

The Selection: Bride Of The Dark Dragon Chapter 91 - Tips

MIRA

Days go fast but nothing changes. Dereck told me that the gerdian hasn't tried to get in touch with him. And to my own surprise that made me sad. He said that he would come back for me. And yet he didn't. What if Tristan caught him or killed him? And why exactly it makes my heart clench with pain? I don't even remember who he is. All I remember about him really are his eyes. And sparks of magic in them. At least now I think that it was magic. Dark magic. Oh, gods, even thinking of this makes me guilty... A gerdian who is also a dragon. I never even thought that something like that is possible. Dragons left our world many years ago. And yet somehow I am connected to one.

Tristan keeps bothering me, he gives me orders that are hidden as wishes and I have to obey whatever he says to make him believe that I am still drugged enough to his liking. And he keeps pressuring me into giving myself to him. Luckily, I can still pretend I feel unwell every time he is near me. And now he believes that it's because of the elixir he gives me. So now the dosage is lowered and since before that I have even been reminding him myself that it's time to take it – he stopped watching and controlling it. And so did the maids. Which gives me a perfect opportunity to feed it to the plants around me. It now has been three full days as not a single drop reached my body and I feel better and more like myself. But still do not remember much about the time at the Selection... or about that gerdian. He said that his name was Killian. But I know now that it's not his real name. Killian was his alias in the kingdom. The king recently announced Killian Krauten a traitor and said that he is dead. It wasn't big news because Count Krauten was not really famous. But Dereck has heard of it and informed me. The funeral never happened which gives us hope that he is still alive. They probably just burned bridges for him so he can't appear in the Kingdom again.

Maybe that's why he hasn't come for me. Or maybe he has just forgotten all about me... Maybe it wasn't big love after all... I don't know... But every time I think about him I feel this painful longing for something...

"Here you go," Dereck gets out a bottle which is an exact replica of the one with the "elixir" that clouds my mind. Yesterday he informed me that the said elixir was heavily based on Sideria, a rare and dangerous plant that helps to manipulate minds.

"Thanks!" I smile handing him the real bottle, which I emptied prior. Not a drop of Sideria should be inside of me if I want to restore my memories and find out what really happened at the Selection. My new medication carefully created by my Academy friends should detoxify my blood within the next few days. And the best thing, I can take it just in front of Tristan and his people now. Hopefully, it would work.

"Don't mention it," my friend winks at me, hiding the real bottle in the bag with swords and other training equipment. And, luckily, he did it in time as the door bursts open and Tristan storms in.

"Mira!" he smiles at me but that smile fades when he notices Dereck, "Ashterton."

"Your Highness," my partner in crime bows respectfully, "We were about to go to today's training. "

"Yes," I smile at my fiancé, "I just wanted to take my medicine first."

I pour a small glass and drink it quickly, noticing Tristan's frown.

"How responsible of you," he forces a smile, "The healer said that you would be able to stop taking it right after the wedding, though."

"Really?" I look at him with hesitation, "I think it really helps me. Would it be all right to stop taking it so soon?"

"Of course," he says, "The healer says that right after the wedding you will be feeling much better."

Yeah, right. Right when I will become yours with no chance of going back. How convenient.

"Anyway, what brings you here?" I try to sound careless, "As Der said, we were going to practice a bit."

"I think you can postpone it a little, there are some people that you should meet," Tristan says and then looks at me with heavy eyes, "And I would need you to help me."

Oh, another order then.

“Here you go,” Dereck gets out a bottle which is an exact replica of the one with the “elixir” that clouds my mind. Yesterday he informed me that the said elixir was heavily based on Sideria, a rare and dangerous plant that helps to manipulate minds.

“Of course, anything,” I smile as I know very well that I have no choice. Dereck looks concerned behind Tristan’s back. He has now been a witness to his manipulations multiple times. And knowing his temper, he is furious on the inside even though he doesn’t show it on the outside.

“Great,” the Crown Prince of Akyrian Kingdom brushes his palm over my cheek, “I want you to meet a group of girls. They are special, just like you are.”

“In what way?” I raise my brows.

“They have bl00d that can accept dark magic, Mira. Just like yours. Some of those girls were with you at the Selection.”

I gulp.

“Really? Why do you want me to meet them?”

“Because, Mira, you need to inspire them!” he smiles but that was an order right now. Sideria should make me agree. Part of me still wants to agree and I have to fight the urge to obey for real. Even though I have to pretend to anyway. But inside of me, there is a real struggle.

