

## 22 —the woman I will share my bed with. 1

Arwen felt so wrong to demand a marriage certificate from a stranger, but if not him, she would have looked for someone else. Either way, she would have ended up embarrassed. 1

Aiden visibly hid his smile, prompting Arwen confirm her words. "I am not joking. I just answered to you honestly. I want a marriage certificate today. If you are willing to get one with me -" 1

"Are you sure?" he suddenly interrupted her midway, his gaze turning sharper with scrutiny. 2

Arwen felt warning bells ringing in her ears. Her consciousness urged her to reconsider, but remembering the reasons behind her bold decision, she resolutely chose to ignore them.

"If I haven't been sure, I wouldn't have asked you," she replied without any hesitation, adding, "But it's fine if you don't agree. I need to get the certificates today, so I will look around. I am sure I will find someone who will agree."

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Arwen understood that her request was too sudden. But given the situation, she had no choice but to try and see if someone could help. At worst, she would have to hire someone, offering some benefits. Although she had never tried, she had heard that some people were willing to enter into contract marriages.

With that thought, Arwen was ready to turn and walk away when suddenly she was pulled back by her arm. Before she could react to that pull, her body was already pressed against his. She heard a hard thump beneath her ear and immediately jerked herself away, looking at him, confused by his sudden action.

"Once offered to me, others lose their chance. It becomes mine." Aiden's expressions were dark as he declared it outright. As he stared down into Arwen's marble gray eyes, he tried to make sure she understood what she was getting herself into.

He didn't want to scare her away, but at the same time, he couldn't stop himself from preventing her from retreating.

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Arwen didn't understand his words at first. It was a bit complicated for her to make sense of. Her brows furrowed, and just as she was about to ask him to explain what he meant, she heard the call of the person who had been managing the queue of the couples and their appointments.

"Ms. Quinn, since your fiancé has arrived, you can go in next."

Arwen briefly glanced at him before returning her gaze to the man who was holding her. She wanted to ask him what he meant by his previous statement, but with the time running out, she had no choice but to forget about it for now.

"So, are you willing? If yes, then we will get the certificate now," she said, maintaining her calm as best as she could.

Aiden wanted to capture this moment -the moment where she was oblivious to his determination. Although Arwen had tried her best to hide her desperation, he could tell she was making a haste, thinking that if they didn't make it in time, she might miss her chance. 1

But little did she know, as long as she wanted it, he would make the magistrate wait for them.

Smirking, Aiden nodded, "I agree, but on one

"What is it?"

"I won't do contract marriage. The woman I will marry will be the woman I share my bed with," he said, and for a moment Arwen was taken aback. She had made this decision thinking there would be no emotional strings attached. But if she agrees to him, that one advantage would be lost, potentially putting her at a disadvantage.

Aiden could read her thoughts as easily as he could read any of his favorite books —with both ease and passion. He knew he had scared her and there was a chance she might slip away, but he couldn't give up the opportunity he had today.

One wrong move might make her push him away, but one courageous move could even give him the chance with her that he had always desired.

Arwen knew her reasons for entering into this arrangement, but she hadn't yet heard him specify his. She gave him one long look —from head to toe. While his eyes had already captivated her and smile had dazzled her, beyond those two things, he also had a decent figure and good looks.



Sharing a bed with him wouldn't make her lose anything. Nodding, she agreed, "Fine, I have no problem with it. Let go then." Stepping a step back, she grabbed his hands and pulled him along with her towards the magistrate's office.

They arrived just in time as the couple who had entered before them were exiting. They were all smiles. When they saw Aiden and Arwen, the woman quickly praised, "You two are up next? All the best. You both look good together and will definitely get the best picture for your certificate."

The couple cheered and Arwen couldn't help but glance at Aiden. But just as she would have taken the time to admire him, he turned his eyes to look at her. Feeling awkward, she quickly turned away, ignoring the gaze that remained fixed at her.

The assistant from the magistrate office came with the necessary papers in hand and looked at Arwen first before glancing at the man beside her. He looked influential and handsome — someone perfect for the beauty that was Arwen. But as for his attitude —

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"So, your fiancée finally arrived," he said, intentionally adding a hint of taunt. Arwen didn't catch it at first and nodded with a smile. But she realized it soon when she saw him turn to Aiden and say, "As a man, you shouldn't make your woman wait at the marriage registrar's office like this. She doesn't deserve this." 2

Arwen felt bad for not correcting him immediately. She quickly opened her mouth to explain, but before she could, she heard the man on her side say, "I know I was wrong. This won't happen again." 6

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**Scarlet\_Shine**

Creator's Thought