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**KING  
OF  
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**KING  
OF  
GREED**

## CHAPTER 1

Alessandra



ONCE UPON A TIME, I'D LOVED MY HUSBAND.

His beauty, his ambition, his intelligence. The wildflowers he'd plucked for me on his way home from a graveyard shift, and the gentle kisses he'd trailed over my shoulder when I stubbornly refused to heed my alarm clock.

But *once upon a time* was a long time ago, and now, as I watched him walk through the door for the first time in weeks, all I felt was a deep, dull ache in the places where love once resided.

"You're home early," I said, even though it was near midnight. "How was work?"

"Fine." Dominic shrugged out of his coat, revealing an immaculate gray suit and crisp white shirt. Both custom-made, both costing upward of four figures. Only the best for Dominic Davenport, the so-called King of Wall Street. "Work was work."

He gave me a perfunctory kiss on the lips. A familiar whiff of citrus and sandalwood brushed my senses and made my heart squeeze. He'd worn the same cologne since I gifted it to him a decade ago during our first trip to Brazil. I used to find the loyalty

romantic, but the new cynic in me whispered it was only because he couldn't be bothered to find a new scent.

Dominic didn't care about anything that didn't make him money.

He flicked his eyes over the lipstick-smudged wine glasses and remnants of Chinese takeout on the coffee table. Our housekeeper was on vacation, and I'd been in the middle of cleaning up when Dominic came home.

"Did you have friends over?" he asked, sounding only marginally interested.

"Just the girls." My friends and I had celebrated a financial milestone for my small pressed flower business, which was nearing its two-year anniversary, but I didn't bother sharing the accomplishment with my husband. "We were supposed to go out to dinner, but we stayed in at the last minute instead."

"Sounds nice." Dominic had already moved on to his phone. He had a strict no-email policy, so he was probably checking the Asian stock markets.

A knot formed in my throat.

He was still as breathtakingly handsome as the first time I saw him in our college library. Dark blond hair, navy eyes, a sculpted face set in a semi-permanent pensive expression. It wasn't a face that smiled easily, but I liked that about him. There was no fakeness; if he smiled, he meant it.

When was the last time either of us had smiled at the other the way we used to?

When was the last time he touched me? Not for sex, but for casual affection.

The knot pulled tighter, restricting the flow of oxygen. I swallowed past it and forced my lips to curve upward. "Speaking of dinner, don't forget our trip this weekend. We have a Friday night reservation in DC."

"I won't." He tapped something on his screen.

"Dom." My voice firmed. "It's important."

I'd put up with dozens of missed dates, canceled trips, and broken promises over the years, but our ten-year wedding anniversary was one of a kind. It was unmissable.

Dominic finally glanced up. "I won't forget. I promise." Something flickered in his eyes. "Ten years already. It's hard to believe."

"Yes." My cheeks might crack from the force of my smile. "It is." I hesitated, then added, "Are you hungry? I can heat up some food and you can tell me about your day."

He had a bad habit of forgetting to eat when he was working. Knowing him, he hadn't touched anything except coffee since lunch. I used to visit his office and make sure he ate when he was starting out, but those visits stopped after Davenport Capital took off and he became too busy.

"No, I have some client things to take care of. I'll grab something later." He was back on his phone, his brow furrowed in a deep frown.

"But..." *I thought you were done with work for the day. Isn't that why you're home?*

I bit back my question. There was no use asking things I already knew the answer to.

Dominic was never done with work. It was the world's most demanding mistress.

"Don't wait up for me. I'll be in my office for a while." His lips grazed my cheek on his way past me. "Good night."

He was already gone by the time I responded. "Good night."

The words echoed in our palatial, empty living room. It was the first night I'd been awake to see Dominic come home in weeks, and our conversation had ended before it really began.

I blinked back an embarrassing sting of tears. So what if

my husband felt like a stranger? I felt like a stranger to myself sometimes when I looked in the mirror.

At the end of the day, I was married to one of the richest men on Wall Street, I lived in a beautiful house most people would kill for, and I owned a small but thriving business doing what I loved. I had no good reason to cry.

*Get it together.*

I took a deep breath, straightened my shoulders, and plucked the empty takeout boxes off the coffee table. By the time I finished cleaning up, the pressure behind my eyes had disappeared like it'd never been there at all.

## CHAPTER 2

*Dominic*



THERE WAS AN OLD ADAGE THAT BAD THINGS CAME IN threes, and if I weren't so scornful of superstitions, I might've believed it after this shit show of a day.

First, a ridiculous tech malfunction reset our email and calendar systems that morning, and we'd spent hours getting everything back in order.

Then, one of my top traders quit because he was "burned out" and "found his true calling" as a fucking yoga teacher, of all things.