“I am not good at inspiring people,” I shake my shoulders.

“You just need to say a little speech about how terrible gerdians are and how they all owe it to the Kingdom for saving their lives to help us fight against them. They need to accept dark magic and then share it with others willingly. It would lead us to victory,” Tristan finishes with that smug look on his face and I swallow again. This is serious. Too serious. And also it feels like a trap. Does he really need me to inspire anyone when all he needs to do is just give them some Sideria like he gives me and manipulate them into doing whatever the chaos he wants? I don’t think so... So why?

“Let’s not waste any more time, my love,” he pulls me by my hand somewhere and Dereck follows behind with a tense face.

“Of course, Tristan,” I say carefully, “But I am so terrible with speeches. You know that, right?”

“Don’t worry, the speech is already written for you. Just read it with passion and everything would be great!” he smiles and my heart sinks. It’s some kind of trap and I walk into it willingly...

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We walk into a room full of women, young and old. Some are way too young and some are so old that they can barely walk. But I guess Tristan just wants their blood’s abilities and nothing else matters to him.

Some of the faces seem familiar to me but however much I struggle I can’t remember their names or how I know them.

Tristan leads me confidently to the orator’s pedestal and helps me up the stairs, standing in front of the crystal that makes one’s voice louder. I notice, that right next to the crystal there is a piece of paper. Probably my speech.

I throw a careful look at Dereck and he doesn’t look happy with everything that is going on but he still nods to me reassuringly. We both know that for now, we need to go with the flow.

“Ladies, my fiancée and I are really happy to see you in our home.” Tristan says, casually naming the palace our home, “As you can see, lady Miradora is ready to fight already! And she has something to say to all of you!”

He gestures at my battle outfit and that’s how I know that it wasn’t a coincidence that everything happened right before my training with Dereck.

He directs me to the crystal and gestures at the paper. My eyes run quickly through the words and ...Oh, gods! I look at him with hesitation in my eyes but he quickly plants a kiss at my temple, whispering, “It needs to be done, Mira.”

I swallow once again. Damn it! I don’t want to say any of it before I figure things out.

“Ladies,” I read the first word and already feel that my mouth is too dry, “Our great Kingdom is in danger. In fact, we have been in danger for a while without even knowing it.”

My voice trembles and Tristan puts his hand on my shoulder, squeezing it lightly in a sign of support.

“Our closest neighbor – the Gerdian Empire has been plotting to attack us for a while now. And as you all know we were never able to defeat them before. Their dark magic is too powerful and because we lost a war many years ago we were sacrificing our women every year. Twenty five young girls were sent to gerdians to do as they pleased. And we were promised that they would be treated nicely...”, I stop talking and receive another squeeze, a bit more harsh this time, “But this is not what is really happening there. In reality, during my time at the Selection, gerdians were treating girls horribly and... and were killing them as they pleased. Only a few including myself managed to survive, all thanks to... my fiancé and beloved, the Sapphire Knight of the Akyrian Kingdom, and our new Crown Prince Tristan Ragnard. This hero...”

My voice breaks again and my eyes fall to a girl in the traditional Southern Tribe dress. She looks at me and smirks. And so is the blonde next to her. I know them and... and I feel bad when I think about them.

I am clearly being used here. I should not finish this speech. I shouldn't talk to anyone before I figure everything out myself.

“Excuse me,” I say, touching myself in my signature “I am going to faint this very moment move”, “I don't feel too well...”

I try to walk away but Tristan catches me in his arms and it looks like he is comforting me.

“Mira, if you can't do it for me and your country, do it for your family and your father,” his voice is stone-cold and I look at him in horror as he gives me another harsh squeeze.

“What do you mean?” I whisper.

“I mean that your father is treated in the royal healing department, it would be a shame if something happens to him there,” he says coldly and pushes me back in the direction of the crystal.

I clear my throat and continue, “No, I have to finish this before I leave. This hero uncovered the elaborate plan of the gerdians to take down our Kingdom and managed to postpone their attack. But they are coming. And when they come next time – they would want to turn us all into their slaves. This cannot happen. We need to stand against them. Together!”

Gods, I hate this speech.

