

## Book 2 Dragon King's Forbidden Love Chapter 91 - Tips

LARA

All eyes were on us when we walked in but I had trouble keeping my face straight. At a large throne that wasn't there before, sat a huge man with broad shoulders in a black and red outfit. He had red short hair and way too many rings on his beefy fingers. I knew who it was without any introductions. Xander Rust, the rebellious red dragon who hated Demir and started that war in the first place.

But what really made my heart sink was not him on Demir's throne. It was Primrose, who stood right beside him. I was shocked to see her here even though I was already aware that he was mad about her. But to think that she would just stand obediently like that... It was not like her! Something was wrong here but I just didn't know what yet.

However, when Gideon attempted to take my hand and I flinched away from him, I saw the princess snort and cross her hands on her chest. The clanking noise made a chill run down my spine. And it was then that I noticed a golden chain going from her delicate wrist to the throne.

He put Primrose on a chain! That man who claimed that he loved her and wanted to marry her, put a chain on her as if she was his pet!

I had a storm raising inside of me and my stepbrother probably noticed that as he hissed at me quietly, "Not now, Lara! Not here! He can kill any one of us if he likes."

It was probably true and it helped me to sober up. I knew one thing for sure – I was not going to die. Not until I freed Prim and saved Demir. Not until I fixed everything! I didn't have the luxury to die and that meant that I had to be careful.

"Ah, my feathery friends!" Xander chuckled loudly and a crowd of his supporters repeated after him. Now that I looked at them, I saw the biggest amount of redheads in my entire life. My eyes were traveling through all of them until they locked with the face that I knew very well.

Sean Sarn tried to smile at me but that was when I could afford to turn away and ignore him. He didn't think that we were friends after everything he did, did he?

“Future Emperor,” Gideon bowed respectfully, and I made the lightest and quickest curtsy in my life. I also did not wait for him to dismiss us and stood up straight.

“So, is that the girl Demir was so crazy about?” I felt like Xander was undressing me with his gaze and Deon wrapped his arms around me quickly.

“Meet my fiancée, Lady Lara Artes,” he said, ignoring the question.

“You are very lucky, Lady Lara Artes,” the usurper snorted loudly, “The ex-emperor wanted you as a wife, the new leader of the Citadel of Light wants you as his wife now and even if he didn’t, you would find a place in my court. Maybe as a concubine...”

“Don’t mind me!” Prim rolled her eyes and her chains made a loud sound again.

“My love,” Xander turned to look at her and I noticed fire dancing in his eyes, “Don’t be jealous. I already proved to you that my flames for you will never die. I’ve been waiting for you for centuries. I will never trade you for another.”

It would probably sound sweeter if she wasn’t chained. Or forced.

“Oh, please,” she rolled her eyes, “You can trade me for another any day. I really don’t mind.”

“Prim!” he growled and pulled her chains so that she almost fell into his arms. Yet she stood strong, hissing from pain since he obviously applied too much pressure. He noticed that and let it go, turning back to his audience. “Excuse my bride! She is... overwhelmed with all the bridal preparations that fell on her!”

A wave of ugly laughter went through the room. They all were mocking the princess. And to my surprise, I saw some familiar people here as well. There were not only the red dragons, who were newcomers in the palace. But also gerdian nobles. There stood Camelia and her husband, and not far from them were a marquis and a count who were new members of Demir’s council. I remembered how he complained that they acted on the same side all the time.

Traitors! All of them were traitors! A lady came to talk to Sean Sarn and she was definitely one of those gossip girls who surrounded Camelia all the time. She clearly tried to flirt with him but he brushed her off and looked at me again.

"I will help!" I heard myself saying and all the murmurs stopped at once.

"Lara!" Gideon threw an angry gaze at me.

"Excuse me?" Xander Rust spared me an amused gaze.

"The wedding," I stepped forward and lifted my chin up high, "Princess Primrose is a dear friend of mine. I'd be happy to help her with the wedding preparations."

"Is that so?" Xander smirked and looked at his bride, who was shaking her head in horror, mouthing "no" to me.

"Pardon my fiancée," Deon interjected, "Unfortunately, she has her own wedding to plan and for that, we need to return to the White Archipelago. It just slipped off her mind!"

The usurper was contemplating for a few moments, his head resting lazily on his fist.

"You'll stay," he announced, and I tried to hold back my smile, "I wanted to invite you as guests anyway! It will be good for our nations to become... close friends! Don't you think?"

Gideon definitely did not think so. But he bowed again respectfully, "As you wish. We'd be honoured."

"Then it's done! You are staying until the wedding!" Xander stood up, "And now it's time for the feast and the celebrations! We worked hard for it and we deserve to have some fun!"

He started descending the stairs and only now I noticed that he actually chained Prim to himself as she had to follow behind him. She was in no hurry though and he had to practically drag her.

"What did you do, Lara?!" Gideon gritted through his teeth as he grabbed my elbow.

“What’s the problem?” I gave him an innocent smile, “You are friends with the red dragons, aren’t you? It’s good for the nations, remember?”

“We need to get back home as soon as possible! And staying here is the worst idea!” he stated the obvious as if I cared.

“Well, we can’t now!” I yanked my hand out of his and followed the crowd so that he couldn’t catch up with me.

“Trouble in paradise?” someone whispered to my ear and I recognized Sean. I chose to ignore him, though. There was nothing that I wanted to tell him anyway.

But as we were walking out from one huge hall and almost entered another, he grabbed me and pulled me away. I didn’t even understand how, but we found ourselves in a tiny dark room.

“Secret passage,” the dragon explained even though I didn’t ask him anything. He created a fireball on his palm to illuminate the space around it and gave me a light smile. “I thought we need to talk, Lara...”

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I looked at him, feeling how hate, agony, fury, and desperation boil inside of me, wanting to get out.

A slap echoed through the dark room and the fireball disappeared.

Sean created a new one and sent it to the ceiling this time. And I slapped him again. Then again and again, until he caught my arm and pushed me against the wall.

“I think you made your point loud and clear!” he rolled his eyes, “Are you done?!”

“I am not even close!” I tried to hit him where it hurt the most but he caught my knee as well, lifting it up too high for me to be able to use it against him again.

“Let go off me!” I screeched but instead, he only pressed himself tighter into me, looking me straight in the eye.

“Are. You. Done?!” he repeated himself and I struggled against him some more, only realising how useless it was. I was considering hitting him with my forehead but in that case, I would probably be the one unconscious after.

He didn't stop looking at me and I felt extremely uncomfortable under his gaze.

“Yes!” I spat and turned away.

Slowly, very slowly he released me.

“We need to talk,” he sighed and a chuckle escaped me.

“What makes you think that I will want to talk to you ever again after everything that you have done?!” I hugged myself, looking for a way out. So far it seemed that this room did not have a door. But we managed to get inside somehow so it meant that there definitely was an exit here somewhere.

“I explained to you before,” Sean ran his hand over his face, “This is war. I am doing what I can for my people.”

“Well, you won,” I snorted, “Congratulations! Are you happy now?! Is everything exactly as you imagined it?”

“You know very well it's not,” he admitted, “All I wanted was for my people to be heard and respected.”

“Have you seen your leader?” I gave him an eye roll, “What did you expect when a lunatic like him comes to power?!”

“He is more pragmatic than you think...”

“Well, then there is no problem. Is it there?” I was touching brick after brick on the wall, looking for the one that would open the secret passage for me. “Just let me out of here. We don't have anything to talk about.”

“Lara,” his warm hands laced around my shoulders and he turned me around so that we were looking at each other again. “I can't help Prim or Demir... It's true... But I can help you.”

“And how would you do that exactly?” I raised my brow, “Most importantly why would you do that? Haven’t you heard? My life is amazing! The man I love is being tortured! I am soon to be married to my brother! The people who I grew up with now drink my blood! Everything is just wonderful!”

“Lara...” He stretched his hand and brushed his palm over my cheek, “If you... don’t want to go back to the White Archipelago, I can help you with that. You can stay here... With me...”

My eyes grew wide but he continued, “I am Xander’s right hand, he would not refuse me such a little request. He already got what he wanted from your brother and doesn’t need him anymore. He is awful when it comes to many things, but he keeps his word. He promised me a reward...”

“And you plan to ask me as your reward?!” I almost choked on the words.

“Only if you accept...”

“Never!” I gasped, “I will never...”

“Lara!” he interrupted, “We don’t have time for all this! I know very well how you feel. What I am offering to you is... freedom of sorts. Stay here with me and you will have my full protection. I will not touch you. If you don’t want me, I’ll live with it. But you don’t have to go back there. You don’t have to marry Gideon...”

I looked at him with my lips parted. He seemed sincere. But the more he talked, the more furious I got.

