

COMMON(ER) PROBLEM

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Cue the loud and overdramatic coughing of Ferdinand von Aegir.

“Dorothea! Is there any reason in particular you have brought me out to this village off of the record? I assumed it was for some secret mission, but all we have done is embark on a sightseeing tour.” The young noble was confused. Dorothea Arnault had never gotten on well with him before, the girl vehemently antagonistic towards him due to a circumstance he could not change, nor did he ask for: the fact that he had been born as a Crest-bearing nobility.

So for her to ask him out so suddenly? It had surprised him. Garreg Mach had issues it would help with, and those it wouldn't. He had simply assumed the songstress had taken up a cause that the monastery wouldn't green light, and to those ends he had hoped to help her. But? She had been taking him around the village as if they would be staying a while, the trip culminating in the tour of a worn hut that only the common folk could afford to call their home.

“Hmm... This will do.” The brunette woman mused to herself after stomping a floorboard to make sure it wouldn't break. She had ignored his questions thus far, but finally she seemed content enough to reply. **“You'll be staying here a while, that's all it is.”**

Ferdinand raised an eyebrow. He had been suspicious that this might be the case, but he'd likewise assumed she would be staying as well. Based on her phrasing, was that not so? **“Beg my pardon? I'll be staying? For what rea... son...?”**

As he'd posed his follow-up question, Dorothea had in turn raised her hand into the air. It was a gesture he had only seen her enact during battle, for it was the exact same posture she wielded while casting a spell. The moment she had? He'd felt his body grow sluggish. **"I'd like you to live as a commoner for a while. Well, I'm not exactly asking."**

So, *what?* She wanted him to *pose* as one? He couldn't find the energy to ask that question even though he had wanted to. This gave Dorothea the opportunity to continue without interruption. **"The spell I just cast on you will turn you into a completely different person. Not just your body, but your mind and memories as well. The struggles of being a commoner... You'll experience firsthand."**

Was she serious? Did magic of such a scale even exist? "Don't worry! I'll turn you back, eventually. But your new body?" She turned towards the door. **"I don't have any control over how it will look. So... If you become a child or a woman, sorry!"** Giving a wave over her shoulder, Dorothea then darted through the door of the hut, leaving Ferdinand all alone.

The boy's movement were still limited. **"Gck!?"** Had his fellow Black Eagle really cast something so sinister upon him? He wasn't as unsympathetic to the lives of the common folk as Dorothea seemed to assume, but to be thrust into their shoes so suddenly? Surely, he would not be able to cope properly! Likewise, changing his mind and memories? Could something so cruel truly be accomplished? Was that how much she loathed him!?

Ferdinand could ask himself as many questions as he liked, but that wouldn't change the nature of his situation, nor the fact that the spell had already begun to take root throughout his physical form. It could already be seen in his hair, stripping the boy of his brilliant, well-kept orange, and replacing it with a darker tone that seemed to fray as if he didn't have access to the many shampoos and conditioner that most in Garreg Mach did.

Well, naturally, this was because a commoner *wouldn't*.

The orange tone wasn't lost entirely, and yet as it lengthened and took on an unrulier, greasier look, it was clear it was closer to a plain brown in shading. Orange was a color so predominant among the bloodline of the Aegir family that it might as well have been the first moral wound to who he truly was, but things only worsened as the orange of his eyes darkened to a remarkably similar color. Bags were likewise produced beneath these eyes, suggestive of the fact that he no longer had the many comforts of a noble's lifestyle that allowed him to sleep comfortably every night.

The initial changes continued even as his long, orange-brown hair slithered to just above his rear end, and the fact that he could feel this dirtied hair tickling his butt made him aware of something else shocking. **“My clothes!?”** Finding his ability to move and speak restored, he was quick to understand why. He had been completely stripped, right down to his birthday suit. That damned Dorothea! She knew he wouldn't be able to dash out of the hut without clothing!

Plainness, in abundance, had seized the young man's facial features. The natural beauty of his bloodline stolen away, he better resembled basically any young man you might find among the commoners of Fodlan's villages, though this wasn't the only place becoming unexceptional. An odor was filling the air, and Ferdinand was quick to note that it was his own. **“What the-!? When was the last I'd bathed!?”** Or so he wondered, and yet? He could not recall. Had he not possessed access to a bathing facility every day? Was that possible...?

No, this village only had one bathhouse, and drawing water was difficult.

