

The King's Tainted Mate Chapter 36 - Tips

Her light grip around my fingers tightened, drawing my attention to my mate. We were about to step into the hall filled with my guests waiting to dine with their king. This was one event that those who had the privilege of being invited to, gladly attended. Some using the opportunity to tighten the already existing ties of the noble families to the throne. Others using the moment to get back into the good graces of their king after misunderstandings or plain disobedience had severed those ties. The invitation being the biggest opportunity to mend those bridges.

Still others, those that were bold enough, were here seeking to win the heart of the king or hoped to catch his eye if his heart proved to be out of reach. Young maidens for whom there was simply nothing shameful about winning the king's heart the old fashioned way which involved landing in his bed first.

Among my guests was Myrna, my mate's sister. Someone Shyla was not eager to see.

I hated doing this to my mate. Making her face her family and all the pain, but every one of my plans had changed when I laid my eyes on her tonight. The sight of her had been the one to birth a need for this. Tonight, as with my own guest's intentions of attending this not just for the food, I too was not here for the food at all. Tonight was for something more important. Something I hoped and prayed to the gods my mate would accept.

The moment I had stepped into her chambers, I was hit not only by her beautiful scent, but by a certain truth I had not thought of before Myrna's treachery. While desire and every other strength of the mate bond had been perfectly duplicated by the spell, something unusual had struck me as I entered my mate's chambers.

Up until then, the need to claim my mate had always been the thing to draw me to her, or so I thought. But more than that, I realized, there was a purity to the bond shared by real mates, which proved Cerus's words true.

It was not just desire, but between us, lay the gift to protect each other if only we would connect to it.

After having been plagued with thoughts about Myrna and the false bond the entire day, I had been overwhelmed by the heaviness of it all, but once I

stepped into Shyla's chambers everything had evaporated as mist before a flame.

Nothing of what I'd felt or thought lingered. I had proved my theory right there and then and everyone of my plans had changed to what I was about to do now.

My own grip tightened around my mate's delicate hand, assuring her of my presence by her side and my heart swirled when her response involved leaning into me for obvious protection and comfort.

"Good evening, your majesty." The usual greetings drew my attention to my guests that had gone deathly silent, their faces bearing varying expressions. Confusion, curiosity, surprise, indifference, fake smiles and genuine ones too, no doubt directed at the sight of intimacy that I shared with one they would all consider an unexpected guest. I did not care for any of those except my mate's as I led her past the figures and up the grand dining table to our seats in silence. She hated having all the eyes on her.

"I've got you." I whispered to Shyla when unease took over the earlier calm she felt before we stepped into the hall.

"Oh Elian! She is so beautiful!" My mother gushed as she suddenly appeared before us, her tone full of emotion and catching me off guard. In the midst of everything, I seemed to have forgotten that my parents would be in the midst of my very many guests.

"Hold yourself Sarabeth!" My father scolded, clearly not impressed by the sight he was seeing. "This is not the time, nor the place."

My mother glared. Now that she was no longer queen, she let her emotions show very often in front of guests and before she did more than glare at my father who had it coming, I held my hand out to her and placed a gentle kiss on it in greeting while I still held on to Shyla. "Is your own son invisible, now mother?"

"Of course not, but she..." My mother held out her hands to Shyla, her eyes sparkling with unshed tears, making me realize how unfair I had been for not working harder to grant her request. "She is perfect." I lost the warmth of my mate to my mother and while I hated it, the resulting sight was warm enough for my heart. This was so very different from the first time she'd hugged Myrna. The love was still there, but my chosen mate had simply not melted

into one of the most loving arms I had known as Shyla just had. Myrna had been more concerned with presenting herself perfect than enjoying the warm welcome. Shyla on the other hand held on to my mother as if her very life depended on it. No words came out of her mouth and yet so much was spoken in the moment.

We should have been seated by now, but I waited a moment longer, relishing the beautiful sight until someone else demanded my attention.

“Son, what is the meaning of this?” My father’s nose flared as he mind linked me, but I was not about to indulge him yet. With his views on what I should do with my mate fresh in my head, I knew he would not be pleased with what I had chosen and would fight me on it, so I smiled instead.

“Hello to you too father. Glad you and mother could make it.” My gaze flickered to the two ladies, heart swooning at the sight.

“Is that all you have to say for yourself?!”

“Of course not, but this is not the time for such utterances.” I replied, making the former king of Xatis glare my way. It was all he could do when so many faces were watching our exchange intently. We might have been using the mind link, but our body language was clear for all to see and I knew he was not about to have this conversation in front of everyone.

“Sarabeth, my dear, now that is enough. Let the poor child breathe.” Father tugged on my mother’s arm and she let go of my mate reluctantly.

“We should have tea soon, my dear.” My mother smiled, drawing Shyla’s smile too as both my parents got back to their seats.

“Your... majesty?” I stiffened at Myrna’s voice. Shock laced her tone, but by the time I turned to her, nothing of that shock remained on her perfectly put together face. I, however, knew the mask would c***k eventually. It was just a matter of when.

Reaching for my mate, I nodded. “My lady.” My greeting felt flat even to my own ears. It was also not the appropriate greeting for my own queen, but after what she’d done, it was more than she deserved. But of course, she’d never let that show.