“Do you even hear yourself?!” I chuckled darkly, “You are offering me to exchange one cage for another! That’s just that!”

“You will be free to do whatever you want, I will treat you well. With time, it will get easier... And I’ll... If you want... I can even give you your wings back...”

“I knew it was you!” I hissed, “You stole my wings and now you offer me them back if I agree to stay with you in return?! How noble! Now that I think about it, I am not surprised that you serve someone like Xander!”

He looked down and clenched his fists.

“Just think about it, Lara. This is the best I can do for you.”

“Oh, no,” I shook my head, “You can do so much better than that! You just won a war with your scheming, going through this castle as you pleased. One thing is for sure – you are capable to do more than you are offering here. And that’s why I am going to decline such an ungenerous offer!”

He didn’t say anything to that and I leaned over the nearby wall, tired. Sean came closer and pressed on one of the bricks right next to my head. The wall moved, creating a very narrow passage.

“The offer still stands,” he said dryly and motioned for me to leave first.

“If you really want to help,” I threw one last gaze at him before walking out, “Help me see him.”

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Thanks to that little encounter I was late for the feast and when I entered the spacious hall where everyone was already eating and drinking, Gideon ran up to me.

“Where have you been?!” he looked mad but I just shrugged my shoulders.

“It’s that time of the month,” I met his gaze and held it. I knew very well that the noble lord and Warrior of Light could never talk about things like that. And I wasn’t wrong, he rubbed the bridge of his nose and took me by my waist, leading me to our places.

There were no surprises and we sat next to Xander and Prim, while Sean was opposite of me and Fabian was on my left. I didn’t say a word to anyone for the duration of the dinner. Not that anyone tried to speak to me. Moreover, all of them, with the exception of the self-proclaimed emperor, did not look at me.

It was noisy. Red dragons were no gerdians. Manners meant nothing to them and they drunk way too much. It did not resemble a dinner at a royal palace at all. But when Xander stood up with a glass in his hand and raised it, everyone got quiet.

“We already drank a lot today to our victory,” he said, “But we forgot to thank the one person without whom this victory would be impossible!”

I had a bad feeling about it but then he looked directly at me and smirked, “The golden-haired maiden who fulfilled the prophecy and became the end of the ruthless emperor! Without her help and sacrifice, we would be here today!”

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LARA

The blood inside of me started to boil when I heard those words and the cheering of all the guests. They started raising glasses, shouting, and laughing at the same time.

“To the golden-haired maiden!”

“To the prophecy!”

“To the end of the Dark Dragon Emperor!”

“What was he even thinking of letting her so close?!”

“f\*\*\*t!”

“Well, better for us!”

My first instinct was to get up and leave, but Gideon placed his hand on top of mine, holding me in place. I looked at him and he shook his head slightly, signaling to me that it wasn't the time yet. I wanted to ignore him and just do what I felt was best for me, but then my eyes locked with Prim's. This was the first time she spared me a glance and I knew that she was angry with me. Primrose was the one who knew from the very beginning that me being with Demir was a bad idea. She told it to me, and she told it to him. But we didn't listen. And that's what happened. The worst thing about it was that the two of us weren't the only two people suffering the consequences.

Xander put his glass back on the table with a thump and laughed loudly, pulling Prim closer to himself and breaking our eye contact. Guilt washed over me. It would be selfish to leave her alone here with these monsters.

So, I continued to sit there. For hours. Watching how the red dragons were getting drunk and one by one were leaving the table with the ones they were going to spend the night with. Until finally the usurper stood up, hardly being able to stand on his feet. He took the golden chain that kept Prim on a leash off and handed it to Sean, growling, "Get my bride to her room!"

Sean accepted it and Prim did not look surprised as well. They left the hall together, without saying a word to each other and I realized for the first time that Xander wasn't forcing himself on her. It was as if a heavy rock was lifted off my chest and for the first time during the evening, I was able to breathe properly relaxing in my chair.

Gideon was talking to other invited Warriors of light in the far corner of the room. I noticed Bria standing close to him and rubbing his arm from time to time, trying to attract his attention. But he seemed too busy. My best friend didn't even acknowledge me once for the duration of the dinner. However, I wasn't too upset because of that.

Xander grabbed some girl and was kissing her wildly on his improvised throne. And I decided that it was the best time to escape this parody of a royal dinner.

Quietly, I left the celebration hall, for the last time looking at the flowers, carefully selected for my and Demir's engagement. All I wanted was to go down to the dungeons and to see him. I wanted to try and help him even though I didn't have a good plan in my head yet. But the opportunity was too good to waste!

I took off my shoes to not make any noises. Luckily the palace was half empty now and met no one on my way.

But when I was very close, I saw something that I didn't expect. I froze under one of the magical lamps, not knowing what to do. Right in front of my eyes, Fabian was... making love to some girl.

All right, making love wasn't even the right word for it. He was mercilessly taking her in the middle of a dark passage, pounding with all his might from her back while muffling her screams with his hand. For a second there I even thought that he was taking her by force but then I saw her sucking off his fingers. The whole scene made me cringe and I wanted to run away. But it was the only way to the dungeons that I knew of. I wasn't even sure that it was the right way. But other than that, I had no idea where to go.

Judging by how busy they both were, they probably wouldn't even notice me.

Right when I thought about it, my eyes met with Fabian's. He kept going while staring at me with eyes half-closed and a smirk formed on his face.

And that's when I knew that I wouldn't run. I wouldn't let myself be intimidated anymore. So, clenching my fists, I continued my way past the two of them. I've managed to make just a few steps when I heard his loud groan, probably meaning that he was finished.

I sped up just a bit but soon heard steps behind my back.

"Did you like the show?" Fabian grabbed my arm and turned me to look at him.

"I don't want to disappoint you, but I've seen better," I shot my brow up, "Take your hands off me. Considering where they've been just a few seconds ago... Eww."

He released me, studying my face.

"You've changed, Lara..."

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"And you are one of those who helped me with that, Fabian. Betrayal does that to people," I sneered and at the same time his smirk faded.

"I wasn't thrilled about that either, you know," he rubbed his neck, "We didn't have a choice."

"We always have a choice," I lifted up my chin.

"Everything changed at the White Archipelago," he sighed, "When you go back there, you would hardly recognize the place."

"What do you mean?"

“I mean that your bro... your fiancé,” he scowled pronouncing the word, “is even worse than my father. And that says a lot!”

“How so?”

“My father was...scheming and selfish. He liked power and probably wasn't the best leader to the people of Light. But Gideon... He... He is mad. He... purged the Citadel of Light, Lara... He called that 'cleaning the house'. It would probably be better to call it the Red Citadel now.”

“That bad?” I gasped.

“It was terrible,” Fabian's face became grim, “I myself hardly survived. In fact, I was one of the first he wanted to k!!! after my father. I was just lucky that I am the commander of the first squadron. And I also gave him a magical oath that I will never even think of marrying you or being in any kind of relationship with you.”

“Can't say that it came as a shock to me,” I rolled my eyes, “This whole proposal of yours reeked of your father's politics. At least now I know why...”

“I didn't know,” he interrupted me and I looked at him in surprise. He looked away but continued, “I don't know who you were. What...you were. My father didn't tell me. He just said that it might be good for the family and I was happy to agree since... Since I always liked you.”

“Yet you survived without me just fine!” I let out a little snort, waving at the passage where just a few minutes ago he was enjoying his time with another girl.

“Survival is what I do best,” Fabian admitted, “I just... I just wanted you to know.”

“Why?” I asked nonchalantly.

“Because, if there is anyone capable of stopping your... Gideon... and saving our people – it's you, the Lady of Seraphim.”

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LARA

I looked at him with a blank face. If he thought that I would clap my hands and throw myself on his neck, he thought wrong.

“I thought you knew nothing about what I am,” I c\*cked my brow and he shifted from one leg on the other, not looking confident at all.

“After Gideon killed my father and I pleaded with him for my and Bria’s life, I was spared and gave a magical oath... Then, after he shared his plan with the warriors who were about to go with him on that mission, I returned home to my father’s office and started looking for anything I could find about seraphim – the mysterious people sent by the Goddess Brighta herself.”

I watched him expectantly crossing my hands on my chest. It was funny to see him this way. The Fabian I knew was always...fabulous, confident, magnificent. He had this glow about himself that attracted everyone around him. But now it was gone. Something was off with him. He rubbed his neck nervously. The confidence he always produced also was gone. It was just a shade of the man he used to be.

“What happened to you?” I asked him bluntly, “You don’t even look like yourself anymore.”

“I am not myself,” he admitted easily, “To be honest I really think that we’ve made a big mistake.”

“Oh, you’ve done plenty of those,” I gave out a chuckle but looked at him with newfound pity.

