

## **The Dragon's Fated Bride Chapter 28 - NOT LIKE OTHER MEN - PART 2**

### **Chapter 28: NOT LIKE OTHER MEN - PART 2**

Faye gave the boy a lopsided smile, tilting her head and taking in his untidy appearance. She felt pity in her heart for the young man before her. Faye could sense his life had been a difficult one.

He answered the smithy. His mouth was open as he panted from running. "Aye, I am here, sir?"

The old man growled at the boy, "Take the Duchess and let her show you what she wants. She has something special in mind for Duke Thayer. I suppose you can finally put some of the fancy skills you learned to work."

2

A smile crept up on his chapped lips as he excitedly answered.

"Yes, sir."

With a wave of his hand, he directed Faye to follow him. Andre was just a step behind as the boy led them to the rear of the forge. There was a wooden workbench and intricate tools meant for carving into metal.

"Oye, Milady. What do ya want it to say? Here writes it on the table with this." His speech was slow and that of a poorly educated child.

"I will just tell you and you can write it."

"HA HA HA! I can't write. That is why you have to do it." He shoved the black charcoal pencil into Faye's pristine white-gloved hands, smearing dirt and soot all over her new gloves.

Andre saw Faye frown as she stared at the piece of coal in her new glove. The knight felt outraged at what the boy had done and chided, "Hey, you scoundrel! Look what you have done to the Duchess' new gloves. What's wrong with you?"

The boy threw his hands over his head and curled into a ball as Andre roared. Faye could see he was terrified and fearful that the enraged paladin would give him a thrashing.

3

She dropped the coal stick, rushing to place herself between Andre and the boy.

"Please, stop." She held up her palms and implored. "Don't hurt him. He did not mean harm by his actions. The boy can't read or write. He was just trying to be helpful."

2

Andre's expression was one of fury, but he quickly schooled his anger once he heard the distress in Faye's plea. He saw her quaking where she stood, fearful he might go after the boy.

Eventually, everyone calmed, and the dust settled. Faye stood at the table beside the boy. His head was shamefully bowed, and she saw tears streaked through his soot-stained cheeks.

When she gently tried to touch his shoulder, he winced and recoiled away from her hand. She could see the pain etched on his face, a reflection of the difficult journey he had endured in life, just like her.

2

"It is okay. I will just take the spurs and leave. I don't want to burden you."

Andre watched as Faye went to pick up the roulettes from the workbench. Before he could stop himself, his hand jutted out and stopped her. He realized there was more to this than met the eye. He recognized Faye could not read or write either.

1

"Milady, if I may,"

He leaned over and picked up the charcoal stick, and walked up to the young man, still trembling where he sat.

"Where can I write the words? The duchess should not be touching the dirty coal and making a mess of her clothing."

"T-th-there."

He pointed at the edge of the table, and his voice shook as he answered.

"Write it on the wood."

Faye watched in awe as Andre meticulously scrawled the words on the wooden bench with coal. Even though she could not read, she knew it was what she had asked to be placed on the spurs. The paladin's handwriting was superb. Faye wondered if he was born into a noble family. He seemed well-educated by the way he spoke and carried himself.

The boy was surprised when Andre spoke to him politely this time.

"Can you recreate this on the spur?"

He answered with a quick "Yes, Sir," his head bobbing up and down.

Faye and Andre observed the young boy working with precision, using his tools and files to engrave the phrase on the copper-clad iron spurs. He then added copper leafing to the etched area and melted it in the forge's furnace. After cooling the spur in a bucket of water, he polished it to a shine.

In no time, he was done and handed the prized gift to Faye. She examined the craftsmanship and was inspired by the detail that had gone into the spur. It matched identically to what Andre had written, down to the same calligraphy style.

1

"Duchess, it's time we should head back and meet the commander."

Hearing Andre call her Duchess was so foreign. Faye was unsure she could ever get used to it. Today had been eye-opening and a tad overwhelming. She felt as if she were dreaming. And wondered if she could get used to all this.

Faye followed Andre from the workshop. They found the smithy hard at work, pounding out horseshoes.

"So I see the boy finished. Well, do they meet your approval?"

Faye smiled charmingly at the blacksmith and expressed her pleasure.

"They do and have exceeded my expectations. How much do I owe you? Faye went to reach inside her coin purse, when the old man saw her pretty white gloves covered in soot. He knew the Duke would not be pleased when he saw it."

He grumbled in a low tone. "Nothing, it is on the house."

Faye frowned at the smithy. She could not understand why he would not accept the money. Faye did not want to become one of those nobles like her adopted father that thought everyone should give them goods and services for free, just because they held a title. She had no intention of besmirching her title or that of her husband the Duke.

"That is unacceptable. I shall disburse the money to either you or the boy today, with no preference for either recipient. The Duchy of Thayer will provide payment for their goods."

2

As Faye was pulling two silver coins from her drawstring purse, the peaceful atmosphere of the town was abruptly disrupted by the sound of women's screams, followed by men shouting and people running.

Her arms prickled with goosebumps as the ear-piercing shriek reverberated in the air. Andre's eyes narrowed toward the direction of the disturbance. He cursed under his breath and drew his sword. Faye's eyes widened.

"It's a Girox, Damn it!"

2

The\_Sweet\_Sparrow

It looks like the monsters are on the prowl.

(̄ \_ ̄)