
BE MINE

A Collection of Love Stories for Valentine's Day

FIONA WILDE STARLA KAYE JOANIE KAY
COURAGE KNIGHT



Published by Blushing Books
An Imprint of
ABCD Graphics and Design, Inc.
A Virginia Corporation
977 Seminole Trail #233
Charlottesville, VA 22901

©2021

All rights reserved.

No part of the book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. The trademark Blushing Books is pending in the US Patent and Trademark Office.

Fiona Wilde, Starla Kaye,
Joannie Kay, Courage Knight
Be Mine

eBook ISBN: 978-1-64563-828-5

vi

Cover Art by ABCD Graphics & Design

This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only.
Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or the author's
advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

Cupid's Dilemma

FIONA WILDE

Published by Blushing Books
An Imprint of
ABCD Graphics and Design, Inc.
A Virginia Corporation
977 Seminole Trail #233
Charlottesville, VA 22901

©2012
All rights reserved.

No part of the book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. The trademark Blushing Books is pending in the US Patent and Trademark Office.

Wilde, Fiona
Cupid's Dilemma

eBook ISBN: 978-1-60968-447-1

vi

Cover Art by ABCD Graphics & Design

This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only. Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or the author's advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

Chapter 1

For the cupids, this was the best time of the year. Heck, for the very traditional cupids this was the only time of the year, or at least the only time of year that really mattered. Adorma sometimes remarked to his companions that given all the emphasis on Valentine's Day, they should just hibernate - like bears - from the end of July until the end of February. But his supervisor, LaMour, pragmatically pointed out that there was more to being a cupid than matchmaking. There were arrows to make and love spells to write and bows to restring. LaMour was right, of course, but his preaching was always enough to send Adorma out for a much-needed smoke.

That's where he was a week before Valentine's Day when LaMour came over with a thick file.

"There you are," LaMour said. "I've been looking all over for you."

Adorma leaned back against the cloud he was floating beside. Wisps of cloud fragments broke away and floated up to join the cigar smoke already spiraling through the air.

"I really wish you would top that nasty habit," LaMour said, nodding towards the stogie.

“I could have been anything,” Adorma growled. “Minotaur. Kracken. Griffin. Instead I’m stuck forever in the body of a winged baby with a half-inch winkie. How about letting me have my simple pleasures.”

“We’ve been over this before. It doesn’t look good a cupid to smoke!” LaMour responded.

“Neither does stubble on my baby face, so quit bitching or I’ll stop shaving. Then you’ll have a bearded, smoking cherub to deal with instead of just a smoking cherub.”

“Fine,” seethed LaMour. “But don’t think this won’t come up on your performance review.”

“What if it does?” Adorma asked. “You gonna fire me? In case you haven’t noticed, the Cupid’s Union gets more alluring every year. Piss me off too much and I’ll go to another company, a unionized one with better benefits like Romantica. Paid vacation. Laser sites on the bows....”

“Okay,” said LaMour. He hated it when Adorma brought up the unions. “Smoke your filthy cigar. Just please try not to do it around the mortals. It can be very distracting for a couple falling in love to have to stop and seek out the source of some phantom smoke smell.”

“That’s not why I’m here, anyway,” LaMour continued. He held out the file. “We’ve got some problem cases here and I was hoping you would consider taking on.”

Adorma smiled wryly. His other ace in the hole was the fact that he was one of the best cupids in the business. Perhaps the best.

“Unmatchables?” he asked LaMour.

“We’ve tried two years in a row,” he said. “And nothing. Not even on Valentine’s Day.”

“And let me guess. You’re breaking down and admitting that I’m the only one in this organization that can do it.”

“What is this? You want to hear it? Is that it? You want to make me say it?”

Adorma grinned. "It would help."

LaMour rolled his eyes. "OK, Adorma. No one else can do it but you. Happy?"

Adorma took the file. "Almost," he said. "I'll expect a raise if I take these on. And I want June off."

"June??" LaMour tried to control his anger. Next to Valentine's Day the month of June was the busiest time for cupids because the pinnacle of the wedding season. Cupids roamed the reception halls, shooting tipsy bridesmaids, groomsmen and guests already half drunk on romantic feelings from virtue of the setting alone. It was easy work, but the schedule was a bitch. Adorma hated it.

"I'll give you half of June off."

"No deal," Adorma said, holding the unopened file out to LaMour. His supervisor scowled.

"Fine. Take June then." LaMour conceded. He glowered at Adorma in silence. "Deal?"

"Deal," Adorma said.

