

The Billionaire's Baby Bargain Chapter 9

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Chapter 9 The Contract That Binds

"Coffee would be wonderful, Dana. And could we see about getting Almara some clothes?" Arthur asked and relief flooded through me. Typically wolves didn't care about nudity since shifting meant being naked, but it had always made me feel vulnerable.

Dana bowed and walked off. Arthur wrapped an arm around my shoulders and led me up the stairs to the entrance of the house. An extravagant foyer with a split staircase was the first thing that I saw. Golden light from a chandelier gave everything a warm glow.

"Where are we going?" I asked as he led me down hallways filled with artwork that I knew must have cost him a pretty penny. Persian rugs lined the floor. Everything just screamed money.

"To my office. We have a contract to sign," he answered, stopping in front of a set of french doors. They led to the coziest space I could have ever imagined. Every wall was covered in floor to ceiling bookshelves with the exception of the stone fireplace that already held a roaring fire.

Another mahogany desk exactly like the one on the cruise ship was set in the middle of the room. On top was a fresh pile of clothes that I immediately grabbed and began to put on. Arthur kindly made himself busy by pretending to look at some of his books.

When I was finished dressing, Arthur came around the desk and sat in his chair, pulling documents out of seemingly nowhere. "Now, you understand the basics of the contract. We get married, you get pregnant, your debit is paid off. For specifics, thirty percent will be offset once we have the marriage license, another thirty percent once you are pregnant, and the rest after the baby is born. Are you following me so far?"

I nodded numbly.

"Good. Now, once your role in all this has been completed, I will leave you with compensation to follow your dreams to be a painter. You would like that, would you not?"

I blinked rapidly. I had been working so hard my whole life to become a painter. Unfortunately, art hardly ever paid the bills in the beginning. And working as hard as I did meant that I didn't really have time to paint. It was a harsh cycle.

"How did you know I wanted to be a painter?" I asked and Arthur gave me that familiar smirk.

“Are you ready to sign?” He held out a pen, which I took with a shaky hand.

“Wait. Can we add a clause?”

Arthur raised an eyebrow. “I don’t think you’re really in a position to negotiate, but go ahead.”

I took a deep breath. “If, for whatever reason, you back out of the contract, I want my debt to be completely erased. If I’m not at fault, I don’t want to be punished.”

He gave me a puzzled look. “Why would I ever back out of the contract?”

I shrugged my shoulders. “If Sofia comes back, I assume you’d want to call this whole thing off.”

A small growl escaped through his lips. “I thought I told you not to say that name around me. But fine. If I break the contract, I won’t hold you to your debt anymore.” He grabbed another pen and wrote the addendum at the bottom of one of the pages.

He shoved the documents across the desk, glaring at me the whole time as I signed my name. A mixture of orange and red swirled above his head. He was aggravated.

He must really love her, I muttered, the bitterness in my voice clearly evident. If I didn’t know any better, I’d say you were jealous, Lily said and I rolled my eyes.

I’m not jealous. At least not in that way. I just...I wished that I had someone that loved me that much. At least that’s what I was telling myself. I couldn’t possibly be jealous for other reasons.

Sure. Sure. Whatever you say.

Arthur:

Arthur watched Almara with a bemused expression as she wandered around the office, looking at all of his books. He couldn’t blame her. It was a rather impressive collection.

But she stopped for the longest time in front of the painting that hung over the fireplace. She’d asked him how he’d known she wanted to be a painter. Even if she hadn’t wanted canvases and paints on the cruise ship, her dreams were evident.

From the first time he’d met her, she had smelled faintly of paint. Every interaction he had with her, she smelled like paint. When he watched her from the shadows on the cruise ship, she had been painting. Always painting. It fascinated him. After going through everything that happened, she was able to create beautiful pieces born from her pain. Almara had tried to toss all the canvases in the trash after the cruise but Arthur had rescued them. He hadn’t been able to help it.

Even now, he could still catch traces of paint on her skin. The corner of his lips tugged upwards in a barely perceptive smile.

You think she's cute, Caleb accused, but there wasn't any venom in his voice. In fact, he sounded downright gleeful.

Not at all. You're mistaken, Arthur grumbled, but he still hadn't taken his off of Almara.

Right. No need to be honest with me. It's not like I can't read your thoughts, Caleb said and Arthur growled at him.

Stay out of my head!

It honestly didn't matter either way. All Arthur wanted was a baby. Well, all his grandmother wanted was a baby. And he was willing to do whatever it took to fulfill his grandmother's wishes before she left this world.

It was well past time to be a father. At thirty-two years old, he was far behind his peers. But his work had consumed him and before he knew it, Arthur had let ten years pass him by.

When his grandmother became sick, he panicked. He pressured Sofia into marrying him, knowing that she would most likely refuse. But he had hoped she'd be sympathetic to his reasoning. Obviously she wasn't.

Then he met Almara. She had been so sweet, so caring, even to a complete stranger. When she crawled into bed with him, he'd thought she was trying to seduce him, but he could smell the wine on her breath.

Arthur intended to just sleep that night and he'd deal with it in the morning, but then Caleb had caught her scent and had overrode all of his rational thought. He'd had just one singular urge: to claim her.

And he had. One night stands weren't foreign to him, but something had made him follow her in the morning and after listening to the fight she'd had with her fiance, he knew that her dreams aligned with his.

He'd had the idea for a surrogate almost immediately, but he had know idea how he was going to get her to agree. She didn't seem like the type that would be swayed by money. Then the Moon Goddess had given him a hail mary. Her low-life of a fiance had racked up a considerable debt and he knew that he had her. She'd never be able to pay him back on her own. Not on that pitiful waitress salary.

Speaking of which... "I want you to quit your job at the restaurant. No wife of mine will be working at such a lowly place."

Almara looked at him, those honey brown eyes widening with shock. Arthur would definitely need to teach her how to take everything in stride. Especially if she was going to live in his world where emotions were weaknesses.

"What?" Her bottom lip quivered and it took every bit of strength that he had not to pull her in his arms and claim those lips.

"You heard me. Don't worry though. I already have something more up your alley lined up for you. How would you feel about working in a gallery?"

“An art gallery?” She asked and for the first time since they met, he heard excitement in her voice.

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