Now, an hour before U.S. markets closed, news leaked that a company we had a large position in was being investigated by the Securities and Exchange Commission. Stocks were in free fall, which meant the value of our position was declining by the minute, and my plans to leave early had disintegrated faster than tissue paper in a washing machine. As the CEO of a major financial conglomerate, I didn't have the luxury of delegating crisis management.

"Talk to me." Brisk strides took me from my office to the emergency staff meeting three doors down in thirty seconds. My

muscles coiled so tight, it was a miracle they didn't cramp. I'd lost millions in minutes, and I didn't have time to beat around the bush.

"Rumor has it the SEC is going hard on this one." Caroline, my chief of staff, matched my pace with ease. "The new chairman wants to make a splashy first impression. What better way to do that than to go head-to-head with one of the biggest banks in the country?"

For fuck's sake. It was always the newbies that crashed their way through their first year like a bull in a china shop. I had a good relationship with the old chairman, but the new one was a goddamn thorn in my side, and he'd only been there for three months.

I checked my watch as I pushed open the door to the executive conference room. A quarter past three. I was supposed to fly out to DC with Alessandra at six. If I kept the meeting short and drove straight to the airport instead of stopping at home first like I'd originally planned, I could still make it.

*Dammit.* Why did the chairman have to upend things on my wedding anniversary, of all days?

I took my seat at the head of the table and reached for my lighter. It was instinct at this point; I didn't even have to think about it. "Give me the numbers."

Thoughts of DC and upcoming flights melted away as I flicked the lighter on and off while my team debated the pros and cons of dumping our position in the bank versus weathering the storm. There was no room for personal concerns in times of emergencies, and the solid, comforting weight of silver focused my thoughts on the task at hand instead of the insidious whispers crowding my brain.

They were always there, filling my head with doubts like how I was one bad decision away from losing everything. How I was and always would be the butt of every joke, the foster kid whose

own biological mother abandoned him and who flunked sixth grade twice.

The "problem student," my teachers lamented.

The "idiot," my classmates jeered.

The "slacker," my guidance counselor sighed.

The voices were loudest in times of crisis. I reigned over a multi-billion-dollar empire, but I walked through the halls every day with the prospect of a crash hanging over me.

*On. Off. On. Off.* The increased speed of my flicks matched my escalating heartbeats.

"Sir." Caroline's voice cut through the buzzing in my ears. "What's your verdict?"

I blinked away the unwanted memories lurking at the corners of my consciousness. The room came back into focus, revealing my team's anxious, expectant expressions.

Someone had pulled up a presentation sometime in the past minute, even though I'd repeatedly said I hated slide decks. The right side was filled with a comforting mix of charts and numbers, but the left contained several lengthy bullet points.

The sentences swam before me. They didn't look right; I was sure my brain had added some words while erasing others. The back of my neck heated while my heartbeats thundered with such fury, it felt like they were trying to punch through my chest and knock the words off the screen in one fell swoop.

"What did I say about presentation format?" I could barely hear myself over the noise. It grew louder every second, and only my painful grip on the lighter prevented me from unraveling. "No. Bullet points."

I bit out the words, and the room fell deathly silent.

"I-I'm sorry, sir." The analyst presenting the slides paled to the point of translucence. "My assistant—"

"I don't give a damn about your assistant." I was being an

asshole, but I didn't have time to feel bad about it. Not when my stomach was turning and a migraine was already crawling its way behind my temple.

*On. Off. On. Off.*

I turned my head and focused on the charts instead. The switch in focus, combined with the clicks of the lighter, calmed me enough to think clearly again.

*SEC. Tumbling stocks. What to do with our position.*

I couldn't fully shake the sense that one day, I would fuck up so royally that I'd destroy everything I had, but that day wouldn't be today.

I knew what to do, and as I laid out my strategy for holding on to our position, I pushed every other voice out of my head—including the one telling me that I was forgetting something damn important.

## CHAPTER 3

*Alessandra*



HE WASN'T COMING.

I sat in the living room, my skin ice cold as I watched the minutes tick by. It was past eight. We were supposed to leave for DC two hours ago, but I hadn't seen or heard from Dominic since he left for work that morning. My calls had gone to voicemail, and I refused to check in with his office like some random acquaintance begging for a minute of the great Dominic Davenport's time.

I was his wife, dammit. I shouldn't have to chase him down or guess his whereabouts. Then again, it didn't take a genius to figure out what he was doing right now.

*Working.* Always working. Even on our ten-year anniversary. Even after I'd stressed how important this trip was.

I finally had a good reason to cry, but no tears came. I just felt...numb. A part of me had expected him to forget or postpone, and wasn't that the saddest part?

"Mrs. Davenport!" Our housekeeper, Camila, entered the room, her arms laden with freshly laundered linen. She'd returned from her vacation last night and had spent the day tidying up the penthouse. "I thought you already left."

"No." My voice sounded strange and hollow. "I don't think I'll be going anywhere this weekend after all."

