

## **Two Million for Love**

### **Bonus chapter**

#### **Aster**

Four months later

Our engagement wasn't long. We'd waited long enough. The ceremony was small, with only our closest friends. No blood relatives, but the family we chose. The press wasn't invited and they didn't get tipped off. Nobody but those in attendance knew we'd tied the knot.

And then Theo whisked me away to Zanzibar for our honeymoon to one of Gio's luxury—and private—resorts.

The sun dipped low over the Indian Ocean, casting molten ribbons of gold across the water's surface. The air was warm and thick with the scent of salt and cloves. The call to

prayer echoed faintly in the distance, the melodic hum carried on the breeze.

I curled my toes into the powdery white sand of the beachside terrace, the hem of my gauzy sundress fluttering around my calves as I leaned into Theo's side. He looked unfairly good in linen—sleeves rolled, shirt open just enough to make me dizzy, skin kissed bronze by the sun. He'd left his watch upstairs. Even time didn't matter here.

Dinner was set under a canopy of fairy lights strung between palm trees. Lanterns glowed amber on the table, casting soft shadows over Gio's sharp cheekbones and darker mood. He'd dropped by a week into our honeymoon, not intending to intrude, but we'd invited him for dinner with us anyway.

He swirled a glass of wine and sighed with all the drama of a Shakespearean villain.

"I should've known," Gio said with mock despair. "First Dante falls to the plague of domestic bliss, and now you, Theo. The

Dominion Society is down to three. That's almost half."

I grinned over my glass. "Well, you can't have him back. Theo's all mine."

Theo glanced at me, smiling softly in that way that still made my pulse race, even now that I wore his ring.

"Happily spoken for," he added, lacing his fingers with mine beneath the table.

Gio raised his glass in surrender. "She's turned you into a smug romantic."

Theo shrugged. "Finding the right woman makes all the difference. I've never been happier."

The words weren't performative. There was no showing off, no ego. Just certainty. Like he knew exactly who he was now—and who he wanted to be for the rest of his life.

Gio didn't smile. He lifted his wine and studied it like it might hold answers. "Love is for other people," he said after a beat. "Some of us can't afford it."

I didn't press. Some walls weren't mine to knock down.

Despite his melancholic mood, we had a nice dinner with one of Theo's oldest friends. He took his leave after, muttering something about finding someone to share the night with at the bar. Theo and I just rolled our eyes.

Later, Theo and I walked the shoreline barefoot, the tide kissing our ankles as we strolled beneath a crescent moon. The stars looked close enough to touch. I could still taste sea salt on his lips from the swim we took earlier, when we'd raced each other to the coral reef and then floated side by side like driftwood, tangled together and laughing until we couldn't breathe.

Now, it was quiet. Peaceful. Sacred.

Theo stopped walking and turned to face me. The breeze swept through his hair and I brushed a lock behind his ear, my fingers lingering on his jaw.

"You're glowing," he said softly.

"It's the humidity," I teased.

“It’s happiness,” he corrected, brushing a kiss to the corner of my mouth. “I think we were always meant to end up here.”

“Zanzibar?”

He laughed. “No. Here. Us. This life. Waking up with you every day, watching you bake, running a company that’s actually helping people, knowing that my heart is safe.”

I smiled, my throat tight with emotion.

“I used to think love would either end in tragedy or be used as just another transaction,” he said. “Something leveraged to cause pain. But with you... it’s freedom.”

“I used to think love meant giving until I had nothing left. With you, I feel like I get even more in return,” I said, staring into those storm-gray eyes that had captivated me from the moment I’d first seen him, even when I shouldn’t have wanted him.

“I could never run out of love to give you,” he replied.

I touched his face. “You’re my home,” I whispered.

He kissed me then—deep and slow and sure, anchoring me to the moment and making me believe in everything we'd built. The ocean roared behind us like applause.

When we finally pulled apart, I leaned into his chest, listening to the steady beat of his heart.

And for the first time in my life, I didn't wonder what came next.

I already had it all.