

Marrying My Ex's Powerful Billionaire Uncle novel Chapter 5 - Anissa Roy and Harding Snow -

The black Rolls-Royce Phantom glided away from Trinity Church, leaving the screaming paparazzi eating dust.

Inside the cabin, the soundproof partition hummed as it rolled up, completely cutting off the driver. The back seat became an absolute vacuum of privacy.

Anissa let out a long, shaky breath. The adrenaline crashed. She reached up and pulled the heavy diamond tiara from her hair, dropping it onto the leather seat.

Harding loosened his silk tie. He poured two glasses of amber bourbon from the crystal decanter and handed one to her.

Anissa took the glass. The freezing condensation against her skin snapped her back to reality. "Thank you," she whispered.

Harding took a slow sip. His eyes dropped to the massive blue diamond on her left hand. "That ring stays on your finger for the next three years. Do not take it off."

Anissa rubbed her thumb over the cold stone. She nodded. "What are the exact terms of our contract?"

"Simple," Harding said, his voice flat and businesslike. "In public, we are a devoted couple. In private, we do not interfere with each other. You will have unlimited access to my Black Card, and I will guarantee your absolute safety."

The car descended into the underground garage of a hyper-luxury building on Billionaire's Row.

They stepped into a private, biometric elevator. It shot straight up to the Penthouse.

The elevator doors slid open. Eleanor Prentiss, the head butler, stood in the grand foyer with a line of uniformed staff.

"Welcome home, Madam," Eleanor bowed deeply. "Your custom walk-in closet and the master bedroom have been prepared."

Anissa caught the words. She turned her head and looked at Harding, her brow furrowed. "Master bedroom?"

Harding shrugged off his suit jacket and handed it to a maid. "The media pays well for leaks. To ensure the staff doesn't sell stories about a fake marriage, we share the primary suite."

Anissa's heart skipped a beat. Her stomach tightened, but she forced her face to remain blank. "Understood."

She followed Eleanor into the bedroom. She stopped dead in her tracks. A massive wall of floor-to-ceiling glass offered a breathtaking, unobstructed view of Central Park.

A sudden, piercing chill crawled up her spine, raising the fine hairs on her arms. Her eyes darted from a row of perfectly sized stilettos to a rack of coats tailored exactly to her shoulder width. How could he possibly know her precise measurements? Even the shoes were a specific half-size she only ever ordered privately from European boutiques. This wasn't a rush job. Harding had been preparing this space for her long before Connor ran away today. The realization hit her like a physical weight. This level of surveillance, this meticulous, silent observation... it was terrifying. She clenched her fists, her nails digging into her palms. The man she had just married was not just a shield; he was an apex predator who had been watching her from the shadows. She had walked willingly into the den of a man far more dangerous than she had ever anticipated.

She took a hot shower. She changed into a conservative, high-necked silk pajama set. When she walked out of the bathroom, Harding was sitting on the sofa, scrolling through a tablet.

He wore a dark gray bathrobe. The V-neck hung open, exposing the hard, muscular lines of his chest. The sterile, untouchable aura he had in the church was gone.

The air in the room was thick with the scent of his body wash—a sharp, intoxicating mix of cedarwood and dark tobacco.

Anissa stood frozen on the rug. She stared at the massive bed, unsure of where to go.

Harding didn't look up from his screen. He tapped the right side of the mattress. "That side is yours. I have mild insomnia. I won't touch you."

Anissa walked over stiffly. She pulled back the heavy duvet and lay down. Her muscles were coiled tight as springs.

Harding reached over and killed the main lights. Only a dim, amber reading lamp remained. He lay down on the far left side.

A massive gap of empty space separated them. But the room was so quiet she could hear the slow, rhythmic sound of his breathing.

She thought the anxiety would keep her awake. But the heavy scent of cedarwood wrapped around her like a heavy blanket. It grounded her.

She closed her eyes. The freezing memories of her past life melted away. Within ten minutes, her breathing deepened into sleep.

In the dark, Harding opened his eyes. He turned his head and stared at her sleeping face.

He lifted his hand. He traced the curve of her cheek in the empty air, inches from her skin.

"Welcome home, Anissa," he whispered to the shadows.

