

Nine Rejected Marriages, I Wed My Ex's Rival

Chapter 2:

The soft chuckle vibrated through the phone, a sound so full of cynical amusement it made Amelia's cheeks burn.

"Which offer was that?" Garrett Thornton's voice was a slow, deliberate drawl. "I have a terrible memory for things I've been turned down for."

Amelia bit her lower lip, the small pain grounding her. She forced her voice to remain steady. "You said if I ever needed a husband, I could call you."

She took another breath, pushing the rest of the words out. "You said you needed a wife to deal with your family."

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The line went quiet again. This time, the silence stretched longer, so long that Amelia thought he was about to hang up. She could hear the faint rustle of fabric, as if he were shrugging on a jacket.

Then his voice returned, stripped of all its earlier playfulness. It was sharp, direct, and decisive.

“Where are you?”

Amelia’s heart skipped a beat. She answered automatically, her voice barely a whisper. “The City Marriage Bureau.”

“Good,” Garrett said. “Stay right there. Give me ten minutes.”

She was stunned into silence. “Ten minutes?”

“Thornton Tower is three blocks from there,” he stated, his tone leaving no room for argument. “I’m coming over. We’ll register.”

The line went dead.

Amelia stood frozen on the sidewalk, the phone still pressed to her ear. Her mind was a complete blank. It had been an act of pure, desperate impulse, a last-ditch effort to prove to herself that she had some control over her own life. She never thought he would actually agree.

Panic began to set in, a cold wave washing over her. Her first instinct was to run, to hail a cab and disappear back into the quiet misery of her life.

But then she pictured Kayson's face, his brow furrowed with performative concern for Kamila. The thought of returning to that life, of waiting for the tenth broken promise, was more terrifying than this insane gamble.

She took a deep, shuddering breath and forced herself to stand straight, like a soldier awaiting her fate.

Meanwhile, on the top floor of the Edwards Corporation building, Kayson was pacing his office, a knot of irritation tightening in his gut.

He had sent Amelia a text.

"Babe, sorry. Kamila's situation was an emergency. I'll make it up to you later."

But the message was met with a stark red exclamation point. Delivery failed.

He frowned, assuming it was a network issue. He tried again. Same result.

Pressing his fingers to his temples, a familiar gesture of frustration, he decided to call.

A cold, automated voice met his ear: “The user you are calling is currently unavailable.”

A surge of annoyance, sharper and more potent than usual, coursed through him. Amelia never did this. She was always there, always waiting, always forgiving.

He concluded she was throwing a tantrum, a bigger one than usual, but a tantrum nonetheless. He’d let her cool off. She’d come around. She always did.

Nine minutes later, a black Maybach pulled up to the curb in front of Amelia, its tires letting out a soft, arrogant hiss.

The back door opened, and a long leg, encased in impeccably tailored trousers, emerged.

Garrett Thornton unfolded himself from the car. He was taller than she remembered from the gala, with dark hair and eyes the color of a stormy sea. He radiated an aura of raw, untamed power.

He didn’t look at her at first. His gaze went to the sign above the door: City Marriage Bureau. A slow, predatory smile touched his lips. Only then did his eyes land on her.

His gaze was intensely invasive, sweeping over her from head to toe as if he were assessing a potential acquisition.

Amelia instinctively took a half-step back, feeling exposed and judged.

The corner of Garrett's mouth quirked up. He extended a hand toward her, his voice a low, possessive rumble.

"Did you bring your ID and documents, future Mrs. Thornton?"

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