

## The Selection: Bride Of The Dark Dragon Chapter 20 - Tips

MIRA

The next day flies fast. Half of it lady Cecilia tortures us with the etiquette rules of the Gerdian empire, the other half she tortures us even more with dance lessons. And the funny part about those is that since we are already considered the property of the gerdian lords, we cannot dance with actual men. Instead, they provide us with magical dummies made of their dark magic itself. And in all honesty, us dancing with black clouds in the shapes of men looks ridiculous. But, oh, well. Not that I care.

When I come back to my room, exhausted, I notice a few huge leather suitcases right in the middle of it. My suitcases! The ones I had back at the Academy! Gods are these my things?!

I run towards the luggage and notice a book with a note attached to it: "I sincerely hope this will help you. T."

Well, this could only be Tristan. And looking at the book I notice its title: The Selection of Brides for the Dark Lords of Gerdian Empire: The Rules.

Oh, this is good! This is what I need! At least, now I will know what my rights are. If there are any, of course. But also – maybe there will be something that might help me to escape!

I lock my door and put my own barrier on it. Not that dark magic wouldn't be able to destroy it in seconds, but if they don't check it they might still think that it was created by Derrien Derwood. Unless he told them all that I am free for grabs already, then – I am doomed. Probably. But I wouldn't be thinking of that! Nope. I have better things to do.

I get out two apples I managed to snatch from breakfast and lunch. I knew that I would be missing dinner for sure since that's the only meal that the gerdians attend. And I don't want to meet any of them unless I absolutely have to. So, first I look at what's inside my bag and find another note – from my team.

“Di, we all hope you are fine and well. Nothing changes on our end. Let us know how you are. Hope you have everything you need now. Dereck, Rick & Nort.”

I sign. It may seem like a simple note to anyone else, but I know exactly what Dereck means. “Nothing changes on our end”... That means that they are still ready to help me escape if I want to. “Hope you have everything you need now” – they put all my equipment and maybe even more to help me with the new plan. “Let us know how you are” – tell us what you want to do now and how.

I burn the note in my fingers. No one should see it, it would be safer for the boys. But it warms up my heart that I can count on them even after Derrien almost killed Dereck. Derrien... go away from my thoughts! Honestly, why can't I stop thinking about this arrogant, selfish, self-centered, rude, vulgar, annoying, indecent, impudent man! I have better things to do!

Unpacking some of my clothes, books, weapons, and spell ingredients that my friends packed for me didn't help. Although I was happy to see my sword and favourite daggers. I earned them in battle, so they mean a lot. Even though completely useless against dark magicians I am currently dealing with. But still nice to have them here.

However, my mood is still not that great. So, biting my last apple, I simply go to sit on a huge windowsill next to my bed with the book of rules. Knowledge is power and at the moment this is something I am lacking. The book is thicker than it really should be and I soon realize that everything is exactly as I have expected. You are property...blah-blah-blah... Respect the gerdians... blah-blah... Do everything they tell you... Blah... Forget other men exist... Bo-ring!

But then another chapter is about presents. And this is where it gets interesting! Obviously, the dark lords do not give gifts without a secret meaning or wanting something in return. This is kind of a secret language they use. When they give you a flower that means that they are interested in and consider you for the role of their bride. When they give you an empty jewellery box, that means that they do not consider you anymore and you are free to go and look for other suitors. This is a good-bye and the lord who made a present like this for you wouldn't be returning for sure. Which makes me smile. So, it IS possible to get rid of them. If all 50 gerdians who take part in the Selection give you the box then you are out. But this has never happened before... before me that is! I also find it interesting that there is nothing about you being

passed on into the Empire and its commoners or brothels. Did Derrien lie to me back when I tried to escape? That bastard!

Next – clothes. And this is where I gulp. When a gerdian gives you a gown made in the Empire, it means that you belong to him... as in you are his property now. Not bride, I must add. Just property. But this is considered a great achievement. The more expensive the gown is – the more serious is the intention of the lord who presented it. And here I gulp again, the dresses that I got were definitely not cheap.

Next – jewellery. This is given as the last step before the official engagement. This is to let everyone know that the woman is taken. And for a woman, it means that she should prepare for the proposal and especially please her lord. I cringe at that phrase. It's obvious what they mean by that... The jewellery they give could be easily recognized as the stone for sure would be black – black diamond, black sapphire, obsidian, black opal, black onyx, black pearl... I choke on that remembering the dress I wore yesterday, covered in pearls... But for sure that wasn't considered jewellery, right?

And the last step is the engagement bracelet. Made out of gold forged by dark magic itself, once it's on you – you would never be able to take it off. Literary. Unless the lord changes his mind and takes it of himself before the wedding. But again – that never happened before. Not since they started to take human brides. Once they want something – they never change their minds.

I close the book not able to take any more of all this and look out of the window. It's dark already and I look at the starry sky. Beautiful. The same as back at the Academy... The same as back at home...

Suddenly, a dark shadow spreads all over it and I gasp. It's so fast! It moves with such speed that I can't quite understand what I see here. What the chaos is it? But it disappears as quickly as it appeared. And no matter how long I look for it, I can't see it anymore!

Have I really just seen something in the sky or am I imagining things? Maybe I am just too tired. Yes, that's it. I am exhausted and just need to go to bed.

Jumping off the windowsill, I march to my luggage and find the section with my underwear and nightgown. Thank gods it all here!

I put it carefully to my bed and walk towards my mirror, standing with my back to it and looking at my reflection and swinging my fingers I realize some of my

magic and untie the laces of my dress. It falls to my feet, revealing another scandalous bodysuit that I was presented by lord Derrien. This time it's silver lace with a firm corset and a b.ra part that pushes my b.reasts even higher than the previous one. I step out of my dress and pick it up, putting it carefully on a hanger I left in the morning and sign, taking a look at myself in the mirror again. I would never get used to this kind of underwear!

Going back to the bed, where my own undergarments are placed carefully I giggle, "Oh my, can't believe Dereck saw all of these and even packed it with his own hands!"

The moment I say the words, dark flames appear and destroy every piece of clothing before me...