

The King's Tainted Mate Chapter 87 - Tips

Shyla had appeared like a vision from one of the many dreams I'd had of her. Except she'd not looked like the usual sweet and shy mate I'd last seen. She was a queen, but more than that, she'd oozed of something else. Something that despite the spells that bound and imprisoned me, had caressed my soul and awakened me.

I had thought that I would die before laying my eyes on her, so when she'd appeared, I had not waited before gathering my strength to do the one thing I had promised to do. I would make her mine before Evarius had a chance to sink his filthy canines into her flesh. And I had done it, but the limp body of my mate had left me wallowing in regret. What had I done?

"Shyla?" I called again, but she only lay in my arms without so much as stirring at the sound of my voice. I held on to her, tighter, not knowing what else to do. My strength had returned. Perhaps a hundred fold than before. And my connection to my wolf had never felt stronger. My wolf had never felt stronger. I could literally feel our strength pulsating, but instead of celebrating that fact, the lifeless body of my mate had all my attention. Her breath barely there.

What if she'd given her life for me? Or had my decision to mark her been the thing to drain her of that life?

The thought had my hands gripping her tighter as I cradled her. I did not even care to stay on guard. Even with the possibility of Evarius marching back in with more orders for Kerina to chant one more spell to make me his prisoner again.

"We do not have much time your highness." The doors to the room I'd been held prisoner in flew open, revealing an imposter.

"Time for what?!" I growled, hating that anyone would interrupt my efforts to get my mate to come back to me.

"Before all hell breaks loo-." Zastan's determination faltered when he beheld my mate. "Are we too late?" The fake king of Careen held the door wider and familiar faces poured in. I was especially grateful to see my family led by Liira. Father and mother's faces held unmistakable relief which soon faltered at the sight of my mate. Norae and Samara looked ready to jump into battle at my

command. Rakon's absence spoke of something being very wrong. I knew that already, but I wasn't about to focus on that. Not just yet.

"Did Evarius—" Dread filled Liira's face as she stepped further into the room, eye's taking in my lifeless bundle.

"She won't wake up." I reported like a child.

"Shyla?" Someone shoved to the front. The sight of Florithe and Lydo deepened my feelings of guilt.

"She—" I struggled to find the words to explain how their child had been taken away from them a second time. This time by my own hands.

"What happened?" A familiar voice asked.

"Zillah?" There was a sight that I would have never expected. Even after learning what I had from Evarius, seeing Zillah in her right mind was more than a little surprising. If it weren't for everyone standing before me after what I'd endured, I'd have thought her to be a hallucination. One of the many to have plagued my mind when I was under Kerina's spell.

"Your majesty, you must tell me what happened." Zillah's tone was not demanding, but it had an edge I had never heard from her before. One that willed me to answer her.

"She came for me." My gaze shifted back to my mate. "I do not really know, but I think she may have stepped beyond the spells threshold to get to me." And I'd hated the very idea of that sacrifice.

"I'm afraid, that is the least of our worries right now." Liira suddenly announced, her gaze on my mate.

"She's waking!" I exclaimed when Shyla suddenly moved.

"No, she's having this baby!"

"She's what?! Is it even time yet?" My shocked gaze went from my mate, to the matriach and back to my mate. "She can't— you can't—" My fatherly instincts kicked in and I felt like scolding my son or daughter for choosing such an unfavourable timing to be born. "She cannot have this baby now...not here."

"I'm afraid that is not up for debate right now." Liira's frantic gaze searched the room, but as I had known, she came to the same conclusion as mine. Even though my protests of Shyla birthing my child here extended beyond the unprepared room we stood in.

"Lily's nursery still remains untouched and it might be the safest place here." Florithe suggested, her hand holding on tightly to her daughter.

"I can get you there without being seen." Lydo offered.

"I can help." Zastan received curious gazes from Lydo and Florithe, to which he merely rolled his eyes. "This might be your home, but the men who've been forced to defend it against you are of Carene and for reasons I still do not understand, Evarius has let them keep thinking I'm their king. So until my brother can figure out a way to break past the spell they've been put under and command them, I can be of help." Gol was here too? Hearing that the outlaw was already working on freeing the Aldeans from Evarius' clutches put the plans about the impending war a notch ahead after I'd pushed them aside to focus on my mate.

"The man is right." My father patted Lydo's shoulder when Shyla's father looked unimpressed at someone telling him what to do in his own home. "Besides, I think he has proved himself to be quite resourceful after rescuing us all."

"Rescuing?" I looked at my father askance. "Why would you need rescuing?" Tension built up within me as I realized how far behind Evarius being imprisoned here had placed me. And I cursed the fact that I wouldn't be catching up soon. Not until I ensured my mate and child were safe.

"This is not the time nor the place." Liira scolded. "Why don't you all lead the way. This child's arrival will not wait for any of your arguments."

