

BONUS  
SCENE



# KING OF WRATH



ANA HUANG

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## BONUS SCENE

### VIVIAN

“I don’t think that’s how you’re supposed to wrap it.” My teeth dug into my bottom lip as I struggled not to laugh at Dante’s attempt to fold the dough into a half moon.

“It’s dough,” he growled. He sealed the wrap and shoved the deformed dumpling to the side before starting on a new one. “How many ways are there to wrap it?” He spooned filling into the center with more force than necessary.

If there was one (of many) things that made him grumpy, it was not excelling at something.

“Two.” I cradled my own dumpling in one hand and used the thumb and index finger of my opposite hand to fold and pinch the sealed edge, creating pleats along the side. “The right way and the wrong way.”

Despite my best efforts to contain my amusement, laughter spilled out at Dante’s dark scowl. The effect would’ve been more terrifying had it not been for the specks of flour dusting his nose and cheek.

We were making, or rather *attempting* to make, dumplings for our Lunar New Year dinner tomorrow night. It was our first Lunar New Year as a married couple, and this time, we were celebrating at our house instead of at my parents’.

My mother was flying in while my father, whom I hadn’t spoken to since our big fight last year, celebrated with Agnes and Gunnar in Eldorra. Part of me was sad our family couldn’t be together for such an important holiday, but Agnes couldn’t make it to the U.S. anyway due to Gunnar’s parliamentary obligations. This arrangement was the best compromise.

Since it was also my first time hosting Lunar New Year celebrations, I thought it would be fun if Dante and I had a cooking night and served homemade dumplings but...maybe that wasn't the *best* idea.

My husband was talented at many things. Cooking wasn't one of them.

"Are you laughing at me?" he demanded, but his words lacked bite. He watched, his expression equal parts annoyed and indulgent, as I brushed the flour off his nose.

"Of course not." My laughter died down, but my grin remained as I stood on tiptoes and kissed the spot where the flour used to be. "Don't be so grumpy. It's the Year of the Dragon. It's *your year*."

I'd told him the truth about the animal I actually saw him as a few months ago, and I swore his ego inflated so much he practically floated to the ceiling.

I brought it up strategically whenever he was sulking about something, like when Holchester United, his favorite soccer team, lost against Chelsea because Asher Donovan had been out of commission.

"Yeah, yeah," Dante grumbled, but his face softened. "Don't think I don't know what you're doing, bringing up the dragon thing."

"I have no idea what you're talking about." I gave him a mischievous smile. "But it's okay to admit cooking isn't one of your top skills. Not everyone can be as talented as me and Greta in the kitchen."

He hitched a dark brow. "You? The person who set off the smoke alarm last week trying to make bacon?"

My smile gave way to a full-body flush.

"That wasn't my fault," I said defensively. My mind flashed to an image of a sleep-rumpled Dante walking in, wearing nothing but sweatpants and a lazy smile, and the flush deepened. "*Someone* came in and distracted me with...with..."

"His devilish handsomeness and incredible charm?" The remnants of his annoyance melted into a teasing grin.

Just like that, butterflies erupted in my stomach. He still had some flour on his cheek and that, combined with his smile, drove any thoughts of dumplings and charred bacon out of my mind.

There was something about seeing the indomitable Dante Russo so *human* that made me melt every. Single. Time.

Still, I kept my expression neutral. As much as I loved him, I didn't need his head to get any bigger than it already was.

"No," I said. "I think it was his incredible humility, ridiculous bedhead

—“ My sentence cut off into a squeal when he swept me up with a playful growl and spun me around.

“Stop!” I laughed, breathless from both the spin and the general giddiness of a night in with Dante. Work and social obligations meant we spent at least several nights a week out on the town, and it was always a treat to have a few hours alone together doing normal couple things. “You’re getting me dirty.”

His hands were still dusted with flour. I didn’t really care, but we were *supposed* to be cooking. Or something.

It was hard to think straight when he was looking up at me with *that* smile and *those* eyes.

They should be outlawed, just like his voice. They were an unfair advantage no man should possess.

“Not yet, *mia cara*.” A wicked grin slashed across his face as he set me down. His hands found my hips, steadying me while the room stopped spinning. “Give me half an hour.”

“*Dante*.” Heat rushed over my cheeks and over the back of my neck at the double meaning behind his words. “Greta will kill us.”

