



## Bride for a Night (Hqn)

By Rosemary Rogers

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While his lovely green-eyed bride is out of sight, she is not far from Andrew's mind—and when Olivia is abducted by French spies, the earl fears he may lose what he's only just found. Yet the wife he races to rescue is a far cry from the gentle bride he abandoned. She's a woman who dares to demand forever after from her husband....

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## **Bride for a Night (Hqn) By Rosemary Rogers Bibliography**

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## Editorial Review

Review

"[A] perfect beach book."

-Publishers Weekly on *Bound by Love*

"The queen of historical romance."

-New York Times Book Review

"Sizzling sensuality, seduction and danger...come together with a powerful, skillfully told love story....vintage Rosemary Rogers."

-RT Book Reviews on *Scandalous Deception* (4 1/2 stars)

"Her novels are filled with adventure, excitement, and always, wildly tempestuous romance."-Fort Worth Star-Telegram

### About the Author

Rosemary Rogers's life reads like one of her incredibly adventurous novels. Born in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) to wealthy parents, Rosemary Jansz was raised in colonial splendour-waited upon by servants, a private education, summers at the finest European spas. Shocking her family by becoming a reporter, she was to amaze them by marrying a Ceylonese sprinter known as "the fastest man in Asia." Fed up with his racing after other women, Rosemary took their two children and relocated to London. Here she met LeRoy Rogers-an American G.I. They were married and relocated to California. Six years later, that marriage also broke up and Rosemary found herself employed as a typist supporting four children and her parents who joined her in the U.S. after they escaped Ceylon-all their possessions and wealth confiscated-in the face of a socialist takeover of the island. However, good fortune was in the wind for Rosemary and her family. As a child, Rosemary had written novels in the manner of her favourite novelists-Sir Walter Scott, Alexandre Dumas and Rafael Sabatini-and had continued to do so throughout her teenage years. Now, as an escape, she would rewrite and rewrite one of those childhood stories. She had completed her 24th draft when her daughter-a fan of historical romances-discovered it and urged her mother to send it to a publisher. The rest is history. That first book, *SWEET SAVAGE LOVE*-now available from MIRA Books-was an immediate sensation and shot to the top of the New York Times Bestseller List. Fourteen more books followed-all New York Times bestsellers-and Rosemary's status as the "Queen of Historical Romance" was unquestioned.

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Sloane Square was not the finest neighborhood in London, but it was respectable and comfortably situated next to the more fashionable areas. As a rule it was occupied by members of the *ton* who clung to the fringes of society, or those who preferred to avoid the bustle that spilled throughout Mayfair.

And then there was Mr. Silas Dobson.

Claiming the largest mansion on a corner lot, Mr. Dobson was what was delicately known as an "upstart."

Or for those less kindly disposed, as an ill-bred mushroom who reeked of the shop despite his fortune.

He might eventually have been forgiven for his unwelcome intrusion among his betters had Silas been willing to fade quietly into the background and accept that he would always be inferior to those born into the aristocracy.

Silas, however, was not the sort of man to fade into any background.

As large as an ox, with a barrel chest and meaty face that was ruddy from the sun, he was as loud and crass as any of the hundreds of men who worked in his numerous warehouses spread throughout the city. Even worse, he made no apology for the fact he had crawled out of the gutters to make his fortune in trade. The youngest of twelve children, he had started as a dockhand before beginning to invest in high-risk cargos and eventually purchasing a number of properties that were rented out at an exorbitant fee to various shipping companies.

He was a bully without manners who had managed to insult nearly every resident in Sloane Square at least a dozen times over the past ten years.

And while he wasn't stupid enough to believe he could ever pass as a gentleman, he was willing to use his obscene wealth to foist his only child onto society.

An impudence that did nothing to endear him to members of the *ton*.

Of course, their ruffled feathers were somewhat eased by the knowledge that, for all of Dobson's wealth and bluster, he couldn't make his tiny dab of a daughter a success.

Oh, she was pretty enough with large emerald eyes set in a perfect oval face with a delicate nose and full, rose-kissed lips. But there was something quite...earthy in her gypsy curves and unruly raven curls.

It was, however, her awkward lack of charm that ensured that she would remain a wallflower.

After all, there were always those gentlemen of breeding who were notoriously short of funds. Being a member of nobility was an expensive business, especially if one was a younger sibling without the benefit of large estates to offset the cost of being fashionable.

With a dowry well over a hundred thousand pounds, Talia should have been snatched off the marriage mart her first season, even with a boorish father who promised to be a yoke of embarrassment around the neck of his prospective son-in-law.

But, when a man added in the fact that the female was a dreaded bluestocking who could barely be induced to speak a word in public, let alone dazzle a gentleman with practiced flirtations, it all combined to leave her a source of amused pity, someone who was avoided like the plague.

