

The Selection: Bride Of The Dark Dragon Chapter 101 - Tips

MIRA

“Missed me?” lady Cecilia smirks and I look at Derrien with the intention to kill. I can read one thousand books on gerdian etiquette, I am ready not to sleep and dance till my feet bleed. But I am not ready to become her student once again! What was he even thinking?!

“Lady Cecelia”, I smile unnaturally, “I am so glad to see that you are alive and well! What great news! Rien, my love, can we go and talk privately for just one second?”

“Absolutely not,” he smirks and flames of dark magic surround him as he disappears. That. Traitor!

“Yeah, she is alive as well,” Isidore rolls her eyes.

“And your posture is still absolutely atrocious,” the mentor slaps her back with a cane she has in her arm. Hmm, that definitely wasn’t there before.

“Is everything alright with your health?” I ask the older lady and she looks at me sharply, his lips are trembling for just one short moment.

“When the explosion happened, I got stuck under a stone,” she says calmly, “As a result, one of my legs was permanently injured.”

“I am very sorry,” I say and touch her hand, giving it a light squeeze.

“Don’t be,” she smiles softly, “I am one of the lucky ones...”

I see something like a tiny tear sparkle in her eyes that are full of pain. I can only imagine what she had to witness there. But she quickly regains control.

“Now, back to work, ladies!” she changes back to her usual straight tone. We have a lot of work to do! And especially lady Miradora here.”

Of course, she will single me out already! Grrrr!

“Brandon says I have impeccable manners,” Morgan quickly stands up, “So I think I’ll leave you...”

“There is no such thing as perfection, lady Rattleton!” Cecilia smirks, “You are about to marry a marquis. You can’t make any mistakes and need as much training as possible!”

Morgan sighs heavily and falls back to the sofa with no hope in her eyes.

“Ladies,” Cecilia walks to the centre of the room and makes a significant pause before she starts talking again, “I think you do not understand the situation that we are in here! Everything changed! And now it is more important than any time before that you are perfect! Anything less than perfection and you will be done here!”

“Didn’t you just say there is no such thing as perfection?” Isidore snorts.

“And that’s exactly the problem! You are already doomed!” Cecilia closes her eyes and rubs her forehead as if she is too tired of us already, “Don’t you get it? The Empire and the Kingdom are about to start a war! And you are all from the enemy kingdom! No one will spare you if you make any mistake! And everyone will be looking and waiting for you to make one!”

None of us say anything, we all know that she is right.

“You all need to get married to your gerdians as soon as possible,” the old lady continues, “This will protect you more. But even then... every lady that was born in Akyria is now under suspicion! We had traitors within us! We had spies who wanted to k!!! the gerdians and who were ready to k!!! their own to succeed! They don’t know if one of you is not a spy. They cannot trust you like they were ready to trust you before. Even the girls who already became wives are not safe anymore. That’s why you need to work hard to prove that you are innocent and that you deserve to be here! And, sadly, I am now the only one who can help you! So, keep your jokes to yourselves! You need this more than I do now! I proved my loyalty many years ago.”

We are all silent.

We are all silent.

“There aren’t any other spies within the ladies who were in the Selection with us,” I say, “Tristan and Xia were talking about it...”

“And this will mean nothing to the Emperor,” Cecilia chuckles darkly, “My girl, crystals with you saying a speech about how akyrians should fight the gerdians are already spread all over Empire as well! No one will believe you even if it’s true. You are the one in most danger here!”

I swallow. That’s not new information but hearing it out loud like this makes my blood freeze within my body. I need to be careful. I need to learn. She is absolutely right.

“So, are you ready to work hard?” our mentor smiles already knowing the answer.

“Yes, lady Cecilia,” we say in shaky unison...

Hours later she leaves us alone and the girls practically crawl out of my room. I am lying on my sofa with shoes thrown away and legs up, seriously considering just letting the Emperor execute me. I’ve seen life, I’ve traveled, I’ve loved! I’ve done everything worthy of leaving and nothing – NOTHING- is worth the torture of being told by lady Cecilia.

“Hard day?” Derrien appears in his dark flames, brushing his fingers over my neck. And I turn away from him. This is the only thing I now have the strength to do.

“Traitor,” I mumble.

He kneels in front of me, smiling softly, and takes away naughty locks of hair off my face.

“I am sorry you have to do this,” he chuckles, placing a gentle kiss on my bare shoulder. Tingles erupt from where his lips touched my skin and I closed my eyes in pleasure.

