

The Selection: Bride Of The Dark Dragon Chapter 16 - Tips

MIRA

When we walk into the dining hall, my hand on Derrien's, since he gallantly offered and refusing was not an option, the whole room gets quiet. And if I am not surprised with the girls' reaction, the gerdians, who dine on the upper surface again, bring me to a state of shock. I see lord Ryden jump up from his seat, his eyes getting dark once again. Damn it. This smells like trouble.

Everybody looking at me, at the dress that I am wearing, at who brought me here... and making assumptions. And I may be a strong woman, but the realization is a bit too much for me... I try not to look at anyone in particular, but I can just feel it... The envious glares of the girls, the greedy looks of the men... I notice Tristan, but he simply turns away. Not that I was looking for any kind of support there.

Derrien moves and I follow his lead as he brings me to the table I was sitting at yesterday and moves a chair for me.

"Thank you", I mumble to him as I sit down and he k!sses my hand.

"I'll see you later, lady Mira. Remember my promise!", he chuckles right before leaving, making me blush once again. And only when I see him going to the area of gerdian lords, I can finally breathe and relax a little bit.

"Sooooo," Morgan grins at me, "What was that?"

"Definitely not what it looks like!", I sign.

"Well, it looks like you have an admirer!", Xia giggles, covering her mouth with her hand, "Tell us everything!"

And something seems off to me. Are they seriously so cheerful when they know that one of us is dead? And maybe Xia didn't even know Bella, but Morgan did. Not to mention that it's just simply creepy that any one of us could be so easily k!lled... and that's when I realize! They simply do not know!

I snatch my head in Derrien's direction and meet his calm gaze. He moves a finger to his mouth to let me know that I should stay quiet.

“Oh, gods! You two have common secrets already!”, his gesture isn’t unnoticed by Morgan, “Seriously, Mira, tell us something!”

“There is not much to tell”, I look into my plate as I am brought today’s dinner – some kind of not familiar to me meat with vegetables arranged in an intricate pattern.

“Leave it be”, Xia smiles, “No one would be sharing their secrets here. We are all kind of rivals after all!”

“It’s not that”, I hurry to clear the misunderstanding, “There’s just nothing between us. He just brought me new clothes as he promised yesterday and that’s it. ”

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“Well, he looks at you as if you are already his!”, Morgan puts a piece of meat in her mouth.

“He is a gerdian. They look this way at everything. We are nothing but property to them,” I take a sip of my drink and for a while our table gets quiet.

“By the way, what really happened to Bella?”, Morgan asks and Xia looks up, “I know they say that she turned out to be a hater of the Empire and was rejected by all of the gerdians and sent home. But it doesn’t make sense...”

“I know”, I sign, “But I haven’t seen her since yesterday’s dinner, so I wouldn’t know anything. I didn’t even know that. They haven’t told me anything – just changed my room.”

The taste of food gets bitter when I lie to them. I wish for all of this to be finished sooner.

“Well, it’s her loss!”, Xia giggles, “Don’t be so tense! She must have been at great fault if everyone rejected her. I mean, I understand the lords and the knights. But even commoners rejected her and for that, she must have done

or said something terrible. Maybe she was a hater after all. I heard they don't tolerate this in the Empire!"

"Really?", I ask hopefully, "So, if I express the hatred for the Empire they would throw me out of the Selection?"

Xia looks at me surprised and Morgan snorts, "Don't even try this! They can do a lot of things to you instead of throwing you away! Bella is lucky she got out so easy!"

Only Bella wasn't lucky at all... and she didn't get out. Maybe there really isn't a way out after all. And we are all simply stuck here!

"Where is your new room?", Morgan asks after the dinner as we walk out of the dining hall.

"On the floor of the gerdians", I admit to her quietly.

"What?!", the brunet gasps, "Oh, gods, Mira!"

"Can we visit?", Xia's eyes sparkle with excitement.

"Of course," I smile at both of them, "That is if no one snatches you on the way and if I am not locked under a dark magic barrier again..."

Both their jaws drop to the floor.

"I'd still come!", Xia giggles. Yeah, she is really into this whole "find your wonderful gerdian husband thing." Morgan looks at me with more understanding in her eyes.

"I'll try to visit too", she says, "I can bring you the notes from today's lessons you missed. They started teaching us the etiquette and history of the empire. It's probably just safer to know it."

"Thanks", I nod and the two of them walk away in the direction of the ladies' rooms. Isidore and her minions pass and I hear one of the girls coughing, "Slut!"

Why does that reaction not surprise me? I roll my eyes and walk in the opposite direction.

“Look at her”, Isidore says loudly as more girls come out of the dining hall, “She is going to the men’s rooms to offer herself to someone new today! So shameless!”

“Keep your fantasies to yourself!”, I turn to her with the most radiant smile I can master, “Or people would think that you are jealous of me!”

“Me? Jealous? Of you?”, the blonde fake-laughs, “You may have got into their beds before everyone else, but as soon as they officially meet with other girls...Let me just say, no one wants to marry used goods.”

“And yet somehow no one is still interested in the unused you”, I snort and a few girls from a different group laugh at my remark, “ You know what they say – don’t count your chickens until they are hatched.”

“w***e!”, Isidore breaks to a scream, “Walking to men’s rooms and still behaving like...”

“I am walking to MY room”, I say calmly but loudly, “Due to changes it is in a different wing of a castle now.”

“Lier!”, one of the minions says, “Why would they put you there when there are plenty of empty rooms on our floor!”

What did she just say? There were empty rooms? Then why...

“And since when do the lords of the Gerdian Empire have to explain their decision to mere humans?”, I hear a familiar voice and lady Cecilia steps in. A wave of curtsies follows.

Isidore lowers her head, she would never dare to anger the only woman here who can talk to gerdians.

“Lady Mira was telling the truth”, she says, “One of the lords requested her to be moved to chambers of his choice. And, of course, we had to oblige. And you all should follow her example. She clearly does something right to attract the attention of not just one, but several lords!”

Oh, gods! She is going to be the end of me. Now, most of the girls look at me as if I am their common enemy.

“However, lady Mira”, Cecilia comes closer to me and her face looks displeased, “Even though you are clearly in favour now, do not think that it makes you special and allows you to miss lessons. You are supposed to attend them at all times just like everyone else! Otherwise...”

“Unless she is ordered not to by one of us”, familiar voice breaks from behind me and I turn to see lord Ryden materializing out of dark smoke.