

Seducing His Princess (Married by Royal Decree Book 3)

By Olivia Gates



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Marry Mohab? Six years ago, the prince risked his life to save Jala, igniting her desires...only to betray her trust. Now the ruthless seducer is forcing her into a sham marriage. Will it mean a second chance with the man she still craves...or heartbreak when all their dark secrets are revealed?



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Editorial Review

About the Author

USA TODAY Bestselling author Olivia Gates has published over thirty books in contemporary, action/adventure and paranormal romance. And whether in today's world or the others she creates, she writes larger than life heroes and heroines worthy of them, the only ones who'll bring those sheikhs, princes, billionaires or gods to their knees. She loves to hear from readers at oliviagates@gmail.com or on facebook.com/oliviagatesauthor, Twitter @Oliviagates. For her latest news visit oliviagates.com

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"Do you have a death wish?"

Mohab almost laughed out loud. A bitterly amused huff did escape him as he rose to his feet to meet the king of Judar.

What were the odds? That these exact words would be the first thing Kamal Aal Masood said to him when they'd been the last thing the man's kid sister had flung at Mohab?

Guess it *was* true what was said about Kamal and Jala. That the two youngest in the Aal Masood sibling quartet could have been identical twins-if they hadn't been born male and female and twelve years apart. Their resemblance *was* uncanny.

With the historical enmity between their kingdoms, Mohab had only seen Kamal from afar. He'd last beheld him at the time of his *joloos*-as he'd sat on the throne, five and a half years ago. Not that Mohab had manipulated his way into Judar that night to see him. Jala had been his only objective. But *she* hadn't attended her own brother's wedding. Yet another thing he'd failed to predict where she was concerned.

Something else he'd failed to predict was how it would feel seeing this guy up close. Kamal looked so much like Jala, it...ached deep in his chest.

It was as if someone had taken Jala and turned her into an older, intimidating male version of herself. They shared the same wealth of raven hair, the same whiskey-colored eyes and the same bone structure. The only differences were those of gender. Kamal's bronze complexion was shades darker than Jala's golden flawlessness, and at six foot six, the king of Judar would tower over his sister's statuesque five-nine, just as *he* once had. Her big brother was also more than double her size, but they shared the same feline grace and perfect proportions. While all that made her the embodiment of a fairy-tale princess, Kamal was the epitome of a hardened desert raider, exuding limitless power. And exercising it, too.

At forty, Kamal was one of the most influential individuals in the world, and had been so even before his two older brothers had abdicated the throne of Judar to him in a chain reaction of court drama and royal family scandals that still rocked the region and changed its course forever.

Now Kamal's lupine eyes simmered with the trademark menace famous for intimidating anyone he seared with his gaze. "Anything you find particularly amusing, Aal Ghaanem?"

"Your opening remark revived a memory of another...person mentioning death wishes." At Kamal's fierce

glower, Mohab's smile spread. "What? You think I find you, or being escorted here like a prisoner of war, amusing?"

He'd expected worse arriving in Judar, with tensions between Saraya and Judar at a historic high. In fact, just yesterday, his king had all but declared war on Judar during a global broadcast from a UN summit. For Mohab, a prince of Saraya second in rank only to the king and his heirs, to land uninvited on Judarian soil in these fraught times was cause for extreme concern. Especially when said prince also happened to be the former head of Saraya's secret service. He'd expected to be put on the first flight out of Judar. Or even to be taken into custody.

In a preemptive bluff, he'd asserted he had timesensitive business with King Kamal and the king would punish whoever detained him. That sent border security officials at the airport scrambling for orders from the royal palace. Mohab had half expected his gamble to fall through, that Kamal would have him kicked out of the kingdom. But within minutes, a dozen of Judar's finest secret-service men had descended on Mohab, breathing down his neck all the way here.

Apparently they considered him that dangerous. He was flattered, really.

"So you find death wishes a source of amusement? A daredevil by nature, not only by trade, eh? Figures. But aren't you also supposed to be meticulous and prudent? I thought that's why you're still in one piece after all the crazy stunts you've pulled. Isn't it the first thing you're taught when you're hatched in Saraya-that Judar doesn't sustain life for your species?"

His species. The Aal Ghaanems. The Aal Masoods' mortal enemies. *Aih*. There was *that* stumbling block, too.

" So again... do you have a death wish? Don't you know that, now more than ever, a high-profile Sarayan like you at large in Judar could have been targeted for any level of retribution?"

Mohab flattened a palm over his heart. "I'm touched you're concerned about keeping me in one piece. But I assure you, I behaved in an exemplary fashion, antagonizing no one."

"No one but me. Arriving unannounced, terrorizing my subjects, forcing me to drop everything to investigate your incursion. Is this your king's last hope now that he's put his foot in his mouth on global feed? Is he afraid I'll finally knock him off his throne, as I should have long ago? Has he sent his wild card to deal with the crisis.at the root?"

