

The Selection: Bride Of The Dark Dragon Chapter 106 - Tips

MIRA

“What the fvcking*g chaos?!” Dargen roars looking at the now missing wall in shock.

And I know exactly what is going on, so not wasting any time I summon fire once again, aiming at his hair and face this time! I just need to win a few seconds! And now I am the one enjoying the moment!

Fire comes easily and the Crown Prince of Gerdian Empire falls off me screeching in pain. But I notice something strange for the first time now – the flames that came to my call are dark...

“You stupid w***e!” Dargen shouts and sends a wave of dark magic at me, knocking me off the bed and slamming across the opposite wall. He stands up and moves in my direction. Which only makes me smirk because he doesn’t see what I see!

And I see a dragon in the distance that flies at us with tremendous speed! I’ve seen this before, on the battlefield back in the Kingdom...

Rien starts shifting while he is still in the air but it’s his human form that steps into the broken room. And as soon as he is here, dark flames hit Dargen in the back, sending him to k!ss the wall right next to me.

“Rien!” I cry and run into his arms.

“Mira, oh gods!” he embraces me tightly, breathing in my scent. And then he distances himself from me and looks me up and down. I bet it is some sight to see! Broken l!p, forming bruises, torn dress, my b.reasts are hardly covered with what’s left of it. And my legs are on display since half of my skirt was torn away.

“I am fine!” I hurry to calm him down, “He didn’t manage to...”

“The chaos he didn’t!” Rien shouts and throws himself at his cousin. He doesn’t use magic anymore – just raw physical power. He tosses Dargen on the floor and sits on top of him making punch after punch after punch. The Crown Prince tries to struggle at first but soon stops or probably just not able

to anymore and only makes painful sounds every time a fist meets his face, which gradually turns into a bloody mess. Rien's knuckles are covered in dark goblin blood as well.

He is going to kill him! And at first, all I think is that the world would be a better place without Ryden Dargen. But then I remember our conversation with the emperor. He will be furious. Or maybe things are even worse and this is some kind of a trap for Derrien. Everything is so messed up here!

"Rien!" I call for him but he doesn't even notice, his eyes are flashing with dark magic as if it is ready to burst out of him.

"Rien, please! You need to stop!", I carefully come closer but he still pays no attention to me.

I put my hand on his shoulder and he turns to me in fury, growling like a beast – his eyes are full of magic and there are scales forming at the sides of his face, areas above eyebrows are protruding rapidly. I shrug as I have never seen him like this before – realizing that he is in his mid-transformation. But suddenly something changes. It's as if he recognizes me again and his face goes back to normal.

"Rien?" I call him and he nods quietly, still holding Dargen by his hair. The Crown Prince is unconscious the whole time.

"Rien, I don't think it's a good idea to kill him," I say and quickly add, "Yet."

"He deserves it!" my fiancé growls.

"Yes, he does. Trust me, I want to strangle him myself," I say, "But it's all seems... off. Don't you feel it? It feels like a trap. And I can't figure out what and why... But I have this lingering feeling inside... Rien, let's go back home and think everything through! In your dragon form, you can kill him whenever you like anyway."

Derrien finally opens his fingers and Dargen falls to the ground.

In no time the man I love is back with me, taking off his coat and wrapping it around my shoulders. He takes me into his hands and flames of dark magic surround us.

Back at home, we take a long shower together. Just shower and nothing else. For the first time ever none of us is in the mood for this.

Derrien carefully cleans my body and checks every inch of it, swearing when he sees a scratch or a bruise. When we are both clean enough, he wraps me into a soft towel and brings me to the bed. He gets a hairbrush out and starts carefully brushing my hair, drying it up with his magic at the same time. I close my eyes and just enjoy this feeling of being safe and taken care of. And when he is done, we lie in bed together. None of us says anything, we just enjoy the closeness and watch the flames in the fireplace. And don't even notice how we fall asleep.

The next day no news come from the palace and no one summons Derrien or me to come back there. The whole next week is quiet, although it does feel like it's the calm before the storm.

We spend all our time together – thinking, discussing, planning... But however much we plan, we still haven't figured out how to get out of all this mess.

"You should have become the emperor yourself!" I snort while going through the bookshelves in our library, picking something new about dragons. Derrien has a vast library but unfortunately, there aren't a lot of books about dragons that are not just novels or products of someone's imagination. And the few books that could be found here are mostly about lower dragons. And lower dragons are just beasts, they don't have human forms and can't shift, they can't communicate and the only common thing about them and Rien is that they all could fly and breathe out fire.

"I am afraid this ship has sailed," Rien chuckles while he waits for me. In the past few days, he didn't leave me alone even for a second.

His conversation with the emperor hasn't gone too well... Although I don't know all the details...but that only signifies the fact that if I knew, I wouldn't like it.

