

The Dragon's Fated Bride Chapter 5 - FAREWELL TO WINTERSHOLD - PART 1

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Faye felt a sudden vulnerability at being unable to decipher the contract. She had never been taught to read like her siblings. She had spent her days locked in her bedroom, sleeping, convalescing, or embroidering clothing for the nobility of house Wintershold.

Refusing to grant her a basic education, the Baron believed Faye to be just as sickly as her mother and that she would never really have a use for it. She was constantly reminded of the possibility of dying young because of her asthmatic lungs. Her adoptive father regarded her desire for schooling as a frivolous expenditure of his gambling money.

4

Sterling's smirk widened as he observed her timid response to his query about reading the contract. He was eager to hear her honest answer.

"What is wrong with you? I was told you were a lady of cultured refinement. Can't you read?"

4

Faye answered him honestly with a headshake and dropped the parchment on the floor in defeat at Duke Thayer's feet. She bowed her head and could feel heated tears building behind her pretty blue eyes. It took everything she had not to burst out sobbing. She could not give this monstrous man the pleasure of seeing her cry.

The Duke jabbed Faye in the shoulder with his long finger and sneered, "Awww...What's the matter? Are you sobbing like a baby?"

7

Faye raised her light sapphire blue gaze to meet the Duke's own crimson orbs and gave him a fierce scowl.

"A proper noblewoman is trained from a young age to keep her tears and feelings hidden from the watchful eyes of others. Tears have no power to solve my problems."

The Duke snorted at her remark, "So you consider me a stranger."

Faye's response was immediate and instinctive.

"Indeed, I do. Just because you hold a paper that says we are betrothed does not mean we are well acquainted, now does it?"

The Duke chuckled at the truth of her comment, thinking how amusing this girl was when she was angry. He was going to have fun taunting her all the way back to the fortress in Stanhall Lake. At least she would keep him entertained on this arduous trip.

4

"I must agree, with you on your assessments, crying like an infant is very unbecoming of the Duchess of Thayer and we know little of each other."

"However, I have discovered that the woman seated before me is a pathetic excuse of a human being. Faye, you are no noble lady. You are simply pretending to be one. You have even failed miserably at your fakery."

1

"The point I am making is if you are to be a noble woman, then you should know how to act like one. That means you are to be pretty and remain quiet unless asked to speak. Your hair and clothing leave much to be desired and as for the fact you cannot read, well, that is another problem altogether. How can I depend on you to run my fortress while I am away if you cannot read?"

2

Sterling let out a deep, exasperated sigh and rolled his eyes upward to the coach's ceiling.

"I can see I am at fault for not finding out more about your background before I was rushed into this marriage and agreed with his majesty's ridiculous scheme. So it is now my burden to remedy the situation. You will begin lessons once we reach Everton Fortress."

1

"I cannot have you embarrassing the Thayer family name with your fabrications and ignorance, now can I? I will seek a tutor in the imperium to come instruct you. At least I have a way to keep you busy and out of my sight for the time being."

Faye shrank back into the carriage floor and avoided Sterling. She sat silently in reflection, thinking of ways to get out of this horrid marriage. Her only idea was to take her own life, and she was not that desperate.

10

It had been several hours as the carriage traveled onward. The floor of the coach became hard to take. Every bump and vibration of the wooden slatting sent shooting pains through Faye's lower half, as if a board was beating her.

After a while, the Duke became bored with watching Faye silently squirm in misery at his feet.

"Get up out of the floor and straighten yourself. Have a seat over there and say nothing."

1

The Duke reached out with his hand to help Faye from the carriage floor. He watched as she flinched and backed away from his hand. Swiftly raising her arm in defense over her face, as if he was going to strike her.

"Put your arm down!"

He snapped in irritation.

"What kind of man do you take me for? I am not one who goes around beating on women. I am a knight and uphold the codes of chivalry. So, put your worry to rest about being hit. I will not touch you."

15

The Duke's brow furrowed as he watched Faye do as he had commanded. He wondered how often she had been beaten by her brother while living at

Wintershold and why? Although he already suspected he knew the answer, and it was not a good one. The next time he met with Aaron Montgomery, he would be sure to do more than break his arrogant face.

5

Sterling knew that the clothes Faye was wearing were not the correct size for her. He understood fully that the dress he saw was not hers. The item of clothing gave off the impression that it had already been used and potentially came from her stepsister's collection of clothing.

The condition of her hair and body was far from satisfactory. When he grabbed her by the wrist earlier; he felt as if it might crush and break under the strain of his massive hand. His new bride was frail and too thin for his liking. Her blonde locks were shaggy, dull, and lifeless.

1

It was clear Faye had been ill-cared for while in her adopted father's custody. The other concern was her ankle. As soon as they returned to Everton, he would send for the doctor. There was great worry it might be infected.

5

Sterling shook his head and scrubbed at the stubble on his chin. Why was he suddenly worrying about this insignificant woman? She meant nothing to him, just a means to an end. This was just another condition of his service to the emperor. Marry and make a baby. He despised everything about this situation.

1

And to make matters worse, Faye was even causing him to lose income, being here for the wedding and transporting her back to Everton. She did not even come with a dowery. Instead, he had to pay off the family's debts because of her stepfather's heavy drinking and gambling addiction.

2

Although, he was glad he did not have to marry the stepsister Alice. She would have really made life a misery for him. The haughty girl seemed the

type to want to spend money on wasteful things, at least with Faye. He knew she would be satisfied with the meager scraps he would offer her.

11

The_Sweet_Sparrow