

The Dragon's Fated Bride Chapter 23 - A MOTH TO THE FLAME - PART 2

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A set of dazzling cobalt blue eyes peered up at Sterling from the table. As their gazes locked, he felt a sudden surge of attraction, like two magnets being pulled together. He noticed Faye's eyes sparkled with a mix of emotions, from joy to excitement to a hint of vulnerability.

1

Her hair was pulled up in a messy style bun that left wavy little strands to hang down and frame her lovely face.

Her cheeks held a faint peach color, complimenting her eyes. Despite Faye's skin appearing healthier, Sterling still had reservations, as he thought she looked too pale. Then his gaze moved down her face to the delicate bow of her luscious lips, which were curved into a slight smile as she watched him survey her.

1

There was nothing ordinary about that smile. It was special, as if created only for him to see. It made the Duke feel warm inside. For some unknown reason, he did not understand why the sight of her like this was making his heart flutter with excitement.

2

Sterling felt drawn to Faye like a moth to a flame. He worried that falling for her would be like a moth flying too close to the fire, resulting in burnt wings and death. He feared that Faye would incinerate his soul, just like the fire does to the moth.

5

He stepped closer to his wife and reached out to touch her hand. A pleasant warmth radiated from her body. Sterling smiled at the sensation. His thumb gently brushed her skin. He could feel the softness of her flesh as his hand grasped onto hers. A feeling of contentment and pleasure flowed through him.

He tugged at her gently, enticing her to stand and walk with him. He was all set to head to town. Today was their final day at the farmhouse.

Sterling wanted to make sure Faye had her own clothes, since the Montgomerys failed to send his bride with a single stitch of clothing. His plan was to buy Faye some new dresses, something befitting a noblewoman, and to call her own.

4

She was his Duchess, and now he took back his thoughts from the other day about supplying her with meager scraps. After all he had witnessed, he knew she had suffered too much and deserved better.

1

Faye obediently followed Sterling. She did not want to provoke him, as she was still unsure about how he was going to treat her. His moods had been so vacillating she was unsure of what to expect from one minute to the next. It was not just an hour ago he was lewd and sarcastic with her in the bedroom, and now he was being tender and gentlemanly.

3

Her emotions felt like they were getting whiplash.

As the Duke led Faye through the field toward the barn, she noticed a magnificent stallion tethered to a post munching on the tall grasses. He was a grey-spotted Percheron. Sterling whistled. The horse raised his head, tilting it as if in question of what his master required.

Faye laughed at the animal's goofy expression with his wide brown eyes, head cocked to the side, and grass sticking out of his mouth. Sterling also chuckled as he came closer to the stallion.

"What are you doing, silly beast? Come here and let me fix your face. You have company. I want to introduce you to someone."

Sterling brushed away the pieces of grass stuck to his lips, and the horse nickered at him. Almost as if laughing at the Duke.

"Oh, you thought I was funny, did you? Well, keep being smart and I will not be so generous with your apples."

2

Sterling's mood had taken a surprising turn, and Faye was amazed. He was relaxed and happy around his horse, and she enjoyed seeing this side of him. She wished he would be like this with her, too.

The stallion shook his lumbering body and snorted, nudging Sterling in the shoulder with the muzzle of his nose. The Duke reached into his pocket and produced a bright, shiny red apple. He turned to Faye.

"Open your hand. Balance this in your flat palm," he said, pointing to the object. "Now offer it to the war horse," he added, jutting his chin towards the animal.

Faye followed Sterling's instructions. She approached the stallion timidly. She held out the apple while closing her eyes and turning her head away. Sterling found this funny and laughed loudly. The horse quickly snatched the apple from Faye's hand. She then backed away rapidly.

4

He realized she was intimidated by the docile horse. Sterling thought Faye certainly had her priorities mixed up. It was he she should fear more than his horse.

2

"His name is Helios. He is waiting for you to pet him. Don't worry. He won't hurt you."