“It all felt so wrong from the very beginning,” he exhaled heavily and leaned over a nearby wall, “I mean... Well, you know me since we were children, right?”

“I do,” I agreed.

“And I,” his gaze shifted to the dark corridor behind us, “I was never perfect.”

“Nope, you really were not,” I nodded again, interested where he was going with that.

“I did questionable things, Lara,” Fabian clearly was not comfortable talking about it as he unbuttoned his shirt a bit, “For a warrior of Light that is... I

slept with girls knowing that I will not be marrying them, I got into fights, I could be selfish...”

“There were worse things hat you did,” I snorted, remembering him pushing me into dirt and calling me names.

“Yes, yes,” he admitted, “But even through all those things I felt light in me. Always...”

He got silent and my lips parted in shock. He wasn't saying...

“It started with your brother,” Fabian continued, “After he murdered my father and seized power... I thought... I thought I was imagining things at first. But now I know that I wasn't. I...I stopped feeling light coming out of him. And you know that Gideon was always one of the strongest Warriors of Light...”

That was the truth. Deon had a gift and only a few other people from the White Archipelago could compare to him..

“I was thinking for a while about all this and came to a conclusion that the rules of the White Archipelago are not just words written in the ancient scroll, Lara. We have to live by them to receive the blessing of the goddess. And when the war started, every day I felt less and less light in me.”

“What did you do?” my voice turned into a whisper.

“We were killing people, just to provoke the dark dragons,” Fabian lowered his head, his silver lock falling onto his face and I noticed a few tears rolling down his bronze skin. My heart clenched from pain but he went on. “We were just a distraction. We didn't even need those deaths in the long run. But Xander and Gideon had an agreement. And our new leader wanted to fulfill it at all costs. I hoped that the fact that I gave the oath would spare me... But I guess it doesn't work like that. The light inside of me is dying, Lara.”

I covered my mouth with my hand. I knew very well now that he was not lying to me.

“And now I am worried about you,” he said all of a sudden, and I looked at him in surprise.

“Me?” I blinked a few times, “Why? I didn’t go on that useless k!lling spree.”

“You don’t understand,” he came closer and bend his hand lower to mine to make sure that only I would hear what he was about to say.

“Your bl00d, Lara,” he whispered, “After I drank it, my Light came back. For a short while. But it did. I bet every one and each of us felt it. Now they all know that all we need to get our strength back is to just have one drop of your bl00d...”

I recoiled from him in shock and he smiled sadly, “Do not worry. I am not planning on doing this ever again. If anything, it also made the Light I had remaining disappear faster... I don’t think that the Goddess of Light is proud of what we’ve been doing to her greatest gift to us.”

He stretched his hand and brushed it over my cheek, “I really wish we could turn back the time. I wouldn’t fool around and try to conquer your heart before you ever met your dragon and all that madness began. It all could have been so different...”

“No offense,” I said, distancing myself away, “But I don’t think that anything could be done about that. Demir and I... we are soulmates. I will never love anyone the way I love him...”

“Doesn’t matter now, does it?” Fabian chuckled darkly, “We are where we are...”

“It also doesn’t mean that this is the end,” I lifted up my chin to look into his golden eyes, “You know that what you did is wrong. There is still hope for you.”

His gaze traveled me up and down with newfound amus.ement.

“I hoped that you would say that,” he smiled, “Lara, I think you need to get back to the White Archipelago. From what I read, like a seraph, you should wield enormous power. The Goddess never sends your people to us without a plan. I think she wanted to give the islands another chance. But we... we are destroying it with our own hands.”

“Unfortunately, I don’t know anything about that... There was no one to train me how to awaken the powers inside of me,” I sigh, “That’s if I have any.”

“A drop of your blood gives unlimited strength and power,” Fabian snorted, “It’s in there somewhere. And also, I don’t think that you need any training on how to use it. It should come naturally to you. Seraphim always come alone. And they always fulfill their destiny.”

“I wonder what that destiny is,” I smiled weakly.

“Don’t you see?” he looked puzzled at my expression, “You need to return our people to the right path! You need to restore the Citadel of light and finish that war. You know, everyone who followed Gideon is already dead. It will happen sooner or later. They may prolong their lives by drinking your blood, probably. But it will ruin their souls.”

I shivered remembering how they all were drinking from me. That was something I really wanted to avoid.

“But there are others, Lara,” Fabian continued, “The ones who refused to follow Gideon. Most of those were thrown to the dungeons of the Citadel of Light. I thought of them as of fools before... But now I actually think that I was a bigger fool. I won a few days of freedom, but I lost my Light... and probably my soul.”

I didn’t have anything to say to that. Because he was right.

“You need to stop Gideon until he destroyed everything,” the man in front of me insisted, “And I will do whatever it takes to help you. Just tell me what you need...”

“And what about your oath?” I reminded him.

“I am sworn not to seek revenge on Gideon and not to think of ever marrying you. I am not going to do any of those things,” he straightened his death, “Instead, I choose to follow you as my leader and try and save my people. I will shove my romantic feelings towards you to the back of my mind and will do my best to assist you instead. Just tell me what you need. If I am going to die anyway, at least I want to die as a true Warrior of Light, fighting for what we believe in.”

I swallowed a lump in my throat. He was putting his life in my hands and trusting in me. Even though I still had no idea what to do.

But on the other hand, he gave me the confidence that I needed. I couldn't afford to be the weak damsel in distress anymore. I never thought highly of Fabian but he was willing to die for what was right. And if he could do that, so could I.

"Fine," I gave up, "There are two things that I need before anything."

"What are they?"

"I need you to take me to the dungeon now," I said firmly, and they demonstrated to him the two magic blocking bracelets on my wrists, "And I need you to find a way to take those off."

"The dungeons are being guarded by red dragons, Lara," Fabian replied at once, "They will not let any of us there. Especially not you."

"Why?" I clenched my fists, feeling blood boiling inside of me again.

"Because Xander ordered it. Everyone knows that you are the Emperor's soulmate. You can help him heal if you are next to him..."

"But he is alive?" I asked hopefully.

"Yes, they plan to execute him publicly, so no one is going to kill him before that," Fabian confessed, "But they..."

He didn't finish but I knew what he wanted to say. They tortured him, weakened him...

"I still need to see him!" I insisted.

"I will not be able to help you with that, Lara," Fabian rubbed his forehead, "I am alone and you are without magic. We can't get inside by force..."

"But there must be a way!" I groaned in frustration.

"And there is..." a familiar voice interrupted us both.

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LARA

We both turned to see Sean Sarn and the hope in me died that same instant.

“Very funny!” I sighed and wanted to walk away, but he caught me by my arm. Not wasting time, Fabian grabbed a dagger that he apparently had strapped somewhere under his jacket and placed it at the red dragon’s neck. All three of us froze in our places, watching each other.

“First of all, I don’t have ill intentions,” Sean released my arm but in the next moment, the blade that was touching him turned red as if it just got out of a blacksmith’s forge and Fabian dropped it. “Second of all, don’t forget where you are and who I am, birdman,” he furrowed his brows.

“What do you want?” I looked at him, demonstrating how unimpressed I am. Everybody knew that red dragons could heat anything up within seconds. There was nothing new about that.

“I was thinking about our conversation earlier,” he looked into my eyes while Fabian rolled his, “I understand your feelings. And I am willing to take the first step forward if that’s what you need to trust me. I will help you see him. Just as you wanted.”

“And what is the catch?” I shot my eyebrow up. If anything, Sean was the king of scheming. Trusting him just like that was dangerous. That man always had his own agenda.

“There is no catch,” he lifted up his arms as if to demonstrate that he was harmless. Hardly believable but I wanted to see Demir so much... I needed to know where he was and how bad they treated him. Because there was no denying that being the prisoner of the red dragons was not nice for him. They were impulsive and more aggressive by nature than even the dark dragons themselves. And they hated Demir. Whatever happened in the past they still couldn’t forgive him even now. It was personal. That’s why I didn’t have any illusions of how they were treating him now.

“Why should I believe you?” I turn to face Sean and he took a deep breath before answering.

“You shouldn’t and I don’t expect you to. But it’s not like you have a choice here, Lara. Other than me only Xander or your brother-fiance could do it however I’m sure you realize the none of them will be remotely interested to even consider something like this.”

“And you are doing this out of the kindness of your heart?” Fabian scoffed, crossing his arms on his chest.

Sean rubbed the deepest scar on his face and sighed, “Of course, not. I just want to demonstrate to you, Lara, that I’m on your side.”

“Alright,” I nodded, “take us to him.”

“It would be impossible to do it now,” he tried to explain but I just turned away and started walking, Fabian followed me closely.

