracted. Choosing to stay focused on the task at hand, I broke out in a sprint towards the trees. With my little knowledge of the palace, I knew it boasted of having maintained natural boundaries, with guards to patrol the areas. I prayed to the moon goddess to spare me from encountering any of those as I hastily put more distance between me and my mate.

I had no idea where I was headed until I encountered a familiar road. It was the same one the guards had used when they had dragged me from the capital. I didn't think twice before heading in that direction. With the many people that flooded the place, one could easily find means to hide from anyone. I hoped.

"Well, well, well...Now what do we have here?" I froze, my hairs standing on end. Even in the darkness, I still recognized that voice. It had been a while, but I still recognized the voice that had so carelessly handed out my punishment from my mate. "Do you know what the penalty is for anyone banished from Xatis and yet found roaming its lands?"

I did not bother to answer or beg for forgiveness. From our earlier encounter, I knew this particular royal guard's interest was my death. A shiver went down my spine at the thought, but I quickly recovered when more than one figure emerged from the shadows. I was surrounded! Had I been followed?

My eyes sharpened as I scanned every face closest to me. Their sinister smiles only served to point out how trapped I was. There was no way for me to run or fight my way out of here even if I wished to. Escaping from one brute had been one thing, ten trained men...wolves, was another thing entirely. Not to mention that shifting into my wolf and giving us a fighting chance was not an option either.

Instinct had me placing my hands on my belly protectively while I let regret for leaving the protection I had in the palace poke my insides. In the moment I just thought being trapped by my mate was a lesser evil compared to what I currently faced. I was about to whisper words of regret to my unborn child for what was about to befall us when Liira's words hit me. I carried the heir of Xatis, these royal guard's future king. Would knowing that make them relent? I had to try.

"I am not here of my own volition." My voice shook, but I kept to my defence. "His majesty's heir grows inside of me." The amused expressions that followed my words unnerved me. They knew and yet they were willing to harm me still...

"His highness cares not for you or that bastard." One guard spat and for the love of God I let those words sink in just because I had seen it with my own eyes. I couldn't put it past him to punish me in such a manner. After all, he had Myrna. He could father an heir anytime he wished. That stung, but I knew it to be the truth.

"We are here to carry out his wishes." Another growled. "And this time you will not live to tell such despicable tales about his majesty ever again!" The whole band of guards shifted right before my eyes and I could only but growl in defence as they circled me ready to attack. The beasts were hungry for blood and the first one leapt at me without warning, leaving me to only brace for impact. It never came. In its place, however, a whimper of a wolf and a deep possessive growl reached my ears. He was here!

My wolf was the first to react to his presence as I slowly looked up from my position on the ground. He'd leapt right into the circle with all his majestic glory. The wolf that had aimed for me lay dead at his feet with its throat ripped out violently. Two or three wolves flanked him but I did not care for those. Only him and the rage that burned in his golden eyes. His need to protect. For the first time ever, I was glad to see him. Glad to see my mate.