"I did not know we were expecting more guests." Myrna flashed me a seductive grin, that was every bit inappropriate for the occasion while she kept the fact that Shyla was her sister perfectly hidden from everyone else. Even when I knew of their meeting earlier, Myrna still pretended not to know the maiden by my side.

She was truly a good actress and being reminded of Rakon's words the day I chose her, I now strongly felt there was more to what happened on that fateful day. But as I had said to my father, this was not the time nor the place.

I turned to Shyla and was taken aback by her demeanour. My mate had lost all the charm and warmth she'd displayed with my mother and only a blank look remained in her beautiful eyes. The same look I despised each time she chose to ignore me altogether. As always, it was so perfectly displayed that for one who knew not the truth, discerning that the two were actually sisters was close to impossible. I was not about to hold it against her, however, as I chose to draw her in and hold her protectively.

"She is not 'our' guest, but mine. Now if you will excuse me, this dinner has delayed enough." Confusion graced my queen's eyes and I fought to keep from smirking. I had no doubt with the bond she'd forced on me, Myrna expected me to pool at her feet in worship, but little did she know of the armor I possessed against her spell.

Unlike the last time I had struggled in her presence, there was not a single whiff of Draxuin in the air to corrupt my senses except my mate's heavenly scent.

"But of course, my love." I stiffened just as a low growl rumbled in my mate's chest when Myrna linked her own arm in my free one. I seemed to have forgotten that she was not one to give in so easily. It was a wonder that Shyla's hand remained in mine after the action. "What kind of hosts would we be if we kept our esteemed guests hungry or on their feet?" Myrna's gaze darted towards Shyla with every intent to highlight what a fragile thing she might be. Her action angered me and I was about to defend my mate when Shyla's own voice kept my lips pursed.

"Oh, don't mind me, I've suffered worse." I flinched at my mate's retort as much as I was surprised. If there was a reply to be had, Shyla's was not one I expected. The words proceeded softly out of her mouth and yet their weight was enough to slap the smirk off of Myrna's face in the most dramatic way. My mate was mad, but kept her emotions so well hidden, making her display the

true qualities of a queen. And if I wasn't Xatis's king laden with obligations to the crown and expectations from its people, I would have swept my mate off of her feet and kissed her right there and then, letting her know how proud I felt in the moment.

Instead I led both women to our seats with Myrna grudgingly taking her usual seat next to mine on my left while I had Shyla safely sit on the seat next to mine on the right. She did so without even sparing me a glance and if I said that that did not bother me, I would be lying.

My actions had not gone unnoticed by my guests either as their curious gazes betrayed what they were itching to discover. I was not about to indulge them yet, however. Reaching for my cup of wine I raised it in welcome to everyone who had accepted my invitation, which happened to be everyone I had sent invitations to. "Do enjoy yourselves tonight."

"I'm sorry, your majesty, but what is the meaning of this?!" I was halfway down to my seat when Myrna suddenly sprang up from hers, sending my wolf into alpha mode at the obvious challenge. Bitterness dripped with my queen's words, her earlier mask cracked open just as I had predicted.

And I would have ordered her to take her seat, but that would only speak of my reluctance to let my decision be made known when I would reveal it later. So I chose to indulge her at her insistence. But because this was not meant for my queen's ears only, I stayed on my feet and faced my guests, hand reaching for my mate.

"As you all know, I had searched for my mate far and wide..." I began while I felt Shyla stiffen beside me. In a way it was a silent plea, begging me not to go down whatever path I intended to, but I had no intentions of the sort, even if my mate hated me for it. Although, I hoped she wouldn't. "...I had given up when my search came up empty, but as it turns out, the moon goddess hadn't. She still brought her to me. And while circumstances are not as they should have been, I have chosen to accept my mate, officially."

"Officially?! As what?!" Myrna's angry tone rose above the ensuing loud conversations after my announcement. That was a right reserved for me alone and while I let her other challenge slide, this I could not forgive. I let my wolf at her, snarling and threatening, sending her sliding back in her seat and everyone pursing their lips, lest they became the object of my anger next. Except for one regrettable soul...

“That is wonderful news your highness!” The loud mouth as usual was the first to rip through the silence.

“If you have nothing significant to utter, keep your mouth shut, lord Evarius.” Myrna hissed, a first for me to witness. I couldn’t blame my wife however as this was the first time he seemed to stand against her.

“I mean a mistress is an acceptable means to help with the demands on both you and his majesty.” Of course he would think that. Just like father, I knew the lords would only see that as the only probable path. That did not bother me as I had expected it. Something else did, however.

“Why do you suppose he is too quick to accept this?” Rakon mind linked my very exact thoughts.

“Did I perhaps ask for your help, Evarius?” Myrna sneered before I could reply to my best friend, making me decide to settle their back and forth before it got out of hand.

“I have no intentions of having my mate as my mistress, lord Evarius. If she’ll accept me, hers will be the place that’s always been meant for her.” Blazing eyes met mine when I finally turned to Shyla and before I could say one more word, my mate flew out of her seat and headed towards the open doors with Myrna following suit.

