

The Selection: Bride Of The Dark Dragon Chapter 9 - Tips

MIRA

I watch girl after girl come up to the stage and introduce themselves. Nervous and confident, flirty, and shy – there is a bit of everything. The process is simple really. Every girl has to come up onto the stage, curtsy, and say a few words about herself. And they all say their names and titles if they have them, where they are from and their hobbies, which are mostly some kind of music, embroidery, painting. Boring! Sometimes the lords ask some questions, but mostly they don't. I don't think they even bother remembering our names. The whole thing reminds me of the process of livestock assessment at some farm. Or at least how I imagine it.

I am a bit interested when I see the mean Isidore walk up to the stage, holding her head high. She makes a very deep curtsy, showing off her cleavage with a huge pendant right in between her protruding breasts. Her face radiates confidence and even arrogance.

“Lady Isidore of House Vierne! Daughter of a Marquis!” she says loudly and raises her chin as if she expects immediate applause. But I am afraid that's not happening as some of the men eat and drink and not even pay her any attention.

She waits for one more second, but when she realizes that there is not going to be acknowledged in any way, she continues, “I love singing and dancing, and I have been raised with the knowledge of how to run our family castle and lands. I have been called the Rose of Akyria and even the crown prince was within the circle of my suitors in the kingdom before I have been honoured with the Dark Mark. I have graduated from Akyrian Academy for Gifted Ladies and...”

Academy for Gifted Ladies is another word for ladies who were not gifted with magic. You go there and they teach you how to be a good wife. That's it. Yep, Isidore would be perfectly matched to one of the dark lords. However, they still do not pay her any attention.

She goes on and on until one of the men raises his hand and she stops, looking at him with appreciation and expecting a question.

“That’s enough, lady”, the man says clearly not even remembering her name, “Otherwise we will have to stay here until the morning.”

“Yes, my lord”, she does another curtsy and leaves, her face red with embarrassment and it almost makes me giggle. I look at the lord who has just humiliated her – he is young looking, with brown slightly curly hair that reminds me of Derek...

Next – Bella. She looks nervous and walks up with shaky legs.

“Good evening, my lords. My name is Belladonna of House Grosvenor, daughter of a Count. I enjoy flower arranging and horseback...”

“Let’s spice this up a little”, the same young man interrupts her, “Lady, what is the most exciting thing you have ever done in your life?”

For a second there my roommate seems shocked, but she quickly takes her feelings under control and smiles, “My lord, I am a bit embarrassed to admit it in front of everyone...”

“Now we just have to know it!”, the man chuckles.

“Well, when I was 16 my older brother and I dressed like commoners and escape to our town’s summer fair. We walked freely for the whole day and...”, Bella blushes.

“Enjoyed yourselves without any restraints of a title?”, the provocative man chuckled again, “Lady Belladonna, you would enjoy yourself in the Gerdian Empire as well. Thank you and you may go.”

Oh, so he does remember the names. He just chooses who is worthy enough to be addressed by him.

“Miradora Freyn”, lady Cecilia announces and I jump up as something stung me on the bottom. I look at my chair and I could swear that I saw sparks of dark magic there! But they are already gone. I quickly look at Derrien and another smirk is plastered across his face.

That’s it! Even if I was planning to tell him my thanks before, I am not going to even bother now.

I walk up on the stage and notice how the room gets quiet all of a sudden. Hmm... Are different clothes really such a big deal?

“Lady Miradora Freyn, daughter of a count...” I say calmly looking at no one really, but still raising my chin high, “I enjoy...”

“Let me guess”, I hear Derrien’s voice, “Embroidery?”

The room fills with the laughter of the dark lords and I wait calmly until they are done. And when it’s quiet enough again smile and say, “Oh no, my lord, I am afraid to disappoint you, but what I enjoy the most is learning the art of battle and defense magic, swords fighting, Artefactorics, spell creating, strategy planning and chess playing. Although I do sing when my mother makes me. But my embroidery sk!!ls are not great. However, I do know 50 ways to k!!l a person with a needle, may I add.”

“This is getting interesting”, the man who humiliated Isidore chuckles, “Lady Miradora, would you be so kind to explain your choice of clothes for today? Did you, perhaps, wanted to emphasize how different you are from everyone else and get more attention for yourself?”

“Oh no, my lord. These clothes were not a choice at all as this is all I have here”, I say firmly.

