

The Dragon's Fated Bride Chapter 14 - HELL'S PARADISE - PART 4

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Sterling stood stationary in the bedroom doorway and stared at Faye's back. He realized that their argument had ended, and that there was no point in continuing to play games. She seemed determined to avoid him and refrain from any further discussion. He perceived by her body language their heated exchange had reached its conclusion.

Faye heard his booming monotone voice trail off as he left the room.

"There are some important matters that require my attention. You should rest for a while."

She heard the soft thud of the bedroom door as it closed. Then the sound of Sterling's boots stomping along the hall, making the wooden floorboards creak as he retreated down the stairs. She exhaled softly in relief that he had left the room. Faye presumed he was going to find a place to rest, along with his troops.

It had been some time since Sterling left the bedchamber. Faye was lying quietly on the bed, trying to recover from her earlier ordeal. Her thoughts were a mess. The day had been miserable and the sun would soon rise. She felt drained from illness, lack of food and proper rest because of the fever. Faye rolled over on her back and placed her forearm over her head, staring at the rafters of the old farmhouse.

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She closed her eyes while her thoughts ran wild as she pondered ways of escaping from Sterling. Cressa's hell would freeze before she would bear a child with this savage Cretan. If she could only get her hands on that contract and burn it to cinders, she would feed it to Sterling in his stew and watch him choke to death on the ashes.

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A sinister smile graced Faye's lips at the thought.

Her attention was suddenly drawn to a faint tapping noise on the bedroom door. Faye listened to the hinges squeak as the door was pushed ajar. She noticed Helena, the widow woman, grinning sweetly as she stood in the doorway.

"Milady? May I come in?"

She waited patiently for Faye to invite her into the room.

Politely nodding, Faye welcomed the woman into the room. "Yes, ma'am," she said, gesturing with a wave of her hand for Helena to enter.

It felt odd to have someone address her so formally and use a noble honorific to refer to her. Throughout her time at Wintershold, she had never been given any respect. Even the hunting dogs were treated with more care than she was.

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Helena carried a kitchen tray with warm stew, fresh bread, and a cup of hot tea.

She noticed the older woman spoke to her the way a worried parent did to a child. This woman made her feel at ease. "I am glad to see you're awake. The color on your face is much improved. How is your leg feeling?"

Faye saw the tray was heavy. She quickly sat up in the bed and propped herself on some pillows. The old woman set the tray in her lap.

Helena fussed over her like a mother. "Now hurry, eat this while it's still hot. I had to hide it from the men. They were a hungry bunch."

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Faye's eyes fell upon a gleaming silver spoon resting on a dainty porcelain plate beside a simmering bowl of vegetable stew. As she reached for it, the clinking of metal against ceramic filled the quiet room. The aroma of warm beef broth mingled with the scent of fresh herbs, making her mouth water.

She dipped the utensil into the steaming stew. The heat radiated from the vapor. It warmed her tiny fingers. Faye eagerly scooped up spoonful after spoonful of the savory soup, the tender chunks of vegetables and tender meat

burst with flavor in her mouth. The old woman watched in stunned silence as Faye devoured the bowl of food with unbridled hunger. Although it was no surprise considering how malnourished Faye appeared.

Helena suspected the young lady had been suffering miserably under the Baron's roof for sometime now.

She watched as Faye placed her napkin on the tray next to the empty bowl, and inquired,

"Would you like something more to eat?"

Faye politely responded to the sweet elderly woman, "No, Ma'am," while shaking her head. I am full. Faye's cheeks blushed as if embarrassed, as if asking for seconds would be a sin.

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Helena giggled at seeing Faye's flushed face.

"My, you are so funny. One minute you are like a barking mad animal spewing heated words at the Duke and the next you are too shy to admit that you are still hungry. Well, if you change your mind. I have more to eat in the kitchen. Is there anything else you would like?"

Faye shook her head, not making eye contact with Helena.

"No, just some rest."

"Alright then, finish your tea. I placed the healing potion in it this time so it would not taste so bitter."

Faye picked up the teacup, and the contents were only luke-warm and quickly swallowed the remaining liquid. When she reached the last few drops, there was a slightly unpleasant taste, but nothing horrid like the last time.

"Thank you for the meal and fixing the potion in the tea. It was much better this way."

Helena smiled at Faye's polite manners as she picked up the tray and turned to leave. She knew this young girl would make a delightful Duchess, if the Duke would stop being so unkind to her and give Faye a chance. As she

prepared to leave and give the girl an opportunity to rest, a tiny hand shot out and grasped her aged wrist.

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"Wait, can you stay for a bit?"

There was a perplexed expression on Helena's face at the girl's request. She slowly lowered the tray of empty dishes to the nightstand and pulled up a chair, taking her seat to face Faye in the bed.

She could see there was something bothering Faye. Her brow was knitted and lips pursed as she concentrated on what she wanted to speak.

"I-I, have—Umm..." She did not complete her sentence. Faye's face was now beaming bright red. What she had to ask was urgent, but she just didn't know how to phrase it.

"What is wrong? You can speak to me. If you are worried, I will tell the Duke, then don't bother your head with it. I promise not to speak a word about what is discussed here."

Faye swallowed apprehensively, finally brave enough to ask her question. She leaned closer to Helena and covered her mouth with her hand as if whispering a secret.

"I'm curious. What happens on a wedding night?"

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Helena's face turned bright pink at Faye's question and she chuckled.

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"It's a special night of celebration and romance. When a married couple shows affection for one another. Has anyone ever discussed a noble wife's duties in the bedroom with you?"

Faye's eyes nervously darted about the room.

"I am afraid not?" came the answer.

Helena reached over and gave the girl's hand a comforting pat.

"Hmm... Well, I will try my best then."

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A/N: Hi readers! Are you enjoying this story? If so, please help the author during the contest this month. Leave reviews, comments and power stone votes to let others know about this awesome new novel.

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