



The Sheikh's Wedding Contract (Society Weddings)

By Andie Brock

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The Sensuous Sheikh: Married for Duty

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Now, with the wedding contract signed and sealed, Zayed learns the shocking truth—Nadia is his enemy's daughter! But in the dark desert nights Zayed's desire for his princess intensifies and anger gives way to a sensual hunger that begs to be satisfied...

The world's sexiest billionaires finally say "I do!"

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Andie Brock started inventing imaginary friends around the age of four and is still doing that today; only now the sparkly fairies have made way for spirited heroines and sexy heroes. Thankfully she now has some real friends, as well as a husband and three children, plus a grumpy but lovable cat. Andie lives in Bristol and when not actually writing, could well be plotting her next passionate romance story.

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Nadia just hoped she wasn't too late. As she neared the palace gates she could see groups of young women were already leaving, their diaphanous costumes fluttering as they hurried away, like colourful butterflies.

Inside the domed entrance to the palace she found herself being jostled by the departing throng of the harem, for that was what they were. The most beautiful women in the kingdom, bedecked and bejewelled, to be presented before the newly crowned Sheikh Zayed Al Afzal for his amusement and pleasure. Except that it seemed none of them had been deemed suitable. Had the sheikh dismissed them all, finding none of them good enough for his high and mighty standards? Certainly by the forbidding look on the guards' faces, the way they were herding the woman from the palace, it would appear that something had gone very wrong.

Well, she would just have to try harder. Ducking down, Nadia snatched up a fistful of the gauzy material of her skirt and, making herself as small as possible, started to dodge between the legs of the departing guests. She made it to the doorway and luck was with her as the eyes of the towering bodyguard were momentarily distracted by the exposed curves of a departing guest.

This was her chance. She started to run madly, breathlessly, along the wide hallway, her sandals squeaking on the marble floor, the bracelets on her arms and ankles and the heavily jewelled belt around her hips all jangling in a cacophony of giveaway noise.

There was an open door in front of her and blindly she ran towards it, with no plan in her head other than that she must not be stopped. She had to get in to see Sheikh Zayed Al Afzal.

Skidding to a halt, she found herself in the middle of an enormous glittering stateroom. And there, seated on a gilded throne on a raised dais at the far end of the room, was Sheikh Zayed.

They stared at one another. With her breath heaving, Nadia felt the hated bra top cutting into her and accentuating the swell of her breasts, her stomach muscles contracting beneath the jewelled belly button, her whole body exposed in a hideous betrayal of everything she believed in.

And she had certainly got his attention. She could feel the sheikh's eyes raking over her semi-naked body, her skin prickling with heat and self-consciousness in the wake of his sweeping gaze.

She knew this was her moment, her one chance, and she had to make it pay. But still she faltered. For this Sheikh Zayed was not what she had been expecting at all. He was tall and strikingly handsome, his long legs stretched out in front of him, crossed at the ankles. He wore a dark Western suit with elegant ease, and as Nadia raised her eyes she took in the broad expanse of his chest, the white shirt, the tie roughly pulled to one side. His hands, she noticed, were gripping the lions' heads on the arms of the throne, at odds with his relaxed posture.

Make eye contact, that was what she had to do now. Taking in a short, brave breath, she tipped back her head and braced herself to meet his gaze full on. She could do this. But what she saw was so much worse than she'd thought. For what halted the breath in her throat, sent her determination skittering sideways, was not the cruel eyes of the heartless killer she was expecting but something far more dangerous. They were beautiful eyes, a deep, dark chocolate brown, steady, assured and all seeing. The sort of eyes that could melt you. The sort of eyes that could snare you.

Suddenly she registered the laboured breath of a bodyguard behind her, but it was too late, his vice-like grip digging into the flesh of her forearm before she had any chance to dodge out of his way.

'My apologies, sire, this one slipped past us.'

This one? How dare he speak about her like that? Furiously trying to shake off his grasp, Nadia felt it tighten still farther. 'I'll thank you to take your brutish hands off me!'

The guard hesitated for a second, Nadia still squirming in his grasp.

'You heard what the lady said.' Rising to his feet, Zayed positioned himself on the edge of the dais. 'Let her go.' The words echoed around the vast chamber of the room.

'Sire.' The hand was released and the guard took a small step back and bowed his head.