“Let them be!” My mother’s and grandmother’s voices ripped through my mind link at the same time. Liira had barely just stepped into the room.

“Let them be?” I was inches from following after my mate, a sinking feeling making me think I had lost her and when I shot them a questioning look, both she-wolves only flashed me knowing looks as they took over the roles of playing hosts to my guests seamlessly. Conversation flowed soon after, but all I could do was wait impatiently, eyes fixed on the doors my mate had exited moments ago, hoping mother and Liira were right.

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“What?!” Myrna’s loud protests echoed throughout the dining hall I’d marched back into right after I’d done the exact opposite earlier. “What do you mean you accept his proposal?!”

That had not been my intention at all. I had had no thoughts of gracing my mate's dinner with my presence again once I walked out and neither did I have thoughts of accepting his proposal that had brought nothing but a heaviness on my heart.

I had wished for nothing but to escape it all. But when Myrna came after me, when my dear sister had encouraged me to all but keep running like the fragile thing I was, when she made it clear that she was so smart and deserving of the crown while I would forever be nothing but Elian's stupid mate, something had snapped.

It wasn't even my wolf that had wanted nothing but to be let loose so she could teach Myrna exactly who deserved to be queen. No, that was definitely not it at all. It was something more. Something hidden deep within my soul. Something that had stirred to the surface when Myrna sang of all the reasons I did not deserve to be by my mate's side.

It was a part of me I did not even know existed until that moment Myrna let out her sinister laugh again. The one that reminded me of all the pain she'd inflicted on me and everything she'd stolen from me because of her selfish heart. It was a part of me that wanted nothing but to give her a taste of her own medicine. Revenge. And what better way to accomplish that than to take the very thing she desired the most?

I ignored my sister's protests and kept holding my mate's gaze. The moment I had stepped back into the dining hall his expression had morphed from complete dread to nervousness to utter surprise. Now it was full of hope and beaming with happiness. I refused to acknowledge those emotions, however. I was doing this for me and no one else. Or so I knew I would keep telling myself from this moment on. Even when a look into my mate's deep gaze spoke of it being so much more.

"You do?" Despite convincing myself that this was about getting back at my sister, my heart fluttered at the obvious joy in his simple question and I found myself wishing to make that joy last a little longer with my answer.

"I do."

"You possibly cannot be serious about doing this!" Myrna roared, making me reluctantly tear my gaze away from my mate and turning to her. The burning anger that marred her usually graceful face brought me unusual satisfaction. I would have smirked too, just to fuel that anger, but I was not her and I sure as

hell was not about to portray myself as the stupid mate she thought and wished to paint me before my mate's guests. So I pasted on the most innocent smile, playing her pretend game perfectly before addressing her.

"What is it sister? Did I disappoint you, yet again?"

"Wait, sister?"

"Isn't the queen an only child?"

Gasps and whispers erupted all over the table, but I paid them no mind. I did not care for the lies she'd have told to fit in here. Neither did I care for how many noble rules I was breaking by addressing the queen of Xatis so plainly. She deserved worse than a plain address.

Myrna on the other hand looked as though she wished for the ground to swallow her before quickly masking the effects of my words. Just as I had known, she cared too much about what everyone around her thought of her. It was oh so clear in the way her haughty attitude attempted to dispel the truth hidden in my words. While she stood next to my mate, a place she'd held through treachery and one I would be reclaiming, I marvelled at her futile attempts to maintain the vision of a graceful queen in front of all the guests.

I would have let her be too if only I did not see through her intent. If only I did not see through how she would quickly twist that truth to suit her selfish desires or claim her innocence.

"What is it you said again? The moon goddess had not forgotten us down in our pathetic little village?" Her glares mixed with despair suited me just fine as I repeated her own words in her hearing. "Well, it turns out that was true after all." A bitter smile graced my lips at the memory. It would be the first time I would speak of it too, choosing to unearth my own pain while I treaded my path of revenge. "And I must say I have you to thank in part for this."

"Thank me? What insane talk is this? Why would I do anything for anyone who is bent on stealing from me?"

I let out a chuckle as I felt everyone's eyes on me at my sister's accusation. "Steal from you? Aren't you being a bit too much, sister? Why would I steal what is already mine?" My gaze found my mate's and the gold shining in his eyes singing of his approval made my wolf purr, loud enough for all to hear. It would make it the first time she marked her territory in such a manner. It was

not my intent, but when it got Myrna fuming, I smiled. An action that sent that perfect vision of a queen she'd displayed fading.

"I am his queen! He will never be yours!"

I growled, hating her declaration. Hating her with every fibre of my being. Foreign feelings that I embraced as I sought to clip the wings that made her dare to lay a claim on my mate. "Perhaps you should have held my hand and made sure I did not end up in his arms that night if you wished that to be as you say."

Myrna only frowned, confusion flooding her face and I was only too glad to enlighten her. "Oh you know, the night I was desperate to save my beloved sister's life? The night I gave up everything for your sake? His were the arms to cradle me that night."