“Goodbye, Sean,” I wave my hand not even looking at him. He caught up with us in just a few seconds.

“What do you think,” she chuckled, “that it’s that easy? He’s heavily guarded and Xander gets reports on everyone who visits him. The moment I help you enter his cell, he will know and will come to kill both of us.”

“Then I don’t see how you can be useful,” Fabian said within an emotionless face.

“In two days, I will be visiting him officially. To prepare him for his...” he stopped talking but I knew what he wanted to say. He had to prepare Demir for his execution. It would probably be too late by then... the thought alone made my heart clench painfully in my chest.

“I will be able to take you with me then,” Sarn continued, looking at me with hope in his eyes. I don’t know what he was counting on, because if Demir died, it would also be the end of me. I heard of Dragons and their mates dying after losing each other and now I could feel it. If the thread of his life would be cut short, mine will tear on its own very soon after that. Soulmates two halves of the same whole. You break one and the other follows.

However, it was better than nothing. Ideally, I needed to find a way to save Demir as soon as possible. But if I couldn’t do it before then – it would be my best chance.

I stopped and spared a glance at the red dragon.

“Then I’ll be seeing you in two days, Sean,” I said and sped up.

Fabian kept following me and I didn't know what to do about him. It was not easy to trust him even though I genuinely felt that he was sincere. But I was mistaken so many times before that it was hard to trust people now. Nevertheless, I couldn't ignore the fact that he already knew about my little deal with Sean Sarn. And that meant that I was better to keep him close.

"How do you know this guy?" He asked me.

"I had quite an adventure while I was gone," I admitted, "I know many people now."

"You don't trust me," he sighed, "I can't say that I can blame you for that. But, Lara, what I told you before was true. Gideon will destroy us and you are the only one who can save us. I want to help you."

"If I'm honest, I don't see how you can help me," I told him bluntly without sparing his feelings, "You lose your light and almost have no strength. I doubt that Gideon shares any useful information with you since he clearly doesn't trust you either after you're tempted to marry me. So I don't see are you of all the people may be useful now. No offense, Fabian. I'm only speaking the truth."

"None taken," he stepped in front of me and summoned light to the tips of his fingers, "I, Fabian Marvis of the White Archipelago swear my loyalty to lady Larissa Artes. I will do everything in my power to help her save our people and to overthrow the ones who are destroying the true warriors of light."

A magical oath was something he would have to keep until the day he died.

"Didn't you give a similar oath to my stepbrother?" I reminded him.

"No," he smirked, "the oath that I gave him stated that I will not seek revenge for my father and that I will never try to marry you or be involved with you in any romantic way."

"You chose your words carefully," I chuckled but went past him, "Despite that, I still don't see how you can be helpful."

I managed to make just a few steps when his voice sounded firmly behind my back, "I'm the son of my father, Lara. He was preparing me to become the next leader of the Citadel of Light. I know always in and out of it, I know everyone who works there, I know all the magic spells that lock the doors

there... but most importantly, I think I know what you have to do to return the light to the islands.”

“Not on my first priorities list,” I replied calmly even though I was genuinely interested. The best I could do was to get Demir out of here. but what would we do next?

“If what I read about seraphim is right,” Fabian smiled softly, “You may possess such power that neither Gideon nor red dragons would be able to stop you when you are in your full strength. If I am correct, you alone will be enough to defeat a whole army. I bet this is something that may potentially interest you, right?”

“And what do I have to do to get my full strength?” I looked at him still not being able to get rid of their distrust inside of me.

“You need to get to the artifact inside the citadel of light,” he replied honestly, “I think that it was meant from you from the very beginning. After all, it was called the Heart of Seraphim for a reason. When you get it, you will know what to do.”

I did not say anything. But this time around I just knew that he was telling me the truth. In all honesty, he already told me everything I needed to know. And we both knew that. This was him putting his trust in me because he had nothing left.

“You do realize that I’m not leaving this country without my dragon,” I showed my brow up.

“I figured,” he shrugged his shoulders, “Recently I came to believe that the gods know what they’re doing. You being his soul mate is probably not a coincidence. And since you are our last hope, she’s probably a part of the plan. Just tell me what you need and when you need it. Other than that, I have nothing to do anymore. But I will have one little request...”

“Now I recognize the old Fabian,” I let out a little snort, “what do you want?”

“Bria,” He sighed, “my sister... if you can save her if there is at least a little chance to return her and to bring back her light, would you promise me to at least try to do it?”

For a second there I remembered Bria's eyes... The way she looked at me when she drank my blood, the way she looked at me at the feast just a few hours ago... Raw hatred that I didn't know she was even capable of.

Have some good memories from our childhood and she was the closest thing that I ever had to a friend back at the White Archipelago.

"I will try," I nodded just when we heard steps from the other side of the dark corridor.

Not wasting any time, Fabian step closer and grab my arm, and started bullying me behind him, well throwing an apologetic gaze at me from time to time.

"Laura! There you are!" Gideon threw me out of his grasp and started looking me up and down as if checking if I was hurt, "I've been searching everywhere for you! Where have you been?! And why are you with him?!"

## **Book 2 Dragon King's Forbidden Love Chapter 96 - Tips**

LARA

He was finally done checking me when he noticed my frown. His facial expression changed that very instant to a much colder one and he glared at Fabian.

"What is the meaning if this?!" Gideon almost growled, "I thought we were done with this?! You gave an oath."

"I did," Fabian replied calmly, "That's why I followed her when I notice she wasn't going in the direction of her own room. Turns out she was looking for the dungeons. But luckily, she has no idea where they are."

"Lara, does he say the truth?" my stepbrother switched his attention to me.

"What do you think, Gideon?" I sneered, "Does it sound like the truth?"

"That's enough," he snapped and started dragging me somewhere, "Thanks, Fabian. I will take it from here."

I didn't try to stall him. It was useless anyway. And when he felt that I relaxed and followed him, he let go of me and tried to entwine his fingers with mine.

“There is no need for that,” I flinched away, and we walked the rest of the way in dead silence. At the door of my room, I turned to face him and wave him goodbye. “Good night, Gideon,” my tone was dry and emotionless as I entered my chambers, but when I tried to close the door, he blocked it with his hand.

My lips parted in shock when he walked inside as well and locked the damn door behind him.

“Wh-what are you doing?” I was stepping back as he was coming closer.

“Lara, where do you think I live?” he smirked, and a bad feeling started lingering inside of me.

“You are not serious!” I gasped, trying to keep a distance.

“I am dead serious,” he undid the clasps of his cape and threw it to one of the chairs, “The Red Emperor is generous to us but he is not that generous. The palace is overcrowded now, so my fiancée and I get only one room to share.”

The realization was horrendous. He already was way too comfortable here and I wasn’t sure what was happening while I was unconscious. I wasn’t even sure how many days I was out.

“Well, you can sleep on the sofa then,” I tried to sound brave but it only made him chuckle.

“There is a perfectly nice bed in here and I don’t see why I should avoid sleeping in it,” he responded with confidence. As if he anticipated that question and had all the time in the world to think about what to reply.

“Very well,” I huffed and marched to the little and elegant couch that I spent so many wonderful hours reading in, “then I will use it.”

It was too small to lie down in it properly but I didn’t care. It was a matter of principle.

“No, you will not,” Gideon came closer. So close that I could feel his breathing on my bare shoulders. “You will sleep next to me in the bed.”

“No!” I clenched my fists.

“This is not a request,” he informed me, “You need to start getting used to the changes in our life, Lara.”

“I will never get used to it!” I promised him.

“What’s the big deal anyway?” he snorted, “Back at the White Archipelago when you had nightmares, I was flying into your room from the balcony and held you in my arms until you felt calm and could go back to sleep. You used to love it.”

“Because I didn’t know what kind of thoughts were in your head!” I turned to face him and for the second time today, I saw the real fury in his eyes.

“And what’s so terrible about that?” he stepped closer and I backed away, “We are not related by blood. You are not my sister no matter how we grew up. Yet we clearly love each other.”

“You are delusional!” I shook my head, “This is not love!”

“Love is not black and white,” he stretched his hand to me and his thumb brushed over my lower lips, “It comes in all shades and colours. You thought you loved me as your brother even though we were never siblings. You loved your friend Bria even though you were never true friends...”

I opened my mouth to protest but he only chuckled, “Just trust me on that one. Bria would throw you off the roof of the tallest building without wings if she could.”

I wanted to disagree with it but then remembered how Bria squeezed my arm painfully before drinking from me. I brushed that thought away. That was what Gideon loved doing – throwing me off the track, changing the subject, and making me forget what he wanted me to forget. Only now I saw how manipulative he could be.

“Stop it!” I warned him, but he only came closer, backing me into a wall and pinning his hands at both sides of me.