“Still not talking to you!” I pretend to be angry even though we both know that I can’t stay mad at him for long.

“Uh-huh,” he mumbles leaving a wet trail of kisses from my shoulder to my neck and then to my chest. Paying special attention to the place where he put his mark on me. A moan escapes me as this feels too good and he chuckles, biting my earlobe gently.

“I hate you!” I sigh, although it sounds more like another moan.

“I know, I know,” he smirks lifting me up in his arms, “I’ve been a very bad, bad, bad fiancé. You can punish me if you like. Or I can punish you...”

“For what?” I snort as I wrap my arms around his neck, “I didn’t...”

“For lying!” he smirks and opens the door with his foot. We are in my changing room and then in the bedroom... But he doesn’t stop there and I raise my brow.

“Derrien Derwood, where are you taking me?” I ask with a slight disappointment in my voice. I was kind of hoping that the bedroom was our final destination!

“Somewhere relaxing”, he murmurs and opens the door to the bathroom...

“Naughty gerdian!” I bite my lip already knowing what he had planned.

“Yeah, yeah,” he chuckles as he puts me down to my feet and turns the taps, perfectly warm water streaming to the giant marble bath. He comes back to me quickly, dark flames at the tips of his fingers.

“Don’t you dare!” I practically jump away from him, “Rien, you have ruined enough of my dresses!”

“I’ll buy you new ones,” he smirks coming closer.

“Only a man could say something like that!” I roll my eyes, “They are all handmade and one of a kind! People were working for weeks or maybe even months creating it! And you just want to ruin it because of your impatience!”

“I can be patient!” he snorts, coming from my back, undoing the straps and hooks of my dress and sliding it down my body to the very floor, and staying there with a mischievous gaze. He pulls my panties down and carefully places one of my feet to the edge of the bath, leaning in to kiss me in the place which a lady shall not name.

“Oh, gods!” I moan as I tug on his hair, not to fall down. His hands around my thighs and bottom are holding me in place and supporting me as well as his tongue makes swift circular movements over my bundle of nerves. He knows very well how to bring me to the edge fast and uses it against me time after time. But, luckily, I don’t mind. My release comes within seconds, shattering sparks and tingles throughout my body.

He stands up, a smug smile across his face, as his own pants and shirt disappear in the dark flames. I open my mouth to say something but he covers my lips with his kiss, giving me a taste of myself and pulling me closer.

“I don’t care about how long did it take them to make my clothes,” he chuckles going up the marble steps and stepping into the bath, not letting go of my hand, “I am sure my tailor would be thrilled to receive extra orders from me.”

He seats at the head of the bath and helps me inside. I slide onto his full length, arching my back from all the sensations and closing my eyes once again. His hands travel around my body, his lips on my breasts and my fingers are in his hair. He grasps me by my bottom with one hand and by my waist with another, guiding my motions and pace.

“Oh, Rien!” I bend down to kiss him and shamelessly tug onto his hair to make him look at me. We c***x together and I put my head onto his shoulder, my body limp in his hands as he rubs my back with soothing motions and placing soft kisses where he can get me.

“I can stay like this forever,” I mutter into his ear and he turns to me to bite it.

“Me too, my little mage,” he whispers.

I tell him everything that lady Cecilia made me do today and he tells me everything he has been busy with. Dargen wouldn’t leave us alone, insisting that I should come to the castle as soon as possible.

“You know he is planning something, right?” I say, sighing.

“Of course,” he plays with a lock of my hair, “I expected no less from him. And he never disappoints. However, I think he can wait a few more days until the Jubilee.”

“And what if the Emperor ends up telling us that we can’t get married?” I say out loud something that was concerning me for all those days.

“He wouldn’t,” Derrien kisses the top of my head, “Don’t even think about it, Mira. You are mine, no one would argue with that.”

I sure hope so. But this lingering feeling deep inside bothers me...

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The day of the Golden Jubilee ball approached too fast. The golden dress fits me like a glove and my hair is in an intricate hairdo with some of it up, braids creating a beautiful pattern, while the rest is flowing down my bare back in perfect curls.

Rien walks into my changing room and all the maids disappear the moment they see him. I wonder what he was doing to servants before I arrived here because they are all clearly terrified of him. But that's a thought for another time because as soon as I catch his reflection in the mirror, I see how great he looks today in a beautiful black coat with golden embroidery and a dark cloak draped over one shoulder with the same golden patterns on the edging – all symbols of the gerdian royal family, which Rien's ducal house is allowed to wear on special occasions.

