

“The life that love designed— a road I never dreamed, yet somehow it was mine.” Anita Delgado-Kapurthala, *India*

They say destiny is written in the stars. I have always believed it moves to a deeper rhythm—the quiet pulse of the universe itself. This life is my masterpiece, the story heaven chose for me. The girl who once only dared to dream now holds her future in her hands.

I stood alone on the white marble balcony of the Jagatjit Palace. The scent of jasmine and sandalwood drifted upward from the gardens, heavy in the warm Indian night. Beyond the sleeping city, the Himalayas carved a dark line against the moonlit sky.

My fingers brushed the cold diamonds of the *diadème à la Russe* resting upon my head.

To the world, I was an enigma. A scandal. A living fairy tale. Rani Prem Kaur Sahiba—the Spanish Maharani of Kapurthala—draped in silk, guarded by silence.

But the mirror does not lie. Memory is merciless.

Beneath the weight of the crown, beneath the flawless French that now flowed so easily from my lips, I knew the truth. If I listened closely—past the distant drums of the palace—I could still hear it: the sharp crack of castanets, the frantic strum of a guitar, the wild laughter echoing through the narrow streets of Peña.

I was not born a queen.

I was a stubborn, hungry dancer from Málaga—unwilling to accept the life the world had written for me.

My story did not begin in marble halls, but in a crowded theater in Madrid, thick with smoke, cheap wine, and desperation. It began the moment a foreign king stepped inside, looked beyond the dust and poverty—

and saw the fire.

This is the story of how that fire consumed everything. How I traded a comb for a crown. How an Andalusian girl conquered an empire.

May 1906.

Spain was intoxicated with celebration. A new queen was about to be crowned through her marriage to King Alfonso XIII, and royalty from across the world had gathered in Madrid to witness the occasion. Among the distinguished guests was the Maharaja of Kapurthala, one of India's most fascinating and enigmatic rulers.

But beneath the pageantry and splendor, another Spain existed.

Its streets were filled with poverty, unemployment, and growing resentment toward the monarchy. While the aristocracy prepared to celebrate, anger simmered among those who felt forgotten.

Then, on the very day of the royal wedding, the unthinkable happened.

As the newlyweds made their way to the reception, an anarchist launched a bomb at the King's carriage.

In an instant, celebration gave way to chaos.

History remembers the explosion.

But destiny had other plans.

For from the smoke and confusion of that fateful day would emerge one of the most extraordinary love stories of the twentieth century.

Two souls from opposite worlds.

One, a humble Spanish dancer struggling to help her family survive.

The other, one of the wealthiest and most enigmatic rulers in the world.

Separated by continents.

Bound by destiny.

And from the ashes of tragedy would rise a romance that would captivate Europe and forever unite Spain and India.

This...

is how our story begins.

CHAPTER ONE

The Promise

“They say rebellion is worse than its instigator—but it is the king’s injustice that makes me a giant.”

[Madrid, May 31, 1906]

High above the Mayor Street, in a cramped room that smelled of stale tobacco and cold ambition, stood Mateo Morral. Inside the regicide’s mind, pure idealism and blind panic collided like violent storm fronts.

The ceremony had ended, and the bronze throat of every church bell in Madrid now filled the air, their joyous peals echoing across the city and rolling over the Spanish countryside. It was the sound the nation had been waiting for—the announcement of a new Queen.

Freedom. Justice. Revolution. Words that were once whispered in the shadows now roared in his ears. He told himself the act was necessary—a bloody sacrifice demanded by history. And yet, beneath that iron conviction, absolute terror lurked: the terror of death, of failure, of public ridicule. *The terror of bleeding for nothing.*

But there was no turning back.

Juliana’s face burned in his thoughts, brighter than the harsh noonday sun striking the Madrid cobblestones below.

She will love me, he thought, his heart hammering against his ribs. *The man who liberates Spain... the man who dares. I am that man.*

This was not merely politics. It was pure, unfiltered devotion. A final, grand offering. If her affection could not be won by reason, he would purchase it with blood.

He sat alone in the stifling gloom of his fifth-floor boarding house and reviewed the plan one last time: the angle of the drop, the exact distance to the street, the narrow escape route. He ruthlessly suffocated pity before it could even take a breath.

"A weapon does not commit regicide," he reminded himself aloud, his voice raspy. "A man does."

Somewhere inside the small room, a faint ticking echoed against the peeling wallpaper—or perhaps it was only the frantic drumming of his own pulsating heart. After months of meticulous preparation, the hour had finally arrived. It was now or never.