Society members took pleasure in Talia's failure. They smugly assured themselves it would be a blow to the odious Mr. Dobson and an example to other encroachers who thought they could buy a place among the aristocracy.

They might not have been so smug had they known Silas Dobson as well as his daughter did.

The son of a mere butcher did not acquire a small financial empire unless he possessed the unbridled determination to overcome any obstacle...no matter what the sacrifice.

Well aware of Silas Dobson's ruthless willpower, Talia shuddered at the sound of her father's bellow as it echoed through the vaulted rooms of the elegant house.

"Talia. Talia, answer me. Damned, where is the child?"

There was the muffled sound of servants rushing to provide the master of the house with the information he desired, and with a sigh Talia set aside the book on China she had been studying and cast a rueful glance about her temporary haven of peace.

Arched windows overlooked the sunken rose garden and a marble fountain that sparkled in the late May sunlight. Heavy shelves filled with leather-bound books lined the walls, and the coved ceiling high above was painted with an image of Apollo in his chariot. At one end a walnut desk was set near the carved marble fireplace that was flanked by two leather chairs. And the floor was covered by an Oriental carpet that glowed with rich crimson and sapphire.

It was a beautiful library.

Rising from one of the chairs, Talia smoothed her hands down the teal skirt of her simple muslin gown, wishing she had changed into one of the fine silk dresses that her father preferred.

Not that he would ever be pleased with her appearance, she wryly acknowledged.

Silas's disappointment in not having a son and heir was only surpassed by his disappointment in possessing a daughter who looked more like a gypsy than one of the elegant blonde debutantes who graced the London ballrooms.

Braced for her father's entrance, Talia managed not to flinch as he rammed open the door to the library and regarded her with an impatient glower.

"I might have known I would find you wasting your day hiding among these damnable books." His disapproving gaze took in her plain gown and lack of jewelry. "Why did I spend a fortune on your finery if not to be out preening yourself like the other silly chits?"

"I never asked you to spend your money on my clothing," she softly reminded him.

He snorted. "Oh, aye, I suppose you would as soon go about looking like a charwoman and have all of society think me too clutch-fisted to properly provide for my only child? A fine thing that would be."

"That is not what I meant."

With heavy steps, Silas moved beside the desk, his face more ruddy than usual, as if the white cravat tied around his thick neck was choking him.

Talia felt a flutter of unease. Her father only allowed his valet to wrestle him into that particular tailored gray jacket and burgundy striped waistcoat when he intended to mingle among society rather than devoting his day to his business. A rare occurrence that typically ended with her father in a foul mood and various

aristocrats threatening to rid the world of Silas Dobson's existence.

"Is it not enough that you embarrass me with your clumsy manner and dim-witted stammering?" he growled, pouring himself a generous amount of brandy from a crystal decanter.

She lowered her head, a familiar sense of failure settling in the pit of her stomach.

"I have tried my best."

"Oh, aye, and that's why you're alone on this fine day while your fancy friends are attending an alfresco luncheon in Wimbledon?"

Her heart dipped in familiar disappointment. "They are not my friends, and I could hardly attend a luncheon for which I did not receive an invitation."

"You mean to say you were slighted?" her father rasped. "By God, Lord Morrilton will hear of this."

"No, father." Talia lifted her head in horror. It was bad enough to be ignored when she was forced to attend the events to which she was invited. She could not bear to be a source of resentment. "I warned you, but you would not listen. You cannot purchase me a place in society, no matter how much money you spend."

The anger suddenly faded from her father's face to be replaced by a smug smile.

"Now that is where you are wide of the mark."

She stilled. "What do you mean?"

"I have just returned from a most satisfying meeting with Mr. Harry Richardson, younger brother to the Earl of Ashcombe."

Talia recognized the name, of course.

A handsome gentleman with brown hair and pale eyes, he possessed a reckless charm and a talent for shocking society with his outrageous pranks and notorious passion for gambling. He was also infamous for being deeply in debt.

Watching from the fringes, Talia had secretly concluded that the gentleman's wild behavior had been a result of being so closely related to Lord Ashcombe.

Unlike his younger brother, Ashcombe was more than passably handsome. In fact, he was...breathtaking.

His hair was the palest gold that shimmered like satin in candlelight, and his lean features were so perfectly carved that he appeared more like a god than a mere man. His cheekbones were high and sharply chiseled, his nose was narrow and boldly arrogant, and his lips surprisingly full. His eyes.

A delicate shiver raced through Talia.

His eyes were a pale silver rimmed with black. They could glitter with cold intelligence or flare with terrifying fury. And his lean body was hard with the muscles of a natural athlete.