I wished to know more, but I agreed with Liira's sentiments and I hastily followed after Zastan and Lydo at the matriarch's prompting. As promised, and much to Lydo's annoyance, Zastan got us past many of those Aldean soldiers and to the nursery safely.

I hadn't been to Shyla's home in a while, but the heaviness that now filled it was clearly not part of the warmth that it had possessed once before.

"This is perfect." Liira got to work and while I awaited her further instructions, I cradled my mate and stared.

When Florithe had said the nursery had remained untouched. I had expected the place to have been covered in linen to protect every inch of the room and it's furniture from dust, but that was not the case. The room was pristine, as though Lydo and Florithe were the ones expecting to give birth at any moment. I agreed with Liira too. It was perfect. It was not the one I'd secretly been working on and planned on surprising Shyla with, but given the circumstances, it would have to do.

"It's the closest we had of her and we couldn't bear tearing it apart all these years." Florithe, seemingly noting my surprise said as she pointed me to a large bed. I walked over and reluctantly laid my mate down. I hated the loss of contact and my mate seemed to as well. If the subtle frown that crossed her facial features was anything to go by.

"I'm here." I whispered even when I doubted she'd hear me at all. "How will she have this baby if she won't wake?" I turned to Liira after the longest moment of observing my mate, seeking an acknowledgement of her having heard me.

"Get me these." Liira listed a few items and handed them to Zastan before turning back to me. "Her eyes maybe closed, but her body seems to be awake enough for what is to come. Although, I'm really hoping her labour pains will be enough to awaken her and make everything that much easier." My mate's body seemed to convulse barely moments after Liira's words, bringing on another surge of anxiety in my bones.

"What can I do to help?" I needed to do something. Now that my arms were free of my mate's body, I could not hide the nerves plaguing me.

"Right now? Stay out of the ladies' way." My mother, carrying a basin of steaming water walked past while Liira shoved me to the side. I wished to protest, to let all of them know that I would not be missing my own child's birth, but someone laid a hand on mine.

"Perhaps we can speak of other pending matters." Zillah invited. I nodded, but made it clear that that would have to happen right there in the nursery. Even with all the impending chaos, there was no way I was leaving Shyla's side. Being a few feet from that bed was already too much for me and my wolf.

"I can see she has your mark." It was by no means a question.

"You marked her?" From Shyla's side, my mother frowned, making me stand up straighter.

"I know what tradition dictates and forgive me for not honouring it, but I couldn't let that bastard make her his."

"And yet you bear no mark of hers." Zillah observed with what seemed a lot like regret.

"Taking my mark seemed to have taken a toll on her." I hadn't expected it to. Hell, I was still unsure it was even the thing responsible for my mate's current state.

"What does this mean?" Sarabeth's gaze shifted from me to Liira and to Shyla. "If this child comes without her marking him—"

Liira paused. "Oh my, I had completely forgotten about that."

So had I. "I do not care for it right now." I hoped our bond would remain. Or that she would choose me in the end if it didn't, but all that could wait. I was more concerned about her health more than anything.

"Whatever the case, your marking her saves us some time." Zillah appeared thoughtful and whatever lay at the heart of her thoughts stirred something in me.

"Time?"

She smiled then. Her sane smile I noted was no different from the one she'd flashed me many times before. "I do not know why you were not rejected. Perhaps because she is your mate or she had already chosen you."

"Rejected?" I did not understand. Did she mean Shyla meant to reject me a second time?

"Your mate, it turns out is much much more than we all thought." My father came forward a somewhat smile on his face. "Her tattoo, the mark of twin wolves, comes with the power too."

"The mark of the twin wolves?" My jaw dropped at that. I knew what that was. Me and Rakon had a hundred times before role played as the twin guardians

that had been entrusted by the gods to watch over the magical creatures. The tale had been fascinating and now— “It was all true?” I stared at my father before shifting my gaze to Zillah who merely smiled.

“And now that you marked her, part of her is now embedded in you and once you take her mark, you will be the chosen’s other half.” Speechless, I blinked for what felt like a million times. “I—wait, is that what Evarius is after? His secret ingredient? The power to rule every wolf in the realms?” Suddenly I did not regret marking her. For once I felt I had made the perfect decision when it came to my mate.

“And right now, you took it from him. Although not yet fully as she needs to mark you to complete the ritual.” As Zillah spoke, I stared at my mate in awe. She was the chosen? “Unfortunately, until she does, it’s free for the taking by anyone who can.”

“The gift is vulnerable?” It was by no means a desire to hold on to what rightfully belonged to my mate, but hearing that my decision to mark her had made it free for the taking renewed my feelings of regret. Had Evarius known? A splitting headache served as my answer.