A manuscript rested open in Mateo Morral's hands. Its anonymous editorial was not merely political rhetoric; it was a manual. A manifesto designed for dismantling a monarchy. On the cover, bold letters proclaimed: *The Vanguard of Change!*

"With every heartbeat, a cry for freedom, With every breath, the weight of truth. Spain weeps— And for love, I release terror. I do it all for you."

He read the cover again, letting the verses anchor him. Slowly, he placed the manuscript on the nightstand. He reached for a leather tobacco pouch and rolled a cigarette with mechanical, deadened precision. His fingers did not tremble. *His soul did.*

He rose from the chair. The suitcase lay hidden beneath the bed. He reached for it with extreme care, lifting it onto the mattress. The brass key turned in the lock without protest. Inside lay the Orsini bomb.

Smooth. Cold. Merciless. It was a weapon designed purely for impact. No fuse to light. No agonizing wait. It was thunder, compressed into heavy iron. He lifted it.

Outside the window, the city roared.

Cheers surged like massive ocean waves crashing against stone. A hundred thousand voices celebrated the Spanish King and his new British bride. Church bells rang in a deafening chorus. Banners and flags fluttered from every balcony. Madrid exhaled pure joy, entirely without suspicion.

“From afar the shouting swells— A crowd in celebration, While hell is being sown.”

The battle inside him intensified. *Heart against doctrine. Weak flesh against rigid ideology.*

The royal newlyweds advanced through streets swollen with devotion. It was nearing two in the afternoon when the grand procession finally approached the inn. Less than half a kilometer remained before they would reach the safety of the wedding reception at the Royal Palace.

Mateo stepped out onto the fifth-floor balcony like a dark sentinel. In his hands, he cradled a bouquet of vibrant flowers, their petals still dewy and soft, concealing the cold metal sphere within.

Below him, Mayor Street had been transformed into a river of silk. Under the unrelenting sun, thousands of umbrellas—canaries, creams, and pale lavenders—bobbed in a synchronized dance, creating a protective canopy for the elite. It was a masterpiece of refinement; the soft, rhythmic rustle of lace fans provided a delicate percussion, a collective heartbeat from a crowd obsessed with the crown.

Then came the sound of the state: the Royal Guard led the way, their breastplates gleaming like mirrors under the noon sun. Behind them, the marching band erupted—joyous, thunderous, and unrelenting. The brass notes bounced off the stone balconies, a triumphant anthem that seemed to vibrate in Mateo's very teeth.

Mateo watched the silk river flow and the gold-braided soldiers pass, his fingers tightening around the stems of his bouquet until they nearly snapped. The bells and the brass sang of a glorious beginning, but the iron hidden within his flowers spoke only of an end.

The royal carriage emerged from the sea of people—gleaming, golden, and triumphant.

"Today I am police, judge, and jury," he whispered to himself.

The Madrid sun scorched the back of his neck. Sweat traced a cold line down his spine. Still, he did not move. In the reflection of the open windowpane, he saw Juliana. Her dark eyes. Her mouth. Her promise.

For Spain. For freedom. For you.

The carriage drew nearer. The distance shrank into seconds. His blood turned to ice. *There is no turning back—not in love, not in war.*

"Now!"

The word tore from his throat, screaming out all the agonizing weight in his soul. The bouquet left his hand.

Three seconds of falling. It was nothing more than a colorful, beautiful stain against the bright blue sky. Time fractured. And then—The Blast!

The bouquet didn't fall like a gift; it plummeted like a leaden bird. Then, the world tore open. It was as if hell itself had been let loose upon the cobblestones of the Calle Mayor. In a heartbeat, the masterpiece of refinement was incinerated. The joyous ceremony was instantly swallowed by blinding, acrid smoke and the jagged shriek of tearing iron.

The "river of silk" became a sea of fire. Splintered wood from the royal carriage flew through the air like lethal arrows, and the rhythmic percussion of the lace fans was replaced by a chorus of absolute chaos.

Mateo watched from above as the air turned gray. Below, the screams began—high, thin, and primal—cutting through the ringing in his ears. The devotion of the crowd had been replaced by the frantic scramble of the dying. The Queen's white dress was no longer a symbol of a new beginning; it was a ghost lost in a charcoal haze. The iron had spoken, and the beginning it promised was a nightmare.

"I did it!" he shouted over the ringing in his ears. "I did it!"

But the triumphant cry dissolved instantly into the thick, rising ash. Below him, the golden carriage was shattered. Horses reared in agony. Bodies fell to the street. Triumph and horror fused together in one violent, unforgettable instant.

Acrid smoke filled his lungs. It tasted of iron. It tasted of her.

Mateo leaned back against the brick wall, his breath ragged and shallow. "The end of an era," he murmured to the empty room. *Or perhaps, the beginning of something much darker.*

"I did it," he whispered again, closing his eyes. "I did it, for you."