

Wedded Bliss

by Amika Malone

Alaina paced around in the green room. She couldn't believe she had agreed to do this. Her friends had told her it would be an excellent idea. How can agreeing to marry a total stranger on national television a decent idea, let alone an excellent one? "Oh Lain, it'll be fun!" they said. "If you hate the guy, can't you get it annulled?" they asked (you can, but it's not encouraged.) "God, getting to wear a pretty dress and have a team of experts do your hair and makeup sounds like the best thing ever!" they would lament that it was Alaina getting married and not them.

This was not how Alaina had planned her wedding to be. Not in the slightest.

She sighed. She had only agreed to sign up because they wouldn't keep pressuring her until she did. So, she did. She never planned on getting *picked* for the show. Her chances felt like one in a million.

She plopped on the couch. This was the opposite of how she'd planned her wedding to go down.

She thought of Elliot back home. Elliot her lifelong crush. As long as she can remember liking men, she liked Elliot. Her dream wedding involved him. Not the stranger from God knows where waiting on the opposite end of the hall.

"Five minutes," a stagehand poked her head in and told Alaina.

She nodded and got up and smoothed out her clothes. It was now or never, though she wished it was never.

"Welcome, ladies, gentlemen, and viewers at home to the series premiere episode of *Wedded Bliss*!" the host started. "On our first

show we have Alaina Balder from Albany, New York. Welcome to the show, Alaina."

Alaina took a deep breath and forced a smile at the host. "Thank you."

"Alaina is 24 and has only ever had one boyfriend," the host continued, given the audience background info on Alaina, "And now she is here to skip the courting nonsense and jump right into the fun part of relationships: planning a wedding. So Alaina, what is your ideal wedding?"

"Well John," she started, "I always thought I'd go down to New York City and get married in central park. Be brought to the altar on a carriage with my father at my side, my groom waiting a little impatiently for me."

"Romantic, romantic," the host said with a slight smile, "But you're aware that that is not how it's going to go down today, correct?"

"Yes," she nodded, and then added under her breath, "Unfortunately."

"Now, before you meet your groom, you'll be groomed to perfection by our panel of hair and makeup experts, and then fitted into the perfect gown by our fashion gurus, and given a bouquet by our florist to the stars."

Alaina bit her lip. She knew she was *supposed* to be excited, but she had wanted no part in this. And now, now she'll never be able to even get a date with Elliot. Even if she had gotten this marriage annulled, she would forever be known as "that chick that was on *Wedded Bliss*" and she'd be damaged goods. No one would want to date her, especially not Elliot. Her love life was ruined and she would be answering to her friends when she got back home.

The host cut to commercial and Alaina let out the breath she didn't even realize she was holding. The host turned to her. "Since we're off camera, I can tell you don't want to be here."

Alaina looked up. "You're right, I don't. I signed up on a dare from my friends. I'm not in it for the fantasy wedding, or even the prize money."

"You can always get an annulment."

"I know, but that means this guy, whoever he is, and I lose the prize money. I couldn't care less about it, but I don't wanna screw him over."

"A very commendable thought process," he smiled, "Well, good luck sticking it out, and whatever happens, happens."

She nodded. "You're right."

They cut back to the show. "And we're back! We're here for the first stage of the process in which Alaina's hair and makeup are done by our style experts. To my left, we have Janelle, hair stylist extraordinaire. And to my right, we have Cassidy, expert makeup artist. While they make Alaina over, we'll meet the man she is going to be hopefully spending the rest of her life with," the host went on while the hair and makeup team shuffled Alaina off to a soundproof room to get madeover. The host continued. "Our lucky dude is 25, and also from Albany. He's had a few casual girlfriends, but nothing serious. Say hello to Elliot Towne!"

Elliot walked onto the stage his demeanor much different than Alaina's. "Hello John it's wonderful to be here!"