"What did you say?!" Shock graced my sister's beautiful face but it was quickly replaced by a smirk. "You are many things Shyla, but a liar?" Myrna assumed her know it all attitude that once upon a time I worshipped as the younger sister and one she'd used to convince many with over different matters. "His highness is equally many things too, but he would never step into such a filthy place." The guests mumbled in agreement much to my sister's delight. For a moment it seemed as though she'd found the thing that would render most of my words a lie. That was until my mate spoke.

"Actually... he would." I snapped my gaze to my mate, surprised that he would reveal such a shameful thing about himself so easily. It hadn't been my intent either as I knew such matters concerning kings were never spoken of in the open. But as he held my gaze, there was no hint of shame in his eyes and I couldn't help the thought that he meant that for my sake. Because if he remained unashamed over the matter, no one would burden me into feeling ashamed either.

"Your majesty?" Myrna's fight faltered, one would even swear she sounded hurt by my mate's words. "Why would you be in the forgotten village at all that night?"

"To drown my sorrows."

"Drown your sorrows?" The heavy emotions lacing my own voice caught me by surprise.

“Or so I thought.” For the first time since I’d walked back into the room, my mate stepped towards me, his deep unwavering gaze on me, sending my heart racing. This was supposed to be about getting back at my sister, but as he inched closer, I had a feeling it had turned into something else. “I had until sundown to find my mate. But after searching for so long, what were a few hours? I knew then that the moon goddess had denied me the one thing I had forever longed for. So I turned to wine to numb the pain that came with that truth. I should have known that that was simply not so. I should have known that the moon goddess was not that cruel.” My breath hitched when I felt the warmth of his hands on mine. “I should have given you a chance.” His voice was barely a whisper as regret and pain swum in his eyes and poured into my own heart, making me understand.

I understood. It did not change anything. Neither would his words erase the pain of his actions, but I understood. “W-What is done is done.” I stepped back, needing to get out as my own grief flooded my soul.

“Then will you do one more thing for me?” He made no attempt to hold me back and yet I stayed rooted on my spot. Held captive by his pleading gaze.

Wishing to be free, however, I shook my head respectfully. “There is nothing more-” My words died in my throat as my mate dropped to one knee and held out the one piece of jewellery I thought I would never lay my eyes on ever again.

“W-What is this?” My voice trembled even as I got lost in the intensity of his gaze once again.

“This is the ancient jewel of Xatis.” My mate began, his gaze never leaving mine. Somewhere in the background, I heard whispers, gasps and protests, but that world faded as I drowned in the abyss of my mate’s gaze and the allure of his voice. “A royal family heirloom inherited by every heir to the throne once they become of age. It is not the heir’s to keep however, as it is meant to be gifted to their mates once they found them. Many say it is full of magic aside from its beauty. Drawing and binding mates, strengthening their bonds until a time it is passed on to the next heir. I must confess that while I whole heartedly wished for a mate, I did not really believe in the lore about its magic...until you.”

“Me?” My voice was barely a whisper as I longed for the ending to his tale that had captivated me more than I realized. My mate smiled before taking my hands in his, making me gasp as the strongest wave of tingles yet swept

throughout my entire body. Whether that was because of the magical ring that touched both our hands at the same time, I was not sure.

“Because that night, as drunk as I was, I made a mistake.”

“A mistake?” My heart clenched. Did he now regret our night together? And worse, blame it on the wine?

“That is not it.” He smiled yet again, but it did nothing for my heart that was beginning to ache at the thought. “What I mean is, I meant to pay my dues for the night with another ring, but it was this ring, the one meant for my mate, the one meant for you that I ended up slipping into your garments. I did not understand why I had thought to carry it that fateful day, but now I do...”

That was supposed to be the ending to his tale, but as I stared at my mate and the ring he held, I realized that his very many words were nothing but a beginning. A beginning to a tale that was not only his but mine too. A tale that perhaps neither one of us may have had control over.

“Shyla?”

“Hmm?” The ground on which I stood swayed, taking me along with it.

“Are you alright?” I nodded even though I felt rather funny.

I...

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If I was not my own witness to how much I felt for my mate, how much I longed for her, how much I cared, I would think mine was the fate of bringing only pain to her poor soul and ensuring she remained unhappy.

Staring at my family heirloom while I paced the silent floors of my wing in the palace, I wished I could undo my actions. I had hurt her yet again. Despite all the promises I'd made, I had gone ahead and hurt her all over again.

I had been selfish. It was not my intention, but when she'd declared in front of the multitude of witnesses that she accepted me, my heart had exploded. Even when I knew that she did so out of spite, the pounding in my chest had drummed with a melodious rhythm, loud enough for every wolf in the hall to

hear. I could barely keep from howling in jubilation too as my wolf suddenly wished he could sprout wings and fly at her declaration.

And despite her intentions, I had hoped there was more. When she'd held my gaze, I could have sworn that I saw it. Hidden behind those breathtaking eyes it lay and that had spurred my decision to jump at the opportunity. To momentarily turn a blind eye to the shocking discoveries I'd made and make sure she was mine before anymore protests arose, or before she had a moment to rethink her decision and let fate interfere.

I had thought the moment perfect, but in the end, all I knew was that she had not smiled when I presented her with the most precious jewel I would ever gift her. Her beautiful eyes had only sparkled with something that had given me hope after what I'd witnessed between her and my chosen mate, but it was gone just as quickly as it had appeared, leaving me with nothing but dread as my mate lay limp in my arms.