“There is a reason why gerdians were choosing specific girls, within our blood, there is something that helps us accept dark magic. And if we can accept it, we can possess it. More than that, we can later share it with our men. And this is the key to winning this war and protecting our Kingdom. We can destroy the Gerdian Empire once and for all! But you need to be willing to help us! You need to be willing to fight them! You need to...”

“We are ready!” the girl who is clearly from the Southern Tribe jumps up to her feet.

“We are with you!” someone else stands up.

“I am in!”

“And me!”

“And me!”

“Let’s kill them the way they killed all those girls!”

“For our freedom!”

“For the Crown Princess and her Prince!”

The whole room turns into chaos itself. And before I manage to do anything else, Tristan pulls me by my hand to the entrance. Dereck runs after us but he growls at him, “Your training is canceled, Ashterton. Come tomorrow!”

We are back at my room in no time and as soon as he pushes me inside I hear the sound of the door lock and know that now his barrier starts working again. I thought that it’s for my protection but now I see how wrong I’ve been...

“Mira,” his hands land on my shoulders, and I shrug them off.

“What was that right now?” I turn to see him, angry as the chaos itself, “Were you threatening my father?!”

“No, Mira, of course not!” he sounds sweet. That’s how people talk to children when they lie to them. He takes a step in my direction and I take a step back.

“Then why did you tell that?!”

“Mira, I am sorry I scared you. I just needed you to finish this speech. You have no idea how important that is,” he speaks softly now. Stretching his hand to my face. I flinch but in no time his hands are around me, pulling me closer and pressing me against his torso.

“Tristan! What are you doing?!” I try to push him away.

“I’m so sorry, my love,” he covers my neck with kisses, “I didn’t want to upset you. It had to be done... Soon everything will be over and we will lead a happy life together. Just wait a bit more... Mira...”

He pushes me to the bed and lands on top of me, pinning me to the mattress with his weight, continuing to shower me with kisses.

“Tristan, no!” I say but he doesn’t listen.

“We’ll get married... you will never remember...”, he mutters something completely ignoring me.

“Stop it, please!” I shout but only hear the sound of fabric tearing as his hands start to greedily devour my body.

“Oh, gods,” he groans, “I’ve been waiting for you for so long... I lose my mind around you...”

He is mad, he is completely mad. And the worst thing – he is so strong, too strong for me! He tears off buttons of his collar and I... give out a loud sob. And then another, and then one more, covering my face with my hands.

He pauses, watching me for some time. And then slowly gets off me. I feel a cold sheet covering me and shudder at the sensation, opening my eyes. Tristan pulls me into a hug and kisses my temple softly.

“I am sorry, Mira”, he whispers, “It’s all right, I will not hurt you. I can wait until our wedding night. It’s going to be amazing. It’s all right...”

And I am not sure if he is saying that to me or to himself... Then, when I stopped crying and calmed down, sitting quietly in his embrace, he stands up and walks away. Only to return with a fresh glass of "elixir".

"Take your medicine, Mira," he says calmly and I look straight into his eyes. He is calm.

"I...I already took it," I say weakly.

"You need to take it again, just trust me...", he sits right next to me, brushing his fingers over my cheek and then my hair as I obediently take the glass and start drinking. Thank gods Dereck and I managed to swap the bottles earlier today!

When I am done, he waits a bit and then smiles softly at me, "Mira, forget everything that happened right now. You were never upset because of me."

Huh. That's how he does it. I swallow and nod, "I wasn't."

"Good," he says and places a kiss on my forehead, "You are really waiting for the wedding and you are very happy that we are very much in love. You want to become mine. Right?"

"Right," I say quietly.

"And now go to sleep," he softly pushes me to lie on the pillow, "When you wake up you will miss me."

"Yes," I say and close my eyes.

I wait for some time but he doesn't leave. From time to time I feel his fingers brushing over my skin or hair. And then, in about half an hour, he sighs heavily and places a kiss on my naked shoulder. After that he leaves the room, closing the door once again.

Tears start rolling down my face as I sit up. I run to the shower and take a long one. I feel so dirty even though nothing happened...

What Tristan is doing scares me. And my family in the palace not out of goodness of king's heart but for a reason. In that way, they can control me better.

I put on a simple light lavender dress and sit on the bed once again. I get the locket that the gerdian gave me at the ball from under a heavy lamp on my bedside table and look at it once again. He said that he would come for me... And now I know that I want it to be true. I'd be safer with him than with Tristan...

With these thoughts I fall to my bed and darkness consumes me within seconds...

