

Sara's Dilemma - By Gavin Burgess

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Parental Note:

This story is intended for young teens. It contains content which some parents may deem unsuitable for less mature children. It is suggested that parents review the contents of this publication prior to making it available to their children.

Sara's Dilemma (Prologue to A Companion's Tale)

My name is Sara and it's my wedding night. I'm hungry because in all the confusion no-one has brought me any food and I'm sitting alone in my honeymoon suite crying. You may think that this is strange, after all a girl should be happy on her wedding night, but tonight happiness escapes me. The problem isn't that I'm hungry, for this is just a small thing, but rather that if I'd been allowed my own way this marriage would never have taken place. Do you think I don't love this man to whom I find myself married against my will? Well you're wrong. I love this beautiful young man so very much that it hurts just to look at him. I loved him the very first moment I set eyes on him! He's tall and strong and handsome to the point that it takes my breath away. The skin of his face is like gold and his hair is wavy and dark. His eyes flash like the wings of birds over water and his lips are like a beautiful flower dripping with nectar. His hands are strong, his body carved and his mouth so sweet. He's the most lovely man I've ever seen. How could I not love him and desire him? He's most definitely the man I love, and yet I cry. I cry with a grief so profound that I cannot be comforted. I mourn for the loss of one so fair. You see I know that tonight, very, very soon, when he comes to our honeymoon suite, this beautiful young man whom I love is going to die.

Although I wouldn't boast or flaunt my beauty amongst others I must admit to myself, and if I'm to tell this tale, to you, that I'm fortunate to have been made a most attractive woman. Over the years many men have noticed this beauty and no less than a dozen suitors have come, over time, to petition my father for my hand in marriage. Of these my father has spurned several but when

David came with his request my father found himself to be in agreement and the wedding took place.

That evening David and I retired to our honeymoon suite. We laughed together and talked about our future. We kissed and teased and warmed to each other and soon became passionate. David's body was strong and firm and his bare chest was warm under my hands. We felt so alive, full of the energy of our youth and the excitement of passion. His hands on my body ignited little fires wherever they touched and I was full of a wonderful joy. But this happiness was to be short-lived as David suddenly gasped, clutched at his throat and rapidly began to turn blue. Something was very wrong. David, making the most alarming gurgling noises fell to the floor.

The Doctors pronounced the cause of his death to be choking. It seems David had eaten something to which he was allergic and his throat had swollen shut, blocking his airway and leading to his death. So here I found myself, married and widowed in a day, and still a virgin. I mourned for many months but I was young, and found life again, and presently my father thought it acceptable to consider the petition of another young suitor.

Simon was a pleasant young man, although I found he didn't have the same physical appeal as David. He seemed kind and polite but very shy. We'd been alone together for a full hour on our wedding night, drinking wine and talking, but he still hadn't touched me. Nor was he destined to, for he suddenly clutched at his chest and keeled over quite dead. This time it was a heart attack which had caused me to be left alone. What was to become of me?

It was over a year before another man came to ask for my hand. When I did finally marry again, and forgive me but his name escapes me now, my new

husband was stricken with some strange internal bleeding the moment he entered our room. Then came the next, a seizure of the brain, and the next, stung by a scorpion which had concealed itself under a pillow, and so I became a challenge for the brave and adventurous young men of our land, those who did not fear death, but, as young men so often are, were beguiled by their belief in their own invincibility and the desire to possess a beautiful lady.

In all, seven men came and died and I still remained a virgin bride. After the last, who bled to death from a gruesome injury sustained through a misadventure with a cigar knife, I was inconsolable and cried out to God that He'd free me from this terrible curse, and that no more young men would die on my account. I always hoped that God would answer my prayer but now this new man has come, more handsome, more beautiful, more fine, and more worthy than any who have come before, and, knowing all, still he's insisted that I'm to be his bride.

At my first wedding there was great celebration, with feasting for days, and dancing and singing and fine wines and the elite of society. The second was almost as grand but with each subsequent suitor the arrangements became a little less complex, a little less public, until now they're reduced to mere practicalities, the reception and conscription to the grave of one more groom being, for my family, little more than an unpleasant glitch in their otherwise ordinary lives. In the case of this young man, he's merely, and barely, partaken in the obligatory meal with my father and here I find myself rushed to

my room, with no preparation and without even a morsel in my stomach. There is such an urgency to this naively charming young man.

Now I hear him on the stair, his tread is at the door, and with his every step his end approaches. He's opening the door. It's much too late for him to go back. The door is closed behind him. He's entered the room and so now he's going to die!