

NOTHING IS FAIR IN WAR.



REIGN OF A KING

KINGDOM DUET
BOOK ONE

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

RINA KENT

REIGN OF A KING

KINGDOM DUET BOOK 1

RINA KENT

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*To Cassie,
For being Jonathan King's number one fan ever since he was the villain.*

AUTHOR NOTE

Hello reader friend,

If you haven't read my books before, you might not know this, but I write darker stories that can be upsetting and disturbing. My books and main characters aren't for the faint of heart.

To remain true to the characters, the vocabulary, grammar, and spelling of *Reign of a King* is written in British English.

Reign of a King is the first book of a duet and is NOT standalone.

Kingdom Duet:

#1 [Reign of a King](#)

#2 [Rise of a Queen](#)

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BLURB

Nothing is fair in war.

Jonathan King is every bit his last name.

Powerful.

Untouchable.

Corrupted.

He's also my dead sister's husband and way older than me.

When I first met him as a clueless child, I thought he was a god.

Now, I have to confront that god to protect my business from his ruthless grip.

Little did I know that declaring a war on the king will cost me everything.

When Jonathan covets something, he doesn't only win, he conquers.

Now, he has his sights on me.

He wants to consume not only my body, but also my heart and my soul.

I fight, but there's no escaping the king in his kingdom...

PLAYLIST

Elastic Heart (Rock Version) – Written by Wolves
In The End – Linkin Park
Broken Into Two – Scarlet City & Devin Barrus
Crutch (Piano Version) – Scarlet City & Sarah Aviano
Just – Ghostlight Orchestra
The Hardest Part – Coldplay
Graveyard – Halsey
Burn It Down – Linkin Park
The Catalyst – Linkin Park
Battle Symphony – Linkin Park
Until It's Gone – Linkin Park
Sharp Edges – Linkin Park
Lose Somebody – Kygo & OneRepublic
Close – Nick Jonas & Tove Lo
Hollow – Scarlet City & Stetson Whitworth
Drowning – Scarlet City & S.P.I.T
Saved My Life – Sia
Cold – James Blunt
Wish It Was Love – Cemetery Sun

You can find the complete playlist on [Spotify](#).

A U R O R A

rastic measures.

They aren't something I want to take, but something I have to.

I'm only playing the cards I've been dealt. Well, I'm also paying for not being more careful, but it's pointless to ponder on the past.

I, of all people, know that so well.

The wedding isn't what I expected from grandiose families like the Kings and the Steels.

D It's a simple ceremony with a few people present. They're probably the elite of the elite if they managed to get invited to this event.

I sure wasn't.

Instead, I spent an entire week trying to forge an invitation. I ended up going out with one of Steel Corporation's leaders, Agnus Hamilton. He's not just the CFO. He's also Ethan Steel's right-hand man.

In a way, I killed two birds with one stone. I got to learn more about the corporation — not that he talked a lot on that subject. I also got invited to the wedding as his plus-one. I didn't even have to try as hard as I predicted.

Agnus gave me a direct opening into Ethan Steel's entourage.

He only escorted me inside the reception area, then disappeared somewhere.

I'll have to find him so he can introduce me to Ethan, but first... I need to practice my pitch again.

That's why I'm standing in a secluded area by the buffet table, nibbling on a piece of lobster and taking note of my surroundings.

The wedding reception is set up around the pool of the Steel household. The bride's home.

The afternoon's dim sun glints on the surface of the water, illuminating the light blue colour. It's an elegant picture frame filled with distinguished men in expensive tuxedos and women in designer gowns.

My research paid off in recognising almost all of the big shots present here today. I learnt early on to never be blindsided, and for that very reason, I did as much research as possible.

For instance, the shorter man in a sharp tuxedo is Lewis Knight, secretary of state. He's smiling at something the two men with aristocratic features have said. They're actual nobles with titles. Duke Tristan Rhodes and Earl Edric Astor.

It doesn't end there, though. The Prime Minister, Sebastian Queens himself, and his wife are congratulating the bride and groom.

It shouldn't be a surprise.

They all belong to the same circle of influential figures. Power oozes from every corner of this 'familial' reception.

Corrupted.

Infinite.

Untouchable.

It's like being in the sun's immediate orbit. If a normal person wants to approach that type of power, they should be ready to be burnt.

I guess I am.

Because I have no choice.

Desperation leads you to radical decisions you would've never considered before.