"A midnight run will do you good." Rakon mumbled beside me. While I waited for my mate to wake, he'd stayed not only as the head of my guard, but as my best friend too and for once he'd done so, quietly, even when he had all the rights to scold me. He'd been right after all.

"Not tonight." I shook my head and understanding registered in his eyes as we both slipped back into silence and kept pacing.

I knew he was right, however. A good run would definitely shed off some of the feelings weighing heavily on me, but I was unwilling to shed any of them. I deserved all the pain resulting from my own misjudgement of my mate's actions on that fateful day. And while I had rage simmering beneath my skin over the matter, I had chosen to ensure Shyla was alright before anything else. I couldn't bear being away from her either and that run would do exactly that. Being stuck outside my bed chambers, away from her, was already driving me insane.

The doors to the said chambers swung open and I was before them before whoever meant to walk out did.

"Is she alright? Will she be alright?" I held my breath as I stared into my mother's tired eyes. At least they were not sad, giving me a glimmer of hope. She, Liira and a couple of royal midwives had been holed up in my bed chambers attending to my mate for longer than I would have liked. "Mother?" I panicked even more when she said nothing.

"Of course, dear." A warm smile graced my mother's lips and every dreadful feeling that had been holding me captive since I caught my mate's collapsing body at dinner loosened its hold. "She will be alright!"

"Oh thank the gods!" I melted into my mother's embrace, body bleeding out all the nerves. "She will be alright." I mumbled, holding on tighter as though I were a little child again.

"It is nothing more than what you would expect when one is carrying the heir to Xatis." My mother reassured me. But until I saw her with my own eyes, until I held her in my arms, that reassurance would not be complete.

"I wish to see her."

"Not just yet boy." I had barely taken a step before Liira decided to finally open her mind link to me, snapping her command. And before I could snap back at her out of impatience and risk being kept out of the room longer, the link went dead again.

Dread crept upon me and I turned to my mother. "Are you sure everything is alright? What of my child?" Mother had said everything was alright with my mate, but Liira's actions built more cracks in that reassurance. I couldn't just assume it extended to the child my mate carried too.

"Oh he's strong. Perhaps even stronger than you, son." She grinned, making me relax a fraction. "Of course it is to be expected, but I suspect we are in for a big surprise." My mother's grin grew impossibly wide, making me frown.

"Surprise?"

"I'll leave that to Liira."

"Grandmother? Is that why she insists in making me wallow in my misery by keeping me out here?" Was she playing doctor while I was going out of my mind with waiting? For once I felt like going against my grandmother's better judgement. Damn the consequences.

"Oh you know how she is when she makes discoveries."

"Discoveries? What discoveries?" I held my mother's gaze. Despite knowing that everything was alright, I felt uneasy.

"Your mate is one special wolf my dear." I knew Shyla was special. She was my moon goddess' given mate, but the glint in my mother's eyes spoke of something more and I couldn't wait any longer. I side stepped the former queen of Xatis with every intention to barge into my own bed chambers and make discoveries of my own, but I was held back by my mother. When I almost glared at her, she simply smiled. "Will you talk with your mother before you do?" She pulled my now stiffened self away from the entrance to my bed chambers before I could turn down her request.

Having an inkling of what she wished to speak of, I dragged my feet a little in a subtle protest. Of course that would never deter the woman who'd birthed and raised me when she wished to ensure her son was fine.

"Are you alright?" Her tired eyes regained some of that usual concern she always had for me when she knew something was weighing heavily on me.

I nodded. Despite being nowhere near it or wishing not to be after the discovery I'd made when my mate had laid bare part of what I had not known about fate's dealings the first time we met.

"I just wish to make sure she is alright, mother." She could read me like a book and I knew my mother bought nothing of the picture I attempted to paint of me being alright. Her understanding smile and the ensuing warm embrace was evidence of that.

"You will be alright. Both of you." I wished I could share in her belief, so badly. But as I finally stepped into my bed chambers and beheld my mate's sleeping form, I was reminded of how easily our happiness eluded us each time and how incapable I was from keeping it from happening despite promising to.

"Your majesty..." A couple of midwives stepped back from my enormous bed and bowed low, leaving only Liira. My grandmother had a thoughtful look on that morphed into a happy expression once her eyes landed on me.

"We are just about done here." Liira nodded to the midwives who flowed out of the room with her permission. Once the last one of them exited, she turned back to me, her happy expression replaced by a frown. "Will you now remain by the door after your disobedience?"

"I..." My throat worked, my lips moved, but no words slipped through. My feet refused to work too and I could only stare at my grandmother, unsure if I could approach, unable to inquire of the discoveries she'd made. My mate did look

alright...and at peace. I did not wish to take that away from her as I had learnt I was in the habit of doing.