After much begging, cajoling, and bribing in the form of chocolate chip cookies on our part, Greta had reluctantly ceded her precious kitchen territory to us for the night. If she saw us doing anything except cooking in here, she’d ban us for life and make us eat undercooked pasta for the next month.

Still, I didn’t resist when Dante cupped my cheek and brushed his mouth over mine. “I’ll take that chance.”

His velvety reply vibrated down my spine and kicked my pulse up another notch.

“You’re a bad influence, Mr. Russo.” My half-hearted protest drifted into a sigh of pleasure when he kissed me again, deeper this time, with a firm tenderness that sent warmth spiraling through my insides.

It’d been four months since our wedding and almost a year and a half since our engagement, but it didn’t matter how long we’d been married or how many times we’d kissed. Every time felt like the first time in the best way possible.

I wound my arms around his neck as his hand slid from my cheek to the back of my neck. His tongue swept against mine in a leisurely, expert caress, and the edges of my mind turned hazy.

Who cared about the flour or dumplings? That was what showers and takeout were for. Worst came to worst, we could order in food—



“What are you doing?”

Greta’s voice doused the moment more effectively than a bucket of ice water.

Dante and I broke apart faster than two teenagers caught making out by their parents. His hand dropped from my face, and our guilty stares swung in unison toward the doorway, where Greta stood with a disapproving frown and her hands planted on her hips.

*Uh oh.*

Images of stale pasta and unseasoned meat served as punishment flashed through my mind. She was understanding when it came to most things, but she was unyielding when it came to her kitchen rules.

Namely, anything other than eating, cooking, and yelling at the TV was actively discouraged.

Dante recovered first. “We’re taking a break,” he said, the picture of innocence. “Making dumplings is exhausting.”

“*Making dumplings?*” Greta snorted. “Is *that* what the kids are calling it these days?”

Dante’s mouth twitched while I buried my face in his chest to hide the laugh bubbling up my throat. I couldn’t help it. We were both adults, and he was technically her boss, but there were many times when Greta treated us like a stern but loving grandmother who was fed up with our antics.

Actually, now that I thought about it...that was a pretty accurate description of our relationship.

“I told you, no hanky panky in my kitchen! And what is that?” Greta gasped. “Are those supposed to be...*dumplings?*”

She must’ve spotted Dante’s creations.

My shoulders shook with silent laughter when I pictured her horrified expression.

Dante’s arm tightened around me. “Yes.” A defensive note crept into his voice. “Obviously.”

“Absolutely not!” Greta sounded like he’d just told her we were serving fast food at a state dinner. “We are *not* serving those to guests in my house.”

“It’s actually my house,” Dante said in response to Greta’s statement.

She ignored him. “Out! Out, both of you! I’ll do it myself. My God, imagine sitting down for dinner and seeing *those* things on your plate...”

Her mutters trailed off into a stream of furious Italian as Dante and I reluctantly left the kitchen.

“My dumplings weren’t *that* bad,” he muttered during our walk down the hall. “Were they?”

“They were...” I tried to speak through my laughter. “They were pretty bad. I’m so sorry.”

“You’re supposed to have my back, *Mrs. Russo*,” Dante said pointedly, but a small smile curved his lips. “However, Greta interrupting us might be a blessing in disguise.”

“Oh? And why’s that?” I cocked an eyebrow even as my heart sped up at the devilish gleam in his eyes.

All remaining levity faded when he pulled me close enough for our bodies to press against each other. Heat bloomed in its place, spreading through my veins and curling low in my stomach as he rubbed a thumb over my hip.

“Never finished dirtying you up in the kitchen,” he drawled. “Now I get to finish the job.”

The words pulsed between my legs.

It was early February in New York, but I suddenly wished the air-conditioning was on instead of the heat. I was burning up.

“Who said I’ll let you?” I breathed, but another sigh escaped when Dante dipped his head and skimmed his lips over my neck.

It was unfair. He *knew* I had a weakness for neck kisses.

“Hmm...” He kissed his way leisurely up to my mouth. “I can be *very* convincing.”

“I don’t know.” The butterflies returned, more numerous than ever. “I might need a lot of convincing...”

I felt him smile. “Then it’s a good thing we have all night.”

We didn’t try returning to the kitchen that night. Instead, we retreated to our bedroom where, hours later, I could confirm his claim with one hundred percent confidence: my husband was, in fact, *very* convincing.

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xo, Ana

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