I find myself in an unfamiliar room... A fireplace, a sofa, a desk at the huge window. I don't know this place and yet I feel like I've been here before.

"Mira!", a voice behind me makes me turn and I see the most gorgeous man, looking at me as if he has found what he's been looking for, "Mira, you are back!"

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"Mira, you are back!", the man runs to me and I quickly take a step back, making him flinch at that. I now look closer at him and know that he is the gerdian who danced with me at the ball.

"What is this? Where are we?" I ask, a bit terrified with everything that is going on.

"Mira, it's all right," he raises his hands in a defensive move and doesn't take any other attempts to get closer to me, "You are safe here and I wouldn't do anything you don't want me to. I promise."

"All right," I say after a while, "Then answer my previous questions. What is this? Are you playing with my mind as well?"

"No," he answers without any hesitation, "Our minds are connected."

"How so?"

"We exchanged our blood when we were kissing and it triggered this kind of connection... Now when we both are open to it and want to see each other, we can connect through our dreams," the man sits at the edge of the sofa.

“How do you exchange blood through a kiss?” I snort.

“I bit your lip and you bit my tongue. The first time,” he chuckles.

“The first time?” I raise my brow.

“Yeah, we kind of were doing similar things to each other later on and it was topping up the effect. Not that it could be gone. Ever. But every time we do this again the signal is getting stronger,” he replies with a very calm tone and somehow I feel like I start to trust him. Gods, I hope that it’s not another trick and he is not using me the way Tristan does.

“What is your name?” I ask after I sit on the far corner of the sofa. As far from him as possible. Yet still way too close to my liking.

“Derrien Derwood,” he says with some kind of bitterness in his voice.

“So... We were in love?”, I look at him to not miss his reaction. He shrugs at my words and looks directly into my eyes.

“We ARE in love, Mira,” he says without hesitation, “You just don’t remember it because your ex poisons you on a daily basis with Sideria!”

“How do you know? About Sideria?”

“Thanks to you,” he chuckles, “Someone was using it at the Selection and killing the girls they needed out. I was investigating and you were helping me. They still outplayed us, though...”

“What happened there? I do not know anything and I feel that Tristan is not being honest about it...”

“Clever girl,” he smiles at me with a proud look in his eyes, “They tried to kill me and the Crown Prince of the Empire. They did not succeed. But, unfortunately, some of the participants of the Dark Selection died. Everything happened in the middle of the ball...So...”

“Was Tristan one of them?”

“Yes,” Derrien grits through his teeth, “He kidnapped you first with the help of your friends, drugged you for the first time as well... And then he and his two accomplices created a powerful explosion. I was looking for you like crazy in that chaos... But I felt you away. I saved whoever I could and shifted to...”

“You are a dragon,” I interrupt him and he smiles softly, “How does that even work...”

“That’s a story that you already know, Mira,” he replies, “You just need to remember...”

“But how can I?” I jump to my feet, “I am not taking any more medication! I am even taking the detoxifying elixir but it just doesn’t help!”

“Of course it does,” he stands up as well and comes closer, “Otherwise you wouldn’t be here now. I tried to connect to you for weeks! You were completely blocked, I couldn’t reach however hard I tried! And now... here you are...”

He takes a lock of hair off my face and then brushes my cheek softly. I feel tingles erupt through my skin... like tiny sparks...

“Sparks...” I say out loud for some reason, “You usually have sparks in your eyes when you do that...”

“I do,” he says before slamming his lips into mine. His arms wrap around my body before I even try to push him away. And then I just don’t want to... The kiss is intoxicating but it’s a good kind of intoxicating... As his tongue explores my mouth and his hands are pressing me harder and harder into him, I forget about everything... And when I open my eyes, we are somewhere else... I see grass, woods, mountains and a small hut...

I look up at him and he pulls me inside of the hut.

“Why have you brought me here?” I ask.

“Because when we went through the portal it was your significant place,” he replies.

“W-why?”

“You saved my life in that little hunter’s house,” he smiles as we walk inside, “And then you became mine for the first time and forever.”

He is not lying and I know that place. Moreover, I could almost feel his body on mine... I’ve been with him. I am his...

He pulls me into another lingering kiss and this time I wrap my hands around his neck, slowly and hesitantly... but it makes him groan with delight and I like it. We fall into the direction of the small bed but somehow we land into soft sheets and cushions of my bed in the palace.

