

The Selection: Bride Of The Dark Dragon Chapter 96 - Tips

MIRA

Slowly, I get to my senses. Rien... Rien has just hit me with his magic. Maybe it's a mistake and he didn't recognize me?

I lift up my head and see him moving towards me. Eyes on me but no smile on his face. What is going on?

Some knight jumps at him but he easily breaks his neck and throws him away. I've never seen him like that... Could... could he have tricked me? Could he be lying to me all this time just like Tristan did?

He comes close to me and looks at me with angry eyes. There is nothing from the Derrien I just met in my dreams! I look at him with an open mouth as I just don't know what to expect next.

"Mira!" Tristan shouts and I turn to look at him without any realization of doing so. He runs to me, shock and terror on his face. One second – and a huge wave of dark magic knocks him down. He doesn't move and I can't tell whether he is dead or alive.

"Enough!" Derrien growls and comes closer to me, grabbing me by my wrist and pulling me all the way up into his hands. I feel a cold metal sensation where he touches me and want to check what is this exactly. But his eyes are full of dark magic and he looks furious. Without saying even a word to me, he throws me over his shoulder and starts walking away.

"Rien, what is going on?!" I shout! "Rien! Talk to me! Put me down!"

But nothing... From the corner of my eye, I see Dereck helping Colton out of the battlefield. They both look at me with worry on their faces and I give them a weak smile. Gods, at least help my family to stay alive!

Because I am not so sure anymore that I will...

DERRIEN

Seeing and touching Mira, even if just in a dream, was unbelievable. I open my eyes and a smile plays on my lips. She remembers me. Everything is

going to be fine. I am going to take her home tonight and this whole nightmare will be over.

She is mine and she knows it. And this is all that matters.

It is still too dark and I have a few good hours before the planned attack. The wound on my side heals nicely but still aches a bit. Akyrians used some kind of new poison. I see that they have been planning this war for a while.

But today is just for Mira. Over my dead body she is going to marry this piece of sh!t. And all the Akyrians will see how easily we can defeat them and that their Crown Princess is actually in love with me, a gerdian. Everyone will know that she is mine... and there will be no more disputes about it.

To lose her was the most painful experience in my life. I should have never left her back at the Selection Castle! Before going to the Emperor, before dealing with Dargen, I should have brought her to my castle where she would be safe. But I didn't. And I paid a heavy price for it by almost losing her.

My dragon was raging all those days. He has some kind of connection to her and I can't quite understand why. Why is he so obsessed with her? I am crazy about her as well but he was quiet for so many years, not caring about anyone or anything. And now, unless she is in our arms, he is furious. What does she have that has this kind of influence over him? I guess we will have all our lives to find out...

Everything is ready for today's attack. I am taking just one of my squads. It should be enough for what we plan. Three other squads will be on standby. But we will hardly need them. Fighting akyrians is like taking candy from a child. I am surprised to think they would even risk plotting against us! But I guess we need to give them another lesson. And send the message loud and clear!

A knock on the door and a trembling servant enters my chambers. My dragon's mood swings did not go unnoticed and now everyone is extra careful approaching me. Good. The less they all annoy me the better.

"My lord," the boy bows, "The Emperor summons you to the throne room."

"Why?" is all I ask and his knees start shaking. Pathetic.

“They did not inform me, my lord. But this is urgent. The Crown Prince is also there,” he says in a shaky voice.

“You may go,” I wave at him and he disappears quickly.

And now I am worried. The Emperor knows that I am about to set off. Why the chaos would he summon me now? And if Dargen is there that doesn't promise me anything good!

I transport myself to the throne room and kneel.

“Greetings to my uncle, the dark Emperor of the Gerdian Empire”, I say the formal greeting.

“Raise, Derrien. No need for formalities, we have something to discuss,” Uncle says and I stand up to my feet. Dargen is right next to the throne, an ugly smirk on his face. Something is wrong. I know that now!

“What is it?” is all I ask. The sooner they get to the point, the better.

“You need to see something, Rien,” Uncle says with an unhappy face, “You are going to get your woman today. But you need to know that everything is not so simple anymore. She is with the Akyrian Crown Prince now...”

“I told you before, he is drugging her. When Mira is here she would...”