“Are you afraid of me, Lara?” he looked slightly hurt but I was not buying any of it anymore.

“Yes, I am,” I chose to reply honestly this time, “Because it feels like I don’t know you anymore!”

“But I am still the same...”

“That’s what scares me the most,” I confessed, “It turns out that I didn’t know you at all...”

Gideon distanced himself from me and I let out a sigh I didn’t know I was holding. He took off his jacket and started to unbutton his shirt, while I just stood there, not knowing where to hide.

“Well, the good side of this situation is that now we can finally get to know each other better and explore our feelings for...one another,” he kept undressing calmly, his back towards me. “You are sleeping in the bed with me. And, please, don’t provoke me to make a scene and...punish that insolent maid of yours, for example. I will treat you the best way possible, Lara. But even my patience has limits. I will not touch you until you agree to accept me. However, you will marry me and sleep in my bed. Those things are non-negotiable.”

“You wouldn’t,” I whispered.

“Kill that maid?” he turned to face me when he was already wearing next to nothing, “I only left her alive since she could be useful. If she is not...”

The silence in the room was telling me more than anything else. And I swallowed a lump in my throat.

“I see,” I went to the wardrobe room, “I will be ready in a moment.”

## **Book 2 Dragon King's Forbidden Love Chapter 97 - Tips**

LARA

I already spent too long in the wardrobe room. The only thing I truly wanted was to stay here and sleep on the floor. But I knew that he would never let me. The time was running out and I still hadn’t come up with anything.

I put on a simple dress. Not a nightgown. Everything that the gerdian empire had to offer was too revealing to put on into a bed with the enemy. I chuckled to myself as I was brushing my hair, stalling for time.

The enemy... This was what he became to me now. He didn't even realize that. And this was the saddest part in all of that.

When did it happen to him? When did he become like this? Or maybe he was always that person and I just never saw it? I indeed used to beg him just stay with me when I had nightmares in the past. It always felt safer by his side. However, now everything changed. And now being by his side felt like the most dangerous thing...

A knock on the door broke my train of thought.

"Lara," Gideon called me softly, "It's too late already. You need to rest. You are still too weak after ... everything."

He meant after them drinking my blood, of course. But I knew that I couldn't hide anymore and sighing heavily I stood up. I didn't want him to hurt Lisa. That gerdian girl was still angry at me but I couldn't blame her. The Gerdian Empire welcomed me even though they all knew that I was the danger for their entire existence. Not to mention that Xander and my stepbrother were probably announcing on every corner that I was the one who betrayed everyone and help them to seize the country. I hated how believable that story was. But there was nothing I could do about it.

I opened the door and met Gideon's hungry gaze. He frowned when he saw my attire but didn't say anything. In the meantime, I walked right past him and went straight into the bed, covering myself with sheets.

"It's not even that cold!" he scoffed as I felt the mattress dipping on the other side.

"What are you talking about?" I said, pulling my covers higher, "I am freezing!"

"Oh, really?" He moved much closer and his hands wrapped around me possessively. "No worries," his nose grazed over my ear and I could swear I felt a gentle peck somewhere in my short locks, "I will always take care of you"

"There is no need," I protested but his grasp only became tighter as he pulled me into his firm body.

"I insist," he growled softly, his breathing burning me even through my clothes.

“Gideon, please!” I pleaded.

“Do not make me angry, Lara,” he said coldly and that coldness did not match what he was doing, “I already told you how it’s going to be from now on. Stop fighting it. Sleep.”

But of course, that wasn’t an option. I lay there, stiff in his arms, and felt extremely uncomfortable. Soon his breathing became slower and his arms relaxed around me, yet he didn’t let go. He clenched me so tight as if his life depended on it. Tears came naturally. But I refused to sob loudly. Goddess forbid, he would wake up and decide to console me. The thought alone made me shudder in disgust.

I tried to throw his hands off me but it was next to impossible. Every time I moved, he was only grasping me tighter. I fell asleep more from exhaustion than from anything else. Gideon already woke up and was in the best mood.

He was putting on his clothes and I couldn’t help but notice that it was a completely new set. Meaning that someone took care of it for him. Thinking about that, there were no things of his here. And I started to believe that he had a separate room from mine after all.

As if he had felt me watching, he turned to face me and I froze, realizing that his shirt was still unbuttoned.

“You can sleep longer if you want to,” he said smiling as if everything was perfectly normal and came closer, sitting on the edge of the bed. I flinched and tried to distance myself from him and this resulted in the cold change in his gaze as he grabbed my hand and pulled me closer.

“I am fine,” I muttered, “Need to get up and go to check on Prim if that’s possible.”

“That’s my Lara,” he smiled again, caressing my cheek, “Always taking care of everyone around her. Be careful in that palace, all right?”

“I lived here for months,” I told him and he traced my lips with his thumb as if he was thinking about something completely different, “I will be fine.”

“I hope so,” he said thoughtfully, “but don’t forget that everything changed. Xander is a very hot-tempered man. Try to avoid him at all costs and do not provoke him if you end up meeting him. But if anything happens, either way,

mention that you are my bride and that the redhead Princess adores you. Also, say that you don't care about the former emperor anymore."

"I will never say that," I snapped without even thinking and his grip on me became tighter, to the point of almost hurting my chin.

"Just think of this maid of yours when you make that decision," he smirked and my lips parted in shock.

He was thinking about something just for a second, his golden eyes sparkling dangerously when he bent down and forcefully covered my mouth. His full body was towering over me and I tried to push him away, realizing that I was touching his bare chest and only making him groan in response to my actions. His tongue entered my mouth, ravishing everything inside of it and I felt the mattress dip deeper as he got onto the bed on top of me.

He took both my wrists into one of his hands and pinned them above my head.

"Gideon, please!" I didn't even get to finish as he muffled me with yet another forceful kiss.

"So sweet," he muttered, the free hand on my neck sliding lower and lower, sending goosebumps all over me. But not the good type. "So long... waited...", he couldn't even form a proper sentence.

Tears formed in my eyes because for the first time ever I was afraid and powerless like that. Any other time before I at least had my magic to summon and protect myself. But not anymore. The magic-blocking bracelets clanked as he pushed them together, squeezing my wrists painfully. I could already feel the bruises forming.

I sobbed into his mouth but he ignored even that and I felt pathetic and useless. I would have probably given up if it wasn't for Demir. Whatever was happening to me, he had it worse and I knew it. He didn't have any other chance except for me to come and get him out. At least, I wasn't aware of anything or anyone else capable of helping him. I was all he got and I had to fight. I couldn't let him down! I couldn't be weak anymore!

Gideon was already lifting up my skirt while continuing kissing me and the position was too uncomfortable to try and kick him. Not to mention that he was

much bigger and heavier. So, I did the only thing I could come up with in a moment like this.

I bit him by his tongue that he kept sticking into me. I bit hard and felt his warm blood gushing into my mouth, making me want to vomit even more.

He hissed and pushed me away quickly, jumping off the bed and finally giving me my freedom.

“What the chaos?!” he looked at me with a mix of shock and fury as I wiped my face, feeling disgusted.

“Try that again and I will do the same!” I warned him, climbing off the other end of the bed to make sure there were obstacles between us.

Blood was trickling down his chin as he spread out his wings and appeared before me in less than a second, huge and intimidating.

Without saying a word, he grabbed the back of my head so that I couldn't pull away and slammed his lips into mine. I thought that he was going to repeat everything he just did but instead, he bit into my lower lip, piercing it with his teeth and moaning as he sucked the few drops of my blood. And only when he was done, he released me out of his grasp, chuckling and hiding his wings.

“You will have to get used to being intimate with me, Lara,” he said nonchalantly taking off his white shirt that had a few crimson red stains now, “It's unavoidable, and the sooner you accept me, the better. Also, please, don't try to hurt me again. You will leave me no choice but to reciprocate!”

He came closer again, shirtless, and started wiping away the tears I didn't know were rolling down my cheeks.

“There,” he smiled gently, just like he always did. Only now it felt blood-curdling, “I am sorry I scared you, my love. We will take it slow but it's not going to take forever. I am in urgent need of an heir, after all. And it will be easier for you when you are not the only seraph out there...”

“You know what,” I looked at him sullenly, “I never thought that I could hate you. But I think I do.”

His expression changed and his lips twitched, yet he brushed his palm over my cheek again.

"You'll get over it," he said and went for the balcony, spreading his wings again and flying off in just the pants he had on. "We will have our whole life ahead of us for you to figure out what you truly feel towards me," were his last words.

As soon as he was gone, Lisa appeared in the room. She looked me over and saw my broken lip and the blood on my dress. I was sure that she would tell me something nasty to hurt me more, yet she only let out an exasperated sigh.

