

LIES AND WEDDINGS



A NOVEL

KEVIN KWAN

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF
CRAZY RICH ASIANS

ALSO BY KEVIN KWAN

Sex and Vanity

Rich People Problems

China Rich Girlfriend

Crazy Rich Asians

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WEDDINGS

A NOVEL

KEVIN
KWAN



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Acknowledgments

About the Author

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For

TŪTŪ PELE,

*who told me to have
trust and patience*

Hong Kong, 1995

SOUTH CHINA SEA

“If I had a flower for every time I thought of you, I could walk in my garden forever.” Henry kept chanting the line out loud over the roar of the helicopter’s engine. He had just seen it in an ad at the jewelry shop, and he did not want to forget it tonight. Against the ink blue of the evening sky, the jagged ridges of the mountain pass reminded him of a great slumbering beast. The Dragon’s Back, as it was known to locals. Looking out over the twinkling lights that came into view as the chopper crested Shek O Peak, Henry remembered what his mother always said: The feng shui was especially good on Hong Kong Island because the city was situated with the mountain at its back and the ocean at its feet. This was why so many great fortunes were made here.

And no one felt more fortunate tonight than Henry Tong. He was flying home from a weekend on the nearby island of Macau, where, after winning \$7.4 million at the high-stakes poker table of the Casino Lisboa, he had directed the pilot to take him straight to his favorite watering hole at the best hotel in Hong Kong, where his closest chums had been commanded to meet him. What none of his friends knew was that before jumping aboard the helicopter, Henry had made a pit stop at the jeweler on the mezzanine level of the casino and hastily snapped up a twelve-carat canary diamond ring.^[*1] This night called for a grand celebration—he was going to make Gabriella Soong his fiancée.

The helicopter descended atop the Peninsula Hotel on Kowloon’s waterfront, and Henry impatiently jumped out before the rotor blades came to a stop. Rakishly handsome with his hair slicked back and his Armani jacket

flapping against the wind, the twenty-six-year-old strode across the landing pad feeling as if he owned the whole joint. A uniformed attendant in the hotel's signature Brewster Green livery bowed deferentially as he held open the door. One level down—on the twenty-eighth floor of the hotel—was the city's most exclusive nightspot: Felix.

At that moment in time, no place on the planet could compete with Felix in terms of sheer wow factor. As one entered the main dining room through a darkened hallway, the space suddenly opened up to soaring floor-to-ceiling windows that framed the stunning view of the Hong Kong skyline across Victoria Harbour. Only here, the view had to compete with the jaw-dropping design:^[*2] a massive shimmering steel focal wall etched with undulating waves and a glowing, long white alabaster communal table that appeared to float across the entire north end of the dining room. On the opposite side, a pair of conical towers with spiral stairways wound their way up to twin VIP champagne bars overlooking the bustling scene below.

The Aussie bouncer standing guard recognized Henry immediately and unclipped the purple velvet rope at the foot of the stairway. "Mr. Tong, your party's waiting," he said with an affable nod.

"But the party doesn't start till I get here!" Henry shot back as he fastened the top button of his blazer and bounded up the steps three at a time. Even in a VIP lounge packed with the city's bright young things, Henry's friends stood out as the brightest as they clustered along the pale pink leather banquette that wrapped around the low balcony overlooking the cacophonous scene below. Everyone had been waiting impatiently for his arrival, and it was clear they had already enjoyed a few bottles too many.

"Henry! Over here!" Rosina Ko-Tung squealed as she waved her bare arms wildly.

"Finally! We've been waiting for hours," Brendan Lam slurred.

"*Yau mou gau cho, ah!* Can't believe you're still standing!" Edwin Chan clapped Henry on the back.

"Filthy crook! How many mainlanders did you fuck over this time?" Roger Gao chimed in, his face flushed bright red from doing vodka shots with the guys.