“Watch this first!” he interjects me shows me a visual crystal.

A few seconds and I see a huge projection of Tristan Ragnard's face.

“People of Akyria! It is with sadness in my heart that I need to inform you about a war on our doorstep! Recently we discovered that the Gerdian Empire plans to attack us in the nearest future. They betrayed us and plot to turn us all into slaves. And, of course, we cannot let this happen. Luckily, I have a plan. My better half, your Crown Princess will help me to do it. But we will need your support as well!”

And then I see her, Mira!

“Our great Kingdom is in danger!” she says and my heart sinks, “In fact, we have been in danger for a while without even knowing it.”

She speaks and she speaks... About how terrible we gerdians are and how it was us klling off girls at the Selection. About what a hero Tristan is and then she gets to the worst part. She discovers information about why only specific girls were selected by us and why. She says that they found a way to share the dark magic with the help of the girls...

And then it's back to Tristan. He says that his princess will share her magic with him and together they will lead us to victory.

Oh, Mira... You didn't mention any of it to me... Were you just playing with me? Did you betray me?

There is only one way to pass the dark magic from a man to a woman and vice versa. And it's when two bodies unite physically and in spirit. I already passed her my magic. And to pass it to Tristan she needs to...

I ball my fists but try not to show any emotions. I'll find her and find out the truth. And she'll be mine whatever the truth is!

But deep down I know one thing. It's not enough for me to just possess her. I tried her love and affection and now anything less would never be enough for me. Oh, Chaos!

"You see?" Dargen smirks, "So much for your great love!"

"It doesn't mean anything", I say emotionlessly, "I have already told you that she is drugged there. As soon as I get her back, she will get better. And if anything, it's good that they are using her for propaganda! When she is here, she can help us break all those lies!"

"Hmm," the emperor rubs his chin, "All right, Derrien. I trust your judgment. But since the situation changed, bring her here, to the palace. Not to your castle. I need to see her before you take her away."

"Good, uncle, I'll obey your orders as always," I say although I don't like where this is going.

On my way to Akyrian palace, all I think is whether she betrayed me or not. I want to believe that she loves me! She remembered me now and should just be waiting for me to get her. Everything will be fixed and soon we'll be together again. Soon I'll claim her and make her my wife. And there will be no going back from that!

I break their barrier easily and summon my warriors. The battle starts fast, I don't even need to participate. So, I just fly above their heads and wait patiently for my squad to deal with their knights.

And that's when I see her. Her ginger hair shining among all that mess! What the chaos is she even doing there?

I see her sending a fire pulsar, I see her forming a shield... She is fighting against my men!

The pain in my heart is enough to kill my soul! Why is she doing that? Is she really with that scumbag Tristan? Did she lie to me? Did she play with me? Did she betray me?

Rage overwhelms me! I fly to her and shift on the go. She notices me almost immediately. And looking into her eyes I want so much to believe in her. But she is here and she is fighting against us. She said all those words...

I send a wave of dark magic her way. Not a strong one, but enough to knock her off her feet. I am next to her in seconds, some knight on my way. I break his neck and throw him away. She looks at me, shocked.

"Mira!" someone shouts and I see Ragnard trying to reach her. She is looking at him as well. No! This cannot be happening!

"Enough!" I snap and get her up, clicking the engagement bracelet around her wrist. And before she can say anything, I throw her over my shoulder and transport back to the castle...

The Selection: Bride Of The Dark Dragon Chapter 97 - Tips

MIRA

For the first time ever the transportation is quick but harsh. Flames almost burn my skin and make me whimper in his arms. When we appear in some kind of room (it's hard for me to judge since I am upside down on his shoulder), he starts walking, not really letting me go.

"Derrien, what are you doing?!" I scream, "Put me down! Talk to me!"

“You like to talk, don’t you?!” he growls. And I know that he means something but I have no idea what that is.

“Rien! You are hurting me!” I yell and try to kick him on his back and side and suddenly I hear a painful groan from him, “What is it?”

“Just you hurting me where it hurts the most! Again!” he says emotionlessly and slams the door in front of him open with his foot. He walks some more and then everything changes – he throws me harshly as if I weigh nothing on something soft. Looking around quickly I see that I am on a bed – luxurious dark sheets tell me that we must be somewhere in the Gerdian Empire.