"You look magnificent", he smiles at me and all I want now is to stay home and get to our bedroom with him. I feel like I am the luckiest girl alive to have such a man love with me with all his heart!

"You don't look too bad yourself," I chuckle as he puts his hands on my shoulders.

"I have something for you", he says and I look surprised as he doesn't seem to have anything with him. But in the next moment, dark flames appear around my neck and a gorgeous necklace with smoky diamonds emerges from them.

"Rien!" I touch it, feeling how warm the metal got from the flames, which surprisingly never burn me, and then squeeze his hand that is still on my shoulder, "This is so beautiful! It's just perfect!"

"Only the best for my bride," he lifts up my hand and bends down to kiss it, sending tingles all over my body. Honestly, ever since we started to live together this effect is getting more and more powerful!

"Perks of being the bride of the Dark Dragon!" I giggle and he suddenly grabs my chin and turns me to face him, covering my lips with his.

"You drive me crazy!" he mutters, "In the best and in the worst ways, Mira."

“Same here,” I mumble, kissing him back, but very soon come to my senses, “Rien, we need to stop! Rien... Rien!”

“I don’t think I can”, he says somewhere around my neck.

“I don’t think I can”, he says somewhere around my neck.

“We can’t miss the Jubilee!” I remind you, “And if we don’t stop now, we will not be able to stop later!”

“sh!t!” he mutters, pulling away, and then adds some swearing that is unknown to me. Probably something gerdian. “You are right, Mira,” he says, “I am sorry...”

“No need to apologize,” I bite my lip, “If it wasn’t important to attend this ball, I would have never even tried to stop you!”

His eyes spark with dark magic and I know what it means and hurry to fix the situation, “But we absolutely must go, Rien!”

“Yes, yes, you are right,” he grits through his teeth as he closes his eyes and takes his dragon under control.

I quickly fix my make-up. The lipstick got destroyed over our little encounter. And when I turn back, Derrien is already back to his usual and smiling.

“My lady,” he bows and offers his hand.

“My lord,” I curtsy and accept it.

And the moment I do he transports us both to the palace.

It is exactly as I have imagined it – dark marble everywhere, columns and heavy golden decorations everywhere. Portraits of royals in dark clothes, heavy golden curtains that also somehow look dark and louringly. The whole atmosphere here is heavy, I feel like I breathe dark magic in here instead of normal air.

“Are you alright?” Rien brushes his hand over my cheek as we stand in front of the main staircase. Other couples and even whole families appear out of dark smoke here and there. All bow to Rien as they notice him and he just waves, dismissing them all, eyes on me only at all times.

“I am fine,” I smile, gathering myself, “It’s just...It is so different here from your castle. I have to say I definitely like the castle more!”

“Me too,” he chuckles, “Let’s go, Mira. Time for a show.”

He offers me his hand again and I accept it, holding my back straight and head high. We walk together up the stairs and into the main ballroom, which is apparently also the throne room here. Two thrones are standing there – one bigger at the front and one smaller slightly behind. Dargen is sitting in the smaller one and looking bored to death. But as soon as he notices us his eyes light up and an ugly smirk spreads over his perfect face. And I wonder for one-hundredth time how can someone be so beautiful and so disgusting at the same time?!

“Don’t look at him,” Rien says quietly, “The less he notices you, the better.”

“Oh, dear,” I snort, “He was waiting for us and is definitely up to something. I doubt that we can avoid him.”

“And yet we have to stay here at least for a few hours and we longer we don’t intersect with him, the better,” my fiancé smiles.

We make a circle around the ballroom and I notice that Morgan is here with Brandon, and so is Isidore, surrounded by three young gerdians and flirting all the way. Desirae is nowhere to be found though. But I notice two other girls from the Selection with gerdians that also seem familiar.

When the music starts, Rien leads me to the dancefloor at once, taking a place in the very centre.

“It’s one of your favourites,” he smiles, speaking about the dance.

“How on heavens did you know?” I raise my brow, “I never told you!”

“It’s my job to know these things,” he chuckles and starts leading me, “And this Dan Sa’Rotte, we always dance this one together. Haven’t you noticed?”

He makes me arch my back, giving me all support that I need, and then starts circling around the ballroom with me in his hands at ease.