“Despite what it might look like, or the circumstances, one’s mate and their presence is like a drug like no other.” Liira gathered her things as she left me to ponder on her words that I knew to be true. I had experienced that when Shyla’s presence had shielded me from Myrna’s spell, but I had a feeling that was not what Liira was alluding to at all. “And the only thing you are guilty of today is making her feel something for you beyond your bond.” My grandmother only gave me her cryptic smile when I looked askance at her. Unlike my mother, Liira’s ways of comfort involved having me focus on what mattered in the midst of the pain. No pampering. But surely she didn’t mean...My eyes found my mate once again while my heart thudded in my chest. She had to be wrong, right? “I will see you later.” Grandmother bid me goodbye and I only nodded with half a mind. Her words had renewed my hope and the moment she left my chambers, I stepped closer to my mate, my feet deciding to agree with me.

Shyla...my breath hitched as I took in her beautiful form gracing my once lonely bed. I’d dreamed of this image a thousand times before, but none of those visions could compare to the utter display of heavenly beauty that left me in awe of my mate. Her long beautiful hair had been let loose, leaving her facial features relaxed and her natural beauty shining in the dimly lit space. The beautiful gown she’d worn for dinner was replaced by an exquisite night gown that left my mouth dry and my wolf wanting nothing but to claim her. To have the glorious view of what lay underneath. To get a taste of it and not only with my tongue.

“This is so not the time to lust after her.” I chastised my own mind, but the mere mention of it only served to deepen the unbidden desire that was already raging in my flesh. And the longer I stared, the wilder the desire became and the harder it was for me to tame it. I wished to give in. Wished to slip in right beside her and inhale her scent. I wished to wake her and pick up right where I had stopped the last time I had kissed and touched her luscious body to my heart’s content. I wished to do everything I’d dreamt of doing to my mate once I got her to my bed. Everything I had spent many nights turning over in my head ever since Shyla had been within my palace walls.

My wolf was in total agreement as the beast pulsed under my flesh, ready to indulge in the pleasurable dance of love making. He was ready to conquer her body tonight, but this would simply not do and before I made more mistakes

with her, I tore my gaze away from my mate and headed for the doors. I needed to calm down. Us both.

“Elian...” Her tone was soft and mighty at the same time. Mightier than my own, a king’s, bringing me to an instant stop. “Don’t leave.”

I spun around, mouth drier than the desert lands of our realm. Whether that was because of the way my name beautifully rolled off her tongue or the sexy sleepy sound from her lips or the fact that she longed for me to stay after all, I was not sure. “Are you certain?” Because I trusted not myself in her presence, because I knew without a shadow of doubt that if she requested anything of me I would grant it in a heart beat, I needed to be sure she meant her words.

“I...where am I?” Somehow she got distracted, sitting up in the bed as she took in her surroundings.

“In my bed...bed chambers.” I answered distractedly as my eyes took in her female contours that had become even more pronounced now that she was seated.

“Your bed chambers?!” She snapped, drawing my attention. A bitter expression painted her beautiful face as she struggled to abandon the comfort of my bed.

I was by her side in heart beat, knowing why. “I swear, she has not been in my bed, ever.” Even when I believed that my mate had betrayed me, bringing Myrna to my bed had just seemed not right and as I held my mate’s gaze, something loosened in my heart. I had finally done something right. If the stunned expression, mixed with relief on my mate’s face was anything to go by.

“What?”

Author’s Note

Hello dear readers...

Thank you for being a part of Shyla’s and Elian’s journey. I really appreciate each and everyone of you (truly). Thank you for all your lovely comments too.

I thought I should leave this here concerning updates. Please note that this story is meant to be updated daily, but as it is not written yet, many a time

things don't go as planned. Life gets in the way and I end up subjecting you to days without updates. It is not my intention to keep you waiting, but then I would rather post something worth your time than just sticking to daily updating for the sake of it.

I promise I work on the chapters daily, but until it is ready I do not post. So please forgive me when that red dot does not appear in your library. And also when I can, I will stick to daily updating too. Hope you understand.

That said, I hope you enjoyed this update 😊

The King's Tainted Mate Chapter 39 - Tips

"Is everything to your taste?" I looked up, right into my mate's alluring abyss of a gaze at his question. His protective tone matched the emotion that swam in there, making my belly flutter terribly. It was all it had been doing for the better part of our lone, quiet and welcome time in my mate's bed chambers.

Everything was to my taste, surprisingly. After what I would consider a disastrous dinner, my own surprising boldness that inspired my life altering decisions, I felt a sense of satisfaction I hadn't felt since my world had crumbled down. It was a sweet taste of revenge, but that wasn't exactly what my mate was inquiring about.

"It is, thank you." I said of the food set before me that had been prepared at an impossible hour after a mean rumbling of my stomach. Against my protests, my mate had gone ahead and barked orders both to Rakon and whoever he'd chosen to mind link at the awkward hour to prepare something to eat. I had expected a snack at the very least, but when the many servants had poured into his chambers with various platters of food, I was dumbstruck at the sight. Everything was just too much and I had no doubt he'd woken the entire palace kitchen staff to do his ridiculous bidding. The woman I assumed was the head cook had only seemed to relax after my mate had given her a satisfied response once everything was set on a low table that I now shared with my mate. "You did not have to do this much." I mumbled, but as with my earlier protests, my complaint was met with silence.

I would have been offended too, but having him wait on me, having him stare at me as though I was his whole world while inquiring ever so often if I was alright, overshadowed my own need to be furnished with an answer and so much more.