“Where is this?” I ask of him as he starts ripping off his armour.

“You are a clever girl, Mira! Can you guess?!” he grits through his teeth and I jump up to my feet, coming closer to him. He turns to me and grabs me by my shoulders with a clear intention to throw me back to the bed. But I pull the harness, helping him to undress and he takes his hands off. His eyes are full of dark magic. It looks like it is going to burst out of him any minute.

“Rien,” I say softly, helping him further, “What is going on? Why are you like this?”

I place my hand on his cheek and make him look at me.

“To chaos with it!” he says and dark flames make the rest of his armour and clothes disappear, he pulls me in, tugging by the hair on the back of my head, and kisses me greedily, making me forget about everything. He lifts me up and throws me back to the bed, not wasting any time and crawling right on top of me. His fingers slide across my belly to my throat and where he touches dark flames appear, burning my clothes off but leaving my skin untouched. My breasts pop out and he leans down to kiss my hardened nipples, grabbing a handful at the same time and making me moan at the sensation. He has never been rough with me and this is a completely new sensation. And I can’t say that I don’t like it.

He brushes his hand over my thigh, making my pants disappear in the flames as well. All that’s left is a small lacy piece of fabric, covering my womanhood. But in the next moment, he tears it off me and throws it away.

He licks my mark and the sensation is unreal. I arch my back in his arms, only wanting more and more of him.

“Please, Rien!” I beg and I am not even sure what I am begging for.

“Look at this!” he suddenly grabs my wrist and demonstrates to me a shiny bracelet out of dark gold. So that’s what he has put on me! A bracelet!

Wait! A bracelet... Does it mean?

“Is this?” I try to ask but don’t even get to finish the sentence as he slams his lips over mine once again, his tongue showing me that he is the one in control.

“This, Mira,” he growls, “This is forever proof that you are mine! There will be no one else for you! You will only belong to me and me alone! Always!”

“Rien!” I try to smile and say that I am his for a while already but he doesn’t let me as he is back to attacking my lips.

And I don’t care! I have no objections anyway, entwining my hands around his neck and bringing him closer to me.

He growls from pleasure and I feel how his fingers start to play with my petals. Sliding up and down, probing in and out, until he concentrates on a particular bundle of nerves, making me arch my back to his embrace and caresses.

“Rien!” I mutter his name over and over again while leaving sloppy kisses on his strong neck.

“Mine, Mira! You are mine!” he groans as I feel his hardness all the way up to my belly button, his fingers becoming faster and faster. My release comes quickly, making my whole body shudder, crystals of sweat covering me.

“Yes, Rien, I am yours,” I say, breathing heavily in his arms, “I don’t want anyone else. Only you!”

“Good!” he says as he raises slightly, sitting up and raising one of my legs from under my knee, holding it high. He enters me in one swift move, not gently at all, sending me to the heavens with his every thrust. He pounds into me for what seems like forever and I am not even able to say his name anymore. This is not our usual lovemaking, however crazy it was. He is proving me something, punishing me, and loves me madly. Madness... This is pure madness and we both enjoy it!

He leans back to me, leaving wet trails of kisses down my breasts, neck, and face, his fingers buried deep into the flesh of my thighs, our sweaty bodies as one. Derrien speeds up and his plunges become deeper and deeper until all I can do is scream from all the waves of pleasure that erupt inside me.

“Mine!” he growls and I feel his warm seed filling my insides as he stills on top of me, pressing himself into me up to the hilt. He stays like this for a long time, not letting me move away even for an inch. Holding me in place with his body and looking into my face. He brushes his thumb over my lips, making them part, and covers my lips with his, his tongue still in control of mine...

“Only...yours...,” I say before my eyes close under the heaviness of today’s day and I drift off to sleep in his strong arms.

Gods, please, don’t ever part us again!

But when I wake up the next morning, I am alone in bed... Rien is nowhere to be seen. And when, after a while, I check the door of the bedroom – it is locked...

The Selection: Bride Of The Dark Dragon Chapter 98 - Tips

MIRA

When the door unlocks and a few maids come in, I am disappointed. They quickly close the damn door behind them and it just reminds me of the hell I just broke out of!

How dare he! What the chaos is wrong with him?! I am not some doll to use when he likes and then to put aside until better times!