“Of course I have”, I whisper, “That’s why it became my favourite!”

We dance and we dance as if there is no one else in this world. And at the final accord, Derrien pulls me towards him, leaning in for a kiss...

Then suddenly fanfares sound throughout the hall, making people whisper and bow at once.

“Lords and Ladies of the Gerdian Empire, greet his majesty the Emperor of Gerdian Empire Ghardin the First!”

Oh, my...

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I stay in my curtsy, too afraid to move or to even look up when cold fingers touch my chin and pull me up. The Emperor! Oh, Gods!

He waves to the rest so that they can raise as well and in no time he is back to me.

“Miradora Freyn,” Emperor Ghardin says without a thread of emotion on his face, “Nice to finally meet you.”

“Likewise, your Majesty,” I try to smile but he still doesn’t react in any way.

“I am glad Rien finally let you out of his castle!” he says and a few laughs emerge here and there. They are all thinking the same thing. And even though it is true, I somehow feel a little bit insulted. But, of course, I keep it to myself.

“I am happy to see more of the Empire as well, Your Majesty”, I smile again, “It’s so beautiful. And especially your palace – it’s simply magnificent. ”

“True,” he nods, “The Akyrian Kingdom has nothing of the sort. The only thing valuable there are a few women that can become mothers to future gerdians.”

Another insult... I look at Rien but his face also does not express any emotions.

Looking back at the Emperor I see the family resemblance. He is a very tall and broad-shouldered man, who reminds me of both – Rien and Dargen. He has black hair like both of them, but silver has already touched his temples and beard. He has strong perfect facial features – just like his nephews, bushy

eyebrows permanently furrowed. Upon the whole, he is a handsome older man, but the aura around him is heavy and suffocating. I know at once that Dargen's rudeness and cruelty, as well as Rien's lack of emotions, come from this man. And his intense look at me gives me the impression that he is not my biggest fan.

"Lady Miradora, dance with me!" he orders and stretches his hand to me, which I have to accept with a forced smile.

"Gladly, Your Majesty," I am being perfectly polite and follow the Emperor to the centre of the dancefloor.

The music starts and so do we. His moves are perfect, it's obvious that he has done it millions of times.

"Honestly," he says so that I can hear him, "I don't see what all the fuss is about you!"

"Neither do I," I swallow another insult, repeating to myself that this is for Rien. For us!

"At least you are not stupid," he snorts, "Although I am not so sure that it's a good thing!"

To that, I respond nothing and he continues, "You drove two of my nephews crazy! And I see that the Akyrian prince is smitten with you as well. He was taking a big risk getting you out of the Selection castle before he murdered all those people!"

I swallow at the mention of Tristan...

"And Derrien," Ghardin sighs, "He was always such a loyal boy..."

"He is still very loyal to you, your Majesty," I interject quickly.

"Not the way he used to be," the Emperor looks at me with a furious gaze, "He never disobeyed my orders before! I always knew that whatever I say – he would fulfill! But then you appeared! And now he shifts to his dragon form in front of everyone, even though we've been keeping it a secret for years! And then hides you from me for days! Just what exactly did you do to him?"

“Uhm,” I am lost for words, but then look straight into his eyes, “We are in love, you Majesty and...”

“Love!” he chuckles, “He needs to fvck you more, and then you two will be over with that nonsense! It’s lust, my dear! There is no such thing as love in this world...”

“But you seem to love and care for your two nephews,” I note to him and his hands squeeze my waist and hand roughly.

“You don’t know a thing about our family, little girl. Those boys are our Empire’s future. I was hoping for Rien to become the emperor but he refused. Then Ryden stepped up. I was disappointed at first but now I think it’s for the better. He is ruthless and follows my orders just fine. If he gets you, he will show you your place – which is in bed and nowhere else.”

My blood boils at his words.

“But Rien and I are already engaged,” I say carefully.

“But not yet married,” he smirks, “Everything can still change for you. You are lucky that you are one of the special ones. You can give birth to gerdian children. Otherwise, I would have already killed you and forgot about all that nonsense.”

“Rien and I are ready to...”

“Do everything,” he chuckles darkly, “Yes, I know. And you will. You have a huge mess to fix! And you’d better start smiling as you mean it, my girl! Today’s event is being recorded by the crystals. Tomorrow akyrians will see how much fun their beloved symbol of war has here in the Gerdian Empire.”

“Of course, your Majesty,” I force a smile, “If needed I can give a speech about...”