"Why..." She trailed off, her eagle eyes taking in the luggage next to the couch and my white-knuckled grip on my knees. Her round, matronly face softened with a mix of sympathy and pity. "Ah. In that case, I'll make dinner for you. Moqueca. Your favorite, hmm?"

Ironically, the fish stew was what my old childhood housekeeper made me when I was heartbroken over a boy. I wasn't hungry, but I didn't have the energy to argue.

"Thanks, Camila."

While she bustled off to the kitchen, I tried to sort through the chaos swirling through my brain.

*Cancel all our reservations or wait? Is he simply late or is he not going on the trip at all? Do I even want to go on this trip now, even if he does?*

Dominic and I were supposed to spend the weekend in DC, where we'd met and gotten married. I had it all planned out—dinner at our first-date restaurant, a suite at a cozy boutique hotel, no phones or work allowed. It was supposed to be a trip for *us*. As our relationship frayed further every day, I'd hoped it would bring us closer again. Make us fall in love the way we had a lifetime ago.

But I realized that was impossible because neither of us was the same person we used to be. Dominic wasn't the boy who gave himself a hundred paper cuts making origami versions of my favorite flowers for my birthday, and I wasn't the girl who floated through life with stars and dreams in her eyes.

*"I don't have the money to buy you all the flowers you deserve yet," he said, sounding so solemn and formal I couldn't help but smile at the contrast between his tone and the jar of colorful paper flowers in his hands. "So I made them instead."*

*My breath caught in my throat. "Dom..."*

*There must've been hundreds of flowers in there. I didn't want to think about how long it took him to make them.*

*"Happy birthday, amor." His mouth lingered on mine in a long, sweet kiss. "One day, I'll buy you a thousand real roses. I promise."*

He'd kept that promise, but he'd broken a thousand more since.

A salty trickle finally snaked its way down my cheek and shocked me out of my frozen stupor.

I stood, my breaths shallowing with each step as I walked quickly to the nearest bathroom. Camila and the staff were too busy to notice my silent breakdown, but I couldn't bear the thought of crying alone in the living room, surrounded by luggage that would go nowhere and hopes that'd been shattered too many times to mend properly.

*So, so stupid.*

What made me think tonight would be different? Our anniversary probably meant as much to Dominic as a random Friday night dinner.

Dull pain sharpened into knives as I locked the bathroom door behind me. My reflection stared back from the mirror. Brown hair, blue eyes, tanned skin. I looked the same as I always did, but I hardly recognized myself. It was like seeing a stranger wear my face.

Where was the girl who'd pushed back against her mother's modeling dreams for her and insisted on going to college instead? Who'd lived life with unapologetic joy and unbridled optimism, and who'd once dumped a boy for forgetting her birthday? That girl would've never sat around waiting for a man. She'd had goals and dreams, but somewhere along the way, they'd fallen by the wayside, consumed by the gravity of her husband's ambition.

If I pleased him, if I organized the right dinners with the right people, if I made the right connections, I would be useful to him.

Years of helping him accomplish his dreams meant I hadn't lived—I'd served a purpose.

Alessandra Ferreira was gone, replaced by Alessandra Davenport. Wife, hostess, socialite. Someone defined only by her marriage to *the* Dominic Davenport. Everything I did for the past decade had been for him, and he didn't even care enough to call and tell me he'd be late for our fucking ten-year anniversary.

The dam burst.

A solitary tear turned into two, then three, then a whole flood as I sank to the floor and cried. Every heartbreak, every disappointment, every piece of sadness and resentment I'd harbored poured out in a river of grief edged with anger. I'd bottled up so much over the years that I was afraid I'd drown beneath the waves of my own emotions.

Cold, hard tile dug into the backs of my thighs. For the first time in forever, I allowed myself to *feel*, and with that came blinding clarity.

I couldn't do this anymore.

I couldn't spend the rest of my days going through the motions and pretending to be happy. I had to take back control of my life—even if it meant destroying the one I currently had.

I was hollow and brittle, a million shattered pieces that hurt too much to pick up.

My sobs eventually slowed then subsided altogether, and before I could second-guess myself, I pushed off the floor and stepped back into the hall. The temperature-controlled penthouse maintained a perfect seventy-three degrees year-round, but tiny shivers wracked my body as I grabbed what I needed from the bedroom. The rest of my essentials were already packed and waiting in the living room.

I didn't allow myself to think. If I did, I would chicken out, and I couldn't afford to at this stage.

A familiar sparkle caught my eye when I pulled my suitcase handle up. I stared at my wedding ring, a fresh ache tearing through my chest as it blinked up at me in a seeming plea to reconsider.

I faltered for a split second before I set my jaw, slid the ring off my finger, and placed it next to my and Dominic's wedding picture on the mantel.

Then I finally did what I should've done a long time ago.

I left.