"You think I'm here to...what? Assassinate you?" A huff of incredulity burst from Mohab. "I may be into impossible missions, but I'm not fond of suicidal ones. And I was almost strip-searched for anything that could even make you sneeze."

Kamal's laserlike gaze contemplated Mohab's mocking grin. "From my reports, you can probably take out my royal guard stripped and with both hands tied behind your back."

"Ah, you flatter me, King Kamal. I'd need one hand to go through them all."

The other man's steady gaze told him Kamal believed Mohab was capable of just that-and more-and wasn't the least bit fooled by his joking tone. "I have records of some true mission-impossible scenarios that you've pulled off. If anyone can enter a maximum-security palace with only the clothes on his back and manage to

blow it up and walk away without a scratch, it's you."

Mohab's lips twitched. "If you believe I can get away with your murder, why did you agree to see me?"

"Because I'm intrigued."

"Enough to risk letting such a lethal entity within reach? You must be bored out of your mind being king."

Kamal exhaled. "You don't know the half of it-or how good *you* have it. A prince who is in no danger of finding himself on a throne, a black-ops professional who had the luxury of switching to a freelance career...emphasis on the 'free' part."

"While you 're the king of a minor kingdom you've made into a major one, and a revered leader who has limitless power at his fingertips and the most amazing family a man can dream of having."

"Apart from my incomparable wife and children, I'd switch places with you in a heartbeat."

Mohab laughed out loud. "The last thing I expected coming here is that I'd be standing with you, in the heart of Aal Masood territory, with us envying each other."

"In a better world, I would have offered you anything to have your skills at my disposal and you at my side. Too bad we're on opposite sides with no way to bridge the divide."

Mohab pounced on the opening. "That's why I'm here. To offer not only to bridge that divide, but to obliterate it."

Kamal frowned. "You deal in extractions, containments and cleanups. Why send you to offer political solutions?"

"I'm here on my own initiative because *I'm* the solution."

His declaration was met by an empty stare.

Then Kamal drawled, "Strange. You seem quite solid." Mohab chuckled at Kamal's unexpected dry-as-tinder wit, drawing a rumble from Kamal. "I have zero tolerance for wastes of time. If you prove to be one, you will spend a few nights as an honored guest in my personal dungeon."

"Is this a way to talk to the man who can give you Ja-reer?"

Kamal clamped his arm. "Kaffa monawaraat wa gho-mood... enough evasions and ambiguity. Explain, and fast, or..."

"Put down your threats. I *am* here to mend our kingdoms' relations, and there's nothing I want more than to accomplish that as fast as possible."

"Zain. You have ten minutes."

"Twenty." Before Kamal blasted him, Mohab preempted him. "Don't say fifteen."

Kamal's gaze lengthened. "As an only child you missed out on having an older sibling kick your ass in your formative years. I'm close to rectifying your deficiency."

Mohab grinned. "Think you can take me on, King Kamal?"

"Definitely."

And Mohab believed it. Kamal wasn't a pampered royal depending on others' service and protection. This man was a warrior first and foremost. That he'd chosen to fight in the boardroom and now in the world's political arenas didn't mean he wouldn't be as effective on an actual battlefield.

Before Mohab made a rejoinder, the king turned and crossed his expansive stateroom to the sitting area. Mohab suspected it was to hide a smile so as not to acknowledge this affinity that had sprung up between them.

Kamal resumed speaking as soon as Mohab took a seat across from him. "So why do you think *you* can give me Jareer...when I already have it, Sheikh Prince Solution?"

A laugh burst out of Mohab's depths. That clinched it. He didn't care that other people thought Kamal scary or boorish. To him, the guy was just plain rocking fun.

Kamal's lips twisted in response, but didn't lift.

"There is no law prohibiting an Aal Masood from smiling at an Aal Ghaanem, you know."

Kamal's lips pursed instead. "I may issue one prohibiting just that. The way you're going, you might end up making the dispute between Judar and Saraya even more...insoluble."

Mohab sighed. "So...Jareer, euphemistically referred to as our kingdoms' contested region..."

"And currently known as our kingdoms' future war zone," Kamal finished.

Not if Mohab managed to resolve this.

Jareer used to be under Saraya's rule. But the past few Sarayan monarchs had had no foresight. They'd centralized everything, neglecting then abandoning outlying regions. Jareer, on the border with Judar, had always been considered useless, because it lacked resources, and traitorous, because its citizens were akin to "enemy sympathizers." So when Judar had laid claim to Jareer, with its people's welcome, Mohab's grandfather, King Othman, had considered it good riddance.

