

The Selection: Bride Of The Dark Dragon Chapter 8 - Tips

MIRA

The rest of the day goes in a blur. I try to comprehend the facts that I know now. Derrien didn't kill me and even didn't harm me although he clearly could and probably even was supposed to. All the other girls received their marks one month ago. But not me. I was the last one. But only Gods know why. And maybe that is why Derrien spared me... After all, I didn't have time to prepare and learn the rules.

And the cherry on the top is Tristan. Why would he be the one to supervise such an event? This must be below him. Usually, someone unimportant is sent. And this year they send the Sapphire knight – the hope of the kingdom, the first sword, and the nephew of the king? It just doesn't sit right with me.

We walk to the dinner together with Bella and Morgan, chatting as they inform me about all the rules I haven't heard before. And there are plenty.

"Well, the worst for you would definitely be the dress code", Morgan signs, "We are supposed to have dresses for every occasion. And they should not be repeated..."

"And if we don't – then what happens?", I roll my eyes.

"Well, if a girl is from a family of commoners, she would be provided dresses and everything she needs here. Others have to prepare themselves. And if they don't it considered disrespect for the Empire and the girl could be punished... But I don't know how..."

Great. Just great.

We walk into the dining hall and I gasp. The spacious room is decorated with gold and black colours. It's sparkling. So luxurious that I immediately feel like a pauper in my travel outfit. And looking at the girls around us I notice that they are all dressed as if they were preparing for a ball and not a simple dinner, which isn't even a part of the Selection process. Unbelievable!

The room is divided into two parts – the lower one and the higher one, with a round platform in the middle. And something just tells me that this platform is used as a stage from time to time. The higher part is decorated even more

lavishly than the lower one. And the girls are only allowed downstairs. At the moment the higher part is empty, but I note that all the tables are set.

“You are going to be fine!”, Morgan squeezes my hand, “Let’s find a table!”

“Bella! Bella!”, I hear a screeching voice and see the girls who were laughing at me earlier today wave at my roommate, “Come here!”

Bella looks guilty at us and I just know that she wants to leave and sit at a popular table. And that is definitely not ours.

“Go!” I smile at her. I understand her to some point. Although this Isidore girl, who shoots daggers at me with her eyes, is only going to bring trouble. I want to tell Bella, but she is so happy and already running towards them. Oh well, we can speak about it later. Hopefully, she is not going to tell my secrets to them... But even if she does – it cannot be stopped. Morgan is right, I shouldn’t trust people so easily.

Morgan and I sit at one of the empty tables and look around. All the girls are beautiful, there is no exception here. The gerdians only choose the best of the best. Some are wearing exquisite jewellery and dresses and some are looking more modest in beautiful dresses and no accessories at all. These are probably the commoner girls. They form a table of their own, which is full already as only 5 places are set at each.

“Would you mind if I join you?”, a girl with long and straight black hair in an unusual dress design smiles at us.

“Of course”, Morgan waves at one of the chairs.

“Thank gods,” the girl smiles, “I was afraid to be rejected everywhere!”

“Well, you kind of at the rejects table anyway”, I chuckle at her and she giggles, covering her mouth.

“I would be more in place here”, she smiles, “My name is Xia. Xia Dart.”

“I am Morgan and this is Mira here”, my friend introduces us, “Are you from the South?”

“Yes”, the girl lowers her eyes, “I am. I am from one of the Southern tribes.”

“How interesting! You would have to tell us more!”

And that's when a sound of a fork clicking a glass draws everybody's attention to a woman who appeared at the little stage in the middle. She is in her forties, very elegant and thin in a dark wine dress that fits her like a glove. Her hair is up and she slides a haughty gaze over each of us, stopping at me just for a moment and almost gasping, but quickly takes her feelings under control.

"My name is Cecilia Verton and I am going to be your curator for the next months until your destiny is decided here," she says loudly and all the girls immediately straighten their back as if they are on their best behavior. "I will inform you of the event, I will supervise your lessons, I would approve or disapprove your outfits, I would be the one to decide on your punishments if the need arises...", she looks at me when she says that, "And I would be the one to let you know the will of the dark lords of the Gerdian Empire! I hope that is clear to you!"

Everyone nods. Like the good submissive little girls that they are. And I catch another gaze of lady Cecilia on me. Damn it!

"For your protection and supervision and for the promoting the relations between our Kingdom and the Empire, our great King Bendor has sent the Sapphire Knight of Akyria to help me look after you this year!", she points her elegant hand at Tristan standing at the entrance door with his hands crossed on his chest. I haven't even noticed him. "But ladies, remember, that although you may find sir Tristan Ragnard irresistible in any way, you should always make sure not to embarrass neither yourselves nor him by inappropriate behavior. Since you are here, you are considered the property of the Gerdian Empire. And gerdian dark lords would never tolerate their women next to other men. So, to help yourselves and not to put sir Tristan in a compromising position – KEEP. YOUR. DISTANCE."

Gods, not many people scare me. But she does.

"And now, to the most exciting part of today's first dinner, ladies!", lady Cecilia suddenly turns from fury into an elegant angel once again, "As you have all been warned before you arrived here, the Selection would be full of tests and surprises! And today is the first of them! Your first meeting with the dark lords of the Gerdian Empire will happen right here and now!"

Waves of shocked whispers fill the room and lady Cecilia smirks at us.

"When the lords arrive, remember your manners! Each of you would be called to this very stage and would have to introduce herself! And answer some

questions if asked. If you are not asked anything, just curtsy and leave back to your place!”

She leaves the stage and before she says anything, grand doors at the back of the higher part of the dining hall open, and men, most wearing dark clothes walk in. There are way too many of them and it sends a chill down my spine. They are looking at us as we are just some goods at a shop’s window – some with interest, some indifferent, some with eyes ready to devour each and every one of us.

I turn away from them, not wishing to pay them the undeserved attention and look at the girls. Everyone looks so excited. Some already flirting with their eyes, some playing the shy card – taking “secret” glance at the men, and some shamelessly sticking their breasts up in the air.

Even the girls at my table look happy with their arrival. Am I literary the only one not overwhelmed with the whole experience? Did no one except me have a life prior to this?

And that’s when I feel it. A gaze that weighs like a hundred stones put onto my chest. I look up and see Derrien Derwood, sitting at the table right next to the chest. A male servant pours him some wine but he doesn’t break eye contact with me, piercing me with his reddish eyes.

He obviously contemplates something but when his eyes travel down my body he smirks. And I clench my lips. I know he kind of spared my life, but he is clearly enjoying me wearing such clothes at an event this important.

Oooh, I am not going to give you the satisfaction of seeing me humiliated! It’s just clothes! And I am just the kind of lady, who can handle anything!

With that thought, I take my glass and raise it slightly towards him, smirking at him in return and take a sip. Gods know, I will need all the courage I can have today!