He looks around slowly and then looks at me.

“Is this where you are now?” he asks and I nod, “Good. Let’s make some memories here as well!”

On my bedside table lies a sapphire brooch in the shape of the butterfly, the one I was wearing at the ball. He touches it and it starts to flap its wings and then flies away... And like a flashback before my eyes, I see another ball, a lilac dress, me and him dancing... and magical butterflies flying to and from my outfit... I smile and so does he... and then we meet at the hut... Such a small detail as a butterfly jogged my memory...

“Rien!” I exclaim and look at his eyes filled with his dark magic, “Rien!”

“Oh, thank gods, Mira,” he covers my lips with his and entwines my fingers in his hair, bringing him closer to me. I want him as close as possible! I don’t want to ever be separated again.

Our clothes disappear in the flames of dark magic which do not burn me. If anything it feels like another kind of foreplay. He enters me roughly, taking me again and again like a hungry beast. And I enjoy every second of it, repeating his name, chanting even. I feel his and his dragon’s passion and reply with everything that I’ve got. I belong to him, I wear his mark with pride... I c****x again and again in his hands and waves of pleasure ripple through my whole body....

And it made me wake up.

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It feels disappointing to be in the arms of the man that you love one second and find yourself alone in a cold room the next. I have never felt this lonely...

But the good news – I remember everything now! Every single detail!

And Tristan! That piece of a ... crown prince. Seriously, from now on when I hear the phrase "crown prince" it sounds like an insult! How dare he do this to me! And he even dared to threaten my father! Speaking of which, I need to make sure to get him and my family out of here! Fast!

Before Tristan takes me to breakfast I remind him myself about my medicine and take the detoxifying elixir right in front of him, smiling charmingly and thinking of one million ways to kill him with my bare hands. And yet, I cannot hurry. I need to be careful. Who knows what other traps he has for me. And for the people, I care about.

"Is everything fine, Mira?" he asks, giving my hand a light squeeze.

"Of course, why wouldn't it be?" I shrug it off and notice how his facial expression changes. He is onto me and I know it. Also, I am not that good at pretending. It was one thing when I didn't remember anything and it is completely another when I do. I remember that he was behind all those murders. Even if it was King Bendor's order... And that's a big IF. And I know that he blew up the whole Selection castle without even hesitating. And he drugged me for weeks now! And gods know what he has done to my father! I am starting to think that everything is not just a coincidence!

"No, Mira," he pulls me harshly by my waist and makes me look into his eyes, "Something is wrong with you today. Something is not right. Tell me..."

"I..."

"Mira, you want to tell me everything, right?" he says with a raised brow and I know that this was an order, one of those that Sideria in my blood should make me obey.

"Yes," I sigh, "Um, I was thinking about all those girls the other day. The ones that are just like me..."

"What about them?" he seems a bit more relaxed now.

"What is the process there exactly?" I ask, "How are they going to receive the dark magic? And how are they going to share it with men?"

"That's... that's not something you should be worried about now," he pats my head, "You have more important things to think of. Like our wedding. Have you seen your dress yet?"

“Yes, it’s gorgeous,” I try not to sound too annoyed, “But really, shouldn’t I be with them there? I am one of them.”

“Of course not, Mira, you are the future queen. You are most definitely not one of them,” he chuckles, “But if you want to take part, I might think about it, and then maybe you would be able to share dark magic with me.”

Something is off here...

“But how can I do that?” I smile at him coquettishly.

“That’s enough information for one day,” he pulls me closer and I know that he wants to kiss me. Damn it! I’d better just do it although it feels wrong on so many levels.. His lips are closer and closer, almost touching mine...

When we hear a sign of an explosion. And then another. And then one more!

“What is this?” I gasp and push him away quickly, using the situation and trying to figure out where the sound is coming from.

“Get back to your room!” he snaps, looking up at the sky. I follow his gaze and see something strange up there. Perfectly blue sky and white fluffy clouds... and yet something is off with that picture. In one place it looks like lightning start to appear. But why on such a perfect day? There are more and more of them every second and soon it’s as if a part of the sky collapses leaving an ugly hole in it. And in that hole the sky is of a completely different colour. It’s red and in some places it’s orange. As if the sky was in flames.