'And for future reference, I expect my orders to be carried out in a civilised manner. Let it be known that I will not tolerate brutality in any form.'

'Your Royal Highness.'

Nadia turned to give the admonished guard a haughty stare, pointedly rubbing at the red marks he had made on her arm. The wretched bangles jangled.

'So, young lady.' As he swiftly turned his attention to her Nadia felt the spotlight of Zayed's glare. 'What is your name?'

'Nadia.' She delivered it clearly enough but said out loud it made her feel all the more exposed.

'Well, Nadia, I'm afraid I have to inform you that you have had a wasted journey.' He stood tall and proud, with his legs apart and his arms crossed over his chest, very much the master of control. 'You see, I am not in the habit of choosing my companions in the way that has been arranged tonight. I must apologise for inconveniencing you.'

Somehow it sounded more like a reprimand than an apology.

'But, Your Royal Highness...' With her heart thudding in her chest she raised her eyes to meet his, opening them as wide as she could before lowering them again and batting her dark lashes in what she hoped was a seductive gesture. 'Since I am here, may I not be allowed to perform for you?' Without waiting for an answer she slowly, hesitantly, began to make her hips sway, undulating them in the way she had seen the dancers perform in her own palace, for the entertainment of her father and brother.

She had studied them as closely as she could from her hiding place in the shadowed recesses of the palace

ballroom, committing the movements to memory before hurrying back to her bedroom to practise what she had seen. Trying not to look her reflection in the eye, she had disrobed to her underclothes and gyrated earnestly before the mirror. Now she just needed to try to remember what she had learned.

She raised her arms above her head, twisting her hands around each other in the seductive, trance-like way she had seen performed, her hips moving more provocatively now as the moves came back to her, the jewelled beads jingle-jangling as she shimmied her behind first one way, then the other, her feet lightly moving beneath her.

'Young lady.' Zayed had descended the few steps from the dais and was striding across the brightly coloured mosaic floor towards her. Nadia's dancing became more and more daring as she took her humiliation and turned it into raw sensuality, undulating her stomach and gyrating her hips with an excruciating lack of abandon.

He was right in front of her now. So tall, so close, his dark shape towering over her as he looked down at her overheated, increasingly desperate dancing.

Still Nadia didn't stop, her eyes now level with his broad chest, her arms spiralling wildly in front of his face.

'I obviously haven't made myself clear.' Suddenly his strong hands had caught hers in midair and he lowered them slowly down to her sides, his eyes not leaving her flushed face. All movement ceased, apart from the shudder of shame that ran through Nadia. Raising his hands to her shoulders, he turned her, gently but firmly, in the opposite direction. 'The door is that way.'

Zayed watched as the beguiling young temptress scurried down the corridor, flanked by the guard, who was now thankfully keeping his hands to himself. She seemed keen to get away, her hurried strides rippling the long black curls down her back and making that particularly pert *derrière* sway alluringly beneath the tantalisingly flimsy costume. But the rest of her posture was stiff and aloof. Which seemed odd, when you considered her wanton performance just a few minutes before. The display she had just treated him to.

And a very nice display it had been, too, he had to say. There was no doubt that this Nadia was a beauty, the way she exhibited her pale-skinned flesh turning him on far more than he would admit to himself. If circumstances were different, if he were to come across her in a bar, for example, it would give him the greatest of pleasure to get to know her, in every sense of the word. But not here, not like that. He might have the reputation for being a womaniser, but seducing a beautiful woman was one thing. Having the poor creatures herded before him like a cattle market, quite another. Not that Nadia looked as if she would be easily herded anywhere. How she had ended up here was a mystery.

Scowling, Zayed turned away, and, shrugging off his jacket, he threw it over his shoulder. Standing in the middle of the opulent stateroom, he looked around him. What the hell had happened to his life? A couple of months ago he had been expanding his business empire, travelling the world, loving the thrill of facilitating multibillion-dollar company takeovers and the wealth and trappings that went with being hugely successful at his job.

But all that had changed, dramatically so, when his mother had made the shock announcement that he was to return home, to the kingdom of Gazbiyaa. That *he*, Zayed, was to be crowned the next sheikh of Gazbiyaa, and not his elder brother, Azeed. The decision had been equally momentous for both brothers: Zayed thrown into the totally unfamiliar role of sheikh, something that he had never been prepared for, never expected and certainly never wanted, and Azeed, who had been groomed for this role all his life, having the title brutally

snatched away from him.