“My lady!” the maids bow awkwardly since I am sitting on the bed wrapped in sheets only. Damn Derrien destroyed all my clothes yesterday!

“My lady, my name is Lina, and these Celia and Mary”, one of the maids introduced them, “We are going to be your personal maids. Lord Derwood hired us specifically to serve you.”

“Thank you,” I smile awkwardly, knowing that at least he was thinking of me and preparing for our life together warms my heart a bit. The girls bring me breakfast and help me take a bath, they style my hair into a complex hairstyle,

which is apparently one of the latest gerdian trends. And then they bring me a beautiful dark teal dress with golden embroidery, helping me into it.

“You are not gerdians,” I notice in between our struggles.

“No, my lady,” Lina replies, “All of us were born in Akyrian Kingdom.”

“Did you take part in the Selection as well?” I ask.

“We wish!” Mary snorts and immediately gets shushed by the two others.

“No, my lady,” Lina says calmly.

“Then how did you end up here?” I raise my brow.

“We were refugees,” the maid answers with dignity, “All of us. We fled the Kingdom.”

“But why?” I am shocked, to say the least.

“When you are not a noble life is hard there. Sometimes two hard. When our families lost everything, we decided to move in search of a better life. We needed a safe place.”

“And you chode the Empire?” I gasp.

“Yes, my lady,” Lina says, “They were kinder to us than our own people. They gave us a home, education, and work even though we were not valuable to them. And now here we are.”

“I see,” I nod, and they curtsy and leave me alone to my thoughts. How little do I know about the world I leave in? I had no idea that humans were escaping to live in the Empire. And that the Empire was accepting them gladly. If someone told this to me a few months ago, I would decide that it’s a joke!

Time flows somehow much slower when you are locked in a room... I watch out of the window and see vast lands and sky. My prison, and I can’t call it anything different at the moment, is too high to notice any kind of details.

The room I am in is too simple. Just the bed, a dressing table, and a bathroom. I guess I don’t mean to him as much as I thought after all. And it makes me sad. Did I put myself into another trap?

I refuse lunch and say that they shouldn't bother with dinner as well. By now I thought that I'd see Derrien again and we could at least talk. But no. No sign of him.

When it's already dark and I have lost all my hope, the door opens and Derrien walks in, wearing his usual dark attire. He looks tired... But again, so am I – sitting on the windowsill I turn my head slightly to have a look at him and then bring myself back to my previous position, watching the two moons shining brightly in the sky.

"I have been told that you haven't eaten anything since morning. Why?" he asks sternly.

"Not hungry", I reply, holding back my tears.

"You need to eat. I don't want you to get sick..."

"And why is that exactly?" I ask, "Because I haven't played the role you predetermined for me till the end?"

He doesn't say anything to that and I snap.

"What am I here exactly? What do I do here? Why did you bother to bring me if that's what our life is going to be? I don't deserve this, Derrien! You said that you loved me! And I trusted you!"

He walks firmly to the dressing table and puts something onto it. I look at it closer and see a visual crystal. He waves his hand over it, activating it and I jump off my seat and come closer as well.

"Explain this to me, Mira!" he grits through his teeth.

And then I see Tristan's face, he is talking about the upcoming war with the gerdians and about his plan to use the Selection girls. And then I see myself. I quickly recognize the speech I had to give a day or two ago, saying the words that were not written by me. Suddenly, pieces of the puzzle start to be out together. So, that's why he is so furious...

"I...", I start.

"Before you say anything, these crystals were activated all over the Akyrian Kingdom! Everybody believed in your every word! And I already found out

when exactly was the recording made! And that's after you found out that you were drugged by Ragnard! So, Mira, explain to me, please, why did you do it? Why did you betray me like this?" he looks like he is fuming, sparks of dark magic dance in his eyes.

"He had my father hostage!" I turn to face him with tears in my eyes, "I had no choice but to read the speech he wrote out loud! I had no idea that it would be used in such a way! And even if I did, for my Dad...I'd do it all over again! And I am not going to apologize to you for that!"

Something changes in his face at my words...

"I can't believe that you assumed the worst in me after everything we've been through!" I yell, "What did you think? That I am with him?! That I am playing with you?!"

