

Nine Rejected Marriages, I Wed My Ex's Rival

Chapter 4:

The moment Garrett hit post, his phone was cast aside onto the seat beside him. He didn't spare it another glance.

Amelia's phone, however, began to vibrate uncontrollably. A cascade of notifications flooded her screen. Her best friend, Tatum Shaw, had sent a rapid-fire series of question marks.

She glanced over and saw Garrett's post. In seconds, it was swarmed with hundreds of likes and comments. The news was spreading like wildfire through New York's elite circles.

Her fingers trembled as she switched her phone to silent, shoving it deep into her bag. She couldn't deal with that right now.

The car glided to a stop in front of the familiar, suffocatingly grand facade of the Carlisle family mansion. Garrett didn't move to get out.

“I’ll wait for you down here,” he said. “Or, if you prefer, I can have my assistant come by tomorrow to help you move.”

His unexpected consideration caught her off guard. She nodded, her throat tight. “I’ll be quick.”

As Amelia stepped out of the car and walked up the sweeping driveway to the main entrance, it felt like crossing a threshold back into a life she had just escaped.

At that same moment, Kayson’s driver, Saul, was still lingering over a second cup of coffee at a cafe downtown, having completely forgotten his duty to pick up his boss.

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Kayson, growing impatient in his office, tried Saul’s number again. It went straight to voicemail.

He ripped his tie loose with a frustrated tug and decided to get a car himself.

While waiting for the elevator, his assistant, Leo Foster, rushed toward him, his face pale. “Mr. Edwards, Garrett Thornton just announced on social media that he’s married!”

Kayson's hand paused on the elevator button. He frowned. "Him? To who?"

"He didn't say," Leo replied, breathless. "He just posted a picture of a marriage certificate, no names visible."

A strange, unsettling feeling coiled in Kayson's stomach. He and Garrett had been rivals for years, in business and in life. Any major move from Garrett was a threat.

He snorted, trying to brush off the unease. "Probably some model desperate to marry into money." He needed to believe it was insignificant.

But the feeling wouldn't go away. He pulled out his phone again and dialed Amelia's number.

The same cold, automated voice greeted him: "The user you are calling is currently unavailable."

For the first time all day, a genuine sliver of fear pierced through his annoyance. He was losing control of the situation, and he didn't like it.

When Amelia entered the sprawling main house, she found her mother, Kristen Carlisle, and her stepsister, Kamila, sitting in the living room as if they were holding court.

Kamila's ankle was propped up on a pillow, neatly wrapped in a bandage. She leaned against Kristen, offering Amelia a timid, wounded look.

Kristen's eyes narrowed the moment she saw her daughter. Her voice was sharp, laced with contempt. "So you decided to come back? Kayson already called me to apologize for your little tantrum. Do you have any idea how much you embarrassed him today?"

Amelia looked at the two of them, a perfect portrait of maternal betrayal. A chilling coldness spread through her veins. This was her family.

She ignored her mother's accusation and walked past the grand staircase, heading straight for the narrow hallway near the kitchen that led to the staff quarters.

Her foster mother, Faye Miller, emerged from the kitchen, her face etched with worry. "Amelia, you and Mr. Kayson..."

Amelia gave Faye a small, reassuring smile that didn't reach her eyes. "I'm fine, Faye."

She stepped into the tiny, windowless maid's room that Kristen had forced her to live in. The stark contrast between this cramped space and the rest of the opulent house was a constant reminder of her place. She pulled out the suitcase she always kept half-packed, a subconscious symbol of her desire to escape, and began filling it with the few personal items she owned.

Down in the car, Garrett's phone rang. He answered it, his posture relaxing slightly. It was his older brother, Clarence Thornton.

Clarence's voice was as cool and measured as ever. "You got married." It wasn't a question.

"I did, brother," Garrett replied, a lazy drawl returning to his voice.

"This is foolish," Clarence said flatly. "Bring her to dinner next week."

Garrett's eyes drifted up to the apartment window, a slow smile spreading across his face. "No problem."

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