

The Billionaire's Baby Bargain Chapter 11

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Chapter 11 Becoming "Almara"

I grit my teeth as my face burned red. Arthur knew that I couldn't pay him back. I didn't have a choice. I would have to play by his rules...or else. I nodded and focused on my food. It tasted like cardboard. I didn't think it was the chef's fault. I was just miserable.

We ate the rest of the meal in silence. Well, I was silent. Dana and Arthur chatted merrily away. I wonder if Arthur knew that Dana was in love with him. I bet Dana would be a perfect candidate for the surrogate position, I grumbled to Lily as I speared a spinach leaf with my fork.

Not if she's in love with him. She wouldn't be able to let him go once the contract was fulfilled. That one would definitely cause problems, Lily surmised and it made a certain sense. I couldn't wait to get away from Arthur. I would not be sticking around once the contract was over.

"Alright, little wolf, it's time for us to go. You are getting a much needed makeover," Arthur told me cheerfully as he set down his utensils. I didn't miss Dana's eyes narrowing at his nickname for me. I really hoped she wouldn't actually be a problem later.

Arthur dabbed at the corners of his mouth with a personal handkerchief. It disappeared back into his pocket. He saw me watching him and gave me a thousand kilowatt smile. My breath caught me in my throat. Moon Goddess, help me.

The makeover Arthur had taken me to get had been intense. The boutique he took me to was an all-in-one stop specifically for events. They had dresses. They had hair and makeup. Everything one could possibly need to prepare for a banquet.

I don't think I had ever been poked and prodded so much in my life. I had never put too much stock in my appearance. I had never wanted to spend that kind of money on myself. I hadn't seen the need to.

But now I could understand why women went to the salons. After all was said and done, I felt extremely refreshed. I felt like anything was possible. I felt like a new me.

The hairstylists had trimmed my hair and added layers. Then they artfully curled it so it fell in waves across my back. The makeup artists had insisted on giving me a natural dewy look with muted gold eyeshadow to brighten my eyes.

The dress they had picked out was a rich burgundy a-line evening dress with a sweetheart neckline. It was much nicer than the gaudy thing that Robert had me wear on the cruise ship.

When I had entered the main area of the boutique where Arthur was waiting, he had jumped to his feet, staring at me with open appreciation. I hated to admit it, but I had preened under his gaze.

But now we were at the actual banquet and I was a bundle of nerves. I unashamedly clutched at Arthur's arm as he wound our way through the numerous guests.

I didn't dare speak to ask questions. Not when all the wolves would be able to hear what I said. I'd have to be right in Arthur's ear and there was no way I was getting that close.

We reached a couple who were talking amongst themselves and I immediately knew who they were. These were Arthur's parents. He looked just like them. The family resemblance was uncanny.

"Arthur, my love! I'm so glad you could join us! And who is this lovely little flower?" his mother asked, eyeing me curiously. I curtsied low. Arthur may have been alpha, but his parents still deserved respect.

"Mother, Father. I wish to make an announcement. If I may?" Arthur asked, bowing.

Both of his parents cocked their heads to the side, but motioned for him to go ahead.

In the human world, I'd heard that they hit a knife against a glass to get everyone's attention, but in our world, we howled. Arthur tipped his head back and let out the most beautiful howl I had ever heard.

It wasn't long before the rest of the guests were howling along with him. I wanted to join in, but I wasn't part of his pack. At least, not yet.

"Friends and family, welcome to tonight's banquet. I have a very important announcement. Now, I know you expected Sofia and I to wed in light of our mate bond, but it has become clear to me that we do not share the same dreams. However, this little wolf beside me has managed to capture my heart. I would like to introduce you to my fiance, Almara."

I could feel panic creeping in as the whole room went silent. They were all staring at me. I hated being the center of attention. I clutched Arthur's arm so hard that I knew I had to be hurting him.

The panic was crawling up my throat now. I couldn't breathe. I was minutes away from gasping for breath when Arthur yanked me to him, crashing his lips to mine in a bruising kiss.

I saw stars. All thoughts escaped me. Nothing existed anymore except his lips on mine.

I melted into him, putting as much of my body against his as I could. I just

wanted to be close to him. I wanted his scent to surround me. It was so intoxicating.

All too soon, Arthur pulled away, peering at me through half-lidded eyes. Being this close to him, I could smell his arousal. That realization alone was enough to snap me out of whatever trance he'd put me in.

When the bubble around us popped, I could hear all the whispers and remembered that we had an audience. I looked at Arthur questioningly. Why had he kissed me in front of everyone?

As if reading my thoughts, Arthur bent down, putting his lips right next to my ear. "You were about to have a panic attack. I stopped it. You're welcome." By the moon, this man was cocky.

"What is the meaning of this?" Arthur's father demanded to know, shuffling us to hidden alcove away from all the prying eyes.

"It is as I said, father. Sofia has broken my heart, but Almara here has put it back together. We plan to wed as soon as possible," Arthur answered smoothly, seemingly unphased by all that had transpired.

"Why did you not mention this before tonight? Why did you blindside us like this? Do you have any idea how this makes us look?" his mother hissed and I took an involuntary step behind Arthur.

"I did tell you. It's not my fault you don't check your emails," Arthur said almost lazily. His parents took out their phones, taking a moment to read whatever it was that Arthur had sent.

When they finished, they looked at me with renewed interest.

"Arthur, dear, why did you not tell us that Almara is attending The Pullman Institute of Art? That's quite an achievement for one as young as yourself," Arthur's mother said, directing her attention to me.

My mouth fell open. That's the same information that had been on the resume Dana had shown me this morning. Arthur had already sent out those lies. I wasn't prepared for this.

"Tell me, pet, how is studying in the human world?" she asked and my eyes widened. How was I supposed to answer her? I wasn't any good at lying. She would be able to smell it on me.

"Come now, Mother. Don't pester her. She's clearly overwhelmed. Not to mention, you and Father have failed to properly introduce yourselves," Arthur chimed in and I relaxed. He was covering for me.

"Oh dear. You're right. I'm sorry, pet. Allow me to correct our faux pas. My name is Elenor and this is my mate, Roman. It's lovely to meet you," Elenor said, holding out a hand. I took it, using sheer force of will to keep my hand from shaking.

"It's lovely to meet you too," I murmur as I also shake Roman's hand.

"As much as I would love to keep chatting with you, we must get back to the

party before rumors start flying. I have many people to introduce Almara to. I promise we will get together privately soon,” Arthur said and led me away from his parents and back into the continuously whispering crowd.

I noticed several people checking their phones and stiffened. How many people did he send that fake resume to?

I felt his lips against my ear for the second time. Goosebumps rose on my arms. Several of the ladies around us had a jolt of bright green among their merry yellows. If only they knew what he was actually saying.

“You must learn to control your emotions, little wolf. Your identity is a secret. We must not be found out. If anything you do leads to the contract being broken, just remember that I’ll own you.”

But he already did.

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