LaMour raised an eyebrow. "Just like that? You don't even want to look at the cases first?"

"I don't need to. I'm the best. You admitted it yourself."

Now it was LaMour who was grinning. "Well, just so you know, your getting a raise and June off is conditional on matching these."

"Piece of cake," Adorma said.

LaMour snorted and turned away, his little wings beating frantically to haul his chubby baby body into the air. Adorma started to tell him he needed to lay off the Valentine's candy but decided against it. Instead he opened the file. The shock of what he saw sent him whizzing after his supervisor.

"Hey!" he called, but LaMour ignored him. "HEY!!"

LaMour turned. "Yes, Adorma?" His tone sounded innocent. Too innocent.

"Brats?" he asked, shaking the file in his face. "Brats?"

“You said you could handle anything, Adorma.”

“Brats are different, LaMour. This isn’t fair. Brats are alone because no man can handle their drama and willfulness. There are hardly any men left who can make decent mates of them. You know that. A hundred years ago it wasn’t so hard. You just matched a brat up with a strict guy and after a couple of good spankings she straightened right out. With the right kind of handling, brats could actually make good wives. They were passionate people. The problem was finding a man that had what it took to turn a brat into a decent partner.

“Look, Adorma. I know they’re a pain in the ass, but they deserve love just like everyone else. And what is our job?”

Adorma’s chubby cheeks turned red. “Don’t patronize me, LaMour. I know what our job is. It’s to make people fall in love. And not just any love, but lasting love...”

“Right. And we don’t discriminate...”

“I know,” Adorma agreed. “But...brats?”

“Do you want June off or not?” LaMour crossed his chubby arms and glared at Adorma, who was puffing on his stogey as he looked down at the file.

Adorma wanted nothing more than to drop the file and watch the papers disintegrate as the fluttered down to earth. By the time they got below cloud level, the cherub paper would turn to dust. But then he thought of June and how much fun it would be to go hang with the leprechauns who always welcomed him for gambling and booze. He could stay shit-faced drunk for the whole month. No more showing up for weddings with a hang-over. His aim sucked when that happened and last year he’d gotten written up for accidentally misfiring twice at the same reception. It had taken LaMour calling in an elite cupid sniper to straighten things out after the groom had fallen in love with his new mother-in-law.

“Fine, I’ll do it,” he said.

"I knew you would," LaMour winked. "Good luck." He turned and fluttered off.

"Yeah, well fuck you very much," Adorma replied under his breath. Then he popped the stogie into his mouth and zipped off to find a cloud where he could settle in and do some research. If he was going to get June off, it was going to take a lot of work.

He opened the file. The first case was one Lauren Kapetchney, age 33. Her photo was attached. She was pretty, which meant she was trouble. Adorma knew that most women who looked as pretty as Lauren should already have a man. If she didn't, it was because she was such a terror that they had just decided her beauty wasn't worth the tradeoff. Adorma stared at the picture. Long blonde hair, bright beautiful eyes, great smile. She must be the devil.

He searches his memory for available, unattached men who might be up to the task of taking on someone like Lauren. Adorma wasn't about to aim his arrow at just any man. He was an ethical cupid, even if he did smoke like a chimney. He wasn't going to get some perfectly decent guy love-drunk on a woman who was going to make his life hell. He'd known cupids who had done just that; they'd go back and regularly hit the guy with Cupids Arrow, blinding him to the reality of the woman he was with. The man would be in love, but never really happy because deep down under all those good feelings he'd know his partner was really just a shrew. And yet he'd be powerless to stop loving her. And it did no good to hit her over and over. She'd love him but she'd still disobey and drive him crazy in the process. Because with brats, Cupid's arrows were never enough. What brats really wanted was to be tamed, and that was only something their men could give them.

Unfortunately, the brat-taming kind of men Adorma needed to match to these Unmatchables. They were in exceedingly short supply. Finding one would be a chore. But finding....the exasper-

ated cupid leafed through the file - finding three would be practically impossible, wouldn't it? He began to wish he'd not been so cocky. He should have looked at the file, negotiated things with LaMour. Now it looked like he was about to not only give his supervisor the last laugh, he was going to end up working the month of June.

Surely there had to be something he was missing. Adorma collected his file and fluttered down to a lower cloud, one a little more dark and misshapen than the others. His cloud. He flew directly into it and disappeared from view. Inside he tossed the file on his cluttered desk and went to the battered pink file cabinet where he kept records on his share of humanity looking for Love.

