

The King's Tainted Mate Chapter 17 - Tips

It had been too long since I ate. That's what I thought to excuse the unlady like manner in which I was consuming the rabbit. Or perhaps it was the delicious aroma that overwhelmed my nose or the taste of each bite of the perfectly flame cooked piece of meat. Or better yet, it was because I was trying too hard to ignore another particular scent that blended so well with the delicious aroma and made me wish I was devouring something else altogether... or someone.

I was no cook, but there was something about citrus and wine and berries going perfectly together with the flame grilled delicacy. It was a whole tasty meal.

"There is more if you like." I froze at the sound of his voice. My mouth agape, hand halfway towards it, holding a whole leg of rabbit meat. A glutton, that is how I must have appeared in the moment, but when I looked up, his face held no form of judgement that I would expect a man of royalty who was used to dining with fine noble ladies would. Instead, only a gentle warmth that was as strange as his lack of judgement painted his face.

"Forgive me." He apologized, seemingly after sensing my discomfort, making him sound even more strange to someone like me who had experienced his monster side more times than I could count. I fought against those memories as they wished to make an appearance. Just for tonight. I only wished to be grateful for being alive. He'd made that possible and he'd scoured an entire forest in the darkness so I could be fed. Even I could be thankful for that.

"I have just never seen anyone enjoy something so much, I'm almost tempted to hunt this entire forest of its rabbits just for you."

Just for you... I blushed as I lowered my hand and closed my mouth. What did one say in such circumstances? I was tongue tied, but I fought through the ordeal to mumble my appreciation. "This is the best rabbit meat I have tasted in a long while." Gol would be heartbroken, but I only spoke the truth. It had been a while since I had been in Dovah. And well, my mouth and belly had a tendency to appreciate what was currently making them happy, it seemed.

"I'm glad to hear that." The pride evident in his tone made his words ring true. "And you can have as much as you wish."

“What of the men?” I turned in the direction of the guards who stood a stone throw away, leaving only me and my mate around the fire that had been lit to tend to the small camp. I did care if they ate, but that was not the reason for my concern. Not in its entirety. The truth was, my mate had smiled with his words and that seemingly innocent split of his lips had not only sent my belly fluttering like it was possessed, but it had transformed his facial features in a way that made me want to reach out and touch and say my appreciation upclose. I was grateful. I, however, was not looking to be charmed into dropping my guard entirely.

“If they wish to eat, they can go hunt!” My gaze snapped back to his at his sharp tone and growl. Those features that had drawn me in had soured more than a fraction and I wondered if it was something I had said.

Go hunt? Surely he wouldn’t let his own men go hungry the entire night, would he? My gaze dropped to the fire, to the sight of enough meat there to feed the entire lot, but I couldn’t help think they would not be tasting any of it tonight. Was he expecting me to have all of it perhaps?

Had I been mistaken when I thought he didn’t think of me to be a glutton?

I was about to protest, but he beat me to it.

“You are eating for two now.” He mumbled, rendering me speechless. I hadn’t even thought that far.

“His majesty is right, my lady.” Someone spoke from behind. The same guard who’d been part of the two that had guarded me while my mate fought. From how he spoke freely and the absence of contempt on my mate’s face for his interference, I was beginning to think that the two shared a close bond.

“Besides, none of us is willing to lose a limb or two for not taming our appet!tes.” The guard received glares, but he only rolled his eyes before the two fell into silence, their faces set with serious expressions. Knowing they were probably having a conversation in their mind link, something not meant for my ears, I turned my attention back to my meal because I still wished to have more. Only I decided to consume it with a little grace this time around.

“We should be in Dovah at daybreak, given our little stop here.” My mate turned his attention to me the moment the guard returned to his post. I welcomed the change in subject, but I was also made painfully aware that I was going to be spending an entire night trapped with my mate in the carriage.

I could only nod, not trusting my mouth not to blurt out my protests regarding our travelling arrangements that would pretty much serve as our sleeping arrangements. I had endured being bathed in his alluring scent without giving into the temptation up until this moment, Dovah wasn't that far, was it?

"We leave once you are done." His lips broke out into a subtle smile, but my heart sped up all the same, making Dovah seem further than it actually was.

"I'm done." I got up before he could protest and headed towards the carriage. At a loss over what to do about the near to impossible task of enduring his presence, I hoped to fall asleep before my mate joined me in the space that had already proved to be too small for my plans to avoid him.