My fingers traverse through the old tomes, feeling the cold leather of the covers. Until something catches my eyes. I get out a book that looks more like a journal. And looking at the cover I come to the conclusion that it is exactly that – a very old journal, handwritten at that. I open the first page and gasp.

"Arron Brookland!" I say out loud and look at Rien with excitement.

“What?” he looks at me, not impressed at all.

“Rien, it’s the journal of Aaron Brookland!” I try to explain to him, but his expression is still blank.

“So?” he raises his brow.

“He is a famous traveling knight of Akyria! The legend!” I almost want to jump, “And another important thing! He is a great-great-great-great-many-greats-grandfather of mine!”

“Really?” Rien chuckles seeing my excitement.

“Yes!” I nod vigorously, “We are relatives through my mother. She was a Brookland before she married my father. I can’t believe you have this! This is... This is supposed to be a national treasure of Akyria! Or at least my family! How did you get this?”

“I have people who bring rare things to me,” he just shrugs it off, “Don’t get too emotional about this journal though. It’s in some ancient language! I couldn’t read it...”

I quickly flip through pages and smile, “Well, Derrien Derwood, then you are in luck! This is ancient Akyrian. It goes back to times when people were not speaking the common language! And I was taught it since I was about five years old!”

“Seriously?” he looks like he is not bored for the first time since we are here, “You can understand what’s there?”

“Well, I am not fluent,” I admit, “But yeah, I think I can understand. My mother was teaching me since I was young. This is a common practice for Brooklands. While Freyns are famous warriors, Brooklands are known as scholars and scientists.”

“That explains a lot!” Rien grins at me and I blush. I still blush when he looks at me like that, “Take it, and let’s go.”

We have another perfect quiet evening, curled up on a sofa together, reading and drinking wine in front of our fireplace.

I eagerly start to read the journal of my ancestor, finding out about his adventures and translating interesting bits to Derrien. He listens to me with curiosity, not minding me interrupting his own reading every other minute.

He plays with my hair as I speak, kissing the top of my head from time to time and I realize that I could live like this forever. I really wish it could be like this forever!

It's getting really dark, so I am surprised when a maid knocks on the door at such a late hour. Usually, no one dares to disturb us after dinner if we are together.

"Come in," Rien orders as I look at him with worry in my eyes. He smiles at me reassuringly but his face tenses when he sees that the maid brought a letter.

Even from the distance, I can see the royal stamp on it... Black with a blood-red seal that could only mean one thing...

Oh, no! Please, gods, no!

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"Don't go!" I hug him from the back as he prepares to leave me. This is breaking my heart. "Don't go, Rien, please, don't go!"

"Mira!" he turns to me and pulls me closer into his arms, breathing in my scent, "Everything is going to be all right. I am going to be back in no time!"

"You don't know that!" I reproach him with tears in my eyes, "You are not the emperor's favourite nephew anymore! He is angry with you! What if..."

"No," he places a finger on my lip to stop me talking, "Don't say that and don't think about that. Whatever happens, I will be back. For you, Mira."

He places a long and torturous kiss on my lips. It's painful because it as well may be our last one for a while.

“Lord Derrien Derwood, the archduke of Derwood is requested to be present at the Emperor Ghardin the First’s Council meeting concerning the current war with the Akyrian Kingdom. Arrive at the Palace as soon as possible”, the words in the letter stuck in my mind.

Although it’s perfectly normal that Derrien takes part in this kind of meetings, he says it himself that usually, the Emperor was inviting him mentally, sending some kind of signal. This letter alone signifies that everything has changed! He is not in favour anymore! And only the Gods know what will happen there...

“You know very well that if I don’t go it’s going to be even worse,” he says, kissing the top of my head, “Mira, I am going to return to you. You just wait for me here, alright?”

“Yes,” I stand on my tiptoes and give him a soft kiss on the lips, his hands clench around me immediately, pulling me closer. We kiss as if...as if it’s the last time. And when we break the kiss to catch up with our breath, flames of dark magic appear around him.

“Wait for me, Mira”, is all he says before disappearing and I break down in tears, falling to my knees.

“My lady!” Lina enters the bedroom in the morning, gasping in shock, “Why are you on the floor, my lady? This is not healthy! Oh, gods! You look so pale!”

“Is he back?” is all I ask when she helps me up.

“No, my lady”, the maid replies with a tense face, “But this is normal. Council Meetings may take several days, weeks even!”

I don’t like it! I don’t like it at all...

Lina helps me to undress and gets me into the bed, muttering something all the time about how I should take better care of myself. For Derrien.

“If he comes back and sees you like this!” she whines, “We would all be suffering consequences! Besides, I think he loves you this much because of your strength and...”

She hits a point. I am no weakling. And if something is truly wrong then Derrien needs me strong.

I raise from the bed against Lina's attempts to put me back in.

"Just bring me breakfast," I order her and she curtsies and immediately leaves, a faint smile on her face as she does it.

