

A Mother's Responsibility

A Snow White Short Story by K. M. Shea

Faina was not entirely certain how she felt about Fritz.

She was aware he stood with Snow White when Faina was otherwise incapacitated. And she knew perfectly well he had shielded Snow White and protected her from threats: both physical and perhaps emotional. And yet.

And yet.

As Snow White's stepmother, she couldn't help but feel that everything had happened rather...*fast*. Not to mention she was not particularly pleased that it had all occurred without her on hand to observe.

Afterall, having Snow White fall in love with a strange forester in less than a month without Faina present to ascertain the man wasn't an axe murderer was not exactly how she had pictured her stepdaughter's love story unfolding.

Moreover, Fritz was not the sort of man Faina would have picked out for Snow White.

To begin with, he was about as talkative as a rock. And while Faina was not one who cared much for family lines or pedigrees, as a common forester he unfortunately had no family history for her—or her spies—to snoop through.

Additionally, he could do very little for Snow White and her future role as Queen except protect her. While Faina deeply appreciated knowing Snow White would undoubtedly be safe from now until the day Fritz died, she had always thought that Snow White would end up with a confident man who could help her rule Mullberg.

But Snow White has grown much during my... incapacitation. She has come into her own, and has gained a new kind of confidence. One I'm very glad to see in her as it has made her happier and will undoubtedly make her a better queen. Because of that, it is possible Fritz may be a better husband for her than the sort of man I was picturing. But...

"If he harms one hair on her head, or makes her cry, I shall have him scalped." Faina announced to her maidservant.

The attendant peered cautiously at Faina, "Are you referring to Master Fritz, again?"
"Yes."

The maidservant nodded understandably and clucked as she patted Faina's hand. "Don't you worry, Your Majesty. As the mirror's influence on you continues to fade, such disturbing thoughts will soon no longer trouble you."

Faina pressed her lips together but said nothing more.

This has nothing to do with the mirror's influence, and everything to do with the fact that I will kill anyone who harms my stepdaughter. Ignoring the fact that she is my precious daughter, I have many people to answer to for her happiness and love.

There was of course Snow White's deceased father and paternal grandparents, but most of all there was Snow White's mother. And though Faina had never met Snow White's mother, she had a great deal of respect for the late queen. She was aware of what a precious gift the queen had left her in the form of Snow White, and she had no intention of betraying the responsibility her position as Snow White's stepmother represented.

Regardless, Faina wished for Snow White to marry for love. And really, Fritz hadn't done anything to arouse her suspicions, besides the manner in which he had seduced her stepdaughter. (Because could you call a love story played out over a few short weeks anything

except a seduction? No! Never mind that Faina's romance with the late King Matvey had played out in a similar timeframe....)

Though Faina did not voice her concern to Snow White, she had no such reservations in speaking frankly to Fritz.

"I don't really know that I like you," Faina told the taciturn forester over breakfast—in the early light of dawn, before Snow White arrived.

Fritz tilted his head. "I beg your pardon?"

"You seem like a fine young man," Faina continued. "But as Snow White's stepmother I reserve the right to be reluctant in forming a positive opinion about you."

Fritz blinked slowly, and his calm—or perhaps unemotional?—expression on his face did not so much as twitch. "Good," he said.

It irritated Faina that she thought better of him for that reaction.

In the end, it was Snow White's maternal grandfather who offered Faina the right mix of wisdom and assurance.

"Snow White is a clever girl, is she not?" Lord Trubsinn asked.

Faina sat up straighter in her arm chair. "Snow White is more than clever, she is dazzlingly brilliant!"

Lord Trubsinn chuckled. "But of course," he said. "Which means we can trust her judgement on this forester fellow."

Faina drummed her fingertips on her armchair. *I had not thought of it that way. But it's true, Snow White would never pick an unscrupulous husband. She'd see through him in an instant, and she would never do something that would put the country at risk.*

"Not that it matters," Snow White's grandfather continued. "Because she'll still have you by her side. And with her forester to protect her back, and you to stand with her by the throne, woe befall whoever is stupid enough to oppose her."

The thought of being allowed to continue to watch over Snow White made Faina smile, but she also realized that the statement was true about Fritz as well.

Faina had witnessed a courtyard practice session held by the Seven Warriors.

Fritz had undoubtedly been the best fighter of them, and Faina would be hard pressed to find a better warrior amongst her soldiers.

He will protect her...in a way that is perhaps far more important in these dark times as the Chosen lurk about. Besides, Snow White is able to rule alone. She has the ability, and I think she will continue to gain the necessary confidence—with help from Fritz.

"Perhaps I will like my future son-in-law after all." Faina smiled wryly at Lord Trubsinn, and added rather mischievously, "but there is no need for him to know that."

The End