“For now I am already fed up with your speeches,” he interrupts me, “Just do as I say and maybe you will get what you want. But know this, in the end, I will give you to whoever I want. No bracelet will help you if you anger me in any way. If Derrien disobeys me again – you will be the one paying the price. Dargen will be happy to accept you any time, I can tell that for sure. So, from now on you are my obedient little puppet, saying what I say and doing what I order. Got it?”

“Yes, your Majesty,” I curtsy as the dance has finished. The Emperor turns away without saying a word, telling something to Rien. Our eyes meet for just one second and everything is clear between the two of us. He knows exactly what I’ve been told and I know exactly why Ghardin calls him out to talk. They both leave and the music starts again.

From the corner of my eye I see how happy Dargen is, he stands up and moves in my direction, but before he can reach me, Brandon Seville appears before him and I sigh with relief, trying to escape on my shaky legs.

“Here!” Morgan and Isidore appear at two sides of me and offer me a glass of wine.

“Gerdian wine? No thanks!” I mutter.

“It’s not the same aphrodisiac stuff they were giving us at the Selection,” Morgan smiles reassuringly and takes a sip from her own glass.

“Drink it, dear,” Isidore looks at me with a troubled face, “Gods know you need it now. You look very pale. Was it bad?”

“Horrible,” I admit, “He doesn’t like me and…”

“I don’t think he like anyone,” Morgan whispers, “But, ladies, here even walls have eyes. This is not the place to talk of anything. Besides, Brandon wouldn’t be able to hold the Crown prince for long. Mira, you’d better hide somewhere before Derrien comes back.”

“I know,” I sigh, “But where?”

“I know a place,” lady Cecilia appears out of nowhere, “Follow me, Mira.”

I throw a quick glance at Dargen and he notices it immediately, smirking at me. Oh, gods! I am in trouble.

“I’ll create a little diversion,” Isidore says, following my gaze, “Just go quickly!”

I follow lady Cecilia into another room, which leads to a staircase. We go up and enter on some kind of balcony behind the heavy golden curtains. From there I can see the whole throne room. Isidore is in Dargen’s hands, it looks like she just fainted. But in a few seconds, she jumps back to her feet and walks away with a completely different gerdian. It doesn’t escape my gaze

that she shrugs when she looks back at the Crown Prince. I guess she hates him no less than I do after all the tortures he made her go through.

“Stay here until the archduke returns,” Cecilia says dryly and prepares to leave.

“Wait!” I stop her, “Why are you helping me?”

The old lady sighs and walks to a nearby chair, sitting with a heavy sigh on it.

“Because it is my job!” she says.

“Is it?” I snort, “One more, one less... Your words, not mine.”

“I was wrong,” she says, not looking at me, “When I lost more of you girls... Only then I realized how I failed you. When my own king ordered to kill you off if needed... When the naughty girl I hated turned out to be right the whole time... I saw that there was no one to protect you.... First, gerdians started saving girls and I was so happy I was right about them. But then I came to live here too. And saw how everything really is here... All my life...”

She breathes heavily and I see tears forming in her eyes. I notice a small table with beverages nearby and walk to it, pouring a glass of water and offering it to the woman. She accepts gladly and takes a few sips.

“You know,” she starts talking again, looking at me with a sad smile, “I was also a part of the Selection once... I was young and beautiful and strived for perfection. So much that I attracted the attention of the then Crown prince.”

All right, this is getting interesting!

“Ghardin?” I gasp and land on a seat next to her.

“Yes”, she smiles, “We both were much younger then. He was smitten with me. Or at least I thought so. Everything was so perfect and I was preparing to become a crown princess! I followed all the rules, I perfected my every move... But then another girl caught his eye. Unruly and rebellious. She was challenging him and he was enjoying that. One night we were supposed to have a date. But instead, he came to me and handed me...”

“An empty jewellery box,” I bite my lip.

“Yes,” she sighs, “He said that he has made his choice and that this other girl would be his princess, not me. The next day was the ball of Portals. And I spend what seemyв like forever in it, alone, crying my eyes out. Luckily, you don’t have to return for as long as you want to. And I used my chance well. I came to my senses, I made myself strong again. When I walked out of the portal, Ghardin was putting an engagement bracelet on that other girl’s wrist.