This is my only chance to save the livelihood of hundreds of workers, their families, their futures, and their debts — that they funnel for these rich

people. They say you always have a choice, but distinguishing between those choices is never clear cut.

Making decisions is even more difficult. If it were up to me, I wouldn't have stepped a foot here. If it were up to me, I would've avoided this circle of people like the plague.

The groom lifts his head and I slowly retreat behind a young couple who are laughing. Xander Knight, the son of the secretary of state, and a green-haired girl, who, if I remember correctly, is the daughter of a famous artist and a diplomat.

They're university kids. Just like the happy couple who got married today.

When I first heard they were both nineteen going on twenty, I admit to being surprised. I didn't realise kids these days married so young. I'm twenty-seven and it's not even on my radar. Not that it ever will be.

I'm defective, and I won't inflict my atypical life on anyone.

But hey, I'm thankful they chose to get married now. It's given me a straight opening to this scene that I would've never dreamt of walking into.

Even if Agnus had helped beyond inviting me, he wouldn't have presented me the chance to have a meeting with the great Ethan Steel, even if I'd offered my body.

Not that I would.

This is my perfect opportunity.

Today is the union of two powerful families in the United Kingdom. Ethan Steel's daughter is marrying Jonathan King's son.

In other words, the long, ruthless rivalry between the two ex-friends, Ethan and Jonathan, is coming to an end.

King Enterprises and Steel Corporation are turning the page with their children's union. They even joined forces for a partnership with the family business of Tristan Rhodes's — the duke I saw earlier.

Or that's what the magazines say. In reality, it could be something entirely different.

If there's one thing I've learnt in my life, it's that the truth isn't always what it seems. Especially with the powerful and the mighty.

The people who have money and influence pumped through their veins instead of blood think differently than the rest of us peasants. They act differently too, which is why I need to be careful.

I *can't* be caught.

Especially not now.

I do another discreet sweep of the guests, searching for Agnus. There's no trace of him or Ethan. Could they be in a private meeting?

No. The prime minister, the duke, the earl, and the Secretary of State are outside. Since Agnus and Ethan belong to their closest circle, they wouldn't leave them out. Did they perhaps go to the other side of the garden?

I need to get this over with and leave before I meet *him*.

Or worse, before he recognises me.

I can't stress enough that I *cannot* be caught. It'll blow everything up in smoke.

That's the only downside of coming here instead of scheduling a meeting in Steel Corporation. I have better chances of striking a deal, but there's also the risk of confronting *him*.

Sucking deep breaths through my nose then mouth, I smooth down my black mermaid dress with a double deep V at the front and back. It shows a bit of skin, but not too much, and moulds against my curves perfectly. I've accentuated the look with the pearls my best friend got me for my birthday.

My hair is tied elegantly at my nape and my makeup is bold — red lipstick, heavy eyeliner, and too much mascara. It's nothing like I would normally wear on a day-to-day basis.

Living my whole life in the shadows has taught me to never stand out. If I do, it's game over.

Today, I've had to go against my core survival method for a different survival game.

My appearance suits being on Agnus Hamilton's arm. Not that the man knows how to compliment, but considering his position in the great scheme

of things, I needed to look the part of his date.

And also, to pique Ethan's attention.

I'm about to head back to search for them when a presence suddenly materializes by my side.

My heel steps back involuntarily and a shudder shoots up my spine and engulfs me in a thick shroud of fog.

Run.

They found you.

Fucking run.

I swallow those thoughts and steady my breathing. I've lived here for five years. No one knows me.

No one.

Smothering the panic, I plaster on a smile and stare up at the person who's appeared out of nowhere — without even making a sound.

I know because I'm usually the best at hearing the smallest noises. It's how I've survived this long.

Glancing over my shoulder, in my closet, and under my bed isn't just a nasty habit. It's the only way I can exist.

My smile falters as I come face-to-face with none other than the groom himself.

Aiden King.

Jonathan King's only son and one of his two heirs, along with his nephew, Levi.

He has sharp features and an impressive height that allows him to look down at me. His metal grey eyes zero in on my face with awe, wonder, and what seems like...loss.

The small mole on the side of his right eye catches my attention first, causing my legs shake.

It's the same as in my memories.

His lips part, but it takes him a second to speak, "Mum?"

A tremor grips my fingers as I place the unfinished lobster back on the plate and pretend to fiddle with the food even though I'm seeing blurry

shapes. I'm thankful my voice comes out calm, unaffected even. "I'm sorry. You've got the wrong person."