"Seriously, what kind of people of Light are you? This is so not how I imagined the famous angel nation," she mumbled and a little hysterical laugh escaped me. It hurt, of course, and my fingers went to my little painful wound on my lip.

"Come," the maid said, "You need a good bath and some ointments. Hopefully, he will not be back for a long time. I heard Sean Sarn has a long meeting with the leader of the White Archipelago today."

It made me feel a bit better and I followed her obediently. I knew I at least needed to look presentable for today.

After her work was done, Lisa disappeared into the cloud of dark smoke. It was naïve to think that she forgave me, but at least she wasn't too cruel to me this time. Maybe there was still hope for improvements in our relationship. Somehow, I needed her trust back. I really needed it.

I knew what I had to do and while no one was watching me, I left my room, walking firmly in the direction of where princess Primrose lived. However, right before my nose, a door to Demir's usual chambers opened up and I saw Camelia backing out of there, bowing as she did.

"Be gone already!" I heard Xander's voice and froze, realizing what was going on. She closed the heavy door and turned to face me, shocked to have met witnesses at this early hour. Demir's ex-lover clearly found a replacement in the face of the new emperor as she only had a sheet wrapped around her and her dress and shoes were in her hands. Her hair was a mess and her skin was covered in small bruises that probably were left by the teeth of the red dragon.

Her facial expression changed from shock to that of pride and arrogance as she straightened her back.

“What are you looking at, traitor?!” she spat at me and now it was my time to gasp, “What, do you think that any gerdian will ever forget what kind of role you played in Dermir’s demise?! If not for you, none of this would have happened to any of us!”

Her words were filled with venom, but deep inside I knew that she was right...

## **Book 2 Dragon King's Forbidden Love Chapter 98 - Tips**

LARA

I inhaled and exhaled slowly, closing my eyes and listening to what she was telling me.

“Everybody knew that you were the worst idea Demir ever had!” Camellia screeched pulling her sheet higher and raising her chin as if she was a queen, no less. “You destroyed him! And by doing that, you destroy the whole empire! Chaos knows what the red Dragons will do to us! The hardships we all have to endure thanks to you!”

I opened my eyes, hoping that she was finally done, and I could move on. But she only narrowed her eyes and continued, “I hope that when your brother takes you it feels as disgusting as it is only possible! From the looks of it, he is no Angel either.” She smirked and pointed at my broken lip.

A slap echoed through the dark corridors and she almost dropped her sheets in the process, covering her cheek and looking at me in shock.

“If it was my fault, how did it happen that your husband was at the table full of red dragons and you ended up in Xander Rust’s bed? The last time I saw him, he was kissing a completely different girl! And the last time I saw you, you had a completely different dress on. Did you change and then came here while you weren’t even invited? Is that the hardship you are talking about?!”

Camelia turned pale and I sneered as I knew that I was right. Her husband was one of the traitors working with the red Dragons. And she was throwing lustful gazes at Xander during the dinner that were hard not to notice.

“At least I was forced to fulfill this prophecy and wasn’t aware that I was playing right into the enemy’s hands. But what is your excuse to be here now? Do you have absolutely no respect and loyalty to your husband? Or maybe he’s the one sending you on missions like this? After all, he only married you

to appease Demir and help him to get rid of the mistress he was tired of. And now he is in the race to appease the new ruler?"

Her lips trembled as if she was about to start crying. I watched her calmly, nothing inside of me even flinched. However, this newfound cruelty tasted good. And she had it coming a long time ago.

"Mind your own business, Camellia," I said as I walked past her and entered Prim's room without the permission of the two giant guards or even knocking.

I expected anything except for what I actually saw inside of the princess's chambers. Almost every piece of furniture, every vase, every ornament was broken, shattered in pieces across the floor. The pillows and sheets were torn and even the curtains resembled rags now, hanging dully, shredded, and blown by the wind.

I found her on the floor next to her bed, hugging her knees. Fiery locks seemed unruly for the first time, scattered around her delicate frame. For a second there I thought that she was sleeping but as I stepped closer and the glass cracked under my feet, She flinched and look at me with red puffy eyes.

"What happened?" I asked her as I checked if she was chained to something again. Of course, she was. Shiny metal snaked around her ankle this time and all the way to the post of her bed.

"I'm about to marry my worst enemy," she greeted through her teeth and stood up, looking at my face, "You?"

"My brother kissed me," I grimaced at the memory.

"Eww," your pretty face distorted in disgust, "I didn't think I would say it, but you win."

"It's a tight race so far," I chuckled darkly.

"What's with the lip? It looks bad," she went to a sideboard that was missing a few drawers and opened one of the remaining ones, getting out a small bottle and handing it to me.

"I tried to beat off his tongue," I confessed, shuddering slightly.

“Drink it,” Prim ordered, “It will speed up your regeneration processes.”

“It’s fine,” I played with the tiny vessel in my hands, “My maid Lisa gave me an ointment.”

“Drink it,” the princess repeated in the same tone, and I obeyed her this time, swallowing the bitter liquid. She smirked at me when I was done. “At least we’ve established that you trust me enough not to think that I may poison you.”

I rolled my eyes, putting the bottle away, “Why would you poison your only remaining ally?”

“What if I am a vengeful person and want to punish you for fulfilling that damn prophecy?” she sneered, and I clenched my fists. I really hoped that she would not go there.

“I can only hope that...”

“Relax, Lara!” she snorted, “I am just teasing you.”

“If you are angry with me that’s fine,” I let out an exasperated sigh, “It is all my fault after all...Everybody keeps saying that.”

“I am not everybody,” the princess came closer, her chains rattling as she walked, “You’ve been there. You saw that I wasn’t exactly useful myself. Demir could have gotten you out but not me... I’d be killed if he didn’t save me.”

“Was that an option though?” I shot my brow up, “Xander seems to be in love with you...”

“Xander doesn’t know what love is!” the girl scoffed, “He was screwing someone in the next room to mine all night long. If he had to kill me to get the throne – he would. I am alive because I am a good excuse to usurp the throne and because I am one of the two things he wanted for years but couldn’t get.”

“At least he is not touching you,” I said and bit my swollen lip.

“Did you brother...” Prim clenched her lips tightly, not being able to continue.

“No!” I hurried to assure her, “Nothing I couldn’t handle. Anyway, that’s not what’s important now, is it?”

"I guess you are right," she nodded, "We need to find a way and free Demir. But I am locked here or... on a leash near Xander."

"That's good," I smiled.

"Excuse me?" she c\*cked her brow at me.

"That means that you will be able to distract Xander," I smirked, "While I get Demir out."

"Do you know something that I don't?" Primrose looked amused now.

"Not really, but I will be allowed to see him tomorrow," I said, "But it will be in Sean's presence, and I'll still have these damn cuffs on."

"Lara, but this is great news!" she started pacing around the room excitedly, "This is already better than what I had in mind before you came!"

"I don't know about that," I say, "With my magic, I would be able to get him out. But without it..."

"Then you need to get it back," she went to the same sideboard, "Luckily, I have something that might help you."

"What would that be?" I snorted, "A magic wand?"

"Something better!" she let out a happy laugh for the first time and produced a piece of paper and an ink pen.

"Erm, I am not sure I follow," I admitted to her.

"Give me a second, she smiled and went to her broken desk, tearing a board from it and using it as a stand for the paper. She quickly drew something and handed it to me. I looked at what she sketched in a hurry and saw a picture of a leaf with 5 sharp ends. "It's very pale green," the princess started to explain, "And it has a pattern here that reminds a bit of a spiderweb."

"Prim, what am I looking here at exactly?" I found that I managed to ask her.

"Our freedom," she sneered, "did Jimmy ever tell you the story about our mother and father? You know, they almost lost to their enemies once too. And back then my mother saved my father from a very similar situation."

“And how did she do it?” I wondered.

“With the help of this plant,” the princess drew more attention back to her drawing, “Memorise very well how it looks, Lara. because everything will depend on you. This plant is called sideria. It was banned many years ago because of its properties. My father was personally burning the fields full of it is the only place where it grew. But my mother... she managed to save a few plants and she brought them to the palace.”

“What are the properties?” Now I was really interested.

“If you make a potion out of it and make a person consume it then it is said that you will be able to influence that person’s mind.”

“Impossible!” I gave you the picture back, “I never heard about anything like it.”

“I know,” Prim grinned, “Dad wasn’t a big fan of it since his arrival used it on our mother when he tried to get her to marry him. It was mostly used by people with bad intentions. However, sometimes the situation just calls for it.”

“You want to try and influence Xander?” I asked her and she snorted.

“Chaos, no!” she splashed your hands, “He will never eat or drink anything from my hand. He knows far too well that all I want is for him to die. And also, he knows my mother’s story so it would be too risky to try that same thing on him.”