I gather myself, put on a dressing gown, take Aaron Brookland's journal and go to the sofa in Derrien's reception room. His scent is still there...

Curling up into the soft cushions, I start reading. The seller didn't lie to Derrien. It was a book about dragons after all. It turns out that Aaron was fascinated by them and went on a whole journey to the lands of ancient dragon shifters. This land was called Agnegard and not only it was next to impossible to find the place but it was even more impossible to actually get inside. You had to go through the dragons' test to enter their land. But if you managed to do it, then they welcomed you in as their respected guest.

Out of Aaron's three companions, he was the only one who managed to pass the test and enter Agnegard. All others have failed.

And the knowledge he got there was priceless! No, they didn't tell him all their secrets. But they shared some. And luckily my ancestor was very observant, so he learned some of the things about them himself. Just by watching them.

"There is nothing more important to dragons than their soulmates," I read the page out loud for one hundred's time, "As soon as they meet him or her, they become obsessed, they crave this person and they love this person so much that it drives them crazy. Once the dragon's heart makes its choice, it is final. There will be no other. They will never need someone else. They would never require someone else. They could only be happy next to that one person. And if they are separated, the dragon will never be able to regain happiness of any kind again. That's what she told me..."

Funnily enough, it turns out that my ancestor was a soulmate for one of the dragons. A beautiful woman that recognized him as hers. He describes her with so much love and passion, and there is even a sketch of her. A woman with long black hair and a playful smile. He said that she haunted his dreams after just one kiss... And that reminds me of something! But Derrien said that it's a gerdian thing... What if...What if it's a dragon thing instead?! He doesn't seem to know much about dragons and their traditions since he was always

the only one! Always alone in all this... He said that the Emperor was helping him as well as he could. But is that really the truth here? Considering how easy it was to fall out of favour, I wouldn't say that Ghardin looks like the kind of man to care for anyone. I remember the story Rien told me about his mother, how she was Ghardin's most beloved sister and how he was sorry when she died... An unpleasant feeling rises inside me. What if everything is not how Derrien thinks it is.

Of course, Ghardin would keep him alive. Dragon is a perfect weapon against anyone. And a loyal dragon is priceless. What if he was just using Rien this whole time?

I jump to my feet, not being able to sit anymore. Thoughts are flooding my mind. Of course, these are all just ideas. I have no proof. And if I am absolutely honest, I hope it's not true. I hope that I am mistaken and Emperor Ghardin is actually a loving uncle to Rien, who would always support and forgive him and who would never hurt him...

But when Rien is not back after 7 days, I lose my hope...

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The next morning I hand Lina a pack of letters to everyone I know in the Gerdian Empire. My last desperate attempt to find out where Rien is now.

I think about different case scenarios in my head, not stopping for even a second. The only break I have is reading of Aaron Brookland's journal, slowly analyzing every word he has written, checking the information with other books, maps, diaries. Finding even little specs of information that can potentially be useful to us in the future.

Future... Gods, I hope we still have a future ahead of us and I am not being just delusional now.

"My lady," Lina enters the room and curtsies, "You have visitors."

"Who?" I ask her, putting the journal down.

"Lord Seville with his fiancée. And lady Isidore Vierne," the maid replies.

“Lead them here!” I hurry her and jump to my feet to make sure that I look presentable.

“Mira!” the three of them appear out of dark smoke and Morgan throws herself at me, giving me the warmest hug, “I am so sorry!”

“Don’t scare her to death!” Isidore says grumpily behind her back, “She might think that you are bringing worse news than you actually do!”

“Oh, you have news then?” I look at them with hope in my eyes, but judging by their tense faces, whatever they know is no good news...

“Well,” Morgan looks at a very interesting spot on my carpet and I look at her fiancé desperately.

“We don’t know much,” Brandon says, “But Derrien wasn’t present at the Council meeting.”

“I knew it,” I grit through my teeth, “Chaos! It was a trap after all!”

“But it’s not over for him yet,” Brandon says and I look at him questioningly.

“What do you mean?”

“His general’s seal,” Seville says and I act that I have no idea what he is talking about.

“What is that?” I flutter my lashes and he rolls his eyes.

“Cut the crap, Mira,” he snorts, “He may be your almost-husband but he is also my friend since forever. I owe him my life. I know that he told you about it when he brought you here. ”

“Oh, that seal!” I suddenly “remember” and he rolls his eyes, “So, what about it?”

“His warrior will only accept new leader if he or she will have that seal in their hands,” Brandon informs me, “Without it if Derrien is not there, they will not make a move even if the Emperor himself orders them in person. They are all sworn to Derrien by blood. And so am I, by the way.”

“I know”, I admit, “Rien mentioned that once...”

“So, why don’t we speak plainly then?” he walks to the window, “The seal is the only reason they haven’t disposed of him yet.”