“Your highness! They’ve attacked us and broken the barrier dome!” knights from Tristan’s squad appear before us and just like that I know exactly what is going on. Why haven’t I thought of it earlier? Never ever have there been such perfect weather for so many days in a row during the rain season! It’s an illusion of a barrier! They put on a protective dome over the capital! And now someone is breaking it! Someone attacks us! And it could only be the gerdians!

A hole in the sky is a hole in the broken barrier. Rien! Only a dragon can attack at this kind of height!

I look and look, trying to see at least a glimpse of him. When Tristan pulls me harshly by my hand and then shoves at the two guards, “Take the future Crown Princess to her room! And make sure she stays there!”

“No!” I protest, “I...”

But the look in his eyes makes me stop. He suspects me...

“Mira, there is a battle going on. This is not a place for you,” he says, looking tensely at me.

“But I am a battle mage! I am...”

He comes quickly and covers his lips with mine in the most possessive kiss ever, his fingers are tugging the hair at the back of my head as he makes me look at him.

“You are the most precious thing I’ve got. I would rather this kingdom go to chaos than lose you!” he whispers, before pushing me back to the guard’s hands, “Take her to her room. Lock her in and guard her! You will pay with your lives if anything happens to my fiancée!”

The knights grab me by my hands and start dragging me away.

“Wait!” I shout, “Tristan!”

But he is already gone. I take the last glimpse at the hole in the barrier, trying to see my dragon... But nothing.

They shove me to my room, muttering apologies and something about all this being their job. Blah-blah-blah!

I don’t even listen. If gerdians are here, Derrien must be here too!

But however much I want to see him, this is war. War against my people and my people are dying this very moment!

I quickly take off my dress and go change into one of my battle outfits. Blue shirt with a vest and tight trousers. I attach all my daggers where they belong and make sure Rien’s locket is well hidden in my secret inner pocket. Right next to my heart.

First thing first, I need to get out and find my family...

I hear the noise of battle right behind my doors and wait patiently with my hands crossed on my chest. When the door opens, I smirk.

“What took you so long?”

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“I see you are ready!” Dereck snorts while Rick and Nort drag unconscious knights that were supposed to guard me inside. We tie them up quickly and put pieces of cloth into their mouths.

“And what if gerdians reach this place?” I ask, looking at my friends, “They would be dead for sure..”

“Mira, it was so easy to overpower them. If gerdians reach here – they would be dead anyway,” Nort shrugs his shoulders, “Their best chance is if no one reaches this place. So let’s just pray for their souls!”

“Let’s not waste any time,” Dereck reminds us.

“We need to get my family out of the palace first,” I say, “They don’t know it yet but they are just hostages here.”

“I’ll do it,” Rick says casually like it’s nothing hard or serious.

“Alone? How?” skepticism in my voice must be obvious.

“Easy,” he snorts, “Do you remember my superpower?”

“Sleeping with everything that moves?” I raise my brow.

“Money!” he rolls his eyes, “If I can’t take the guards down, I’ll buy them to close their eyes. Always works in the palace.”

“Oh Gods,” I sigh, “All right, off you go then. And give this to my father.”

I take the bottle with detoxifying elixir and hand it to my friend.

“Wait!” I suddenly remember, “When you see them, do this sign with your hands and say “Under the Sun of Akyria”. This is our family secret greeting. They will know you are one of us if you do that.”

“Diamond, I always secretly wanted to be a part of your family!” Rick chuckles, “My parents would be thrilled!”

“You will have to go through Colton first!” I snort, “Tell him...”

“He is not there, Mira,” Dereck interjects.

“What do you mean?”

“He was made the captain of the first squad by Tristan’s order,” my friend informs me nervously, “He will be in the first line, fighting gerdians.”

“Chaos!” I swear, “This is bad! Der, then I need to get there! We need to get him out as well! Gerdians... they are much stronger and I don’t think any of our warriors have the dark magic yet. They will all be killed... I can speak to Derrien and ask him for help, but it might be too late! I need to at least get my brother out to safety first!”

“Let’s go then,” is all he says. We shake Rick’s hands and go in different directions. Gods, I hope Rick is confident not for nothing!

We move carefully around the palace, avoiding the guards as much as possible. Everyone is in a state of panic, lords, and ladies are running in the direction of the living chambers. Probably in an attempt to hide. Good luck with that!

And my heart is torn. I hate Tristan at the moment and I am really not sure how I feel about our king. For all I know, he might be drugged by his favourite nephew the way I was. But also, he could be the culprit behind everything.