I don't even notice how I start hitting him on his chest.

"What, then this Portal of yours back at the Selection meant nothing?! When we saw each other there it meant nothing? When I gave myself to you meant nothing!" now tears are rolling down my cheeks, "I hate you for this, Derrien! I hate you! How could you? I hate you!"

His strong arms wrap around me, pulling me so close that I couldn't hit him anymore and in just a few seconds I am already sobbing into his chest.

"Why didn't you tell me when we saw each other?" he asks somewhere in my hair.

"When?" I snort, "If you don't remember, we've been busy with something else! And before we could really talk, I woke up."

"I am sorry, Mira," he takes my red, wet, and puffy face into his palms and kisses me softly, "I am an idiot to have doubted you... I..."

"Yes, you are an idiot!" I agree eagerly and he chuckles.

"Mira, I believe you and would never doubt you again," he says, brushing his hand over my cheek.

"Is that why you locked me in here?" I ask, looking into his now happy eyes, and his expression changes.

“That’s not the only reason,” he says, sighing heavily, “Mostly it was needed for your safety...”

“For my safety?” I am startled by that reply. I thought that next to him I would be safe whatever happens...

“Those crystals, Mira... They had quite the effect on both – your Kingdom and our Empire... The war is now inevitable. And you became one of its symbols.”

“What do you mean?” I shrug. The last thing I want is to become the symbol of this crazy war.

“Ragnard is using this recording and your images to motivate his people. Now he tells a story of how we stole his innocent beloved because she was fighting against us. And people rise across the Kingdom for its “protection”... Because if a delicate girl was fighting the aggressors then anyone can do it. It’s bad, Mira, really bad...”

“Oh, gods!” I am lost for words.

“Mira, tell me,” he turns me to face him, “Did you...did you pass your dark magic to Tristan?”

He looks like my answer could kill him...

“And do I have any?” I look at him surprised with those words.

“You do... some,” he says dryly.

“How?” I flap my lashes, he was mentioning something about selected girls being special and able to accept dark magic, but I am not sure he ever mentioned how exactly it is done. Tristan was saying that it is possible to transfer magic, but again.. no details on the process.

“Ghm,” he clears his throat, “Mira, you receive my magic every time we make love.”

Oh, gods! I feel like I am blushing to the tips of my ears.

“Every time your womb receives my seed...It also receives my dark magic. The process is gradual. Slow even. And depends on each girl. Some accept magic faster, some slower. But before your body fully accepts it, you can’t get pregnant from me.”

I am going to explode now!

“This is something they never mentioned at the Selection!” I chuckle, trying to sound as if I am not embarrassed at all.

“We usually tell this to our wives, not brides,” he smiles at me but soon becomes serious again, “You can only accept the magic willingly. And then you can give it to someone else. Also willingly. So, when Tristan says that you are going to help him to get it...”

“Oh, gods, no!” I cover my face with my hands, “Nothing like that happened! He and I... we never... Oh, gods!”

“Thanks to the chaos!” he pulls me into another warm embrace, “I believe you, Mira. And to be honest, I don’t care anymore. As long as you are with me... As long as you are mine... nothing else matters...”

He raises my chin to look at me and then covers my lips with his. The kiss is sweet and gentle this time. And so intoxicating...

But a loud bang on the door disturbs us.

“Derwood! Take away that damn barrier! That’s an order!”, Dargen shouts and I will recognize his voice anywhere...

The Selection: Bride Of The Dark Dragon Chapter 99 - Tips

MIRA

The knocking on the door gets more and more intense. Dargen is not going to give up and live and I look at Derrien in horror.

“Rien, tell me, where are we exactly?” I ask him.

“My castle,” he replies.

“And why is he behaving like he owns the place?” I can’t connect the dots.

“Because he is the Crown Prince now, you know that,” Rien sighs, “And I wasn’t supposed to bring you here.”

“What does that mean?” I raise my brow.

“Mira, the situation is complicated now. Because of those crystals that were spread among people in the Akyrian Kingdom, the Emperor became interested in you. He ordered me to bring you to the palace. And for the first time ever I disobeyed his order...”

“For me,” I nod understandingly while the banging gets louder, “What do we do now?”