“But what did she do?” I watched the Princess come to a candle that was still dying down slowly on one of her windows and burn the paper without any kind of hesitation.

“She poisoned the man who help my father captive and made him believe things that weren’t true. As a result, he let my father and her goal without even realizing it.”

“I’m not sure that Sean will also eat or drink anything from me,” I told her honestly.

“But it’s not Sean who has the k!ss from your magical blocking bracelets,” primrose blinked at me innocently and if understood what she was talking about.

“You want me to give us to Gideon?”

“Yes,” she went to cheer that was lying on the floor and pick that up, sitting on top of it, “if my observations are correct, he believes that you love him. If you make a step towards him, he will do anything for you. And all you need is just to give him a cup of tea. You have that innocent glow around you, Lara, he will never suspect you.”

She might have been right.

“There are tricks on how one should use it and I’ll explain everything to you,” Prim insisted, “But at the moment, you need to go to the royal garden, turn to the old stone garden house, and right in front of the nearby fountain, you will see a flower bed. A big one. There, between exotic flowers, you will find that herb. Make sure you hide it as you bring it here; this is our only chance, Lara.”

~ \* ~

In the garden, I found the flowerbed quickly. I had two bulky guards with me and they were watching my every move. So, when I got out my greenery scissors, they both put their hands on the hilts of their swords.

“Don’t worry, noble sirs,” I smiled playfully, shocked with how easy and naturally that came to me, “I only need to cut a few flowers of each kind for the princess to pick what she would want to use at your wedding. After all, it’s going to be the event of the century!”

They looked at each other with puzzled expressions but put their hands down. I started with cutting some roses and lilies and went on for a while. My basket was getting heavier and heavier when I finally found what I was looking for. For someone who had no idea about what that was, sideria would look like some sort of weed. Absolutely useless and not pretty. Luckily men understood nothing in things like these and none of my overlookers paid any attention to what I was putting inside my wicker basket.

I shoved the last few branches inside and covered them with other flowers when I hear a familiar voice behind my back.

“I didn’t know you were into gardening,” Sean Sarn appeared out of nowhere, his eyes locking with mine at the same moment...

## **Book 2 Dragon King's Forbidden Love Chapter 99 - Tips**

## Book 2 Dragon King's Forbidden Love Chapter 99

LARA

I keep my chin up as I look into his eyes. At the same time, his facial expression turns grim.

"That could hardly be called gardening, Sir Sarn," I forced a smile and noticed how he almost scoffed at that, "I'm just picking flowers that might be suitable for the future empress' wedding. I started here but I was thinking about checking in the easter part of the garden as well. I heard they have the most beautiful tul!ps there. What do you think? You lived here all your life and know every corner of the palace. Is it worth paying attention to?"

I almost bit my tongue as it was time for me to stop blubbering.

"I feel like I'm obliged to help you," Sean smirked, "After all, I grew up with Prim and she's almost like a sister to me. It would be impolite to ignore a matter of such importance as her wedding flowers."

"You must be so happy that your almost sister marries a man like the new emperor," I couldn't help but say. He scowled at my words. No man ever would want their sister to be married to someone like Xander and we both knew that.

"I'm thrilled," he said dryly but then sneered at me, "In fact, I'm so thrilled that I decided to go with you and help you."

"With what?" I almost choked on my words.

"Flower picking," he chuckled as he waved at the guards dismissing them, "I want our Primrose to be the happiest and the most beautiful bride for the dashing new emperor. Everything should be perfect. Shall we?"

He offered me his hand, but I chose to ignore it, "Lead the way, Sir."

His !ps twitched slightly at my words and actions, but he didn't say anything else and just started walking with me following him awkwardly. I really wanted this bizarre encounter to be over but he started taking me from one part of the

secret gardens to another, showing off hundreds of most beautiful flowers. Most of which I had to reject since my basket was heavy enough already.

“I can help you with that,” he said, “your hands must be tired.”

“No, thank you,” I dodged his attempt to grab my precious cargo, “It’s not heavy at all! Besides, I need some exercise.”

“Lara, I know that you’re plotting something,” the redhead man sighed, rubbing the bridge of his nose as if he was very tired, “But trust me it would be best if you just accept the situation and try to adjust.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” I flashed my pearly whites at him, playing an ignorant fool, “But I will take your very useful advice into consideration.”

“Is that how it is going to be now?” He asked me unexpectedly sadly, “we can’t even be friends anymore?”

“Were we ever friends? I still don’t know a single thing about you,” I was looking desperately for an excuse to get rid of him. There was one problem about Sean. He really did grow up here with Demir, Prim and their other siblings. His mother was the former empress’s friend. And a close one at that. Sean was like family to them back in the day and chances that he was aware of that plant’s existence were pretty high. If anything, he could even know how it looked and where it grew. And if that was the case – he would know for sure what I tried to do.

“That may be because you never asked,” he chuckled, bringing me back to reality.

“All right,” I stopped and looked at him, knowing that only a big distraction might save me now, “You want me to ask you something about you – I can do that.”

He tensed, feeling my mood but it was too late to stop. And he didn’t seem to be a man who liked to back off.

“How did you feel when you lied to me and used me to destroy your former best friend and his family that took your mother in and considered you one of

their closest people?" I shot my eyebrow up when I looked at him and noticed how he clenched his fists. His gaze shifted away from me but just for a moment. In no time he gathered himself and locked eyes on me.

"Do you want the honest truth?" he asked as if he was daring me.

"That's what friends do, don't they?" I said coldly.

"I felt like crap!" he confessed, and it wasn't what I expected. I was sure that he would change the subject or find a reason to leave me. Preferably the latter. Yet he continued, "Ever since I saw you in the capital that day and you hit me with your Light, I couldn't stop thinking about it. I remember it as if it was yesterday. And when I saw how Demir looks at you and how you look at him, I knew that he was your soul mate. The disgusting feeling was back inside my soul. I wanted something that he had. Again. Just when I thought that I managed to get rid of it, to build my own path, separate from him. It was my job to come up with a plan for my people to succeed so that all the sacrifices that we made were worth it in the long run. So, that day I knew what I had to do. Yet I tried everything possible to avoid that. Do you even remember how I begged you to leave at the masquerade ball? Xander was planning to kidnap you back then. With you in his hands, he could control Demir. And we all knew about your hair and the prophecy. However stupid that sounded, the Seer was never wrong before. So, you were the key. Do you remember how I tried to keep you at The Dark Selection? I really tried to avoid all that. Your brother was already conspiring with Xander and I knew that the only way to save you was if I could make you stay there. I knew that Demir would lose this war sooner or later – he had too many traitors next to him. And the prophecies always come true. But I so did not want for you to be a part of it. I was supposed to take you to Xander when I drugged your food. The first night, I couldn't move since Demir was flying above us and I had to work on the protective spell. And during that time you slept in the same room as me.. So beautiful, so innocent... I knew what Xander and your brother planned for you. And I made the decision that I would try and help you. My brain was working fast and taking you to Fiona seemed like the best idea. And no, don't think that it changed everything else. I knew that being apart from you would still hurt Demir. And I planned his demise accordingly. I wished deep inside that he would avoid it. But it was my job to do it anyway. He and I made our choices a long time ago.

Time flew fast, I got to know you better and with every day it was even more evident that I was falling for you. I did not want this, I did not ask for this... yet it was happening despite my attempts to avoid you, to forget you... I already

spent my life wanting things that I couldn't have. And the cycle was repeating itself... Where was I? Let's get back to your question. How did I feel during all that? Horrible. Dreadful. Disgusting. Is that the question that you wanted to be answered?"

I swallowed the lump that formed in my throat and said nothing.

"While we are at it, maybe you will share some truth with me too," Sean stepped closer, "and tell me what the hell you are really doing in this garden."

"Are you even sorry for Demir?" I glanced at him, trying to get him off track.

"Of course," he replied in a broken voice, "I made my choice but I'm not a monster. I wish he could fly away somewhere far and be free and happy there, just like his other siblings did. But it's too late for that. Xander will never let him go. The best thing that I can do for him is to take care of you and Prim."

"Is that how you call it?" I snorted, "I hate to break it to you, but none of us is fine. What happens to us is horrible and Demir will hardly be happy and content with such destinies for any of us."

"I told you that I can save you from your brother," he wanted to come closer but changed his mind at the last moment.

"Save it," I turned away and prepared to leave, "if they kill Demir then I will probably die soon too. We are soul mates, remember?"

"How could I ever forget?" He scoffed.

"If you really want to do something good, help Prim," I looked at him one last time from under my lashes and started to walk away. Luckily, he did not follow me this time.

~ \* ~

Back in my room, I put the basket on one of the side tables and called for Lisa.