“But he is the emperor’s nephew!” I say desperately.

“Mira, our emperor is not a sentimental man. Derrien disobeyed him and that is it. He always was wary of him, because as a dragon, Derrien has way too much power. I don’t need to explain you, you saw it first-hand several times. Everything was good as long as he was fulfilling Emperor’s every request. And before you, that was exactly what Derrien did. But since the two of you met, everything changed. He started to ask for things, act rashly... and then finally he disobeyed a direct order... Ghardin doesn’t forgive and he killed for less...”

“But he loved him... he loved his mother,” I almost cry as I say it.

“Oh, please, this is just a story he tells us, and who knows what really happened there. Remember your perfect Sapphire Knight ex-fiancé? People of power tell us what we want to hear,” Brandon chuckles and Morgan smiles sadly when she looks at him, “Who wouldn’t want to keep a dragon at their hand? It was a perfect plan until you came along...”

“So, this is all my fault?” my blood boils from the accusation.

“No,” Seville says calmly, “Sooner or later it was bound to happen. Derrien is not like them. He has principles and honour, and heart. He may seem unemotional but he cares for his people. Ghardin would have realized that sooner or later and we would be in the exact same situation.”

“So, what now?” I cross my hands on my chest, “Do you know where they could keep him?”

“Yes, and you cannot get in there,” Brandon turns to face me.

“Try me!” I smirk, “If he is there then I will find a way!”

“If I am not mistaken, and that’s unlikely, he would be in the dungeon of the palace. There is a triple security barrier and only guards and royals can enter the premises.”

“Alright,” I bite my lip, a plan is already emerging in my head, “What else should I know?”

“You can use the Seal as your last bargaining chip,” he says, “Find it and offer negotiations to the Emperor...”

“Not happening”, I interrupt him, “You can’t negotiate with someone you will never trust. What will I say? Here’s the seal, give me back my man and we will live quietly in our castle? What are the chances of that?”

He doesn’t say anything because he knows I am right.

“Please, don’t think that you can take the Seal and command his army,” he sighs.

“And why not?” I raise my brow.

“Because it’s just half of the army, the other half is still loyal to Ghardin and Dargen. You will have just a 50% chance of winning if not less. And also we are at war. If you do this, akyrians would attack us and you may end up in an even worse situation,” the man explains.

“Then it’s good that I have a slightly better idea,” I smile and he looks at me in surprise. They all do.

“I knew you would come up with something!” Isidore snorts, “Whatever it is, I am in!”

“Good,” I smile to her, “Because I will need you to meet my friends. Morgan, your help would also be required. And yours, Brandon. To chaos with it, I need all the help I can get!”

“You already have a plan?” Brandon raises his brow in surprise.

“I think I do!” I nervously wipe my sweaty palms on my dress, my heart is racing, “Help me to get an audience with the Crown Prince!”

“Are you kidding me?” Seville looks at me like I am a crazy person, “The only place he would want to see you now is his bedroom... I am surprised he is still not here yet! It’s probably an Emperor’s order prohibiting him to do that since you are the only thing they have to make Derrien talk.”

“Bran, I don’t care!” I almost shout at him, “I need that audience! Even if it is in the bedroom. I’ll be fine!”

“He would kill me if I help you with that!”, the gerdian insists, “And then he would suck you so hard you wouldn’t be able to walk for months!”

“Good!” I blush but still hold my ground, “For that he would need to be alive and with me!”

“Damn!” Isidore chuckles, “Just do what she asks! She can clearly handle herself and that piece of a ... prince!”

“Morgan, I need you to help me with something too,” I turn to my other friend.

“Anything!” she agrees at once.

“Can we at least leave Morgan out of this?” Brandon asks and I almost pity him. Almost.

“No,” the girls and I reply in unison.

“To chaos with you!” he mutters, turning away to the window again, “You akyrians are all crazy!”

It was easy to be granted a permit to visit the Crown Prince. And Brandon was not mistaken he decided to meet him at his private chambers. I guess he already fixed that wall.

The guards have checked me several times and gave me dirty smirks when they found out that I have no weapons of any kind with me. I know what they are all thinking, leading me to Dargen.

They open the door for me and I enter, holding my wine red dress so that I wouldn’t stumble on it while I walk. It is a very revealing dress. The most provocative one I’ve got. And considering gerdian fashion, that speaks volumes. My hair is down, I didn’t even bother with a complex hairdo, waves cascading freely down my bare back and hands.

Dargen is sitting on a chair that resembles a throne in the center of the room, wearing some kind of silk wrap shirt, which shows off almost all of his abs and pants with high boots. He looks at me lazily, but I notice the sparks in his eyes as I walk in.

“Lady Miradora,” he says as if he is really bored, even though he doesn’t take his eyes off me the whole time, looking me up and down and paying special attention to my cleavage, “To what do I owe the pleasure?”

