

## The King's Tainted Mate Chapter 20 - Tips

It was a moment of weakness. As earth shattering as his lips felt on mine and as desperately as I wished to hold on, as much as I wished to drown in the hot goodness he'd lavished on me, it was just that. A moment of weakness. For both him and I. Something brought on by the threat of loss the deadly attack had plunged us into. I knew that to be true, because I had thrown all caution to the wind when I heard him grunt in pain. The pained sound had shot straight to my heart and the thought of my mate being hurt or worse, had all sense of reason flying from my mind and only a need to aid him, to save him had remained.

He'd commanded me to remain hidden in the carriage, but I couldn't. Not when the fear of losing him had gripped my heart so hard I could barely breathe. Each growl outside the carriage had only served to paint the most gory of images that had me breaking my word to him. I could not stay put, wouldn't sit by while my other half faced death. It was the first time I had ever thought of him in that manner and it had been what I needed to do anything and everything to get to him. Because deep down, in the crevices of my heart, I knew that despite everything, a part of or all of my world would shatter if death won.

I had shifted without a second thought and broke out of the carriage with ease after struggling with it in my human form. Driven with a need to save, my wolf had pierced the pack of wolves that surrounded my mate like a sharp dagger catching many of them off guard. I had never thought of me a fighter, but something in us raged as I and my wolf tore off limbs, ripped out throats, tasted the warmth in the blood of the enemy to get to him.

Seeing him at the end of that bloody road had got me drawing in the longest breath and my feet moving of their own accord. Drawing me ever so near, wishing for nothing but the comfort of his embrace. And then I got more than I wished for.

The moment our naked bodies connected, sweet sweet fire engulfed every inch of my body and I wished for nothing but to be consumed whole by my mate. In the moment I did not care for anything but being his. He would have asked anything of me and I would have gladly given in, but thank the moon goddess nothing of the sort came from his lips.

His awe filled words only served to snap me out of my stupor. The realization that I had risked everything for his undeserving soul had me wishing to run too, but he kept me from taking a single step. Trapping me with nothing but the warmth of his glorious lips that set me ablaze with a need I had never thought possible. A need that I wished him to fill right there and then, damn every eye that would be watching. Against my better judgement, I had leapt. Plunging right into the sea of want and need for my mate. I wished to drown in him for an eternity, to be reckless for once and take everything he was offering me, but then I got a rude awakening when something sharp pierced my insides, reminding me of the real reason he would even consider touching me at all.

It was nothing but a moment of weakness brought on by all those emotions that had overwhelmed us. Just the mate bond!

But as his arms desperately held on to me now, as he pleaded for me to hold on to life, to not leave him, my heart melted as I found myself unable to not give in. Even when I knew that only heartache awaited me in my not so distant future. I held on for him and for the baby he was so desperate to save.

We were racing towards Xatis as he urged his steed to go faster, while his heart raced at an even faster pace than the beast that bore both our weights. I had been awake for a while now but still kept my eyes shut as I rested my head on his torso, choosing not to give in to the worries that shifting may have caused. I instead gave in to the pull of our bond, relishing the lie for one last time.

It would be different once we entered Xatis and stepped into his palace. In there, I knew he would no longer be mine because he belonged to another. Mate or not. I would be nothing but the she-wolf carrying her mate's heir while my sister got all his love and care. While she got to spend every night and each waking moment wrapped up in his arms.

My heart ached at the overwhelming thoughts and only his scent calmed me enough to keep my senses from spiralling into sadness. On the way to Dovah, I had promised myself that I would not care about such things, but as I inched closer to what was to make my new life, I couldn't keep my heart from caring.

"Welcome back, your majesty! Is everything alright?" We were suddenly surrounded by the sound of many hooves coming in from all sides, forcing me to snap my eyes open. Guards. We were in Xatis already. Pouring in from the direction of what I assumed to be the palace, the king's men fell in step with

their king as they matched his speed. It was a sight I was not prepared for. He was a king! And as the army of men flying banners of his kingdom rode by his side, I was in awe of the splendor of his majesty and I suddenly felt small. An insignificant mate. The sound and feeling of being engulfed by an entire army made me feel so small, I wished I had ridden in the carriage, hidden away from curious eyes. What would they think of the bundle in their king's arms?

I regretted not having let my mate know I was awake. Perhaps then, I would have gotten my own beast to ride on and saved myself the embarrassment of being carried. Was that his intent? I blushed at the thought, feeling every bit anxious. I had not let that bother me before, but that was when the forest had been the only audience.

I wondered if it was too late to make the request. Shifting uncomfortably in his arms however, I was met with resistance. As if realising my intent, his grip tightened, keeping me in place. Had he been aware that I had been awake all this time?

"Rakon, have Liira meet me at the gates, inform her of the nature of the emergency." He ignored the guard's greeting and the concern therein and kept riding. If the guard was offended by it, he did not voice his thoughts. Someone mumbled a 'yes, your majesty' but I did not get to see who it was either as I was distracted. I had been drawn to the sound of his voice as it rumbled in his chest. It was not his alpha tone, but it oozed of so much authority I couldn't help but be mesmerized. It was a stark contrast from the gentle pleas he'd mumbled the entire way here.

I was still distracted when the horn announcing his return blared and I felt the weight of my future in the royal palace settle heavily on my soul. There was no turning back and I could only pray that fate would have mercy on my soul.

The palace gates were already open when we arrived. I expected to be let down then, but he rode past the palace gates and through the palace doors before he brought his steed to a stop.

"My love!" I froze as my hopes of not ever running into the owner of that voice shattered. Myrna...

"You are back!" I hated the happiness that coated her greeting at the obvious sight of my mate and I fought from unleashing a possessive growl. He was no longer mine.

I expected my behind to hit the floor any moment as he made room in his arms for his chosen, but when that did not happen, I looked up at him, my eyes searching desperately for something I shouldn't have been. And when my eyes found his, I proved myself right.