But when Mohab's uncle, King Hassan, sat on Saraya's throne, he'd reignited old conflicts with Judar. His favorite crusade had been reclaiming Jareer. Not because he'd suspected its future importance, but to spite the region's inhabitants-and because he wanted more reasons to fight the Aal Masoods.

Then, two months ago, oil had been discovered in Ja-reer. Now the situation had evolved from an idle conflict between two monarchs to a struggle over limitless wealth and power. In a war between the two kingdoms, Saraya would be decimated for generations to come.

Only Mohab had the power to stop this catastrophe. Theoretically. There was still the possibility that Kamal

would hear his proposition and reward his audacity by throwing him in that personal dungeon before wiping Saraya off the face of the earth.

One thing made Mohab hope this wouldn't happen. Kamal himself. He was convinced that, though Kamal had every reason to crush Saraya, he would rather not. He hadn't become one of the greatest kings by being reactionary-or by achieving prosperity for his kingdom at the cost of another kingdom's destruction.

At least, Mohab hoped he was right. He had read Kamal's "twin" all wrong once before after all....

"I will be disappointed if, after all this staring at me, you can't draw me from memory."

Jarred out of his thoughts by Kamal's drawl, Mohab blinked at him. "You just remind me of someone so much, it keeps sidetracking me."

"The same someone who made the death wish comment, eh?"

Not only brilliant, but intuitive, too. Mohab nodded.

"And there I was under the impression I was unique."

Mohab sighed. "You are...both of you. Two of a kind."

Kamal sat forward, ire barely contained. "As charmed as I am by all *this...nostalgia* of yours, I have a date with my wife in an hour, and I'd rather be late for my own funeral than for her. I might make you early for yours if you don't talk. Fast."

"All right. I am the rightful heir to Jareer."

Kamal's eyebrows shot up. He hadn't seen this coming. No one could have.

Mohab explained. "For centuries, Jareer was an independent land, and my mother's tribe, the Aal Kussaimis, ruled it up till a hundred and fifty years ago. But with my great-great-grandmother marrying an Aal Ghaanem, a treaty was struck with Saraya to annex the region, with terms for autonomy while under Sarayan rule and with provisions for secession if those terms weren't observed.

"When Jareer found itself on its own again under my grandfather's rule, it saw no reason to enforce the secession rules, as it was effectively separated from Saraya anyway. Then Judar offered its protection. But in truth, Jareer belongs to neither Judar nor Saraya. It belongs to my maternal tribe. I would have brought you the records of our claim for as far back as a thousand years, but after yesterday's fiasco, I had to rush to intervene before I could get everything ready. However, rest assured, the claim is heavily documented by the tribe's elders and historians."

Kamal blinked as if emerging from a trance. "That's your solution? Inserting the Aal Kussaimis as preceding claimants? Widening the dispute and adding more fuel to the fire?"

"Actually, I am ending the dispute. The Aal Kus-saimis' claim trumps both the Aal Ghaanems' and the Aal Masoods'. Any regional or international court would sanction that claim."

Kamal's eyes burned with contemplation. "If all this is true, shouldn't I be talking to the tribe's elder? Who

can't be you since you're.how old? Thirty?"

"Thirty-eight. But while it's true I'm not the tribe's elder, I am the highest-ranking tribe member by merit. I was elected the tribe's leader years ago. Which effectively makes me the king of Jareer."

Kamal's lashes lowered. A testament to his surprise.

When his gaze rose again, it was tranquil. That didn't fool Mohab for a second. He could almost hear the gears of Kamal's formidable mind screeching.

"Interesting. So you're claiming to be *King* Solution. Even if you prove to be the first, how do you propose to be the second?"

"Proving my claim is a foregone conclusion. The second should be self-evident."

"Not to me."

Jala's exact words that fateful night. Said in the same tone. Kamal's likeness to her had suddenly ceased to be reminiscent and had become only grating.

Mohab gritted his teeth. "My uncle assumed I would never invoke my claim, that I would always let him speak for me concerning Jareer's fate. And he was right-I didn't have time to be more than an honorary leader and had no desire to upset a status quo my people were perfectly content with under Judar's protection. But now things have changed."

Kamal huffed. "Tell me about it. Just two months ago, you were the 'rightful heir' to a stretch of desert with three towns and seven villages whose people lived on date and Arabian coffee production, souvenir manufacturing and desert tourism. Now you're the king of a land sitting on top of one of the biggest oil reservoirs ever discovered."

"I have no personal stake in Jareer's newfound wealth. I'm not interested in being richer, and I never wanted to be king. However, my people are demanding I declare Jareer an independent state and that I become their full-fledged ruler. But business and politics aren't my forte. So while I will do my people's bidding, I think it's in their best interests to leave their new oil-based prosperity to the experts."

"By experts, I assume you mean oil moguls."

"With you in charge of every step they take into Jareer."

Kamal raised one eyebrow. "You want me to run the show?"

"Yes."

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