"My lady," she seemed polite again, doing the most perfect curtsy and I didn't know whether that was good or bad. But she never seemed like a person who can hold a grudge for long...

“Lisa,” I forced a smile, “I’m going to drink some tea here in this room. Could you please bring me everything that I might need for that?”

“Of course,” the dark smoke surrounded the girl and she disappeared, only to come back in just under a few minutes with the whole tea set on the tray in her hands. She placed it on the table where I really liked to enjoy a couple of nice cups of tea.

“Thank you,” I said, coming closer and checking if the water was hot enough, “I’ll take it from here.”

“But my lady,” Lisa gave me a puzzled look, “It’s too hot! And you are...”

“I’ll be fine. Just go,” I tried to give her my most reassuring smile, but she did not look convinced. However, we had different social standing and she had to obey me, so, curtsying again, she left the room. Through the door this time.

I got out the leaves of Sideria with trembling fingers and shredded them into the small kettle. I added the tea leaves and mint to mask the flavour and let it brew for a few minutes, hoping that I would manage everything on time.

I took all of it to the balcony and took a seat, waiting.

Gideon arrived in an hour or so from the sky when the drink was completely cold and I frowned when I saw him.

“Lara,” he looked slightly surprised, “Are you... waiting for me?”

“Yes,” I sighed, pointing at the cups, “But it was probably a stupid idea to make tea for you... It’s cold already anyway.”

He stepped closer and observed me for a while. Then asked in a slightly mesmerized tone, “You...made tea for me?”

“It’s already too late,” I chuckled sadly, “But ...do you want some?”

## **Book 2 Dragon King's Forbidden Love Chapter 100 - Tips**

LARA

He looked at me hesitantly and I couldn't blame him of course. Considering how we separate it in the morning it was probably suspicious. But time was pressing and I had to do it now because later Demir could already be dead. The thought alone made me shudder and he didn't escape my stepbrother's eye. It also didn't make him rush to drink the tea that he watched with suspicion.

"Just forget it!" I mumbled and took a sip from my cup, slumming it back into the saucer loudly. I got up and prepared to leave when he stopped me.

"Lara, wait!" He said it with a hint of desperation and I turned back slowly to look at him again.

"Are you even sure that we can still speak as civilized people?" I raised my brow at him, "I'm not so sure after the morning that we had."

"Of course we can," he assured me with a vague smile, "we know each other for many years. Nothing will ruin the relationship that we had."

It was hard not to scoff. It was so ironic that he felt this way because for me there could never be any kind of relationship for the two of us anymore. But I managed to hold back my reaction and force a smile, returning to the table.

"Very well," I took the sparkling silver teapot in my hands and poured the tea into two teacups, moving one of them in his direction. I pretend to fill in mine as well, although it was almost full anyway with the clean tea I had made previously. I sat in my place and looked at him expectantly.

Gideon hid his wings and joined me on the opposite side of the small table. However, he was not even looking at the tea. He wasn't a big fan of it, to begin with, but he used to drink a cup or two with me back at the White Archipelago. This was our time to talk and share what happened during the day. Although now I realize that I was probably the only one sharing back then. He turned out to have so many secrets I had no idea about that it was hard to tell if I knew him at all. Not that it was important anymore.

I took my cup into my hands and brought it to my lips, taking a small sip and watching him at the same time. He didn't move and I knew that I could do anything except for telling him to drink the damn liquid. Then he'd know that something was wrong.

"So," he leaned over the back of his chair, "You obviously wanted to talk."

“I did, didn’t I?” I tensed. A conversation with him was the last thing I needed. Since I didn’t have anything good to tell him.

The silence was getting awkward and I took another sip.

“I think I’ll start if it goes like this,” Gideon sighed, “But I have to say that I am glad that you reached out to me first. I felt bad after what happened in the morning.”

“This makes two of us,” I avoided his gaze, “I did not expect that you are capable of...”

I stopped talking and fluttered my eyelashes, wiping a non-existent tear. Was that how he did it all these years?

“Lara,” he stretched his hand to me but I avoided that, “Of course, I am never going to hurt you. I was just angry... I am going crazy seeing how he made you hate me now.”

“I could never hate you, Deon,” I lied, slightly shocked at how easy that was for me. Maybe because it didn’t matter anymore. If it didn’t work out and I couldn’t save Demir – nothing would ever matter anymore.

I looked at him and noticed a small smile spreading over his face which he erased almost immediately.

“I am very happy to hear that,” Gideon said and placed his hands back on his cup. I tried really hard not to look at it. The less attention I paid to the most important thing – the better. It was essential not to arouse any suspicions. “Listen, Lara,” my stepbrother continued, “We will be going back to the White Archipelago as soon as this wedding is over. And we will get married there. Everything is already arranged. But I want you to learn to enjoy all that. Just think about it, you will be the Leader’s wife. You will have whatever you want, even the light wings. You will lead the life that made you so happy before. We were happy, right?”

“Sometimes,” I had to admit and he tensed again. I probably should have nodded eagerly. Chaos!

“We will be happy again,” he did not give up, “I know it’s very new to you, but we will take things slow. There is nothing I love more in this life than you, Lara. All of this is for you. Everything that I did...”

I swallowed hard and took another sip, when an idea came to my mind, “This tea reminds me of the time when Father died... Back then, you became the Heir of the Artes House. And you were too busy to pay any attention to me. I felt so lonely and one day decided to bring you tea myself just to be able to see you and talk to you...”

I looked at him through my lashes and smiled weakly, adding, “You drank all of it and I was pouring you more all the time so that we could talk longer. I took it a sign of goodwill back then...”

This time a full smile blossomed on his face and he took the cup and gulped all of it almost in one go, making me exhale with relief.

Prim told me that I should be careful with what words I choose and also that it may need time to work. But I wanted to test it badly.

“You will drink one more cup, right?” I ask him with a grin, and he nodded.

I stood up and poured the drink, thanking the Goddess of Light for all her help. Although, of course, it also could be nothing. Yet the good news that he was drinking more of Sideria.

It was a shame that Demir’s mother was gone, I wished I could meet her and k!ss her!

“About our wedding, Lara,” Gideon cleared his throat.

“You really don’t want to talk about that,” I smiled, “Not now. Right?”

“Right,” he was not smiling but did as he was told.

“And you trust me now, you know that I want all the thing that you want. I just need time. A lot of time...”

“Of course,” he agreed, “Take as many months as you need.”

“It may take longer than that,” I chuckled, “A year, maybe two. But I know that you will be fine with that. You said it yourself – you are ready to wait as long as it takes. Right?”

“Right,” he agreed quietly.

“You want another cup, I can see it in your eyes,” I smiled and poured some more of sideria potion for him which he drank happily.

“Thank you,” he said.

“You are welcome,” I giggled, getting slightly bolder. It seemed to be working. “I just want to make you happy. I make you happy, yes?”

“Yes,” Gideon nodded. It was slightly creepy but I did not give a care in the world.

“There is something else I wanted to talk about,” I mentioned nonchalantly, “I think that we can only fix our...relationship... when we trust each other. I need your complete trust, Gideon. You give me your full trust, you believe in everything I do and say, right?”

He said nothing and I clenched my teacup so hard that it was at the point of breaking. Was it not working after all? Or did I overdo it? Deon looked like he was fighting some inner conflict and I bit my lip. This was the defining moment and I already started to think that I lost and he somehow overpowered the magical plant.

But he looked at me with clear eyes and nodded, “Of course, Lara.”

“Then maybe you want to prove it?” I stretched my hands to him and he took them into his large palms. I almost rolled my eyes. “Take the magic blocking bracelets off me, Gideon. This will make both of us very happy and it’s the most important thing.”

“You are right,” he agreed again even though his brows were knitted. His hand left mine just for a second as he produced a little crystal from his pocket. He touched each wrist with it and both bracelets opened up. He was about to take them away when I stopped him.

“Leave them as a present for me,” I tilted my head, smiling brightly, “I want them as a memory of this first time we...started this new chapter in our life.”

“Of course,” he beamed and wanted to take my hands again but I stood up, distancing myself.

“Finish the tea, Gideon,” I said walking away and holding the bracelets, “And I am sure that you are very tired. You need a good sleep for a couple of days. You’ve been through a lot and you are exhausted.”

“You are right,” I heard his voice, “That’s exactly how I feel.”

I left the room and went to Prim, ignoring her guards who ignored me. My dress had long bell sleeves and it was impossible to notice that I didn’t have the magic blockers on anymore.

When I was in, Prim jumped off her bed. The room was squeaky clean already and all broken furniture and vases were replaced.

“How did it go?” she asked me nervously and I showed her my bare wrists, which only made the princess smirk delightfully.