Later, when he was alone, I came to congratulate him. And I ask him to let me exit the Selection... He laughed at that and said that no one leaves the Selection. It is one of the rules that I loved so much. That’s when I fell to my knees and begged him to at least let me not be chosen by anyone else. I said that I will stay at the Selection forever if he wants me to, training new generations, making them perfect...

And for the first time, I saw an ounce of pity in him. He agreed to that. The next day the two of them left and I received my position as the girls’ new mentor. Year after year I was training new girls and sending them to the Empire. I imagined what a happy life they would have here. I was thinking of Ghardin every day... and imagined that I am doing all this for him. I imagined that he will be grateful to me for that. And it was enough for me to feel happy. But then all this happened.

One of the gerdians saved me and brought me here. The emperor and I met again. And very quickly I realized that he doesn’t even remember who I am. But what shocked me the most – his queen, the girl I once envied so much, is already dead... by his hand. He is married to someone else now. He took someone else’s wife as his when he pleased. There are no rules... The girls here are never safe... All this...is the greatest disappointment of my life. I spent my life on a fraud. You, Miradora, were right the whole time...”

“Not really,” I smile at her and put my hand on hers, giving her a light squeeze, “I believed in our Kingdom the way you believed in the Gerdian Empire. And then I got drugged, brainwashed and my parents were held hostage! I guess you and me have more in common than we originally thought.”

For a few moments, we both stay silent, holding our hands as we sit.

“But what are you doing here now? Officially, I mean?” I ask her.

“I was supported by the few gerdians, your fiancé included and appointed an official mentor for the girls. I will also be a teacher for the newcomers they

expect after the war,” she replies, looking into my eyes, “They have plans for all those girls as they need to increase their population... It’s... it’s not a good plan, Mira. They are going to choose a few to become wives and the rest... the rest would be used for breeding.”

“Oh, mighty gods!” I whisper, feeling how my heart starts to race.

“I know,” a tear rolls down the woman’s face, “I am going to stay here and help as many as I can... But this is all I can do...”

Suddenly, the door to the balcony opens.

“I thought that you will be hiding somewhere...”

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A smug smile spreads through his face and I realize that maybe coming here wasn’t such a good idea after all. It’s too secluded. No one would see or hear us here!

I stand up and help Cecilia do the same and we curtsy together.

“Tell Rien,” I whisper to her quickly when I bend to help her again. All this time Dargen is not taking his eyes off me.

“Mira, long time no see!” he smirks, coming closer and then throws an angry look at the old lady, “Get out!”

“Your Highness!” she struggles to curtsy again even with her cane, but still does it perfectly and then leaves swiftly. Hopefully to look for Rien.

“Your Highness,” I greet him and he says nothing. He slowly walks around me, like a predator. Which he definitely is! Watching me, testing my patience, enjoying the whole thing!

“You look as good as I remember,” he says after a while, “As always, gerdian fashion suits you more. You were born to wear dresses like that.”

I feel a light brush of his fingers over my bare back, sending shivers of horror down my spine. It’s as if my body rejects him on a physical level.

He stops right in front of me and lifts my chin up with his fingers so that I look at him, studying my face.

“Tell me, Mira, how is life with my cousin?” he asks, eyes on my lips.

“Very well, you Highness,” I say after I gulp, “He treats me well and takes care of me.”

“And is it all that you need in life?” he chuckles, “Just someone who will treat you good and take care of you?”

“Well, I want to say something but he places his thumb on my lower lip to stop me and then brushes it over and over again and again, making my lips part. He looks at me as if he is in a daze, relishing every moment.

“I can make you Empress,” he suddenly says, “You will have everything. And I will treat you ten times better than he does. All you have to do is say yes to me, Mira.”

Oh, gods... This is bad! There is no way in chaos I would even consider it!

“Say yes and I will make every wish of yours come true, fulfill your every dream,” he places his hands on my shoulders and turns me to the ballroom, “Look at them – they will all be your servants! With a flick of your finger, they will live or die! You will decide fates of people, kingdoms even!”

“Your Highness, I will not be good in any of this,” I interject, “I was not born to become a queen and let alone the Empress!”

“Tsss, Mira,” he whispers into my ear, fingers pressing harder into my flesh, “When I speak, you do not interrupt.”

So much for I’ll fulfill every wish of yours! I am desperately looking for Rien between all the guests, but it looks like he is still with the Emperor. I wonder what they are talking about. Everything is going not according to our plan today!

“I will bring your family to the Empire,” he keeps whispering, brushing his lips and nose over my earlobe, his hot breath on my neck, “I already sent people to get them.”