“Whatever happens, stay inside this room,” he says to me with the most serious face and I want to kiss him again, but knowing that this is not the right time, stops me, “He wouldn’t be able to come in because of the barrier. I’ll deal with him.”

“All right,” I smile weakly, brushing my hand over his cheek, “I trust you.”

For a second there his eyes flash with dark magic and he pulls me in for a quick but very passionate kiss. When he breaks it and moves to open the door, I lean on the wall behind me. Because, otherwise, I am going to fall...

“What do you want?” Rien asks his cousin when he opens the door, his voice doesn’t reflect any emotions whatsoever. I notice how curiously Dargen tries to see what’s inside and when his eyes stop on me, he smirks. There are four knights with him and I don’t like the way it all looks.

“Dear cousin,” the Crown Prince chuckles, “I am here simply to remind you of our Emperor’s order. He specifically told you to bring lady Miradora straight to the palace. And yet here you are – not in the palace.”

“It’s so kind of you, Your Highness, to bother yourself with little things like this,” Derrien sneers.

“Little things?” Dargen looks like he is shocked, “Are our Emperor’s orders just mere little things for you now?”

“Not at all, but it was nothing urgent. Lady Mira didn’t feel well when I managed to take her from the Akyrian Kingdom. She was in no state to stand before the emperor. I sent my servant to let him know that I will bring her as soon as she is ready.”

“She is a war prisoner!” Dargen growls and my heart sinks. Is that what I am here?

“Mira,” Derrien looks at me and stretches his hand to me, “Come here, please, for a second.”

I come up to him, without saying a word or hesitating, and put my hand into his. He kisses it and then lifts it up so that it’s right in front of Dargen’s nose.

“Look at this, dear cousin,” he smiles broadly, pointing at the bracelet on my hand, “Mira and I are engaged. She is not a prisoner here, she is officially my fiancée. So, don’t misunderstand again what status she has. Otherwise, it might be awkward. For you.”

“I am the Crown Prince!” Ryden grits through his teeth.

“And you have to repeat that out loud a lot, don’t you?” Rien chuckles, “Imagine how awkward it would be when you go to a war and more than half of your army does not arrive.”

Dargen wants to say something but soon changes his mind, throwing daggers at us both with his eyes. I bite my lip not to laugh and quietly step behind my man not to embarrass myself, as it is insanely hard to hold a laugh at this point.

“Anything else?” Rien raises his brow and the Crown Prince snorts and leaves, stomping furiously and not saying another word to us.

I bury my face in Derrien’s back and finally give in to my emotions, laughing hysterically. He turns to face me and looks at me with some kind of adoration.

“You really are unique, Mira Freyn,” he smiles.

When I calm down, he brushes my cheek and I say, “About that bracelet...”

“I know, my love, I am sorry,” he sighs, “I owe you a decent proposal. Yesterday I was just so mad that...”

I put my finger on his lip, making him stop talking, “Rien, I don’t care about all that. I just want to be with you. I am proud to wear your engagement bracelet. But what I want is to put a similar bracelet on you.”

He pulls me into a kiss and I feel how dark flames surround us, taking us somewhere else.

When I open my eyes, I see a beautiful room. It is very light and the walls are silver silk with beautiful golden patterns on them. Two elegant sofas are standing around a beautiful golden tea table. A huge white stone fireplace and some bookshelves. A white exquisite desk with a chair matching the sofas.

“What is this?” I look at Rien questioningly.

“One of your rooms, of course,” he smiles, “Reception, to be exact.”

He pulls me to one of the doors and the next room is full of dresses, and jewellery, and perfumes, and everything else a woman needs to keep her beauty. But we don't stop there, as he drags me behind him to the next room. And as soon as we are there I realize that I know this room. It's the bedroom we've been in so many times in our dreams together. This is the place where he wanted to take me at the Portal Ball. I recognize the magnificent bed, the luxury silk sheets, the fireplace in front of it...

“I hope you don't mind that we are going to share one bedroom?” he says after a momentary hesitation.

“Is it a gerdian tradition?” I raise my brow.

“No,” he answers honestly, making me smile.

“Then I love this idea,” I put my hands around his neck and stand on my tiptoes to give him a kiss. The kiss is sweet and gentle. And as soon as I am done, he drops to one knee and gets out something black and shining out of his inner coat.