He says nothing, but he doesn't attempt to move. I feel his gaze digging holes into the top of my head like a hawk.

"Why aren't you looking at me?"

I lift my head and flash him the serene smile I can fake so well. The one that hides endless chaos underneath.

Aiden continues watching me with judgemental and calculative eyes. "You're not my mother."

Phew. "That's what I said."

"Then who the fuck are you?" His attention doesn't leave my face, almost as if he's searching for something.

Or, to be more specific, *someone*.

"Excuse me?" I feign innocence.

"If you're not Alicia, why do you look exactly like her and what the fuck are you doing at my wedding?"

I keep my cool. "I was invited by Agnus."

"Why?"

"I don't know how to answer that."

He steps closer, his face and voice losing their surprised element and morphing to a steel so cold, it matches the colour of his eyes. "Why are you here? Who the fuck are you? And don't tell me this is a coincidence, because I don't believe in that."

No wonder people call Aiden a replica of his father. If he weren't eight years my junior, I'd actually be scared of him.

Scratch that. The only reason I'm standing my ground in front of him is because I'm already acquainted with the devil.

People are nothing compared to the devil. So they don't frighten me.

"Aiden?"

The bride appears by his side, holding the hem of her ample white dress. Her blonde hair falls in elegant waves down her back, giving her an angelic appearance.

“What are you doing...” she trails off when her blue eyes meet mine. Her surprised expression is louder than her new husband’s and she blinks a few times. “A-Alicia?”

“I was just telling Aiden you’ve got the wrong person.” This time, I recover quickly.

He narrows his eyes. “How do you know my name?”

Shit. “It’s all over the place. Congratulations on your wedding.”

I turn around and leave before Aiden can catch me. I have no doubt he’d question me, and I can’t allow that to happen. Besides, I have no answers for him.

I’m on a mission.

All I have to do is finish it and get it over with.

I slip through to the other side of the garden, quickening my pace as if I’m being chased. Which I might as well be.

A breath leaves me when I’m out of Aiden’s visual range. I take a pause at the back corner and collect myself.

That was close.

Which means I’m pressed for time and need to get this over with as soon as possible.

As expected, I find Agnus and Ethan here. They stand around a table with Calvin Reed, a diplomat and the father of the green-haired girl I saw earlier.

I touch my wristwatch, the one I have on me at all times. My lucky watch that’s saved me more than once. It’s almost like the one who gave it to me is looking out for me.

Here we go.

Putting my smile in place, I take a champagne flute from a passing waiter, snap my spine into a straight line, and waltz towards them.

Just when I’m about to reach them, a child no older than ten crashes into Calvin’s leg and demands his attention. The diplomat nods at the other two, takes the boy’s hand, and leads him towards the house.

Ethan and Agnus continue talking amongst themselves.

My perfect chance.

Like the pictures on the internet, Ethan's appearance is striking with light chestnut hair, a sharp jawline, and a tall, fit figure. From afar, he doesn't really share many features with the bride, but as I approach them, the resemblance is there, subtle and creeping under the surface.

I touch Agnus's bicep. "There you are."

His bland eyes fall on me. It's like they have no colour; their pale blue is washed out, almost non-existent. He's broader than Ethan, but with a less sharp edge and a more silent demeanour. His physique is very well-built for someone in his mid-forties, and he gives untouchable vibes.

When I first made him my target and figured out where he takes his morning coffees, I thought I'd have the hardest time getting him to notice me, considering he never dates or even shows interest in women.

Colour me surprised when he offered to pay for my coffee that morning.

Maybe I'm majorly underestimating myself? Who knows? No matter how tough it got, I've never reduced myself to playing these types of games before, so I have no past experience to compare to.

"Right." He smiles. Or tries to, anyway. Agnus barely has any expression, like they were washed out at birth or something. When he speaks, there's a hint of a refined Birmingham accent to his words. "Aurora, let me introduce you. This is Ethan Steel. Ethan, Aurora Harper."

We exchange business cards and I try not to grin. Acquiring Ethan's with his personal phone number on it is like hitting the jackpot.

"I told you about her," Agnus adds.

He told him about me?

Yes!

My victory dance is halted when I perceive the pause in Ethan's features. He's the emperor of Steel Corporation, mid-forties, and has a presence so strong, you're tempted to stop and look at him. It's not the intrusive type, though. It's more like the welcoming type where you just have to get in his vicinity.

That's why he's the most fitting candidate to help me out. He was in a coma for nine years, and since he returned almost three years ago, he's been