

## **The Dragon's Fated Bride Chapter 17 - THROUGH HER EYES - PART 3**

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The land was awash in the gentle light of the morning sun. Sterling needed to go back to his bride and check on her. He had a lot to think about and decide on. Perhaps being delayed for a day or so wasn't too bad. It would give him time to sort out his affairs.

There were soft voices of ladies chatting and carefree giggles coming from the bedroom as Sterling made it to the top landing of the farmhouse. He stood out of sight in the corridor to listen in on the current topic of conversation between the women.

7

He peeped through the crack in the door and saw Faye's bashful face. Her anemic pallor was replaced by a bright, radiant glow of apricot pink tinting her cheeks. There was an aura of renewed energy surrounding her. The old woman was grinning as she explained something, making Faye cover her face and laugh once more. It was such a sweet sound to Sterling's ears.

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Then it became clear to the Duke what they were discussing, and a sly grin formed on his lips. However, he didn't care. At least she would have some idea of what to expect when he took and bedded her.

1

His eyes stayed riveted on the vision before him. For some odd reason, her appearance had changed from yesterday. Faye looked so delicate and innocent where she sat, covered only in an old blanket, chattering on the bed. He noticed his young bride had a natural beauty and did not need fancy powders and jewels to make her presentable.

4

He felt his heart suddenly swell with admiration as he looked at her. His pulse raced, and he felt a warmth spread through his body. He couldn't help but smile, and he was filled with an intense desire to protect her and keep her

safe. He wanted to take her in his arms like he did last night and never let her go.

5

How had he missed this about her yesterday, and what had changed? What was making him feel these strange overwhelming desires for a woman he barely knew? He should in no way have such potent feelings for her. It should be the absolute opposite. His mind was a tangled web of confused emotions.

These foreign sensations she evoked in Sterling were driving him mad.

He shook the wayward thoughts from his head and was about to leave and see his men off when he heard Faye give a sharp inhale of fright at something Helena mentioned. He halted his steps and promptly returned to the door.

There was too much noise from the bottom floor where his men were gathering their belongings for the journey home. The sound of metal armor, swords clanking, and the booming voices of the knights were impeding what he desired to hear. He was intrigued to know why Faye had gasped so frantically and trembled in fear.

1

Sterling sauntered over to the railing and let out a sharp wolf whistle. All the men stopped and raised their gazes to the sound of the harsh call. He gave them a swift hand signal to stay still. The room plunged into a deafening silence. He returned to the bedchamber entry and listened closer.

7

"I-I-I...don't want to do that with Sterling. Aaron, my brother, tried that with me and I stopped him. Then I paid the price for raising my voice and fighting back."

3

Faye moved the blankets aside and showed her ankle to Helena. The old woman had already witnessed Faye's battered body and stopped her before she could show anything further. She grimaced as she remembered the marks and scars on her petite frame.

The old woman leaned forward and hugged Faye, stroking her back to comfort the scared girl.

For a split second, Sterling thought his wife might give him the satisfaction of finally seeing her shed tears. But they never came. Her eyes stayed dry, and her emotions remained in control.

6

Faye parted from the woman's hug and conveyed the suffering she had endured from her adopted brother to Helena.

"He chained me to his bedpost and beat me for days with the leather shaving strop. When I passed out, he would stop and dump icy water on me to revive me so he could begin the torment over again. He said he would stop if I gave him what he desired. But I knew Aaron would never keep his word."

5

"I would not let him ruin me."

As Sterling listened to Faye's firsthand account of the horrific acts she had suffered at the hands of her own brother, he was filled with an overwhelming sense of rage. The sound of her voice trembling with apprehension resonated in his ears as he pictured the pain and fear etched on her face while being beaten.

2

Sterling's fists clenched tightly as he imagined the physical and emotional scars that Faye must carry with her every day. The weight of the injustice and cruelty inflicted upon her fragile being was unimaginable, and Sterling vowed to do everything in his power to help her find justice and healing.

He now had a clear understanding. Faye would give no one the satisfaction of seeing her cry. It was the one thing she had complete control over in her life. She would rather let someone kill her than let them find her in a moment of weakness.

The Duke knew this is why Aaron treated her the way he did. He was trying everything in his power to break Faye and make her grovel and cry before

him. But he questioned why Faye's power had not protected her. He could not understand, since he had seen and experienced it for himself.

1

However, Sterling was now seeing Faye's tragic world through her eyes. It gave him a better understanding of her complexities. The mysteries of this girl were deep.

The Duke stood firm and refused to let the Baron and his son escape the consequences of what they had inflicted upon his girl. Regardless of Sterling's feelings towards her, no one should be subjected to such sadistic treatment. He was determined to send a message to those in his sphere of influence, as well as those who associated with the Baron, that they should not meddle with things that did not belong to them.

Sterling continued to spy on the women. Then he heard Helena's inquiry. "Faye, sweetie, this is very important. Did I understand you to say Aaron was your brother?"

Faye nodded.

"Did he ever—you know..."

Faye shook her head so vigorously that her platinum tresses danced in a flurry about her face. "Oh, NO! Never" she exclaimed, her voice rising with emphasis. "And to be clear, Aaron is my brother only through marriage. I was adopted by the Baron when my mother and he wed."

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She paused, taking a deep breath as if to steady herself, and continued, "Alice and Aaron were the Baron's children with his first wife. My father died when I was young. He was killed by a Roguemont knight."

Helena sensed Faye's body tense up at the mention of the knight, and an oppressive silence hung in the air, the only sound being the faint crackling of the fire in the hearth. The smell of burning wood and hot cinders filled the room, mingling with the scent of Faye's lavender-oiled skin from last evening's bath. She observed the young girl shudder slightly when she stared at the armor in the corner of the room.

Faye abruptly snapped her eyes toward the entrance of the bedchamber at the sound of a deep, exasperated sigh.

She boldly shouted toward the entrance.

"Who ever is there, come out and show yourself. Stop hiding in the shadows like a thief."

3

The\_Sweet\_Sparrow