

The Dragon's Fated Bride Chapter 25 - TURNING PAGE - PART 2

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The Duke stood there looming over Faye with his hands on his hips, and legs splayed in a display of intimidation. He stared down at her tiny bare feet standing on the frigid, dirty ground.

Sterling gave a mocking smile as he gently scolded her. "It's unbelievable that you never disclosed your shoeless state." In an exaggerated movement, he swiftly scooped her into his arms and carried her back inside the store. Fearful she would injure the bottoms of her feet.

Faye protested vigorously as Sterling snatched her up in his embrace.

"Please! Put me down, Sterling. What will the villagers think if they see us like this?"

His brow arched as he chuckled at her complaint. "I'm afraid they'll assume I have profound feelings for you. But don't worry," he added with a wink. "I won't let them know that I'm completely and utterly smitten with you."

14

Faye's eyeballs bulged from her sockets, hearing the strange note in his voice. She was confident that the man was insane. But right now, she would take whatever kindness he was willing to give her. It was a far cry from their first meeting a few days earlier.

Then she heard his boots clacking against the floor as he strode towards the door. His scent hovered in the air as he exited the shop and mounted his imposing steed. Faye watched Sterling gallop away, the sound of Helio's hooves pounding against the packed dirt of the street. As he disappeared from sight, Faye clutched at her skirts. She had a feeling of uncertainty and a sense of foreboding that something terrible was about to happen.

She had felt this way before. Faye seemed to sense when something bad was coming. She hated this ability to predict when terrible things were coming. It had started when she lost her father.

2

The proprietor of the boutique went to the stockroom to get some items. Faye explored the shop, which was filled of bolts of fabric. They were arranged neatly in piles throughout the store.

In addition to solid colors, Faye noticed some fabrics with subtle patterns. The cloth had a faint scent of fresh cotton and was soft to the touch. She ran her fingers over each one to feel their soothing texture.

The sensation of her hands running across the fabric reminded her of all the embroidery she had done while at Wintershold. She had decorated many of Alice's dresses with the intricate stitching, even sewing pearls and precious stones to the clothing to embellish her sister's wardrobe.

"Duchess...Milady—are you ready to see the dresses?"

The shop owner had emerged from the back and was talking to Faye, asking her questions to get her attention. Suddenly, she touched Faye. It made her give a sharp gasp at being startled, jolting her from her reverie.

"I'm sorry you were saying?"

Before Faye stood a woman holding several bundles of ornate dresses. The garments were adorned with exquisite details that caught Faye's eye. The sight of such opulent clothing in this isolated settlement left her stunned.

As she approached the woman, the soft rustle of silk and satin filled her ears, and the intricate beading and lacework shone like twinkling stars in the sunlight. Just by looking at them, Faye could almost feel the plushness of the luxurious materials. It was a surreal experience to see such extravagance in this humble setting.

"I have brought the dresses for you to examine."

Faye's concern-filled eyes gazed up at the shopkeeper. She was aware the cost of a single dress like this was more than she could ever make in her lifetime.

"Do you have something simpler to wear? I would like a dress that is plain. I cannot afford such finery."

The dressmaker stared at Faye's request in puzzlement.

"Milady, your husband has already paid more than enough to purchase every item in this store. You can take whatever you desire."

2

A delicate smile blossomed on Faye's lips. She realized Sterling was giving her new clothes. Faye understood why he had asked if she wanted to be treated like a noble. Sterling knew she would be appreciative of his gifts and not take them for granted.

It was not long, and Faye was finished in the boutique. She had selected seven dresses and matching pairs of shoes. The lady had helped her wash her feet and put on the new slippers, along with dressing her in a gorgeous topaz blue velvet dress with long flowing sleeves and skirts trimmed in subtle silver embroidery with tiny pearls.

3

The fabric was soft, yet thick and would keep her warm in the frigid Hertesk weather. She also discovered it came with a coordinating cloak, and Faye selected several sets of cotton gloves with lace edges, handbags, and hair accessories.

If Duke Sterling Thayer wanted a proper Duchess and was willing to give her such precious gifts, she would be sure to do her best to fulfill the role.

The shop keeper did not take the entire pouch of gold coins and returned what was proper to Faye after the bill was settled. She placed them in her new drawstring purse and went to search for Andre. Faye wanted to find a gift to repay Sterling for what he had done. She wanted something special that would make him think of her all the time and with every step he took. She had an idea, but was unsure of where to find the unique item.

Andre's stern face eased as he noticed her exit the boutique. He asked courteously.

"Are you ready, Milady?"

Her head bob slightly, signaling she was done. There was a sudden burst of cold air that blew around Faye, sending her locks of gold hair swirling about wildly. She pulled her new cloak around her frail frame tighter. Reminding her how thankful she was that she now had good shoes and warm clothing.

"Andre, I would like to ask something. Where can I buy spurs?"

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The lumbering knight paused his strides and chuckled at odd her question. He rubbed the back of his neck as he inquired.

"Why are you planning on becoming a paladin?"

Faye stopped in the street and rounded on the burly knight. She said, a note of cynicism to her tone.

1

"Yes. So I can get closer to the creator and smite my enemies with righteous fury!"

The_Sweet_Sparrow