As if to signify this, speckles of dirt and crust had begun to splatter against his skin, seeing dried mud, rashes, and bug bites ravage his once clean cut complexion. Though, seeing his muscles fade away? That only added to the helpless appearance that was being forced upon Ferdinand. Before long, his frame appeared so meager that there was no way he would be able to wield a polearm. Perhaps a dagger? No, he could not recall ever having any combat experience. He was among the most infamous of the village's farmers, but when it came to self-defence? He absolutely could not.

“Wait... No, that ain't right. I'm... I was born to...” A country accent had been applied to his voice, and there was a floatiness to his tone that sounded as if it were on the cusp of femininity. But then again, hadn't Dorothea said she didn't have control over... **“Who the heck's Dorothea?”** The name had been there, but with a moment's notice it was completely gone. He couldn't place a face to the name, nor the name to the face.

As he pondered, however, his frame continued to change further. Dirt was already caked into Ferdinand's fingernails, but the tips of those nails had been growing ever so slightly, the fingers they rested upon both shrinking in length and thickness, until there was something inherently *maidenesque* about them. They remained filthy and calloused, but it was clear that these blemishes weren't from combat but from a farmer's tools.

His feet followed suit, toes wriggling against the cool mud of the floor while they collapsed in size. His heels softened by design but were more calloused than ever before thanks to the lack of funds in town for proper footwear for everyone to wear. This village was far below the poverty line. It should have been depressing, and yet...

Ferdinand beamed. It looked a little forced, but with his mind adjusting it was clear that he was growing accustomed to his circumstances. That smile looked quite different too, for even while his features were plainer now, those lips had grown plump over the past few moments. No, not *just* his lips. His now brown eyes were wider too, lengthy lashes and thin but unkempt eyebrows. All in all, his face looked like it belonged on a young woman, slightly older in age than Ferdinand was, likely in her mid-20s.

But what was stopping *her* body from matching at the end of the day? Not much, evidently, once a decisive blow was dealt upon her genitals. Her bush of pubic hairs above grew more ample and tangled in the same brown as her hair. This area was just as messy as the rest, but a change in sex wouldn't change her commoner living conditions, naturally.

“How late did I sleep...? Is my laundry strung up outside?” The woman, mid-transformation, was plagued by elements of confusion as she tried to piece together why she was standing naked in her home. All the while, the final pieces of her physical puzzle settled into place, mostly in the realm of curvature.

Her butt bulged and rounded for one, never becoming more substantial than giving the impression of *‘well, she’s a woman’* and nothing more. The woman's thighs were similar, and the breasts that sprouted beneath engorged, erect nipples that were teased by the room's chill? At the very least, there was some appeal to them. The jiggled on the heftier side of the D-cup spectrum, though something about their sizing seemed rather... uneven? Not that it would matter much when clothed.

A knocking on the door suddenly startled her.

“Rosalind? You here? I thought you’d be tilling the fields already.”

...*Rosalind*? Was that her name? Yeah... Yeah! Of course it was! That had been the name she'd answered to since she was just a little babe. Wait... who was that? She wasn't even dressed! **“Uh—Yeah! I’d already been out to the field but came back to get on refillin’ my water jug! I’ll be out again soon, don’t come on in!”** A quick excuse was made, even if it didn't really make much sense at the end of

the day. Who even was that calling out to her from outside? She felt like she recognized his voice, but...

Well, there was no use crying over it, she had to find clothes, and fast!

Then she'd have to go out to the fields, apparently.

Weeks turned to months, and before long the Adrestian Empire had waged war on the remnants of Fodlan. As a result, Dorothea never returned to undo the spell that had been placed upon Ferdinand von Aegir, or the villager woman he had become. But perhaps that had been for the best?

Rosalind was a farmer after all. She had no combat experience, and so when the Church came looking for soldiers, she was spared from conscription. But in the time between Ferdinand's transformation and the war? Rosalind had fallen in love with a man known as Franklin, but he had been taken away to serve as a soldier.

...Leaving Rosalind alone and *expecting*. She'd been impregnated, and so even if Dorothea had returned to change her back, it would have been impossible. Maybe she had returned in secret and Rosalind hadn't even noticed, because she didn't *know* a Dorothea Arnault in this life.

Even as the war raged on, the villager woman gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. She knew the struggles of the commoner life well, and now with the war those struggles had only been amplified. But Rosalind? She was content. Eventually the man she loved would come home, and she would be able to marry him as they had planned when they learned that she was with child.

It took a full *five years* for the war to end.

But when it had, Rosalind was waiting with their four year old daughter clinging to her leg at the village entrance. Franklin had been through a lot during the war, but he had survived. Rosalind had won her happily ever after, and she was happier than she had ever been. It was hard to believe that in her past life she vaguely believed the common folk could never find a happiness like this.

Not that she could even remember that now.