"Now, while Alaina is in isolation and is unaware of who Elliot is,

Elliot knows he is on the show to marry Alaina. Now, both of you are from Albany."

"That is correct," Elliot mentioned.

"Do you know Alaina?"

"Yes, I do. We've been friends forever it feels like, and I've had a crush on her for about as long. I couldn't hide the smile on my face when I saw her."

"Well this is a development I didn't see coming," the host took a step back, "So, you're really excited to do this, I assume."

"Yes," he smiled. "And I hope she's happy when she sees me."

"So are we," the host smiled as he cut to commercial. Elliot left the stage for the green room and Alaina was shuffled back onto the stage after getting her hair and makeup done. She did have to admit, she did feel like a princess. And there was a very audible gasp when the rack of dresses that she was to try on was pushed onto the stage by the fashion expert. They were better than she had ever dreamed of, top of the line designers and everything. Yet, despite that, she was still uneasy about the whole thing.

"Welcome back Alaina," the host smiled, "Are you ready for the next stage of your transformation?"

"Um," Alaina nodded, "Yeah, yeah."

"Excellent! Now for this part, you'll try on dresses chosen by Geoff here, and then the audience will vote on which one they feel is the most flattering." And with that, Alaina was once again shuffled off screen. She was put in the first dress. She twirled in the mirror. She did feel like a princess, even more so than when she just had her

hair and makeup done. She walked out onto the stage. A few cheers, but it wasn't the winner, so she was sent back in to try on a second dress. This one got a full audience applause.

"Looks like this is the one," the host showed Alaina off. "When we come back, Alaina will meet her future husband and there will be a wedding."

Alaina paced the stage the entire commercial break.

"Alaina," the host placed an arm around her gently. "You've been madeover, you've been put into an amazing dress. There is only one thing left to do."

"Yes," she nodded and managed a swallow.

"Please, drop the curtain and reveal the man Alaina will hopefully live in wedded bliss with!"

And with that, the curtain dropped. Alaina turned around and could not hide the tears that formed when she saw Elliot. "Elliot... what? But? You?"

"Yeah Lain, it's me," Elliot smiled, "Surprised?"

"Understatement."

Elliot then dropped to his knee and took Alaina's hand. "Given where we are and what we're here for, Alaina will you marry me?" He couldn't stop the grin on his face when she nodded.

The host smiled at them.

The ceremony was quick, it seemed like in an instant it was over and

they were married. Alaina was in such shock over everything she didn't even remember the host closing out the show.

Two Weeks Later

"Now before we get to this week's special two hour show, I wanted to check in on our very first couple. Remember Alaina and Elliot? Well we have them here and they have some updates for us. Guys?"

The screen cut to a video chat feed of Alaina and Elliot in their backyard. "Hey John!" they said in unison.

"Well, you two look as happy as can be!" the host smiled, "How are things?"

"Wonderful!" Alaina nearly squealed, "I haven't been this happy in, well, forever."

"And you, Elliot?"

"It's definitely a story to tell our future children," Elliot laughed, "No, but seriously, I couldn't be happier. It's not the way I had planned on asking Alaina out, but I don't think I would have gotten the push to do it otherwise. So, thank you."

"So inquiring minds want to know... are you two still legally married?"

Alaina and Elliot flashed their wedding rings. "Yes, yes we are."

"What are you guys going to do with the \$100,000 prize money?" the host asked.

"Well, we're going to use part of it to plan and throw a proper wedding, for all of our friends and family," Elliot started, "And then we're going to donate the rest to our former elementary school. The

place is in disarray and it's not a good learning environment for the current children."

"We're hoping they can use the money to fix the place up, buy new supplies, stuff like that," Alaina continued.

"Wow, it seems like you guys have it all figured out," the host said with a small smile, "Well, congratulations to both of you, and good luck in the future!" he said before signing off, and before the feed cut out, you could see Alaina and Elliot in a passionate kiss.