“Your Highness,” I make a very deep curtsy and stay in it, not daring to stand up.

“Raise,” he chuckles, clearly pleased with the whole situation.

“Your Highness,” I clear my throat and look at him for the first time, blushing and biting my lip, “I have come to ask for your help and protection.”

“Hm,” he smirks, “Interesting. I’ve been offering you those so many times and you always declined. I wonder what changed, lady Mira?”

He is playing with me and enjoying every second of it.

“I had plenty of time to think and have reconsidered my previous behaviour,” I say to him raising my chin, “I was wrong and I want to apologize.”

The smirk on his face goes wider.

“And why should I forgive you?” he asks, throwing a grape into his mouth and still watching my every move.

I kneel and lift up my hands, materializing the seal in them, “I hope that you will be able to forgive me and count for your mercy after I bring you this general’s seal, Your Highness!”

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He is on his feet and next to me in no time and I gasp when he grabs the seal out of my hands, checking it quickly, making sure that it’s the real thing, and putting it away in the drawer of the nearby desk. I stay where I am the whole time, not daring to move.

He is back to me in just a few seconds, his hand cupping my chin and making me look at him.

“Clever girl,” he smirks, “I knew you would come to your senses one day.”

He walks around me, still not letting me raise. And I wait patiently for his decision.

“If I accept you, there are going to be rules, Mira,” he says.

“I understand, Your Highness,” I say calmly, not even trembling.

“If I let you stay today you will become mine forever in body and soul,” he says.

“Yes, Your Highness,” I agree, giving myself a mental note that this promise I would just have to break.

“You will learn to love me,” he says, but this time it’s as if he is telling this more to himself than to me.

“Yes, Your Highness,” I nod and feel his two hands on my shoulders.

“Raise, Mira,” he chuckles, and as soon as I do, his lips touch my neck gently, nose brushing over my cheek and ear, “And call me Ryden. No need for formalities anymore.”

“Thank you, Ryden,” I bite my lip, trying not to throw up when his tongue swirls around my collarbone and he pulls me closer towards his own body, holding me by my waist.

And then I cough. He ignores it and I cough again and then again.

“Excuse me, Your Hi... Ryden,” I smile nervously, “Would it be too bold of me to ask for a glass of wine?”

“Of course not,” he rubs his thumb over my chin and walks to a table where I see a jug and glasses. Just what I need.

“I’ll do it myself,” I catch up with him and smile again, “Do you want one?”

I flutter my lashes and he chuckles stepping away.

“Yes, why not? Bring me a glass as well,” he walks all the way back to his throne and sits on it, watching my every move with delight. I carefully pour two glasses. Luckily, I have nothing to hide. My index finger touches the wine

inside the Crown Prince's glass just for a second, transparent nail polish dissolves in it without a trace.

I bring the glass to Dargen and he accepts it gladly, tapping a place on his lap, and I follow his indirect order, sitting where he showed me and taking a huge gulp of the sweet drink myself. His empty hand holds me by my waist but goes up and down from time to time. He takes a sip and is about to put the glass away.

"You know, Ryden," I say softly, lowering my eyes, "Back in Akyria we have a tradition to drain our cups dry when we drink to the new beginnings..."

"Is that so?" he smirks and my heart sinks. For a second there it seems like he is not going to do it, like he knows what I am up to. I take a nervous sip from my glass and he chuckles at that.

"I guess someone needs liquid courage before what's about to come," he says and drinks everything almost in one gulp. I follow his example. Hopefully, it's not that aphrodisiac from the Selection...

When he is done, he throws away his goblet and then takes mine and also throws it away, shuttering sound does not bother him as he slams his lips into mine.

"Finally!" he mutters and I pray to gods for my plan to work.

"Ryden," I call his name and he looks at me with a smile on his face, "Ryden, why don't we stop for today? You know I love you as it is, right?"

"Hmmm, right," he says after a pause which almost cost me a heart attack.

"Also," I stand up from his lap, "Why don't you have another glass of wine. You are thirsty, correct?"

"Yes," he responds with a smile and I smile back at him. I need to stuff him full with Sideria to be sure that the effect wouldn't wear off.

Morgan and I have spent the last few days creating this potion, using dark magic amplifiers to make it stronger and then turning it into dust with which I'll be able to cover my nails. One little dip and concentrated Sideria is in his glass. But I want to make sure that it's enough. We couldn't test it on gerdians and who knows how much time we've got. I mix the wine with all my nails in

turn, feeling a bit of nausea as I do so. Mum taught me to never put my fingers in my food, let alone anybody else's. But who knew that it might be so useful!

"Drink up! You look so thirsty," I smile as I hand the glass to Dargen and he drinks it obediently, not taking his eyes off me the whole time. As soon as he is done, he grabs me by my arm and pulls me into his embrace.

"You don't want to take me right now, right?" I say nonchalantly as he starts caressing my waist and my arms.