“You shouldn’t have to”, I say calmly even though my heart is racing like crazy now. If he gets my parents then I will find myself in an impossible situation! He can use them to make me do what he wants! Gods, tell me he doesn’t have my family!

“What do you want me to give to you so that you say yes?” he forcefully turns me to face him, his eyes glowing red.

“Your Highness,” I carefully choose my words, “It’s impossible. I am already engaged to the archduke.”

“Do you think I care?” he sneers, “The Emperor is not happy with Derwood anymore, he is out of grace. He has no power over me. I can take you if I want. But I want you to choose me over him! I want you to come to me yourself! I want you to stay by my side and tell him that you choose me because I am a better man, husband, lover...”

“Is that the only thing that interests you?” I raise my brow. Although that all actually makes sense. Rien was always better than Dargen in everything, always the best, always number one. While Ryden was in his shadow at all times. Now when he has all this power he wants to prove to him that he is the better man. This is why he is so hung up on me. I am the necessary trophy that would prove his victory! I am something that Rien really wants for the first time in his life. I am the only thing that could truly hurt him. And he wants to use me.

“No, not the only thing”, he pulls me into a much tighter embrace, burying his head in my hair and taking a deep breath.

“Your Highness, this is inappropriate!” I struggle in his arms.

“Dance with me, Mira!” he orders and dark smoke surrounds us transporting us to the centre of the dance floor. Ryden lifts up his hand and waves to the musicians, “Music!”

I recognize the melody at once. It’s the Zarkand – the dance of a hunter and his prey. Throughout this dance, a woman tries to escape while the man catches her and in the end, makes her do what he desires. It’s beautiful, but I hate it with my heart and soul because the sense of it goes against everything that I believe in. Of course, Dargen would choose something like that.

Every time I step away from him – I can breathe, but then, without a doubt, he pulls me back into his arms, closer and tighter every time. There is no escape from him.

When he “catches” me once again, I prepare for the next movement, ready to “escape” any moment. But he doesn’t let me go. Instead, he pulls me closer, cups my chin, and slams his lips into mine! Right in the middle of the ballroom, while everybody is watching us. No one dared to step on the dancefloor while we were there...

I struggle against him, but he is much stronger physically. I try to push him away, but it is useless. Finally, he breaks the kiss, still holding me in his arms with a look that says to me that he wants more, but I manage to get out and... slap him in a fit of rage. It feels satisfying but I immediately regret it. I should have done it! Shouldn’t have awoken the beast...

The sound of my slap echoes through the room. And gasps that follow break the silence. Only now I realize that music is not playing anymore.

“How dare you!” Dargen grits through his teeth.

“I am engaged!” is all that I can say, lifting up my hand and shaking my bracelet in front of his face, “I love Rien! He and I are...”

“Enough!” he roars and backslaps me. I fall down and feel a metallic taste in my mouth at once, everything spins around me.

I feel like someone is lifting me into his arms. Rien, please, I hope it’s you!

The dark smoke surrounds us and the last thing that is on my mind before I lose consciousness is, “Rien doesn’t use dark smoke...”

The Selection: Bride Of The Dark Dragon Chapter 105 - Tips

MIRA

I open my eyes and feel the worst headache ever. I really want to scratch my forehead but soon come to the conclusion that I can’t!

“What the chaos?” I groan, pulling my hands only to realize that they are both tied at the top of my head.

“Finally”, I hear a familiar voice and shrug, trying to look where he is.

“Where am I?” I ask, feeling how dry my throat is.

“In your future bedroom,” Dargen smirks, sitting on the edge of the bed I am lying in. He observes me like I am some kind of a pet who does something adorable. His hand softly brushes over my cheek, taking away a lock of hair off my face. My whole body tenses.

“Why did you tie me up?” I ask as if it is a completely normal conversation.

“Because you need to learn to hold your hands to yourself”, he sneers and his fingers travel lower to my neck and then – my chest, stopping at my mark.

“I should have marked you,” he sighs heavily, “This is going to be hard to remove to put on a new one...”

“New one?!” I exclaim, “Ryden, you’ve made a point! Let me go now!”

“Say it again”, he husks, “Say my name.”

“Erm, Ryden?” I pronounce it calmly and then add, “Untie my hands, please. It hurts.”

