

The Dragon's Fated Bride Chapter 12 - HELL'S PARADISE - PART 2

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There was no light in the room except for the soft glow of the moon seeping in through the slit in the curtains. Sterling was awakened when he heard Faye whimper as if in pain.

She was still comatose in his embrace, but her body was now covered in a heavy sheen of sticky sweat. As Sterling rose from the mattress to take stock of the situation, his foot brushed against Faye's lower leg. He heard the anklet chime, the one he placed on her at their wedding, as she yelped in pain.

The Duke squinted into the darkness as he reached for a candle on the table side. He fumbled for a match from the box, and the sound of it striking as it lit sent a sizzling noise in the air, and the smell of smokey sulfur wafted through the room.

As Sterling lit the candle, the shadows began to dance along the walls. He then lifted the covers to examine Faye's ankle, which appeared swollen and fiery red. When he had initially seen the condition of her leg, he had been concerned about the possibility of an infection. However, upon closer inspection, all doubts were removed.

He heard a barely audible murmur escape her lips, and she whined.

"It's on fire."

He watched as she tossed about the bed and understood her foot was in severe pain. He was astounded by everything Faye had been through today. She had not cried. Never once did she shed a single tear. It was like she was detached and devoid of showing such emotion.

2

Sterling was at a loss for how to handle her or this problem. He watched as Faye struggled once more to open her eyes. He was quick to place his hand over her face and block her vision as he cooed to her softly.

"Shhh... rest now. I will find us some help."

After he finished speaking, Faye stopped fussing, and her body sank quietly into the mattress.

He was swift to get up and don his clothing. Sterling left her in the room as he went in search of Helena. He understood she might know how to deal with his bride's wound.

While he was meandering through the corridor, he found Merrick in a chair at the top of the stairs. When their eyes met, the vice commander leaped from his seat and bowed deeply regarding the Duke.

Sterling frowned as he addressed his subordinate.

"What in the creator's name are you doing up at this hour?"

Merrick gazed at Sterling in puzzlement. He let out a soft breath as he answered, "I am standing guard over the Duke and his Bride. It is the duty of this cavalry to protect our liege and his family."

The Duke scoffed at hearing the nonsense his vice commander was spouting. It made Sterling burst into laughter. He, the Duke, better than any of his men, could protect himself, his bride, and the entire Roguemount cavalry if needed, and he could probably do it blindfolded.

"You should be sleeping. Once you find me the widow, you are relieved of guard duty. Faye is ill again. Her foot looks infected. I need the old woman to come and look at the girl."

"After that, Merrick—I want you to find somewhere to sleep. You will need to be well rested. I am depending on you to lead the men back to Everton. It will be a few days before Faye is fit to travel. Leave two men and the coach driver here with us. We will catch up with you in a few days. You know well the importance of protecting the fortress. That is our chief priority."

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Merrick was halfway down the stairs to find Helena when he turned and eyed his leader with a look of understanding and answered The Duke.

"Aye, Commander. I understand."

Helena appeared at the bedroom's entry and noticed Sterling. His hands rested comfortably on the arms of the chair. He held a blank expression, showing no emotion while he observed his wife's body contort in pain. The old woman noticed how odd his reaction was and wondered why he did not seem concerned for his wife's plight.

Helena surveyed Faye's condition. Her face shone pale. The girl's entire body trembled in agony as her lips were pressed together in a tight line.

Sterling's words shattered the silence, his tone quiet and measured as he addressed the old woman.

"It's not the fire lung, it's her ankle."

As Helena walked to the end of the bed, she lifted the blanket to see Faye's left foot and ankle swollen three times its normal size. The skin color was so red and inflamed it reminded her of the vibrant crimson flowers on a trumpet vine. Looking at her leg, she assessed in an instant what was wrong.

3

"She is experiencing the burn from a drake's nettle spire. Those are only found deep in the Terrewell thicket. What was she doing in that dreadful forest?"

Helena removed her wire-rimmed glasses from the apron pocket around her waist. She placed them on the bridge of her nose to examine Faye's leg closer and find the spire. It would resemble a thin, dark line under her skin. Almost impossible to detect, even with perfect vision. The drakes' nettle was fine as a human hair.

While the elderly lady scrutinized Faye further, Sterling explained about her abduction by the demons, and that was the reason for her sickness.

The old woman cut his story off as she excitedly exclaimed, "I found it! Now, Milord. Hold on to her tight if she jerks and this snaps in half. I will have to cut open her leg to remove it, and I'm certain you do not want any scars left on your pretty wife."

1

"No, I would dislike that. She already has enough."

Upon hearing his remark, the old woman frowned at Sterling, wondering what he meant.

"We will need to check the rest of her body and make sure there are no more spikes. I also have to remove the anklet."

Sterling was about to express his discomfort with Faye being examined by Helena, and the chain on her ankle was his token of their vows and could not be removed. But before he could say anything, Faye suddenly sprang up from the bed. With her eyes closed, she seemed unaware of her own words and actions.

"NO!!! Please, don't take it off."

The Duke was perplexed by his bride's unexpected behavior, especially since Faye had appeared displeased when he had placed the chain on her ankle during their wedding ceremony. Sterling couldn't help but wonder what was going on with his wife.

As Faye sat up, the blanket that had covered her body slipped off and fell to the ground. Helena gasped in horror as she saw what lay before her.

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The_Sweet_Sparrow

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