“They were *gweilos*. Mainlanders are getting way too good at poker,” Henry said, grinning, as he slumped down beside Roger’s sister, Mary, a former Miss Hong Kong. “I’m so knackered,” Henry sighed. He was finally feeling the effects of his marathon gambling binge.

Mary gave him an assessing look and raised an eyebrow. “How long have you been drinking?”

“Only for the past thirty or forty hours.”

“Rumor has it you almost bankrupted Stanley Ho this time.”

“I wish! My winnings are a day’s pocket money to him,” Henry chuckled, looking around the lounge. “Where’s Gabby?”

“Waiting to make her entrance, of course,” Rosina quipped.

No sooner had she uttered the words than a ravishingly pretty girl in a metallic gray Barney Cheng minidress appeared at the top of the steps.

“Princess Gabriella has arrived!” Brendan cheered. “All hail the princess!”

Gabriella Soong rolled her eyes and gave Brendan a playful slap on his arm.

“Champagne for everyone!” Henry declared, making eye contact with the bartender he knew so well. “Hey, Jason! We need your best champagne tonight! What do you have?”

“How about some Louis Roederer Cristal 1988?” Jason replied merrily, mentally calculating his gratuity as he reached under the bar for the private reserve bottles. Maybe he’d even take a taxi home tonight.

“Wait, wait, before you pop the bottle open...,” Henry yelled at the bartender as he stood on the banquette. “My friends, I summoned all of you here today under false pretenses. You’re not actually here to witness my historic win at the gaming tables of Macau. You’re here to witness Henry Tong a changed man tonight.”

“Have you finally accepted Jesus as your lord and savior?” Roger cackled.

“No, I’ve found the most precious flower in all the world.” Henry suddenly leapt off the banquette and landed on his knees right before Gabriella. The room went silent as everyone stared at him.

“Gabby, if I...if I had a flower for every time I think of you, I could walk in my garden forever...”

“Stop it, Henry, you’re drunk,” Gabriella said, shaking her head.

“I’m drunk on love. I’m intoxicated by you.” Fumbling into his jacket pocket, he took out a midnight-blue velvet box and presented it to the stunned girl. “Gabriella Soong, I realized tonight that all the money in the world would never make me a happy man unless I can enjoy it with you. I will present your father with every last cent of my winnings tomorrow to show him how serious I am. Will you please make me the happiest man on earth by saying yes?”

Edwin, Brendan, and Roger froze in disbelief at the whole scene. Rosina, her mouth wide open in shock, looked across the room at Mary.

Henry opened the box and Gabriella stared down at the sparkling rock. She held her hands up to her face and her body started to tremble. “Oh, Henry...,” she sighed as her eyes brimmed with tears.

“Is that a yes?” Henry looked up at her pleadingly.

“Yes! Yes!” Gabriella cried as Henry stood up and embraced her tightly.

Jason popped the champagne cork, and everyone in the lounge began clapping and cheering. Standing behind the bar, Jason had the perfect vantage point to witness everything unfolding, and for the rest of his life he would remember it like it happened in slow motion:

George Michael’s “Fastlove” blasting on the sound system.

Henry whirling Gabby around the tight space.

Rosina and Roger whispering tensely over the music.

Mary sitting alone gazing at the tiny bubbles in her champagne glass.

Edwin and Brendan doing sloppy tequila shots with a famous Muay Thai star.

Roger walking over to his sister, Mary, and grabbing her by the shoulders.

Mary shaking her head, sobbing.

Henry and Gabby dancing as Roger rushed over yelling, “Fucking pig!”

Henry jumping onto the banquette as Roger lunged at him in a blind rage.

Henry scrambling backward and toppling over the low glass railing.

Rosina not believing her own eyes as Henry tumbled through space like an Olympic diver in slow motion and landed on a dinner table twenty feet below.

Edwin grabbing Roger as he shouted, “What the hell? What the hell?”

Brendan staring in horror at Henry impaled onto a crystal candelabra.

Gabby screaming as blood pooled around Henry's body on the immaculate white tablecloth.