Cupids read quickly. They have to. A lot of people are looking for love. As he leafed through the files, however, he got more and more frustrated. "No," he said, looking at the file of a twice-divorced football player ready to give love just one more chance. "No," he repeated when he came to a handsome but hopelessly romantic science teacher. Romance was good, but he was looking for someone stern, someone who blended Love with a mix of no-nonsense old-fashioned values.

Adorma thought that in the good old days - and by good old days he meant the Victorian era - men and women had known their places. In the good old days home and family meant something and the idea of Bonding for Life was so popular that people didn't just feel the effects of cupid's arrows, they started to actually see cupids. Adorma chuckled when he remembered the first time his friend, Desiro, had recognized his image on a Victorian postcard. Even though he knew he wasn't supposed to, he took it and raced straight up to the main office, where he slammed it down on the desk of the Head Cupid, Mr. Heartner.

"How could they?" he asked. "How could they?" He turned, pointing to his pink baby's bottom. "My ass is not nearly that fat!" And then Desiro, who was vain, burst into tears.

"It's your fault for letting yourself be seen," Heartner chided. "We've warned you that when feelings for love and family are as strong as they are now the risk is high that some romantic swain or his beloved will catch a glimpse of you. In your case, you allowed yourself to be seen by an artist."

"It wasn't a very good artist," said Desiro, his reedy voice shaking in anger. Desiro was one of the more vain cupids.

"Get over yourself," said Heartner. "It's one picture. It's not like it's going to become a popular art trend."

Of course, he was wrong. More and more couple saw cupid and more and more cupids appeared on postcards, Valentine's cards and even in paintings. It wasn't the first time they'd been depicted; but they'd never become so prevalent. But then again, romantic love had never been quite so strong.

Nor, Adorma thought, had men been more masculine and women more feminine. The lines were blurred now. Matches were harder to make, especially matches involving bratty women who needed strong men.

He was about to slam the cabinet shut in exasperation when something caught his eye. A folder marked "Jarvis, S." It was the photo sticking out the top that got his attention. Jarvis, S. (the S stood for Simon) was wearing an old-fashioned Victorian era suit. For a moment Adorma worried that he'd forgotten to update his files and had accidentally left a bygone one in with the current batch. But as he read the file he realized that Simon Jarvis was a docent at a Victorian house-turned-museum in the very town occupied by a certain bratty Lauren Kapetchney. He checked further. They were the same age and had similar educational backgrounds; she was a history major who now worked as a researcher for a textbook company. They both liked to work out. And they were both matched in attractiveness, lack of split ends and Whiteness of Smile.

Adorma pulled the file and laid all the information on the table. Then he pulled Lauren's and laid it beside Simon's. And

this is how cupid magic begins. It's not a whole lot unlike a human job. Ducks need to be in a row. P's and q's need to be in order. I's need to be dotted and t's....well, you get the picture. And that's just what Adorma was good at - planning. While much of his work involved getting people all emotional, he himself tried to be very professional and even a bit detached from his subjects. The initial meeting was crucial. Adorma needed to get them in a position to meet each other. He checked the files. Simon was a morning person. The afternoon would have to do. Simon worked from 11 until 6 at the house, and he cut a fine figure in his suit. Adorma decided that seeing this tall, handsome man in Victorian attire might intrigue a fellow history major. Apparently the house made quite a big deal out of Valentine's Day, which was fast approaching. Good. That would put them both in a romantic mood.

But it would still take more than that. Cupid's Arrow was most effective if shot at the moment of maximum interest. And Adorma wanted to make something caught sparked a mutual interest. For men, this was easy. A beautiful girl was all it took to get a guy's interest. And a handsome man was usually enough to get a woman's. But a brat was different. A brat, for all her brattiness, needed something more. A brat needed some hint that the man she'd just met might be the one. Not just the one to love her and cherish her and keep her, but to give her the kind of structure she needed. Adorma knew these kinds of beginnings were as unusual as the partnerships they would generate. A real brat would tell herself she was repulsed by an old-fashioned man. She would tell herself that he was a jerk, a cretin, a chauvinist. She would tell herself that he was a knuckle-dragging mouth-breather who needed to join the modern era. She would tell herself she hated him, even as the sweet dart from Cupid's arrow dissolved itself in her heart and she suddenly realized she absolutely could not stop thinking about the man.

Cupid's Dilemma

Because Cupid's Arrow, in addition to sparking attraction, did something else: It made a brat begrudgingly realize that the one thing she told herself she didn't want was the one thing she'd always been looking for.