“You are very delicate,” he smiles softly for the first time and, after brushing my lips with his thumb, starts untying the ropes around my wrists. As soon as he is done, I am trying to sit upon the bed, but he holds me in place with his hand on my neck.

“I didn’t tell you that you can get up,” he smirks and I start thinking hectically what spell or attack I can use on him to try and escape. I should do something, I can’t let him touch me! This is absolutely impossible!

“You said that you want me to come to you,” I remind him carefully.

“That was before you slapped me,” he grits through his teeth, “Do you know how lucky you are, Mira? If it was anyone else but you humiliating me like this in public, they would already be dead. Instead, you are being treated like a queen here!”

Is that what he imagines being treated like a queen be? Thank you, but no thank you!

"I am sorry, Your Highness," I say and he starts caressing my neck instead of squeezing it, "I shouldn't have slapped you. I was just startled. But..."

"No buts, Mira..."

"Your Highness, allow me, please, to remind you once again that I am engaged. Rien and I..."

"Shut up," he grabs my wrist with the engagement bracelet, "You don't need this anymore!"

He tries to open the bracelet, but unsuccessfully. It cannot be opened. He tries his dark magic on it but still, nothing happens. Then he starts just nervously try to pull it off my wrist. For a second there I am even afraid that he is going to break it. The wrist, not the bracelet!

"You are hurting me!" I squirm and he stops as if a bucket of cold water was thrown on him.

"To chaos with it!" he says furiously, "My mage will deal with it later!"

He quickly shoves me onto the bed and climbs on top of me, holding my hands on either side of me. He tries to kiss me again, but I turn away.

"Your Highness! Please! I have a fiancé! We are in love and..."

"Shut up!" he says as his hand wraps around my neck, "This ends up! After I claim you he wouldn't even look at you! It will all be over and you will be where you belong! Under me!"

"No!" I scream, getting his intentions all too well and trying to wriggle from under his body, but he is far too heavy for me and far too strong.

His tongue is in my neck, leaving wet sticky traces all over it right down to my chest.

"Don't struggle!" he mutters somewhere in my collarbone and releases my hands. The next second I hear the sound of the ripping fabric and realize that he has just destroyed the top of my dress, my chest almost on full display. He

takes a fistful of one of my breasts and rips more fabric with his teeth to get access to the other one.

“No!” I shout and attack him with what I can. Fire is the first thing that comes to mind and I summon it. But dark smoke appears around him and just suffocates my flames, leaving no trace of it. Meanwhile, Dargen doesn’t waste his time and starts ripping the hem of the dress, one of his arms sliding up my thigh, sending unpleasant shivers down my whole body.

This cannot be happening! No! Not to me! Not when I was so happy already!

Tears are rolling down my face as he continues to kiss me wherever he feels the desire to, the hardness in his pants rubbing around my stomach and I feel like I am about to throw up.

Suddenly, a loud banging on the door brings us both into reality. Sounds of struggle behind it and my most favourite voice in the whole world, “Mira! I am here! Dargen! Open the damn door!”

It’s Rien! Rien is going to save me!

“RIEN!” I shout as loud as I can, letting him know that I am here!

But that’s when dark and unpleasant laughter breaks out of Dargen, who is still on top of me.

“Oh, you think he can save you, do you?” he chuckles as if something incredibly funny is going on and I look at him in shock. What does he mean? Rien is here! He is going to help me!

“Mira, Mira,” he says slowly, enjoying every second of what he is doing, “My room is sealed with a royal barrier. Derrien himself was helping to create it, he can’t break it! He will not be able to enter my room. All he can do now is stand there and listen to how I take you. Again and again, and again. And trust me, after I am done, he wouldn’t be there. You lost already, so just accept it!”

I turn to look at the door, tears are making my vision blurry. I don’t hear anything down there anymore... It’s like he is gone already... It can’t be! He can’t leave me here! He loves me! I know he does, he wouldn’t leave me! It’s not possible! It can’t be all over like that! Gods, please, not like that!

“Finally mine!” Dargen starts to unbuckle his belt and I know that this is my last chance! I throw the hardest punch in his jaw I could master, shocking him. The next blow goes down his royal jewels, which he also misses and I try to get out from under him, however, he recovers quicker than I anticipated, pinning me to the bed by my neck with just one of his arms!

“Naughty!” he growls, “Naughty unruly girl! I’ll teach you!”

He tears his shirt off his body and continues with his belt when suddenly a loud noise breaks out and we both watch the wall next to us disappear as if it was torn out of the building....