But one thing I don’t hate is my kingdom. Akyria is my homeland, its people are my people and I don’t want them to die! I was born and raised to protect them! All those years I have spent learning how to become a battlemage with one aim only – to fight for them and make sure that the Kingdom is safe.

And now... Now I am running to meet my gerdian lover, who probably leads the whole attack... How does that fit into my world now?

And what if it’s not Derrien attacking but Dargen. If it’s him then we are all doomed! With Rien – at least we have a chance...

Suddenly everything changes. We look up and see that the barrier dome breaks into millions of little pieces. Just like a mirror would if something heavy thrown into it. The lighting changes as the red sky now covers us. And smoke quickly fills everything around us.

“Here!” Dereck points the direction in which we should move and I see Akyrian knights and mages form a protective circle. Colton must be there! But however much I look, I don’t see him.

What I see are dark figures coming out of the smoke. Gerdians! They are all wearing their black battle armour. I only saw that in our history books. For a regular human, this kind of armour would be too heavy, but they don’t seem to be bothered with its weight. They move slowly and confidently.

“Mira,” Dereck looks at me, “If they attack us I would have to join akyrians.”

“I know,” I say, “I need to find Derrien! I am sure he will help us if I can just talk to him...”

“Fine,” he sighs, “Try that, I will cover you for as long as I can.”

“I hope you are right,” Nort ads. He doesn’t look too sure about anything.

Meanwhile, the gerdians are closer and closer.

“Take one more step and we are going to attack!” I hear Tristan’s voice and thanks to that I see exactly where he is. And, luckily, my brother is not too far from him, fire pulsars ready in his hands.

But the next second everything changes. Gerdians ignore Tristan’s word and keep moving. All kinds of magical weapons fly in their direction – fire pulsars, ice arrows, deadly vines from the ground, flashes of lightning, and anything else one can only imagine. And yet, most of them just block all of those easily. Seconds and they all join in combat. Clinging of swords sounds in every corner. But the magic is also not forgotten.

I’ve been preparing for it for so long and yet now when I see a real battle before my eyes, I don’t see any romance in it. If anything, it’s ugly. Blood and bodies everywhere. There are so few gerdians in comparison to the quantity of Akyrian knights, and yet most of the bodies are ours...

“Let’s go!” Dereck says and Nort and I nod in agreement. We form small shields and start running in the direction of our warriors. I am looking for Colton everywhere but at the moment it’s hard to define who is who on the battlefield.

A huge dark shadow covers us and disappears within seconds. I lift my head up and see a small dark dot in the sky. But then it gets bigger and bigger... And soon I see him! My dragon!

He flies right above our heads and disappears again. I am not even sure if he noticed me...

“Mira,” Dereck call for me, “Colton!”

I turn to look where he points to and see my brother on the ground, a gerdian above him with his sword ready to finish him.

I send a fire pulsar with all my might and luckily it knocks the gerdian off his feet.

“Colton!” I scream and run to him, noticing that he is badly wounded.

“Mira, what the chaos you are doing here!” my brother gr0ans when I lend on my knees right next to him.

“Later!” I say and form a shield as the gerdian is back and furious. His sword hits my shield but doesn’t destroy it.

“Mira, get out of here!” Colton hisses.

“Listen!” I say to him quickly, “Mum and Dad are in danger! They are hostages here and so are you! Don’t trust Tristan and don’t trust the king! Get our parents out of here and protect them! Be clever about how you do it!”

“What the...” he mutters but another strike of the sword destroys my shield. Luckily Dereck sends a fireball at the attacker and he is thrown off his feet once again. We help Colton on his feet and I see bl00d gushing out of a deep wound on his side.

“Damn it!” I swear, “Der, help him! Please!”

“All right,” my friend nods and that’s when the shade is back. I look up and see that the dragon flies slower this time. The gerdians is back on his feet and I

attack him with a fire wave, my strongest weapon. But honestly, can't he get a message and find someone else to fight?!

The dragon flies in our direction, beautiful and mighty. Dark flames cover his body and soon his shape changes. Human legs step on the ground and I finally see him!

"Rien!" I gasp, looking at him in his gerdian armour. He has a hood on his head but his eyes are just shining with the purple light of dark magic. I also see sparks of it on the tips of his fingers.

I want to run to him but he points a hand in my direction and a wave of his dark magic knocks me off my feet... Why?!