

BASTIEN'S BRIDE

A Forge World Novella

by Meghan March

Chapter 1

“Our family name and title go back to one of William the Conqueror’s most trusted barons. Either you marry, produce an heir, and stop dishonoring the name de Vere, or I will petition the Crown to dissolve the patent upon my death, and you’ll get nothing.”

Bastien listened to his father in disbelief.

“The entailed properties will be gone, and every de Vere who came before us will be rolling in their grave at what you forced me to do.”

Bastien had plenty he’d like to say right now, but his father was already an apoplectic shade of red with spittle flying from his lips as he paced the library in front of the fireplace.

With crystalizing clarity, Bastien realized he had a choice to make. He could enact the ultimate fuck you, tell his father to go through with it, and destroy nearly 1,000 years of noble family history. Or, alternatively, he could grow the fuck up and finally step into the role his father expected him to play.

The first option was tempting in the extreme. His father had cared only for the title and nothing for his son for Bastien’s entire life. As far as his father was concerned, his son was only a vessel to carry the title. Perhaps that was why Bastien had taken such perverse pleasure in being a fuckup. But he had to admit, the de Vere name—or money—had always saved him in the end. Part of Bastien wondered what it would be like to go through life without that safety net. And then he caught himself.

Why on earth would I want that? Isn't life hard enough as it is?

But nets were also chains, and that was where the temptation lay. No net ... no expectations.

"You have forty-eight hours to decide. Your mother has chosen your bride, and she will be arriving today. If you leave the estate, I will take that as your decision. I've already dictated a letter to my solicitor, instructing him to prepare the petition, as much as it sickened me to speak the words."

I like this library, Bastien thought. Even though it had been the scene of countless scoldings, beatings, and dressing-downs his entire life, it was a good room. And I like this estate. There was that big horse chestnut tree he'd put a rope swing on as a boy and ended up with a broken arm. And then there was the trout pond, where he'd caught his first fish. And the meadows ... and the woods ...

"And still, you say nothing?" his father barked.

"I'm thinking," he replied honestly.

"About what?"

"Whether any of this is worth marrying some horse-faced duke's daughter to make you happy so you don't throw it all away."

"Me? Throw it all away? That's you!" His father's roar filled the library.

Poor books. They must tire of his shouting.

"Is it? I'm not the one petitioning the Crown to take back my family's noble title that extends back to William the Conqueror. I'm not the one trying to give back entailed property that at least one hundred people rely upon for income. I'm not the one stuck so deeply in my own anger and rage that I'm willing to do these things simply because I'm a shit father and I could never make my son do what I wanted." He turned away from the fireplace and leveled his gaze on his father. "That's you. I'm simply listening to you rant."

He thought his father would explode. Instead, the man collapsed in his chair. His eyes were still open, so at least that was a sign of life.

"I don't know what to do with you, Bastien. I give up."

"Has it ever occurred to you, Father, that you don't have to do anything with me? Do you realize that the harder you try to force me into the idealized, prescribed mold you have in mind, the more I resist and rebel?"

“Trust me, I’ve noticed.”

“Then why not stop trying? Why not just let me be?”

“Because you’ll ruin us all. You’ve already tried countless times.”

Bastien nodded slowly as he let his father’s perennially low opinion of him sink in once more. “Fine.”

He opened his mouth to say, Shove the title up your arse and go fuck yourself with it.

But instead, what came out was, “I’ll marry her. Whoever she is, I’ll marry her. Consider it done.”

His father stared at him in utter shock, and Bastien didn’t trust his own hearing or the words that had come from his mouth.

Did I really just say that? He couldn’t even believe it.

“You will?”

Fuck, I’ve done it now. It was like someone else had spoken the words for him. And yet Bastien found himself nodding even though he had no idea what had just happened. Then he thought once more, Fuck it. I like this house. I like my tree.

“Tell Mother to start the wedding plans and make the announcement.”

His father’s mouth hung open, rather like an unattractive fish, which was really an insult to fish.

“I’m going for a walk.”

Bastien turned and strode out of the library, wondering how he was going to get out of this.

Sarah watched the countryside pass by through the window and wondered if the view from the other side would be as beautiful when she left. She’d already been told unceremoniously by her mother and three sisters not to worry. It was just a few wasted hours because he would never agree.

The Earl of Carlisle and her father had cracked up some harebrained scheme to give the earl’s errant son one last chance to marry a woman of good breeding to carry on the family line—or else.

Every other attempt to marry him off had been rejected out of hand, or so she'd been told. Sarah didn't pay much attention to such things. She was far happier dwelling in fictional worlds, where men were heroes and everyone lived happily ever after, albeit after rising above life's challenges.

But as the Earl of Carlisle's son had already turned down her sisters—thank the Lord because they were all happily married now—there was no chance he'd say yes when presented with her for a bride. Which meant Sarah could go back to living her life, curled up with a good book, immersed in fiction.

It was a nice ride, however, and getting out into the countryside was a welcome change. It would be excellent fodder for her imagination, and it was also lovely to get some fresh air.

When they drove through the twin pillars at the entrance to the estate, Sarah sucked in a breath.

“Goodness. How gorgeous.”

The tree-lined drive wove through a parklike wood that she imagined had been the same for hundreds of years.

The flights of imaginative fancy sparked by this trip would be numerous and useful, she decided.

And when the house came into view ... she gasped.

It was like something out of an Austen novel. Pemberley had nothing on Rosewyn Manor.

Stunning. The upkeep alone has to be enormous.

Sarah's driver—a charming older chap by the name of Leon—slowed the car on the looping driveway in front of the massive mansion.

If only happily ever afters weren't solely the province of books ... Sarah mused.

A man—blond and fit and undeniably handsome in a dove-gray suit—walked down the double flight of stone stairs, headed directly for her door.

Was he the butler?

He pulled open the car door. “May I assist you?”

Her heart rate picked up as Sarah realized the irony here. I came all this way to be rejected by a lord's heir, only to fall for a butler. Now, that is a good storyline.

She said nothing, simply laid her hand on his and allowed him to help her out of the back seat.

"Thank you, Mr. ..."

"Bastien."

"Thank you, Mr. Bastien."

His lips quirked up into a half smile as he gave a slight shake of his head. "No. Just Bastien. Not Mr."

"Okay ... just Bastien."

"And you are?"

Wishing I were writing all of this down, she thought.

"Sarah. The one about to be rejected by the earl's son."

The corners of his lips moved as if he wasn't sure whether to smile more broadly or not.

"Is that so?"

"Oh, yes. He's already rejected my much prettier sisters, and I simply agreed because a ride to the country sounded like a nice change of pace for the day."

At this, he burst out laughing, and the sound wrapped around Sarah with a shiver.

"Too perfect," he said. "Well, Sarah, aren't you a lucky girl then? A change of pace indeed."

He stared at her with an intensity that she didn't understand.

Sarah paused. "Are you laughing at me?"

It was fine if he was. Sarah didn't particularly care what he thought of her, but his blue eyes seemed to be taking in every detail of her rather forwardly.

"No, forgive me. I'm laughing at the situation in general." He bowed over her hand. "I'm afraid I didn't properly introduce myself. I am Lord Bastien de Vere, your future husband. I just accepted your father's offer."

Sarah's entire body stilled as the words processed. I couldn't have heard that right.
"Excuse me?"

"Come, my dear. Let me show you Rosewyn."

Ready for more? [Grab your copy now!](#) [SuperFans](#) receive every release two weeks early. Every new book is available one week early on [MeghanMarchMerch.com](#). Happy reading!

(c) 2026 Meghan March LLC