[SKIP NOTES](#)

**1 To be precise, an 11.68-carat fancy yellow VVS2 Asscher-cut diamond ring accented by two large kite-shaped diamond side stones.*

**2 Designed by Philippe Starck, the original enfant terrible starchitect responsible for such stellar spaces as the original Royalton Hotel in New York, Kong in Paris, and the Delano in South Beach, where I highly recommend the delicious Sunday brunch buffet—especially if somebody else is paying.*

THE MAIN PLAYERS

THE EARL

Francis Gresham

FORMAL TITLE: The Right Honorable the Earl of Greshamsbury

VERBAL ADDRESS: my lord (formal), Lord Greshamsbury (social)

ASTROLOGICAL SIGN: Cancer

HIS WIFE

Arabella Leung Gresham

FORMAL TITLE: The Right Honorable the Countess of Greshamsbury

VERBAL ADDRESS: madam (formal), Lady Greshamsbury (social)

ASTROLOGICAL SIGN: Scorpio

THEIR SON

Rufus Leung Gresham

FORMAL TITLE: The Right Honorable the Viscount St. Ives

VERBAL ADDRESS: my lord (formal), Lord St. Ives (social)

KNOWN WITHIN THE FAMILY AS “Rufus”

ASTROLOGICAL SIGN: Sagittarius

THEIR ELDER DAUGHTER

Augusta Leung Gresham

FORMAL TITLE: Lady Augusta Gresham

VERBAL ADDRESS: Lady Augusta (formal), Lady Augusta (social)

KNOWN WITHIN THE FAMILY AS “Augie”

ASTROLOGICAL SIGN: Aries

THEIR YOUNGER DAUGHTER

Beatrice Leung Gresham

FORMAL TITLE: Lady Beatrice Gresham

VERBAL ADDRESS: Lady Beatrice (formal), Lady Beatrice (social)

KNOWN WITHIN THE FAMILY AS “Bea”

ASTROLOGICAL SIGN: Pisces

THE NEIGHBOR

Thomas Tong

FORMAL TITLE: Dr. Thomas Tong

VERBAL ADDRESS: Dr. Tong (formal), Thomas (social)

ASTROLOGICAL SIGN: Gemini

HIS DAUGHTER

Eden Tong

FORMAL TITLE: Dr. Eden Tong

VERBAL ADDRESS: Dr. Tong (formal), Eden (social)

ASTROLOGICAL SIGN: Capricorn



*Anyone who lives within their means
suffers from a lack of imagination.*

—LIONEL STANDER

ANNOUNCEMENT IN THE
“FORTHCOMING MARRIAGES”
SECTION OF *THE TIMES*:

**HSH PRINCE M. ZU LIECHTENBURG
AND LADY A. GRESHAM**

The engagement is announced between Maximillian, first son of Their Serene Highnesses Prince and Princess Julius zu Liechtenburg, and Augusta, elder daughter of the Earl and Countess of Greshamsbury. A spring wedding is planned.

Dr. Eden Tong and Rufus,
Viscount St. Ives

GRESHAMSBURY, ENGLAND • *PRESENT DAY*



Eden Tong and Rufus Gresham, who grew up as neighbors and had been the closest of friends since they were very young, used to leave each other secret notes in the hollow of a majestic holm oak that grew on the pathway between their houses. Nowadays, since they were quite often on opposite ends of the world—with Eden in England and Rufus constantly on the go—they would text every morning without fail. Eden (Greshamsbury Nursery School/Mount House/Downe House/Cambridge) would be awakened by her phone alarm playing the first few notes of Radiohead’s “High and Dry,” and after swiping snooze a couple of times, she’d eventually grab her phone and peer at the text message on Signal that was invariably waiting from Rufus (Mount House/Radley/Exeter/Central Saint Martins). Today’s text:

RUFUS GRESHAM: What do you think of my nails?

Eden lazily texted back: