

The King's Tainted Mate Chapter 6 - Tips

"With a grip like that, you will surely be dead meat before you can draw in your fleeting breath." Gol spat as he tried to get me to firm my grip on his arm.

We'd been wrestling all morning. Or he'd been trying to get me to wrestle him. Something about knowing how to make my escape if ever I found myself trapped in the arms of an enemy. It was unlikely, because he'd forbade me from going anywhere without him. And as long as I remained under his roof, I had to follow his orders which he had laid out plainly, together with the consequences of breaking any. He had also taken it upon himself to teach me a few ways I could protect myself while in Dovah, just in case.

In the month and days we'd lived together, he'd been like a protective father I never had, so I chose not to argue, but be grateful. Today, however, I was simply not in the mood for any of it. Perhaps it had to do with a strange uneasiness I was feeling deep in my soul. I could not explain it, but it leaned close to being a sense of loss. I had fought to banish the thought many times, knowing I had nothing more to lose even if fate wished it so, but it still lingered and had me distracted.

"I am but a maiden." I protested, making him huff out in exasperation.

"Dovah cares not for such things." He scolded, his usual calm tone rising a little. For someone who was usually calm, he fascinated me when his temper flared on the most unusual things.

His arms were huge pieces of bulging flesh. Too big for my tiny hands. How he expected me to get a descent grip around them eluded me. "Again!" I flinched at his sharp tone, but obeyed still.

This was for my good. I had told myself countless times I had to endure him. For an outlaw, my punch was too light, my kick was not lethal, my elbow strike was just not quick enough. And with just two legs and no wolf, I would end up dead in Dovah.

Bowing to his wishes, I kicked with every intention to prove him wrong, but Gol blocked my strike midair without breaking a sweat, effectively proving his point.

"Perhaps I should be training with a weapon. A sword maybe?" I reached for the hilt of his own sword, but winced when something hard slapped my hand away.

"You are a wolf. Your body is a weapon in itself. And until you learn how to use it, you will not be allowed near any weapon of the sort."

"Did I mention that I have not shifted yet and neither have I had my breakfast?" I pouted and I could swear I saw his lips twitch.

"Dovah cares not for such things either."

I sulked. For a moment, I was tempted to point out that I had not chosen this life. Had not chosen to be in Dovah. I wished to point out that everything had been forced on me by fate. But that would mean peeling off the little layer that had formed over my wounded soul. It would mean taking away the false sense of healing that helped me to keep going at the dawn of each new day.

Between us, the past was not something that had come up. And apart from thoughtful stares towards me, Gol had never once hinted at wishing to know what had led me to him. I was grateful for that. Perhaps in the distant future, I would be well enough to speak of the tragedy that was my life. Right now however, I had to concede to the fact that I would never be able to do this. Would never be able to beat him. Not when there was no reason to be fighting him in the first place. My lack of a violent bone in me wouldn't let me.

"Forgive me, Gol, I just don't see myself fighting without a reason." I was not one to give up, but how could he expect me to beat him when he was a thousand times my size and embodying a ferocious wolf that had probably won countless battles already. I on the other hand wasn't even sure if I would get a wolf. I hoped that last bit would not turn out to be true, because then I'd just die. What was a wolf without its wolf?

"Gol?" Something strange snapped me out of my thoughts. He'd stopped barking orders at me. I looked up and found his gaze on me. My words seemed to have sparked something in him and he had become deathly quiet.

"G-Gol?" My heart leapt in my throat when a deep growl escaped his lips.

"What is it? Are we under attack?" Frantic, I searched the woods that surrounded our shack, but when I came up with nothing I turned back to him and let out a shrill cry.

He'd shifted and was stalking me like I was his prey. How was he that quick?

"G-Gol, it's me, Shyla." I warily eyed his beast. I had never seen his wolf before, and if I thought he was scary in person, his wolf was worse. Like his face, his wolf was covered in countless scars, revealing years of surviving in Dovah. They gave it a look of death. It was a wonder I could still get words out of my mouth while it stalked me. The beast's crimson eyes stayed on me, watching my every move, which were not many as I was practically frozen on my spot.

