

The 30-Day Engagement

Waverly Decker

Calhoun Howard (Feb 14, 2023)

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A staged relationship blooms into love in Waverly Decker's lighthearted LGBTQ+ romance novel *The 30-Day Engagement*.

Emory and Mari broke up eight years ago, so Emory is surprised when Mari, who works as an actress in Hollywood, invites her to her Malibu wedding. Emory's boss wants her to connect with Mari's groom, who's a tech mogul; it's a task that Emory dreads, but considers to be vital to making junior partner. In need of a plus-one, Emory hires Bliss, a cash-strapped florist who tends to Emory's office plants. Theirs is a quirky meet cute. Still, the women discover that early impressions seldom reveal the full truth.

As they shop for wedding attire and formulate a plausible story about how they met, Emory and Bliss become closer to one another. Emory is career-focused and weary, while Bliss is driven by idealism: her fledgling business is all about simplicity and adding beauty. Their exchanges are inquisitive: Bliss, despite her skepticism about corporate life, is attracted to competent Emory; she plays the part of a devoted fiancée according to her convictions about what commitment should look like. Meanwhile, Emory feels delighted by Bliss's impulsivity.

When feelings arise between the women, they trouble the line between sticking to a short-term business agreement and pursuing something of greater depth. They also soften as they learn to embrace each other. The pain of their respective pasts recedes. Broader ideas about future hopes, the delicate artistry in floral arrangements, and learning to admit to one's shortcomings and risk new beginnings all add up to a sweet love story in which Bliss and Emory's differences are paved over.

In the upbeat LGBTQ+ novel *The 30-Day Engagement*, a contractual romance becomes an authentic one when passions ignite.

KAREN RIGBY (January / February 2023)

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