

Nine Rejected Marriages, I Wed My Ex's Rival

Chapter 3:

Amelia stared at Garrett's outstretched hand. It was large, with long, strong fingers. A hand that looked like it could build things or break them with equal ease. It represented a future she couldn't possibly imagine.

An image of Kayson, his hand gently resting on Kamila's bandaged ankle, flashed in her mind.

Her spine stiffened. The hesitation vanished, replaced by a cold, hard resolve.

She placed her trembling hand into his. His palm was warm and dry, his grip firm as it enveloped her cold fingers. It wasn't a comforting hold; it was a claim.

A triumphant smirk played on Garrett's lips. He tightened his grip, giving her no chance to pull away, and led her back toward the entrance of the Marriage Bureau.

Ms. Sullivan was just packing up her desk when she saw Amelia return, this time with a tall, devastatingly handsome man in tow. The clerk's jaw dropped.

Garrett flashed Ms. Sullivan a smile so charming it could have melted glaciers. “Ma’am, we’re in a bit of a hurry.”

Under the force of Garrett’s sheer presence, the entire process became a blur. Paperwork was filled out with swift efficiency.

When it was time for the photo, Amelia’s face was a stiff, unnatural mask. Garrett leaned in close, his breath warm against her ear.

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“Smile, Amelia,” he murmured, his voice a low vibration that seemed to travel straight through her. “From now on, you’re the winner.”

Her breath hitched. She looked up at him, into those deep blue eyes, and for the first time, she saw something other than mockery. It was a flicker of... something else.

A small, genuine curve touched her lips as the camera flashed, capturing a wedding photo.

When the stamped marriage certificate was placed in her hand, it still felt unreal.

Amelia Frye was now Amelia Thornton.

The moment they stepped back outside, Garrett released her hand.

He reached into his suit jacket and pulled out a set of keys and a sleek, black card, pressing them into her palm.

Amelia looked down. A beautifully designed apartment key and an American Express Centurion Card.

“What is this?” she asked, her voice hoarse.

“The key to a penthouse on the Upper East Side. Your new home,” Garrett said, his tone casual, as if he were handing her a brochure. “The card has no password and no limit. Use it.”

He paused, his eyes glinting. “Consider it pocket money for being Mrs. Thornton.”

The weight of the key and card felt scorching in her hand. “This wasn’t part of our agreement.”

“It is now.” Garrett’s voice was flat, leaving no room for negotiation. “My wife doesn’t live frugally. Especially not in front of Kayson Edwards.”

He said Kayson’s name, and everything clicked into place. This wasn’t just a marriage of convenience. It was an act of war. And she was his newest, most strategic weapon.

He opened the Maybach’s door for her. “Get in. I’ll take you to get your things.”

Amelia slid into the plush leather seat, the scent of mint and expensive leather filling her senses. It was the smell of a world she didn’t belong to.

She recited the address of the imposing Carlisle family estate.

The car pulled smoothly away from the curb. After a moment of silence, Garrett spoke, his eyes on her in the rearview mirror.

“You are heading to the Carlisle estate?”

Amelia froze. The address she’d given was the grand home shared by her biological parents. Yet, ever since her mother, Kristen Carlisle, had acknowledged her and brought her back, Kristen had coldly claimed there were “no spare rooms” in the massive house,

relegating Amelia to a cramped maid's room. In that sprawling mansion, she was treated as nothing more than an unwanted burden.

Her reply was cold and sharp. "My name is Frye."

Garrett watched her in the mirror, catching the flicker of resentment in her eyes. A soft, knowing hum escaped his lips, a sound that was neither a laugh nor a sigh.

He didn't press further. Instead, he took out his phone, opened a social media app, and snapped a picture of the marriage certificate in his hand.

He framed it carefully, showing only the official seal, the date, and the word "Married," but hiding their names.

He typed a single word as the caption.

"Married."

And then he hit post.

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