Faye looked over her shoulder anxiously at Sterling as she moved closer to Helios. Then she said something unexpected.

"That is a good name for a creature so mighty as he is. It is Greek and means {the one above}."

Sterling blinked. He was amazed by Faye's display of knowledge. The Duke knew Faye was not educated and couldn't read. He was intrigued about how she gained this information.

"I'm curious. Where did you hear that from?"

Faye's smile vanished, and she bowed her head, almost ashamed to admit how she learned such things.

"Faye, answer me. How did you know about Greek mythology when you said you cannot read? Are you lying to me about your education?"

3

Faye raised her head. Her face bore an injured expression. Sterling thought she was being untruthful, and that stung. She had always been proud of her honesty. It was the moral her father had prided her on the most.

"I am not a liar, nor have I been dishonest with you on any matter. I cannot read. It was something I learned from Aaron. He would read to me after..." her tiny voice softly trailed off, not finishing her explanation. It was a memory too painful to discuss.

2

"I am sorry, Faye. I did not realize..." Sterling sighed, unable to put his feelings into words.

3

He moved beside Faye as her hand touched the soft, velvety muzzle of his stallion. He placed his massive hand over hers.

"He likes it when you scratch his neck hard, right here. It makes him happy when you pat him hard right there, too."

Faye gently patted Helios, the majestic stallion, but only with a delicate touch. His coat was soft and warm under her hand. Helios got over excited, wanting her to scratch harder, and let out a loud neigh. He pushed her roughly with his snout, and the force knocked her to the ground. She felt the hard impact of the ground against her back, not knowing how strong the stallion was.

Sterling let out a hearty chuckle. "Give me your hand." He leaned down, his hand reaching out to help Faye get up from the ground. As he did so, he noticed something strange - Faye had no shoes on. His hand paused mid-air, and he looked at her with a troubled expression.

"Where are your shoes?"

"I lost them in the Terrewell thicket during the attack."

Sterling clicked his tongue. "Tch"

"We need to fix this immediately. My Duchess cannot walk on the cold, damp ground without shoes. Look, your feet are getting dirty."

4

He firmly clasped her hand and pulled her up, causing her to gasp. Then he lifted her effortlessly over his shoulder. She felt her heart racing as he carried her to the stallion. "It's time to get to our task," he said with determination.

He carefully lifted Faye onto the saddle, making sure she was comfortable before settling in behind her. The leather of the seat creaked softly as he adjusted his position, and the scent of hay and horse sweat filled Faye's nostrils.

With a gentle grip on the reins, Sterling wrapped his arms securely around her. She felt the warmth of his body against hers. The sound of the horses neighing and hooves clopping on the ground excited Faye as they set off on their ride. She had not been on a horse since her father had died.

The journey to the quaint town of Easthaven was a peaceful one. The narrow dirt path was wide enough to accommodate the hooves of Helios, and it was evident that the route was frequently traveled. As they trotted along, the sight of rolling green hills and towering trees caught Faye's eyes, and the sound of chirping birds and blowing leaves was a piece of sweet music to her ears. It was a serene experience, and Helios also seemed to enjoy every step of the way.

As they approached the town, the atmosphere shifted. Suddenly, the narrow path broadened, and murmurs of people replaced the sounds of the birds in the woods. The scent of civilization grew stronger, overpowering the natural fragrance of the dense forest. The absence of wildlife was apparent. When they reached the last ridge and gazed down upon the bustling village below, the air was thick with anticipation. Faye was excited to explore the town.

1

A/N: Have you seen the new character feature on Webnovel? If not, go to my profile and click on 'about this book.' It will give detailed information about Faye and Sterling. You can also leave comments on their personality and vote with points to help get their pictures featured on the book page.

The_Sweet_Sparrow

Your gift is the motivation for my creation. Thank you for all the reads, votes, and comments. I love when you give me more motivation!