He cared. He'd watched over me as though I was the realm's most rare gem he didn't wish to go missing. That had righted more things in my heart. And if any of it was a lie, a pretense on his part, I did not care for it. I would bask in his presence, inhale his scent, relish all he was offering until day break. Until I returned to my own chambers or until I had to face the harsh realities of the world beyond the comfort of his beautiful personal space. A space that had surprisingly remained untainted by my sister's presence.

My heart skipped a beat at the memory of my mate's utter desperation as he sought to convince me of the fact.

Waking up in the sea of his delicious citrus scent had been a perfect way to re-enter the land of the living after my unintended visit to hell's door, but realizing I had woken up in the very bed he could have shared with Myrna had pierced my heart and I had wished for nothing but to escape the pain that ensued. It was not that I had any delusions that my mate had remained chaste after wedding my sister, I couldn't just stomach laying on the same bed where he could have pleased her to no end while I wallowed in pain during the very act.

Hearing that she had never set a single foot in his chambers had loosened many things in my heart and unknown to him, this grand bedroom had instantly become my favourite place in the whole palace after his confession. It was not for the sake of its grand beauty, but for the fact that in here, while those doors were shut, this felt like our own little private world. Ours to treasure, away from everything that threatened to tear us apart. In here I could forget our past for a moment. And with the way he was staring at me, I could consider his proposal to get to know him. I wished to know him.

I lowered my gaze hastily, afraid of giving in to the sinful temptation that had been lurking in my mind and body from the moment I woke from my slumber. Knowing him was apparently not the only thing I wished for. Even when a perfect distraction had presented itself in the matter of my mate having shared his bed with Myrna, my body, blood and wolf seemed to have totally ignored that part and kept the desire buried within burning. And once he'd cleared the air about the matter, the trio had simply dragged me and my heart along and plunged us in the anticipation of having that desire fulfilled.

"Will you try this too?" My eyes widened when a piece of fruit found itself too close to my mouth, his intentions to feed me oh so clear.

“Liira says it’s good for the baby.” Was he mind linking the matriarch for baby advice while I ate? I stared at him, his serious expression rousing something in me. For whatever reason, him wishing to take care of me this way did not sting as before. It did not make me think his heir was his only interest. Perhaps it had everything to do with knowing he’d searched far and wide for me until the last moment or my own admission that I might have been wrong too.

“T-Thank you.” I reached for what he was offering with my hand because there was no way I was eating from his. The mere thought was too scandalous to entertain even in the confines of my own head. Besides, it would be the perfect recipe and shortest route to drown in the temptation that I was already reluctantly wishing to avoid.

“I promise I won’t bite.” He moved the fruit out of my reach, leaving me gaping at him. His expression did not change however and neither did his intentions. And when I merely stared at him, he got up and circled the low table, sending my heart hammering in my chest.

“W-What are you doing?” My breath hitched when he came and sat next to me on the large plush cushion that served as my seat at the table. He did not have to, we both knew it, but he did and I should not have liked it, but I did. And thanks to my very excited wolf, I did little to hide it.

“You’ve barely eaten.” Concern laced his tone and so did something else that got me breathless.

“As have you.” I protested weakly.

“I’m not the one to have collapsed, neither am I the one carrying my child.” He cupped my cheek as gently as he made his case, making me lean into his touch and relishing the sparks that erupted at the contact. “What kind of mate would I be if I did not take care of you and our child?”

Our child... My heart melted, while desire soared and the darkness that graced his eyes only served to entice me even more. My lips parted of their own accord and when he slipped the fruit in, warm fingers tracing the edges, I yearned for something more. Behind the closed doors of his chambers, away from those who would judge, away from everything that sought to keep us apart, away from my own desire for revenge, I longed to be his. And when I held his gaze, eyes pleading, risking to make a fool of myself once more, his answer was immediate. Lips found mine, swallowing up my gasp and every

m0an that dared to escape my throat. A k!ss more ferocious than any he'd ever lavished on me, plunging me in the very temptation I had been afraid of indulging in. But as suddenly as he'd claimed my l!ps, he stopped, leaving me dangerously close to cursing him. King or no king.

"Will you let me make up for my failings?" Was he bargaining with me right now? I stared at him breathless, my eyes widening when he slipped out the ring and got on bended knee. "I wish for nothing more than to make you mine right now, to grant your every desire, but beyond this pleasure..." He traced the edges of my l!ps once more, igniting my desire anew. "I wish to make a promise to you, Shyla." I knew that fate decided many things in my life and that promises could be broken, but I still stretched out my hand and let my mate slip the ring on my finger. It was all for revenge, I thought to myself. But when my mate reclaimed my l!ps, revenge was the furthest thing from my mind as a strange and more intimate feeling flowed in its place catching me off guard.

The King's Tainted Mate Chapter 40 - Tips

She was perfection and she was mine...finally. Delicate and yet sinfully alluring, dragging me deep into her heavenly core. She was as a siren. That creature of the deep that lured sailors to its lair. With the sweetness of its voice and song, it enchanted its victims, coaxing their bewitched minds until she had them trapped within her clutches. And while they waited to indulge in what she'd promised, her fangs and claws turned out to be their reward. Devouring them soul and body while they fought to escape.

