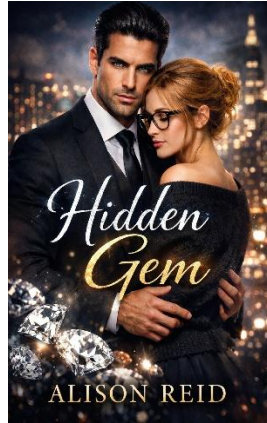


# Hidden Gem

by Alison Reid



Dominic abruptly put his briefcase down, his mind made up before he even realised what he was doing. His instincts took over, and before Amanda could say another word, he closed the distance between them. Gently, yet with purpose, he reached up and removed her glasses, placing them carefully on her desk. Amanda froze, startled, as his hands settled lightly on her arms, pulling her toward him.

“Dominic, what—” she began, but her words were cut off as he cupped her face with his hands and tilted her head slightly upward. Then, without hesitation, he kissed her.

It wasn’t a hesitant kiss. It was firm and full of intention, as though he had been holding back for far too long. Amanda’s mind went blank for a moment, her breath catching in her throat. His lips were warm and commanding, and the world seemed to tilt as she melted into the moment.

Her initial surprise melted away. Her hands slid up to his shoulders, then into his hair, pulling him closer. Her pulse raced as their lips met, a heady mix of fire and softness leaving her utterly breathless.

The kiss deepened, raw and consuming, filled with an unspoken intensity that made her head spin. His tongue brushed against hers, igniting a fire that sent shivers cascading down her spine. Her breath hitched as a soft moan of pleasure escaped her, unbidden, and her fingers tightened in his silky hair, pulling him even closer. It was unlike anything she had ever experienced—a kiss that left her utterly breathless and completely undone.

“Well, now I know why you haven’t been returning my calls,” Daniel said from the doorway, his tone sharp with irritation.

Amanda jerked back from Dominic, her face heating as she fumbled for her glasses, slipping them back on as if they might shield her from the awkwardness of the moment. “Daniel...” she began, her voice faltering.

Daniel stepped further into the room, his expression a mixture of anger and disbelief. “So, you’re involved with your boss now?”

Amanda opened her mouth to respond, but Dominic moved forward, calm yet commanding. His gaze was icy, his voice steady as he addressed Daniel. “I think it’s time for you to leave.”

Daniel scoffed, folding his arms. “Oh, so you’re the knight in shining armour now, huh? Is this why she’s been avoiding me? Because of you?”

“Daniel,” Dominic said coolly, his tone brooking no argument, “Amanda’s choices are none of your business.”

“None of my business?” Daniel snapped, his gaze darting between Amanda and Dominic. “She led me on, and now this?”

“I didn’t lead you on,” Amanda interrupted, her voice trembling but firm. “I was clear. I told you I wasn’t interested in another date.”

“Really?” Daniel countered, his anger boiling over. “Because your actions don’t exactly match your words, Amanda.” His eyes darted back to Dominic. “Or is this your way of climbing the corporate ladder?”

Dominic's jaw tightened, his fists clenching at his sides. "That's enough," he said, his voice low and dangerous. He stepped closer to Daniel, his presence towering. "Amanda has asked you to leave. I suggest you listen before I make you."

Daniel glared at Dominic for a moment, his anger simmering, but he took a step back. "Fine," he spat. "But don't come running to me when this blows up in your face, Amanda."

Amanda's heart raced as Daniel turned and stormed out, slamming the door behind him.

Silence settled over the office, heavy and charged. Amanda stared at the door, her thoughts a chaotic mess. Slowly, she turned to Dominic.

"Are you okay?" Dominic asked gently, his earlier harshness replaced with concern.

She nodded shakily. "I... I think so."

Dominic stepped back, giving her space, though the intensity of the moment still hung in the air. "I'm sorry," he said softly. "I didn't mean to put you in an uncomfortable position."

Amanda shook her head, her voice steady. "Don't apologise. You were just trying to help."

Dominic's eyes softened, his gaze lingering on her for a moment longer than necessary. "I don't think he'll bother you again."

"No, I don't think he will," she murmured, her thoughts drifting back to the kiss. Her fingers brushed the edge of her desk, as if grounding herself.

"You should go home," Dominic said, his voice quieter now. "Take the weekend to relax."

Amanda nodded, gathering her things in silence. As she moved to leave, she paused at the door, glancing back at him.

“Dominic...” she began, hesitating.

“Yes?”

“Thank you,” she said softly, her gaze meeting his.

“You don’t need to thank me,” he replied, his tone low, almost tender.

She gave him a faint smile and left, her heart pounding—not because of Daniel’s confrontation, but because of the way Dominic had kissed her.

And the way she had kissed him back.

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