He was grace and power and cunning all combined together, and while he rarely made an appearance at the various gatherings, he was all but worshipped by society.

How could Harry not feel as if he were forever in the shadow of such a man? It seemed perfectly natural he would rebel in whatever manner possible.

Aware that her father was waiting for a response, Talia cleared her throat.

"Did you?"

"Well, don't sit there gaping like a trout." The older man gave a wave of one meaty hand. "Ring for that hatchet-faced butler and tell him to bring up a bottle of that fancy French swill that cost me a bloody fortune."

Feeling a chill of premonition feather down her spine, Talia absently tugged on the bell rope near the fireplace, her gaze never leaving the self-satisfied sneer on her father's face.

"Father, what have you done?"

"I have purchased you a place in that stiff-rumped society, just as I said I would." His smile widened. "One they can't ignore."

Talia sank onto the edge of the nearest chair, a growing sense of horror flooding through her.

"Dear lord," she breathed.

"You can thank *me*, not the Almighty. He could never have performed the miracle I achieved over a boiled beefsteak and a bottle of burgundy."

She licked her lips, trying to quell the rising panic. Perhaps it was not as bad as she feared.

*Please God, do not let it be as bad as I fear.*

"I assume you were at your club?"

"I was." Silas grimaced. "Bastards. It is nothing less than barefaced highway robbery to demand that I pay a fee just to rub elbows with the tedious idiots who believe themselves above us honest folk."

"If you find them so repulsive, then I cannot imagine why you bothered to join the club."

"For you, you pea goose. Your mother, God rest her soul, wanted to see you respectably established and that's what I intend to do. Not that you make it an easy matter." Her father ran a dismissive gaze over the curls escaping from the neat bun at the nape of her neck, then at the dust that marred her skirt from climbing among the bookshelves. "I hired the most expensive governess and a dozen other instructors who promised to polish you for society, and what did I get for my money? A lump without the least appreciation for all I have sacrificed."

Talia flinched, unable to deny her father's accusations. He had paid an enormous sum of money in the attempt to mold her into a lady of quality. It was not his fault that she lacked the talents expected of a

debutante.

She could not play the pianoforte. She could not paint or do needlepoint. She had learned the steps to the various dances, but she couldn't seem to perform them without tripping over her own feet. And she had never been able to capture the art of flirtation.

All of these failures might have been excused had she possessed the sense to be born beautiful.

She knotted her fingers in her lap. "I do appreciate your efforts, Father, but I truly believe Mother would have wished for my happiness."

"You know nothing," her father snapped. "You are a silly chit who has spent too much time with your head stuck in a book. I warned that governess not to allow you to read that dodgy poetry. It's rotted your brains." He paused to glare at her in warning. "Thankfully, I know what is best for you."

"And what is that?"

"Marriage to Mr. Harry Richardson."

The room briefly went black, but Talia grimly battled back the urge to faint.

Swooning would do nothing to sway her father. Perhaps nothing would. But she had to try.

"No," she whispered softly. "Please, no."

Silas scowled at the tears that glittered in her eyes. "What the devil is the matter with you?"

Talia surged to her feet. "I cannot marry a stranger."

"What do you mean, a stranger? You've been introduced, haven't you?"

"Introduced, yes," Talia agreed, willing to bet her considerable fortune that Harry Richardson could not pick her out in a crowd. Certainly he had never bothered to take notice of her since their brief introduction during her first season. "But we have exchanged barely half a dozen words."

"Bah, people do not wed because of ballroom chit chat. A man seeks a female to provide him with a pack of brats..."

"Father."

Silas snorted, his eyes narrowed. "Don't be giving me your missish airs. I know enough of the world to call a spade a spade. A man has one need of a wife, while a female needs a man who can provide her with a home and a bit of pin money to keep her happy."

The panic once again flared through Talia, and she sucked in a deep breath, pressing a hand to her thundering heart.

Dear Lord, she had to stop this madness.



"Then I fear you have made a poor choice," she managed to murmur. "From what I've heard, Mr. Richardson is a reckless gambler and a." Her words faltered.

"Aye?" her father prompted.

She turned to pace across the carpet, unwilling to admit that she often used her position as a forgotten wallflower to eavesdrop on the latest gossip. It made it difficult to explain how she was aware that Harry Richardson was a lecher who kept a string of beautiful and extremely expensive mistresses.

"And a gentleman incapable of providing either a home or pin money for his wife," she instead pointed out.

Silas shrugged, obviously willing to overlook his potential son-in-law's numerous faults so long as he could provide the necessary pedigree for his grandsons.

"Which is why I have informed him that I will be using a portion of your dowry to purchase a suitable house in Mayfair as well as to set aside an allowance for you." He deliberately paused. "There, now you can't be saying I haven't done my best by you."

Best?

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