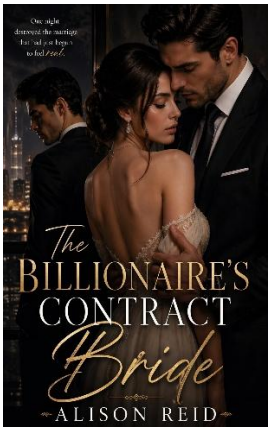
The Billionaire's Contract Bride

by Alison Reid



"This arrangement your father presented—" he continued, "—is not something I intend to treat as temporary."

Teagan didn't move, but her focus sharpened, settling fully on him now.

"I assumed as much," she said. "Men like you don't enter into things lightly."

"No," he said. "I don't."

Silence held. Then—

"If we do this," he said, "it will be a real marriage."

The words landed without emphasis.

Teagan studied him.

"Define that."

Grayson didn't hesitate.

"No separate lives. No public façade with private exceptions. We live together. We function as a married couple in every sense that matters."

Her gaze didn't shift. "In every sense?"

"Yes."

A brief pause.

"You expect fidelity."

"I require it."

"And you offer the same."

"That isn't negotiable."

The certainty sat cleanly between them. Teagan absorbed it, measuring—not the words, but the absence of hesitation behind them. Reliable. Consistent. Not careless. Nothing like—

She stopped the thought before it formed.

"This isn't a romantic proposal," she said.

"No," Grayson replied. "It isn't."

"But it isn't hollow either."

That caught.

Not visibly—but enough.

Her gaze shifted a fraction, then returned to him.

"You're asking for permanence," she said. "Without pretence."

"I'm offering it."

Teagan held his gaze.

"Why?"

The question settled differently—no longer procedural, no longer part of the negotiation.

This.

Grayson was quiet for a moment—not searching for an answer but choosing how much of it to give.

"You know why," he said.

Her expression tightened. "No. I don't."

He studied her. Then—

"I've known you a long time," he said. "Long enough to understand exactly who you are—and what you would do in a situation like this."

"That doesn't answer the question."

"No," he agreed. "It doesn't."

"But it's part of it."

Silence stretched.

Teagan didn't press immediately. Because something had shifted—subtle, but present.

"This isn't about convenience," he continued. "If it were, I wouldn't be here."

"Then what is it about?"

Grayson's gaze held hers.

"Commitment."

The word was simple. But it landed. Teagan felt it—sharp, unwelcome in the way it settled deeper than the rest. Because commitment meant something. Even here. Even like this.

"You're asking me to marry you to secure a business deal," she said.

"I'm asking you to marry me," he replied. "The deal made the conversation possible."

The distinction sat between them. Clean. Dangerous.

Teagan exhaled slowly.

"And if I refuse?"

"The deal collapses."

No softening.

"And you walk away."

"Yes."

Her gaze narrowed slightly. "Just like that?"

“Yes.”

“I don’t force outcomes,” he said. “I decide whether to be part of them.”

There was no pressure in it. That was the pressure.

Teagan watched him, searching for the angle—the leverage, the manipulation. It was there. But not where she expected it.

“You’re very certain of what this would be,” she said.

“I am.”

“And what I would be in it?”

“Yes.”

That made her pause. Because there was no arrogance in it. Only certainty.

“Then tell me,” she said quietly. “What do you think I would be?”

Grayson didn’t hesitate.

“My wife.”

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