"I don't know," he mumbles and I get scared a little bit. Don't tell me he is too strong and Sideria doesn't work on him. In that case, I'll be doomed!

"Why would you want it when we actually have much better things to do?" I whisper in his ear and he looks at me, surprised.

"What can be better than this?" he asks, his breathing heavy.

"Don't you want to rub your victory in your cousin's face?" I say, my voice trembling just a little bit. He looks at me and slowly a smile spreads across his face.

"You know me too well," he chuckles, "But maybe first we should..."

"You know you want to torture him more than you want anything else," I say patting his head awkwardly, "Just take me and the seal to him, it will make you so happy to see his face... when he sees that now you have everything."

"You are right!" he suddenly lets go of me and stands to his feet, "Let's go to the dungeons first!"

"Don't forget the seal," I smile, "Isn't it one of the most important parts?"

"Yes," Dargen takes it and grabs my hand again, pulling me closer, "Of course it is. I can't wait!"

Dark smoke surrounds us and I can't help but feel a bit sad. It was so easy to manipulate him that it's scary. Did Tristan feel the same when he was drugging me? I guess I can say I have learned from the best...

We appear in a clean hallway with many lamps, each of which works with fire magic. This is not what I expected to see when Dargen said that we are going to the dungeons.

“I have to say I am impressed!” I almost whistle, but stop myself from doing so. No one is supposed to know that we are here. “The dungeons in the Selection castle looked ten times worse than that!”

“I know,” Dargen smirks, “That place was filthy. But here is my real and I prefer to keep it tidy since I spend a lot of time here.”

I want to ask first what he means by that but quickly remember that he was the one torturing Isidore at the Selection when she was the main suspect. He even got her confession although she was not guilty at all. And the funny thing here is that Isidore was blamed because she was drugged by Sideria. And now the exact same thing happens to Dargen. Hopefully, he would even be blamed for letting Rien escape in the end. Retribution at its best.

“Here,” he stops with pride against a room with bars and I see my Rien, lying on a neat bed and staring at the ceiling. His room is decent – with a bed, a desk, and even a bookcase. They probably still treat him like royalty. I don’t see any bruises or cuts on him, but he does look tired.

As soon as he hears us, he jumps to his feet and at the bars in no time, looking at me with shock and horror in his eyes.

“Mira!” his face looks so tense, I notice a few new wrinkles on it, “What are you?”

“She is with me!” Dargen puts his arm possessively around me, “Surprised? It didn’t even take me that long! Less than two weeks and she came to me herself! And not only that, she brought me this little thing.”

He gets the seal out of his pocket and demonstrates it to Derrien, the latter grips the bars so tight his knuckles turn white. He looks at me with a tense face but doesn’t say a word anymore. Then suddenly, his face softens. He knows.

“Ryden, dear,” I turn to the Crown Prince, “Wouldn’t it be fun if we go inside there?”

“Not really,” he hesitates and looks at me questioningly. He always knew he doesn’t stand a chance against Rien in a fair fight...

“Oh, it is going to be great! You are much stronger than him, he has nothing on you!” I try to persuade him and hear Derrie clear his throat behind me. A little hint to not overdo it.

“Of course you would use the situation,” Rien looks bored, eyes on his cousin, “This damn cell has been s.ucking magic and strength out of me for days!”

“So, there is absolutely nothing to be worried about here,” I add, “You can have your revenge if you go inside. You will enjoy it! And you will show me just how much better of a man you are!”

“Ghm!” Rien coughs loudly. Gods, I am going to be in so much trouble for all of this later.

“You are right!” Dargen smiles at me, looking like a child who has just been allowed to open his birthday present the day before the actual birthday!

He touches the lock on the door and it opens with ease, sensing his magic. According to Brandon’s advice, only the crown prince and the emperor would be able to do that. That’s why I am here.

He steps inside and I feel like I am pushing him to a cage with a tiger. So, yes, it feels satisfying after our last encounter.

Rien submits him easily, throwing a few good punches on the way.

“Mira! Call for help!” delusional prince croaks.

I create a shield to block the sounds of what is going on here. Ryden Dargen is unconscious in no time, Derrien throws his limp body to the bed, facing the wall, and covers him leaving just the head. Luckily their hair is the same. He holds his hands above Dargen’s face for a while and after he is satisfied, he leaves the cell, sealing it with his own magic now. Good luck opening that!

His lips cover mine in the most passionate kiss that we’ve ever shared.

“You’ve been a naughty little mage,” he says, catching his breath in between, “We are going to burn all the clothes you have on today. I hate that he touched it.”

“You can burn whatever you like,” I mumble, “Just don’t disappear like that anymore!”

“I won’t, I swear,” he mutters and then steps away, the seal is already in one of his hands, “Let’s go back home, Mira! And then I will take you to a safer place.”