I was deep in her lair. Lured by her enchanting beauty, intoxicating scent and those bewitching silver eyes. Except I was no sailor and we were no strangers or hunter and prey, but perfect halves of one moon goddess given whole. My mate and I. She'd trapped me, but I longed not to escape. I longed to be devoured by her, body, mind and soul. Her song was but every m0an that was my doing. Every touch, every k!ss got her singing to my heart's content while her canines and claws sunk into my flesh, pleasuring me and my wolf to no end.

"Shyla" I whispered her name as I dove in, tongue exploring, seeking to k!ss her very soul. And the ensuing m0ans were as music to mine. A rhythm of se.xy notes that threatened to drive me insane with need.

Her night gown lay discarded somewhere on the bedroom's floor as were my own garments, leaving me with the glorious sight of my mate's perfect body. Mine to take in, to explore, to devour...

"So beautiful..." An appreciative growl tore from my lips, earning myself a sexy purr from my mate's wolf. My own wolf howled in my head in response, pride lacing his incredible sound and I longed to join him. To howl until the whole of Xatis heard. Until the entire kingdom knew that she was finally mine. Until they knew that the one my heart longed for now lay in bed, pleased by their alpha, but I settled for another taste of my mate's lips instead. Drowning in the taste of her mouth as my hands explored her perfect curves.

I'd seen naked maidens before, explored their curves too, but none had ever driven me to the brink of insanity as my mate's body did. None had left me panting, desiring, thirsting, lusting... None had my blood on a constant rush, pulsing to no end, seeking release. And the more I beheld her, the more I realized how drunk I must have been that night at the inn. The encounter had been more than satisfying no doubt, but it was by no means anything in comparison to this. For if it were, even a fraction of it, I would have simply not let her go after a single round of pleasure.

I dipped my head, lips finding the inners of her thighs and she trembled, much to my satisfaction. The action spurring me on as I left featherlight kisses that only made her tremble even more.

"Y-Your majesty..." Breathless, she pleaded. I would have demanded that she call me by name too, but the way she sinfully addressed me by my title while bucking her hips against my lips, bringing the scent of her need so close I could taste it, kept my mouth dry. "I—" She circled her hips, hands fisting in my hair, her core brushing against my lips ever so lightly, but enough to drive me insane. To abandon my own plan of attack and just dive in. I had been aiming to tease, to coax until she was begging, but that would have to wait as my mouth that was dry got deliciously wet as I licked and grabbed and indulged in the sweet flow of her desire. "Y-Your maje— Elia—ahh..." The sound of my name dripping from her lips, coated by pleasurable moans did nothing to tame my insanity or my own raging need as I thrust even deeper. Tongue flickering, licking, exploring, pleasuring until I could taste the pulsing of her core. Hot and rushed, matching her quickened breath and furiously beating heart.

Claws sunk in my flesh as the most beautiful growl tore from her lips, singing of my subtle conquest.

"I've got you baby." I watched with satisfaction and pride as she shattered in my hands. By my hands or more specifically, my tongue. Breathless, flushed and thoroughly sated. A sight that had me puffing up with pride and wishing I could stand on the highest mountain and brag of my conquest.

"Uh...your majesty...we have a problem." Rakon hesitantly spoke into my mind link, making me curse myself for leaving it open.

"I'm busy, take care of it." I hissed when those delicate hands reached out and rubbed my entire length as they coaxed me forward, eager to return the favour. Her shyness enchanted me, but these moments of boldness... every time she grabbed, pulled and moved in invitation, she set me on fire. Desire raged, consuming every nook and crevice of my body, leaving me undone and thinking twice about choosing not to bury myself in her.

"Elian..." She pleaded and I wished for nothing more than to grant her wish, but I couldn't. After the emotional night she'd had, riding a wave as intense as the one she'd just ridden and in her condition, I would be a selfish animal if I did not let her have a moment's rest. I claimed her mouth instead, plunging right back in and relishing the ensuing moans that escaped her beautiful mouth that was almost sinful to behold.

Rakon insisted. "I sort of can't...it's something that needs your—"

"Unless Xatis is burni—" I paused, taking the moment to relish the sight of my mate as she lay under me, eyes closed, mouth slightly open no doubt lost in the pleasure of my kisses. "You know what? Whatever it is, I do not wish to hear it."

"It's your queen, she's—"

"Especially not of her!" I growled.

"But she's—Elian—damn it! I shut down before Rakon could say something that would really force me to end this pleasurable journey and hurt Shyla one more time.

Unknown to me was that the journey had ended still, except it had done so under terms that were more than acceptable to me. The look of pure ecstasy on my mate's face brought me immense satisfaction as I beheld her form that had slipped into a peaceful slumber.

My heart skipped a beat too at the sight and I found myself craving for more. Not just having her in my bed and pleasuring her as I had every intention to, making her mine completely. I longed to earn her trust. She'd accepted me, but I was not oblivious to the main reasons why. If Liira was truly right too, mine would be the task to not let that glimmer of hope dim for any reason.

And as the sun's rays peeked behind the heavy curtains, promising tons for the day, I made promises of my own to my sleeping beauty.