“Aren’t you a daughter of a Count? He doesn’t provide for you?”, the man stops smiling and looks serious.

“On the contrary, my father has always provided me with everything I need. However, everything happened so suddenly that I couldn’t take many things with me. And what I did take got destroyed!”, I look at Derrien and raise my brow, he looks at me with an expression of indifference, but there are tiny sparks of purple magic in his eyes. Someone is angry...

“Wait, was that Derwood who brought you here?”, the same man starts laughing, “That explains a lot then, lady Miradora! I am surprised you got here in one piece!”

“I assure you, lady Miradora”, another man starts talking – he’s been sitting the whole evening with a haughty face, looking at the girls like they meant nothing, “We will provide you with everything you might need. Only the best. I will personally take care of it.”

“Thank you, my lord, but there is no need to bother, if I only could contact my family, I am sure they’d send me everything I need within a few hours”, I bow my head lightly, but speak firmly.

“Nonsense”, the man insists, “It would be my pleasure.”

And what can I say to that? Judging from the rules, I have to agree with everything they say...How annoying.

“The lady said there is no need, then there is no need!” I hear lord Derrien’s voice and look at him only to see more angry sparks in his eyes, “Since it’s my fault that her clothes got destroyed, I’ll take care of it myself! ”

Great... Is he going to strangle me with the new clothes in the process?

“May I remind you we need them all alive”, the other man retort, “Could we even trust you not to destroy her the way you destroyed her things?”

“Lord Derwood, Lord Dargen, we’d better calm down. Dargen, since Derwood’s position is higher you have to let it go”, one of the gerdians intrudes and awkward silence spreads through the room.

“Thank you, lady Miradora”, another says, after what I curtsy and leave the stage quickly.

When I sit down, another girl is up. But suddenly a little whimper interrupts everything and I see Bella jump up from her seat. Red wine stain is spreading on her pretty cream dress and I notice Isidore and the three other girls giggle at that.

Lady Cecilia comes up quickly and gestures for Bella to leave. I see tears in her eyes and want to follow her, but she waves me to stay. And right after I meet with lady Cecilia’s angry gaze. I guess leaving now wouldn’t be good considering she is the one determining punishments.

Morgan is next and she tells at the stage about her passion for herbology and potion-making. I guess she studied at some academy of magical arts as well. She also says that she can’t wait to learn all the wonderful herbs of the Gerdian Empire, which differ a lot from what we have here. And the provocative gerdian even calls her by her name as well.

Xia is the last one and she tells a bit about her tribe and their culture and about her love of travel. She doesn't get called by her name, but at least no one humiliates her as they did with Isidore.

After everything is over, the lords finish their meal and leave. I do not look at any of them and do not check if anyone is watching.

Lady Cecilia makes a little speech about how disappointed she is with our representations and behaviour and gives me a special glance. She is onto me. However soon she is finished and tells us to go to bed early.

I say my goodbyes to Morgan and Xia and hurry to my room to check on Bella. I walk past sir Tristan, not paying any attention to him. However, he quickly catches up with me.

"Mira, wait", he pulls me by my hand into one of the many dark corridors of the castle.

"I thought we are not supposed to touch each other!", I get my hand out of his grasp and he looks a little hurt by my actions, "And addressing me simply as Mira is a bit rude, Sir Ragnard".

"Mira", he continues, "I get why you might be angry with me... Our engagement is annulled now and I am here watching you being matched with someone else... You must be hurting inside..."

"Hurting?", I give out a loud snort, "Sir Tristan, I am hurting but our engagement annulment has nothing to do with it. I was planning to do it anyway. You and I are hardly a good fit for each other. But since I was already engaged to someone my family approved of and you were not in a hurry to get married, I got my mother off my back and was able to study at the academy of my own choice. And the only reason I am hurting is that I was taken out of that Academy to be "MATCHED" with a man whom I am not even going to be able to choose!"

He looks at me astonished. Is it really a revelation to him that I am not madly in love with him?

"I understand", his lips are clenched tight, "However, I am still considering myself responsible for you, Mira. I'll contact your family myself today and ask them to send you everything you might need here."

“Thank you for that”, I bow my head a bit, “Would that be all?”

I am about to leave, but he pulls me by my hand again.

“No, Mira, I....”

“What the hell is going on here?!”, a familiar voice breaks behind our backs...