

Royal Contract 91

Chapter 91 - Arranged Marriage

When she stopped, he thought that the whole thing was over. She had enough of the madness he brought into her life. Then, he was surprised by what she did next.

"What do you think?" She pulled up her gown just below her knees and exposed her feet and a portion of her lower legs. "If you plan to drag me to this rough ground, at least let me remove my shoes. It is hard to catch up with you. My feet are already killing me."

She was finding it hard to walk on the grassy and pebbled path with the heels of her shoes, constantly getting caught in the dirt and stone. She did not want to end up with a broken ankle even before the night was over.

Then, she started untying the lace of her shoes. She suddenly regretted wearing it because of the inconvenience of removing it. If she had worn the stilettos she originally planned to wear, then all she had to do was step out of it.

"Let me." He slowly knelt in front of her and removed her hands from the lace. "This is my doing, so it should be me undoing this." He laughed at the irony of his statement.

He could not help it. He wanted to ease the tension in their situation. He was charming, but it did not mean that he was that good at making people laugh.

"Funny. Are you sure you are a prince and not the jester?" She did not find anything laughable at what he said and with their situation.

She did not resist his help, finding it hard to bend with her tight dress. She straightened in her seat, allowing him to finish what she started. However, she found his touch on her skin slightly uncomfortable, especially when he was kneeling just in front of her.

"Hey, did you not hear? I am also entitled to be King." When she did not smile at his statement, he realized that it was not funny at all, not even to his ears. "Anyway, I'm sorry if I placed you in a very compromising position. I honestly did not think that this would end up this bad." He decided to change the topic.

"Nothing we could do about it now, right? So, I think all we can do is work hard on making this comfortable for the two of us for the duration of our arrangement and not let anyone catch us with our lies." She stated resignedly.

She could sense the sincerity in his voice when he said that. It would seem that he, too, regretted their decision to enter into this arrangement. But just like her, he was also stuck.

"Done." He finally declared when he had entirely untied the laces on her legs and removed the shoes on both feet.

Honestly, when he saw those shoes, something else came to his mind. He had imagined removing them from Dani's beautiful slender legs just like this, but not on a bench in the palace grounds. He immediately shook off the thought, knowing that it was not helping his situation.

"Thanks." She had nothing else to say after feeling relieved that the torture was over. That was from the shoes and his touch.

She wiggled her toes, trying to relieve her feet from the confinement of her shoes earlier. But, Alex suddenly placed his fingers on her toes.

"Would you like me to massage it?" He was unsure where the offer came from since he never did that with any other woman before. It just came out of the blue as if that was the most natural thing he should do upon seeing her discomfort.

"No." She blurted out, abruptly pulling her feet away from him. Then, she quickly stood up from her seat. "Shall we continue on our way?" She did not want him touching her, even at the tip of her toes.

She was not afraid of his touch. It was quite the opposite. She was terrified of how her body was reacting with it. It would seem that her body was craving more of it. Every time that he was near.

Alex also stood up, aware of how she reacted to his small action. He was uncertain if he should be happy or wary that she was not thrilled with his touch. Then again, he was also conscious of the way his body was reacting to her nearness.

"This way." He directed them on another path away from the palace towards a secluded area. A few more meters of walking revealed a wall with a rose garden and a small house behind it.

It was not exactly tiny, but compared to the palace, it was relatively small.

"Whose house is this?" She asked when they stood at the front door.

She wondered who would live here when a large palace was just on the other side of this ground. She doubted that this house was for the helpers. It was too beautiful and elegant.

"It was my grandmother's private area. She left this to me before she died. She loved this place." He told her, gazing around the place.

"It is beautiful." It reminded her of the children's book, *The Secret Garden*. It was a book she once read when she was young.

"My grandmama told me that it could be my sanctuary, just like it had been to hers. Everybody is off-limits in this area, except for a few people I trust to maintain the place." He stated, opening the door with a key that he took from his pocket. "So, we can stay here for the week without people watching our every move."

It was one of the few things that her grandmother owned. The late queen was just like the other princesses in the old times. They never had much right compared to a prince. When they reached a certain age, they were married off to a prince to bear them their sons.

That was the life of his grandmother. She married his grandfather because it was her obligation and not because of love. Arranged marriage was not exactly new to him. It was a practice in the previous generations, and it would seem to continue until the next.