"Gol!" He leapt at me, his heavy weight sending me tumbling to the ground. He'd gone mad! I winced at the contact, but didn't linger on that however. Acknowledging that Gol had lost his senses by attacking me, my survival instincts had kicked in effortlessly and I fought him with all my might. His canines and claws sought to s***h, to tear, but I held him at bay. My tiny hands that I thought were not good for anything turned out to be my best weapon. With them and my racing heart, I pushed at his neck and kept those canines from coming any closer to my face while with my legs I kicked at his belly as hard as I could. I hoped to give him a painful reason to snap out of his rage and let me go.

The ordeal, however, went on for a few more painful moments before a scary thought occurred to me. What if he'd really gone mad? I had heard tales of wolves who'd lost their minds after a tragedy and they had turned into beasts that could kill mercilessly. What if Gol was like any of those? He did look the part with his huge mouth that was dangerously opening and closing seeking to devour me.

I would die today! The thought had my head filling with frantic thoughts and I grabbed at those lessons he'd so relentlessly tried to teach me. Right now, he was the enemy and I was trapped by him. I was not even sure if wrestling a man would be the same as wrestling a wolf, but I had to try. My life depended on it.

With my hands that had been merely pushing back. I grabbed at its throat and squeezed as hard as I could, surprising the beast, and while it was distracted, I kicked at its sides with as much force as my lying position would allow. The beast whimpered. And just as quickly as he had leapt at me, he fell back, giving me the needed space to make my escape.

Breathless, I crawled away from him as he shifted back. I ignored his nakedness and glared at his face that bore a sense of accomplishment. Wasn't he even going to apologize for attacking me?

"What in God's name was that?!" I growled at him, as in literally, but didn't stop to marvel at how I did that.

"Testing a theory." Gol's lips curved. They never did that and it infuriated me. He almost killed me and yet he had the audacity to be amused?

"And what was the result of this so called test?" I let the sarcasm drip with my words as my temper flared. My skin prickled too, irritating me even more. "Will you not answer me?!" I glared at him when he merely gave me that irritating thoughtful look. And the more he stared, the more I wished to claw his eyes out. To jump on him and rip something on his body. To taste his blood.

"Violence, it's such a tempting thing isn't it?" He finally spoke, but whatever he'd said only confused me.

"What?"

"So is the need to survive it, don't you think, Shyla? But perhaps it's the desire to taste the blood of your enemy that draws out the best and worst in us."

I huffed in frustration. Did he choose this moment to be poetic. He was not making any sense and I was about to snap at him when his eyes dropped to his side. Against my better judgment, I followed his gaze and my eyes widened at the sight of his exposed flesh.

"Did I do that?" His flesh was already healing, but the unmistakable result of the damage I'd done was oh so clear. My eyes flickered to his throat. It was merely covered in red marks, thankfully. "I'm sorry?"

"You were defending yourself, no need to apologize."

"Still—"

"It's my pleasure to meet your fierce side."

"My what?" I blinked in surprise. Surely he didn't mean—

"It's a an unusual way for one to sail through this life, but I guess it will have to do. No need to fix what is not broken."

“Forgive me, but what are you blubbering about?” He was being cryptic once again and normally I would let it be, but whatever he’d spoken was about me and it nagged me to no end. I needed him to make me understand. I was just an ordinary weak maiden, that was apparently not even good enough for her family. So why was he staring at me as if he’d just unearthed a precious gem?

He did not speak right away, choosing the moment to reach for his garments and covering himself. My impatient heart couldn’t take the delay so I cleared my throat to get his attention, but he only flashed me an apologetic smile.

“This is something you’ll have to figure out on your own I’m afraid.”

What was there to uncover? I stared at Gol, that sense of worthlessness that had plagued me since my rejection overwhelming me. He was wrong. He had to be. I was not fierce. Not in any way he’d painted me out to be. If I was, I would not have let them toss me aside like I was nothing. If I was fierce I would have held my mate’s gaze. Braved those painful words from his mouth when he rejected me.

The familiar ache assaulted my poor little heart and I fought to keep the tears from falling.

But you are fierce. You just refuse to acknowledge it.

“Get out of my head!” I snapped at Gol when his know it all tone echoed in my head. His words only deepened the ache.

Wait! What! He’d spoken to the inner me! How was that even possible? I had not shifted, he was not my family. Apart from sharing his shelter, we shared nothing else. There was no bond that would make it possible for him to speak to me in that manner. So how was he doing this right now?

Eyes wide, I stared at him. “How?” Gol merely stared at me as if waiting for me to have an epiphany. But instead of a flood of understanding, pain ripped through my entire being.