“Actually, I have a better idea...”

The Selection: Bride Of The Dark Dragon Chapter 110 - Tips

MIRA

Flames of dark magic take us to our own castle, where we lose no time. After a crazy kissing session, we find the strength to not continue. We both change as quickly as possible, ignoring the bed that calls for us after we haven’t seen each other for so long. But we have better things to do. Alright, not better but definitely more important. This is our best chance...

I pull on my new battle suit that I ordered from my gerdian seamstress – pants, tight-fitting jacket, and shirt, paired up with high boots and a cloak. I have prepared a travel bag in advance, not forgetting the most important things in my plan – Aaron Brookland’s journal and maps of the Gerdian Empire.

I sit in our bedroom, waiting for him and when the door opens and he walks in, wearing his battle armour, my heart skips a beat. What a gorgeous man I have after all!

“Mira”, he walks straight to me, brushing his palm over my cheek and bringing all kinds of sensations to me. Gods, I love this man! I look into his eyes the same thing that I feel – love and tremendous desire...

“We need to go,” I say, “They’ll be waiting.”

“I know,” he sighs sadly, “You did a good job, little mage.”

“Oh? We are back to that nickname?” I smirk.

“You impress me, Mira. I thought that I couldn’t love you more, but it seems to me that I was wrong! Because every time you do something crazy as today, I realize that my heart somehow gets bigger and has even more feelings for you than previously. And although I hate that Dargen was so close to you today, what you did... You came for me into the pit with snakes, Mira. I will

never forget that. And more importantly, I will make sure you will never have to again! I am the one who supposed to save you and protect you, not the other way around, and..."

"Don't be silly!" I stand up and wrap my hands around his neck, "You and I... we have something special here. We are partners! Wherever you go, I follow. And vice versa. You already saved me multiple times! Finally, I could do something for you."

"When I remember how he touched you", Rien growls and the dress from before, that I carelessly left on the floor before the fireplace, starts to burn.

"Never liked that dress anyway," I snort and pull him in for a slow and torturous kiss, "No one will ever touch me except for you. We are going to make sure of that. Is the army ready?"

"Yes," he nods, "They are all here and received their orders to protect our castle and lands from any kind of intruders. They will keep it safe until we return and figure everything out!"

We transport to the coordinates that I show him, to a border of the Gerdian Empire. This is a rocky area with many high cliffs. So high that even gerdians are not exploring this place and do not dare to transport to here. They also say that this place sucks out magic out of a person. But according to Aaron Brookland, that's a lie. According to old legends, dragons used to leave here but even they decided to leave and went to another realm. But according to Aaron, this is exactly where their land is, hidden from the eyes of strangers.

So, my bold guess is, there is no other realm. Their land is hidden. They never invited guests, so when they stop appearing in our part of the world, gerdians and humans decided that they left.

But dragons want peace and quiet. And unfortunately, gerdian neighbours never gave them that. Too many wars occurred and too much aggression happened. Wise ancient creatures did not want to take part in any of that. Hence they closed their gates with the world of humans and gerdians. And that was it.

When I told that to Derrien, not a muscle flinched on his face. But his eyes... eyes were full of the magic of his dark dragon.

"He thinks you might be right," he admitted, "Let's check that."

And here we are now. Ready to step into the unknown. And when I make my first step... a huge fireball flies right into my face. I block it quickly with a shield, realizing that there is one more shield around me – Derrien's.

"Sorry," Dereck walks out from behind a huge dry tree, chuckling, "Though you were intruders."

"You know what?" I roll my eyes, "Keep your fireballs to yourself!"

We both burst out laughing and I want to come closer and give my friend a hug, but Derrien's shield is blocking me from doing so.

"Rien!" I scold him, "Do you mind?"

"I do mind," he smirks, "Keep both – your fireballs and your hands to yourself! Both of you!"

He says that yet lifts off this shield and Dereck and I just shake our hands awkwardly when I hear some noise in the bushes.

"Finally you are here!" Isidore walks out in a beautiful travel outfit with pants and a long coat sewn with gold thread, looking stunning as always. She marches to me furrowing her eyebrows and I notice how Rick and Nort emerge after her. "Mira! I can't believe you haven't told me that this jerk here is the one I am going to meet!"

She points at Dereck and I see how he rolls his eyes.

"Do you know each other?" I scratch my neck, feeling the tension between those two.

"Do I know the most insolent man in the whole Kingdom?" Isidore snorts, "This rude, blatant, shameless..."

"Honestly, we didn't need anyone to meet us here," Dereck interjects her speech, "Definitely not someone so noisy."

"Noisy?" she hisses, "I am the one who has shown you where to come in the first place!"

"Instead of you, we could have just used a good map! Then we wouldn't be lost. Twice! Besides, we told you that you can leave days ago!" my friend

seems agitated. The calm and always reserved Dereck is agitated. I take a mental note of that moment.