Now the newly crowned Sheikh Zayed Al Afzal, supreme ruler of the fabulously wealthy desert kingdom of Gazbiyaa, gazed bitterly around the empty room. He was going to have to make some serious changes round here, and fast, assert his authority before he was subjected to any more hideous debacles like the one tonight. A harem indeed. What on earth had that been about?

He only wished he could have stopped it before the poor women had arrived. The first he'd known of it was when one of his advisors had ushered him into the stateroom with a sweeping gesture of the arm and announced that the most beautiful women in the kingdom were waiting to be selected for his entertainment. Momentarily stunned, he had only been able to stare in disbelief as the room had filled with these bejewelled creatures, their eyes flashing, their bodies twirling as they paraded before him. By the time he had come to his senses and ordered that they be removed his voice had become raised and his anger all too obvious, making him come across as some sort of brutish tyrant. He was ashamed to remember the frightened look in their eyes as they were rounded up and told to leave. Because his anger wasn't meant for those poor girls, it was aimed at himself. For the position he had been forced to accept and the crazy life he now found himself in.

But that last young woman, Nadia—that certainly hadn't been fear in her eyes. Her parting glance, blazing over her shoulder as she'd left, had been full of mystery and challenge, with a dollop of haughty imperiousness for good measure. Suddenly he found himself trying to remember the colour of those remarkable eyes. Dark blue? Violet?

Pulling himself up short, Zayed took a sharp breath and turned to stride from the room. Why was he wasting his time trying to figure that out? Didn't he have bigger things to worry about?

Nadia felt the cold night air brush over her heated skin and shivered violently. What now? That gorilla of a guard had escorted her to the palace gates without a word, locking them firmly behind her, and now she watched his retreating figure through the bars as he ascended the long flight of steps back up to the entrance, where he would no doubt take up his position to make sure she didn't slip past him again.

Well, she would just have to come up with another plan. One thing was for sure, she wasn't going to give up now. Not now she had been inside the palace and met Sheikh Zayed Al Afzal face-to-face. Although *met* was hardly the right word. The look of disgust on his face as he had turned her from the room after her little performance still produced a cringe that would buckle her body if she let it. Which she wouldn't.

But along with the humiliation, there was no doubt that this formidable sheikh had made another, more unexpected, impression on Nadia. Tall, broad shouldered and commanding—all these things she had taken in in an instant. But there was more: a quiet intelligence, an urbane sophistication that, coupled with his extreme good looks, was a heart-stopping combination. Certainly he was like no man Nadia had ever come across before. And certainly he had made her feel something she had never felt before. Something she had no intention of thinking about now.

Crossing her arms over her chest, Nadia rubbed at the chilly exposed flesh of her shoulders while she studied the vast palace that was now tantalisingly out of her reach. The epitome of extravagant opulence, it glowed against the night sky, each of its numerous arched windows, porticos and colonnades floodlit a fiery amber, the enormous blue dome in the centre of the roof pierced by the illuminated crescent moons. It looked unreal in this light, like a shining UFO that had landed in the desert.

Nadia was no stranger to palace life; in fact it was the only life she had ever known. Born Princess Nadia Amani of Harith, she had spent her entire twenty-eight years a virtual prisoner in the palace of Harith, confined by the archaic rules of protocol and the equally archaic rules of her father and brother. But the palace that she had grown up in, that she knew so well, seemed very humble in comparison to the magnificent edifice before her now. The palace of Gazbiyaa left no one in any doubt of the mighty wealth and power of this kingdom.

But if growing up in a palace had taught Nadia one thing, it was that there was always a way in. She just had to find it. She was about to move away to start her search when movement at one of the windows on the fourth floor caught her eye. Retreating into the shadows, even though there was no way she could be seen down here, she watched as the French windows were pushed open wide and she could just make out the silhouette of Zayed himself, framed against the light. Were these the sheikh's private quarters? Silently, Nadia counted one, two, three, four windows from the central portico. Committing the image to memory, she felt her heart start to thud in her chest again. This was where she had to head to commit the bravest, most dangerous and possibly the stupidest act of her life. But first she had to find her way in.

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