“Miradora Freyn, I promised you when I saw you last time, that I will ask you an important question. I have to admit, that it doesn't matter what you answer, because I would never be able to refuse from you anyway. And yet I wish to hear you say it out loud... So, Mira, under the eyes of all the gods, will you agree to become my wife and to share my love, my magic, my happiness, and my struggles?”, in his hands he is holding a bracelet exactly like the one I already have on my hand, only bigger.

“Yes!” I drop to my knees next to him with tears in my eyes and take the bracelet from him, opening it and closing it on his wrist, “During the light days and the dark, I will be with you forever.”

As soon as the bracelet’s clasp fastens, both bracelets glow with sparks of dark magic, signalling that our engagement is official now. Next time, when we say our wedding vows, they will both be sealed forever on our hands...

After many minutes of madly kissing each other, we take a break to breathe and I ask, “Rien, about the Emperor...”

“Mira,” he stops me, lifting me up in his hands and walking to the bed, “We are not going to talk about that today. Today we are going to celebrate...”

In the morning the maids bring us breakfast and I notice a black envelope on a silver platter. Derrien is busy consuming sausages and bacon and I realize that this is the first time ever I actually see him eat in normal circumstances. And to be honest, this is a terrifying sight, as he eats everything that he sees. I wonder how he keeps such a good shape... Although remembering our last night together, I come to the conclusion that he is going to be fine!

Blushing, I open the envelope and gulp: “His Grace Duke of Derwood and lady Miradora Freyn are cordially invited to attend the Golden Jubilee of the Great Emperor of Gerdian Empire Ghardin the First on the first Golden Moon of Spring...”

And so the game begins...

The Selection: Bride Of The Dark Dragon Chapter 100 - Tips

MIRA

He doesn’t tell me, but I know it. Everything depends on what will happen at the Emperor’s Jubilee Celebration... This is a test for me and if I fail it, Derrien will be the one suffering the consequences. Well, and me too.

Dargen will be against us whatever happens. And only gods know what’s inside the Emperor’s head.

I grit my teeth thinking that it was Tristan who put me into this position, making me a symbol of this damn war. I could have been just another pretty Akyrian wife here, happily married to the archduke and leading a peaceful existence with the man I love. But it's just not happening for me...

War... This war is...complicated. I can guess that the Emperor would want to use me in some way for his own propaganda... That's why he wants to see me so urgently in his palace. And on the one hand, it would be easier for me to just go with the flow and do whatever he requires from me. But then again... my homeland is the Akyrian Kingdom. And this is where my family is. Speaking of which, Derrien helped me to connect with Dereck and he says that my parents and brother are now guests in his house. Tristan wouldn't be able to reach them at the marquis's estate... But for how long?

Just what do I do with all that mess?

"Everything is going to be alright," Rien brushes his hand over my cheek as we both sit on a comfortable sofa right next in front of the fireplace. I watch the dance of flames with my head relaxed against his chest as he reads a book and plays with my hair.

"I don't know," I sigh heavily and he puts his book away, "It's all so..."

"Mira," his fingers cup my chin and he makes me look at him, "I told you I will take care of everything. I'll find a way..."

"Rien, however much I think about it, the only way for us both to be truly happy is for that war to stop," I say looking right into his eyes. His expression is tense but I know he understands.

"It will stop sooner or later," he says.

"Oh really?" I chuckle, "Would that be before or after you meet my brother, my friends, my classmates on the battlefield?"

"I can get them out and..."

"They wouldn't go," I say quickly, because I know it's true, "They would all fight for our country until their last breath... And that's what scares me the most..."

He pulls me in for a hug and kisses the top of my head, "We'll figure something out... One step at a time..."

A week flies fast and now I have just a few days to get ready for the Celebration at the palace. My maids helped me to prepare the most beautiful gown and jewellery for me. Since it's the golden jubilee, I chose gold as the main colour. And I can tell for sure that this is the most expensive gown I have ever owned. But at the moment it seems appropriate as I am now the archduke's fiancée. I can't fail him and need to make sure that he isn't embarrassed for me and everything corresponds to his high status. Rien promised that he would find someone who can help me with the etiquette and other rules of the gerdian palace. But the event is so close and he hadn't brought anyone yet. He must have forgotten so I read a book on all that, which I have found in the library. It's a bit boring like any other etiquette book. But at the same time, it is very useful.