“You’ve got to love it when a plan comes together.” My mind link burned when Evarius’ sinister laugh rang through it. “Come now my little king and serve your master.” I wished to growl at him in protest, but for whatever reason my wolf wouldn’t. The will to submit to the bastard weighed heavily.

“Not just yet!” A welcome growl tore through my mind link too. Shyla! She was awake and apparently...fighting? I could feel the pull towards her once she’d issued her command. My feet that moments ago had intended to head wherever Evarius was, now stepped in my mate’s direction.

“Child, you are awake.” Liira exclaimed from somewhere in the room.

“And where do you think you are going?” Florithe panicked, but my mate paid her no mind. Still clad in nothing but a birthing gown, her gaze stayed on me, a hand on her belly, the other stretched out, bidding me to go to her. Everything in me accepted that invitation. It was by no means a feeling of longing, but of desire. To submit to her and do her every bidding. Except sending me on her errands had not been her intention at all. Her canines being driven deep into my flesh and bringing me unusual warmth in every inch of my being made me realize that fact. Our bond was complete!

Breathless, I stared at her. "I never pegged you to be one to be so spontaneous my lady." Despite her state, her eyes glowed, dangling her very satisfied wolf and it stirred desire in mine.

Well..." Licking her lips dry, she stared at her handiwork and the glint of possessiveness in her eyes deepened my desire. If she wasn't in the process of birthing our child or the little audience we had, I would have taken her right there and then. "My king, needed saving." With her words, I realized that I could no longer feel the pull towards Evarius. "Besides, I do not fancy a chosen mate." With that she headed back to the bed as though she'd not just turned around the fate of all the realms. Her demeanor left me confused too. It was as if she'd been waiting for a particular moment to mark me.

"Do we need to tie you to this bed for you to stay in it?" Liira's scolding woke me from my confused state and plunged me into my newfound status. She was mine and I was hers...we were one! And I needed to be protecting her...all of them, Xatis, the realms. I shared in her gift as much as I shared in her duty and the desire to fulfil it.

"I hate to leave you, but I'll be quick." I cupped her cheeks and her understanding smile drew my lips to hers.

"Evarius is mine."

Still drunk on the sweetness of her lips, I managed a glare at her declaration. "You can't possibly be thinking of joining in after all this?" I gestured to her state, but she merely shifted to the side.

"He waits for you in the family's great hall."

"And how could you possibly know that?" I longed to protest her decision some more, but apparently I had been dismissed. And while I headed to that family's great hall, I cursed my newfound need to grant what she wished.

"You look well. A benefit I intend to enjoy thoroughly, I suppose." The sound of Evarius' voice effectively drew my attention from the annoyance I'd felt towards the gift. And it appeared my own distraction with that had managed to fool him. The bastard was convinced he'd been the one to draw me here and I had never seen an enemy more satisfied with their scheming. "Forgive the less than grand reception." I watched like the obedient wolf I was pretending to be as he gestured to the noble house's great hall. Except for a few guards whose origins I did not know, the place was unguarded and given how Evarius

had kept me in line before, I had no doubt he counted Kerina enough protection around him for the moment. He was in for a surprise. Although, given our history, I was not oblivious to the possibility of surprises of my own. "We would have met at the palace, but I'm in no hurry to take up my position there." So that was his plan? "Besides some pesky and unguided guards seem to think they can hold me back."

Rakon! The bastard had chosen to stay behind and defend my home. I would certainly be kissing the head of my guard once all this was done.

"My love!" From wherever she'd appeared from, Myrna ran to me, her arms spread wide, ready to welcome as though we were still bound to each other.

"Shouldn't you be lavishing all this love on your actual mate?" Catching those hands in a tight grip and keeping her away from me came as a natural reflex.

"What?" Confusion filled her face and instead of her usual reactions, she turned to look back at her mate and sister. "Kerina?"

"What is this?!" Evarius sprang to his feet, before the red head could utter a word.

"What, throne getting itchy so soon, Evarius?" I smirked as I dropped Myrna's hands. It took the bastard a fraction of my actions to realize his predicament.

"You assured me that he would still be bound to you and your sister and that 'she' wouldn't wake for anything once she crossed that barrier until we were done here!" Evarius growled and I couldn't decide which pleased me more. The fear that still showed in his eyes even after trying to mask it, or the fact that my mate was the reason for the hammering in the older wolf's chest. She wasn't even here.

"Get the Aldeans here!"

"I-I'm afraid that is not possible."

"What?!" Evarius roared at the witch.

"Th-They do not answer to me anymore." Kerina mumbled and just then the doors to the great hall flew open, revealing Gol and I decided he could not have chosen a better time to slap Evarius with his first surprise.

“Your majesty.” His armor already drenched in blood, chest heaving and eyes thirsty for revenge, the outlaw took a knee and bowed, the burly figures behind him following their lord. “The aldeans are yours and the chosen’s to command.”