

The Fantastic Adventures of Kip Frazier

Chapter 2: In the Biddy's Kitchen

by Jamie Grove

Them first days at Dragonwood... Well, I know I'm supposed to tell you I couldn't get used to sleeping in a fancy bed but I'll tell you -- I liked it. I like it just fine. In fact, I'd have to say that the nights at Dragonwood were some of the best sleeping to be had. Ever.

It was the days I couldn't hardly stand.

When I come down from that first night's sleep, I was all warm and dusty-headed. I about nearly floated down the stairs, because the smell coming from the kitchen was so good. It was like I was still dreaming.

The kitchen at Dragonwood was a old cave of a room with huge windows that peeped out onto a neat garden. You could

stand by those windows and get a good look at the hills all around. A fella like me could sit up on the sill and have a cup of coffee and really gather his thoughts. Well, I might've if the kitchen hadn't been home to Miss Chaldea.

Miss Chaldea was a country woman, brought up not far from where my Pap had his little patch. She was afraid of everything mechanical in the world, which meant she must have had a rough life there with old Phineas and his clankers.

I could see right off when I come into the kitchen that she must've been part Fey. I suppose most folks from out in the deep woods are. They can't help it. All the same it set the hair on my neck twitching, but I got over it when I spied the coffee pot on the stove.

My Pap used to say that coffee's what's right for a growing boy, and if that fool of a man didn't say nothing that made any sense, at least he got that right.

In all the time I was slaving for the Fey, I didn't get even one cup of coffee. All they drink is a milky, gray sort of tea, but it ain't got any real milk in it so it's just gray. I can't say I was ever curious enough to find out why it was gray either. In my opinion, ain't no one ought to drink tea unless they has to and even then they ought to hold their nose when they do.

"Well, ain't you the biggest wreck of a human being I ever seen?"

This is Miss Chaldea. She shouts. No hellos. No how do ye dos. Not even so much as a good morning. Then, she hauls me right up out of the kitchen and out the back door and barks at me to strip off my shirt and my britches.

Well, this was all happening so fast I didn't know what to say or do. But I figured I wasn't going to get none of that coffee unless I did what she said so I got on with it. Then you know what she did? She tossed a bucket o' cold water on me! Right there when the sun was hardly up and the dew was still all shivering on the grass! I was lucky I didn't catch my death of cold right there and then, but it doesn't stop there... She turns and grabs another bucket and hits me with that, except this one is all soapy and hot.

"Scrub up!"

It wasn't the time for noodling but I did. This is always happening to me so you might as well get used to it. Anyway, I figured I must've looked pretty rough. After all, I'd been sleeping out for weeks and before that I was down with the Fey folk for who knows how long and they ain't so big on being clean neither. So I set about getting a proper scrub, but I ain't

half way done when she hits me with another bucket of the cold stuff.

"Ho, Lady! I don't know where you keep getting all them buckets, but you got to let a fella scrub up before you start dousing him with water again."

Another hot soapy bucket.

We go through this about three more times. I probably looked like a wet cat. I know that's how I felt, but I kept on scrubbing till the buckets stopped coming.

"I'm Miss Chaldea," she said. "And in the future, you'd do well to git yourself clean before you step a foot into my kitchen."

Then she turned and tromped up into the house, leaving my britches and shirt hanging on the handrail along with a towel. Since my body didn't know whether to shiver or shake, I didn't feel much of anything. I turned and took a look at the world around me and wondered what the heck I'd gotten myself into.

Wouldn't take much just to dud up and be gone, but then I really hadn't anywhere to go just yet.

I went over to my clothes and found they were clean. I knew well enough how to make my clothes look clean. Anybody could learn that trick quick enough if they paid attention to the Fey, but this was real and honest clean.

I put on my duds and walked into the kitchen in a huff, because if she could make my britches smell nice without a scrub then there was no reason to splash water all over me like that, and that means she done it just to spite me.

Miss Chaldea was cooking at the big iron stove. On the block behind her was a silver tray piled up with fruit, cheese, and a mess of fine hot buns. I went to help myself, but Miss Chaldea wheeled around and slapped my wrist.

"Them belong to Mister Phineas."

"Can't I at least have a cup a coffee?"

"You'll get your own in a second."

"Well, this ain't no way to treat a guest, I'll say."

Before either of us could get a good shout organized, a little clanker dog came wandering in the kitchen. Miss Chaldea didn't seem to mind him which surprised me because she didn't seem like the sort who would like a dog in her kitchen, especially no steamer like this one.

"I never seen a tin whistle up close before."

"And Oscar probably ain't never seen such a rough excuse for a boy before neither. In fact, I'm sure of it."

The tin whistle nosed my leg, but when I went to pet him he let out a puff of steam and backed away. His paws clattered on the tile as his stubby legs tried to keep balanced. I got down

to eye level with him and called out his name real soft. I waited for him to figure out I wasn't the sort to pull or poke him, and soon enough he come over and let me rub his brass belly.

Miss Chaldea left the kitchen with the tray of food for Phineas and I noticed that she'd laid out a plate of eggs and bacon for me along with some fruit and... a fine cup of black coffee.

Maybe this woman wasn't so mean after all, but I still wasn't forgetting about them buckets anytime soon.

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