I sit on the sofa in my reception room when Derrien walks in through the main door, startling me as he actually usually just transports himself here with the help of his dark flames. He looks me up and down, smiling.

"Did something happen?" I raise my brow.

"I have a surprise for you," his smile is getting broader. For a man who used to be emotionless all the time he sure started to smile more often now!

"What is it?" I raise, anticipation is killing me as I bite my lip.

He opens the door and in come Morgan, Isidore and Desirae.

"Oh, my gods!" I run up to them, aiming to hug Morgan, but somehow Isidore intercepts me and hugs me much tighter than you would expect from a delicate girl like her.

"Welcome to the Empire, Mira!" she chuckles happily.

"Finally!" Morgan gets me out of her hands and also embraces me warmly. Desirae is next. They all look so different now even though it has been just about a month since I saw them last. They all wear dresses in the latest gerdian fashion now and somehow look more sophisticated.

"Thank gods!" I say, wiping a tear in my eyes, "You are all alive! But how?!"

“Gerdians were saving the ones they could,” Morgan replies, touching the bracelet on her wrist, “Brandon got me out first.”

“I see,” I smile.

“And my fiancé, Dairon De Guise saved me,” Desirae blushes, demonstrating her bracelet, and I take a mental note that this is not the same guy who was courting her at the Selection.

“And your fiancé saved me,” Isidore smiles, looking at Derrien for just a second, “He said that you would never forgive him if he left me there.”

I turn to look at my Rien once again and he winks at me.

“Thank you,” I whisper to him and he kisses the top of my head.

“Have time, you only have about an hour today,” he says and as soon as he is done, dark flames cover his body and he disappears. That’s more like it!

“Come in! Come in!” I gesture my friends to the sofas and call the maids, ordering them to bring us beverages and some snacks, “Tell me everything!”

They tell me everything. They tell me how terrible the explosion has been and how the whole castle was on fire. But luckily gerdians started to appear here and there, grabbing girls and transporting them to a remote castle in the Empire. Well, all except for Morgan and Isidore. Brandon took Morgan to his castle. And Rien brought Isidore to him, asking to take care of her. Then he left to look for me again. Even though he knew already that I was not in the castle.

The other girls were held in that new place for a few days, before they all were invited to the palace. It was announced to them that the Selection continues but some of the rules will change. Most girls were engaged within the first week. All very happy with it.

Isidore’s innocence has been confirmed by Rien and Brandon later when they told and proved to the emperor that Sideria has been used on her. And that’s when the first announcement from Tristan started to circulate in the kingdom. The beautiful story about him rescuing the woman he loves – me – from the hands of evil monsters... Gerdians were not happy about that. Some were even saying that I was one of the spies back at the Selection. But Rien put the

rumour down saying that he personally checked me and that I am as much a victim as the girls who died at the Selection.

Isidore, however, is not one of the girls who is engaged.

“Yeah, I decided to take my time to choose,” she snorts while taking a sip of tea.

“I am sorry, what?” my jaw drops to the floor, “Choose?”

“Yes, the emperor now granted us with the ability to choose if we agree or not to marry,” she grins, “We were as surprised as you are. Of course, most agreed to just their first proposal. But not me. I am taking my time. You have no idea how valuable we are here! I have four active suitors and around five who admire me from the distance! This is the most fun I have had in my life!”

“I can’t believe they decided to bend their own rules!” I gasp, “So not like them!”

“I guess they are now trying to prove that they weren’t cruel to us in the first place”, Morgan giggles.

“And how is life with Brandon Seville?” I ask her, “Are you...”

“In love”, she finishes my sentence and blushes again, “We are very much in love. You are invited to our wedding, by the way.”

“I wouldn’t miss it for the world!” I smile when a knock on the door disturbs us. “Who is it?”, I shout.

“I am sorry, my dear, but your time to have fun is up for today”, Derrien walks in, “Time to learn now.”

“But aren’t they here to help me with the etiquette and stuff?” I look at him in surprise.

“As if they could!” a familiar voice behind his back makes me jump up to my feet.

Noooo, it can’t be! Out of all the people, I do not expect to see her here!