“Alright, guys,” I bite my lip holding down a laugh, “So, I take it you have met before?”

“At a ball back in the Kingdom,” Isidore says, crossing arms on her chest, “We danced together and he stepped on my foot. I guess he doesn’t know how to do anything other than fight.”

“Oh, my lady,” Dereck smirks, “That was intentional!”

“That only proves what a barbarian you are!” she hisses, “Who in their right mind would step on a girl’s foot! Definitely not a true knight!”

“That’s how annoying you are!” my teammate snorts, “You open your mouth and one is ready to do anything to close it!”

“Guys!” I try to stop them but they don’t even notice. I look at Derrien for support but he is clearly enjoying the show and doesn’t look like he wants to interrupt us.

“Don’t even try,” Rick comes closer, “We’ve been listening for it for days!”

“Thanks for coming!” I give my friend a hug and then do the same with Nort, “Was everything else fine? And how is my family?”

“They are back to your family home and are planning to stay there”, Nort says, “But there is a problem with your brother. If Tristan summons him, he will have to go. You know that, right?”

“I do,” I get tense. Colton is a captain of a knights’ squad. Of course, he would have to obey a direct command from a Crown prince. That’s why I originally wanted for him to also come here. But he said that his place is in the Akyrian Kingdom. There is nothing I could do.

“He’ll be fine,” Rick says, seeing my reaction, “He could take me down when we had a sparring match. And Dereck and he spent hours trying to win but couldn’t. This guy is going to take care of himself, Mira. Strength runs in your family.”

I smile weakly, just hoping that they are right.

Dark flames appear right next to us and I see Morgan in the hands of Brandon. She looks around and calms down at once when she sees Isidore and me.

“Thanks to the Gods!” she says out loud and finally Isidore and Dereck stop fighting.

“Derrien!” Brandon comes to his friend and they put hands on each other’s shoulders in silence. This gesture says more than any words can.

“Thanks, my brother,” Rien says after a while, “I know how you and your future wife have helped my Mira during the darkest times. I will never forget this!”

“I hope you didn’t think that we will abandon the two of you!” Brandon chuckles, “So, what is next?”

“Next, you will take your lovely bride and go back to your castle and wait there for our return,” Rien says firmly.

“That would be a no from me,” Seville grins, “What’s next?”

“You heard me!” Rien growls, “I need you there. Not here.”

“So, you are taking a bunch of humans with you but not me?”, Brandon clearly doesn’t like what he hears.

“You now know very well the worth of humans, Bran”, Rien gestures at Morgan, and Seville softens, “As I have already said, I need you back in the Empire. I need you to be my eyes there, Bran. I will need your support when I return. And at the moment I need you to stall the war for as long as possible!”

“That would be hard,” the gerdian exhales heavily, “The Emperor has already given the order. You have a week at best.”

“Then a week it is!” I say with confidence, even though I don’t feel it inside. But right now all these people have put their trust in what I told them all and are counting on us. Gods, I only hope that I am not wrong. I hope that Aaron Brookland knew what he was writing about and not just imagined things. I put too much trust into his journal...

“I hope you know what you are doing,” Morgan comes closer and sighs, Brandon wraps his hands around her at the same time.

Yeah, Morg, so do I...

We make a fire and sit around it, all of us together for the first time. Tomorrow, everything will change for all of us. But today Dargen is still unconscious in the dungeon cell and the Emperor is not aware of anything, Tristan tries to fix his losses back in the Kingdom and we have one last quiet evening. We drink wine, eat our food and tell each other stories, laughing together. I look at Rien, wanting to tell him that this is how I want it in the future – together, in peace, and surrounded by our close friends. And by the look in his eyes, I know that he is thinking exactly the same.

Gerdians and humans can live in peace. The war should be stopped. We will stop it. We will do anything to put an end to this. Our children will live without Selections and without the constant fight! We can do that!

In the morning, right after a night of very uncomfortable sleep, we wake up to say farewell to Brandon and Morgan.

“You seriously should take her with you!” Dereck nods at Isidore, “She is just going to be a burden for us!”

“No way!” Isidore flashes up, “I am not going back there!”

“She stays,” I say firmly. I know that Isidore tried...but after everything that happened. After what Dargen did to her... she can't find love in her heart for gerdians anymore. It will be torture to make her come back there. She is ready to risk her life to just leave the Empire. And I know that feeling. It may not be the wisest of decisions, but I am not leaving her behind.

“Now that we figured that out”, Derrien sighs like a teacher left alone with noisy students, “What do we do next?”

Everybody looks at me and I point at the highest cliff that we can see from where we are. It's very far away.

“We need to get there,” I say, “But this place may block magic..”

“Great,” Dereck snorts, “Then how do we get there... On foot, it will take us too long...”

“Oh, I have an idea about that,” I smirk and turn to my beloved dragon...