



Rich People Problems: A Novel

By Kevin Kwan

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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

Kevin Kwan, bestselling author of *Crazy Rich Asians* (soon to be a **MAJOR MOTION PICTURE** starring **Constance Wu, Henry Golding, Michelle Yeoh and Gemma Chan**) and *China Rich Girlfriend*, is back with an uproarious new novel of a family riven by fortune, an ex-wife driven psychotic with jealousy, a battle royal fought through couture gown sabotage, and the heir to one of Asia's greatest fortunes locked out of his inheritance.

When Nicholas Young hears that his grandmother, Su Yi, is on her deathbed, he rushes to be by her bedside—but he's not alone. The entire Shang-Young clan has convened from all corners of the globe to stake claim on their matriarch's massive fortune. With each family member vying to inherit Tyersall Park—a trophy estate on 64 prime acres in the heart of Singapore—Nicholas's childhood home turns into a hotbed of speculation and sabotage. As her relatives fight over heirlooms, Astrid Leong is at the center of her own storm, desperately in love with her old sweetheart Charlie Wu, but tormented by her ex-husband—a man hell bent on destroying Astrid's reputation and relationship. Meanwhile Kitty Pong, married to China's second richest man, billionaire Jack Bing, still feels second best next to her new step-daughter, famous fashionista Colette Bing. A sweeping novel that takes us from the elegantly appointed mansions of Manila to the secluded private islands in the Sulu Sea, from a kidnapping at Hong Kong's most elite private school to a surprise marriage proposal at an Indian palace, caught on camera by the telephoto lenses of paparazzi, Kevin Kwan's hilarious, gloriously wicked new novel reveals the long-buried secrets of Asia's most privileged families and their rich people problems.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Flashy, funny... Delicious, the juicy stuff of classic high-society drama... *Rich People Problems* is a fun tabloid romp full of over-the-top shenanigans, like a society party brawl that ruins both a Ramon Orlina glass sculpture of the hostess’s breasts and ‘a special pig that had only eaten truffles its entire life and was flown in from Spain...’ A memorable, laugh-out-loud Asian glitz fest that’s a pure pleasure to read.” —**Steph Cha, USA Today**

“I gobbled all three volumes of Kevin Kwan’s gossipy, name-droppy and wickedly funny *Crazy Rich Asians* trilogy as if they were popcorn. (Really fresh, still-warm popcorn, with that good European butter... but I digress.) The novels, set among three intergenerational and ultrarich Chinese families and peppered with hilarious explanatory footnotes, are set mostly in Singapore but flit easily from one glamorous world city to another... Irresistible.” —**Moira Macdonald, The Seattle Times**

“Kevin Kwan has done it again. The mastermind behind the delicious *Crazy Rich Asians* series has drawn a cult-like following with his extravagant tales of Asia’s upper echelon. He’s back at with the series’s final installment, *Rich People Problems* (rest assured, it’s just as enthralling as the trilogy’s first two volumes).” —**Isabel Jones, InStyle**

“[A] hilarious family drama... This delightfully wicked family saga will have you laughing over your summer daiquiris at the long-buried secrets of Asia’s most privileged families and their rich people problems.” —**Redbook Magazine, “20 Summer Beach Reads to Stock Up On Now”**

“There are a lot of lines in Kevin Kwan’s forthcoming novel *Rich People Problems* that will make you both roll your eyes and chuckle at the pure absurdity of the characters... Pure entertainment. Think: Bravo’s ‘Housewives’ but with a lot more money and, as a result, a lot more drama.” —**Taylor Bryant, Nylon**

“Thank god for Kwan... In *Rich People Problems*—Kwan’s third installment in his *Crazy Rich Asians* series—even more insane family hijinks unfold when greed and jealousy get fortune-hungry schemers up in a wild tizzy. Catch up on the whole saga before the film’s release.” —**W Magazine**

About the Author

Kevin Kwan is the author of the international bestsellers *Crazy Rich Asians*, soon to be a major motion picture, and *China Rich Girlfriend*. Born in Singapore, he has called New York’s West Village home since 1995. For the latest news and information, please visit:

www.kevinkwanbooks.com

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CHAPTER ONE

Davos, Switzerland

Edison Cheng stared up at the soaring honeycomb-structured ceiling in the vast white auditorium, feeling on top of the world. I’m here. I’m finally here! After years of Olympic-level networking, Eddie had at long last made it—he had been invited to attend the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos. Strictly

by invitation only, this prestigious event was the most elite schmoozefest on the planet.

Every January, the world's most important heads of state, politicians, philanthropists, CEOs, tech leaders, thought leaders, social activists, social entrepreneurs, and, of course, movie stars would descend upon this secluded ski resort high in the Swiss Alps in their private jets, check in to their luxurious hotels, put on their \$5,000 ski jackets and ski boots, and engage in meaningful dialogues about such urgent issues as global warming and rising inequality.

And now Eddie was part of this ultraexclusive club. As the recently appointed senior executive vice chairman of Private Banking (Global) for the Liechtenburg Group, he now found himself standing in the middle of the futuristic auditorium at the Congress Centre, breathing in the rarefied air and catching slivers of his own reflection in the thin chrome leg of an auditorium chair. He was wearing his new bespoke Sartoria Ripense suit, which had been outfitted with an inner lining of ten-ply cashmere so that he never had to wear a ski jacket over it. His new Corthay squirrel suede chukkas had special rubber soles, so he would never slip on the slick Alpine streets. On his wrist was his newest horological acquisition—a rose gold A. Lange & Söhne Richard Lange “Pour le Mérite,” peeking out the precise amount from his sleeve cuff so other watchophiles would see what he was wearing. But most important of all was what he wore over this sartorial splendor—a black lanyard at the end of which was attached a white plastic badge with his name printed in the middle: Edison Cheng.

Eddie fondled the slick plastic badge as if it were a jewel-encrusted amulet, personally bestowed on him by the God of Davos. This badge distinguished him from all the pee-ons at the conference. He wasn't some PR hack, journalist, or one of the common attendees. This white plastic badge with the blue line at the bottom meant that he was an official delegate.

Eddie glanced around the room at all the clusters of people in hushed conversations, trying to see which dictator, despot, or director he could recognize and connect with. Out of the corner of his eye, he spotted a tall Chinese man wearing a bright orange ski parka peeking in through the auditorium's side door, seemingly a little lost. Wait a minute, I know that guy. Isn't that Charlie Wu?

“Oy—Charlie!” Eddie yelled, a little too loudly, as he rushed over toward Charlie. Wait till he sees my official delegate badge!

Charlie beamed at him in recognition. “Eddie Cheng! Did you just get in from Hong Kong?”

“I came from Milan, actually. I was at the men's fall fashion shows—front-row seat at Etro.”

“Wow. I guess being one of Hong Kong Tattle's Best Dressed Men is serious work, isn't it?” Charlie quipped.

“Actually, I made it into the Best Dressed Hall of Fame last year,” Eddie replied earnestly. He gave Charlie a quick once-over, noticing that he was wearing khaki pants with cargo pockets and a navy blue pullover under his bright orange parka. What a pity—he used to be so fashionable when he was younger, and now he's dressed like every other tech-geek nobody. “Where's your badge, Charlie?” Eddie asked, flashing his own proudly.

“Oh yes, we're supposed to wear them at all times, aren't we? Thanks for reminding me—it's somewhere buried in my messenger bag.” Charlie dug around for a few seconds before fishing out his badge, and Eddie glanced at it, his curiosity morphing into shocked dismay. Charlie was holding an all-white badge affixed

with a shiny holographic sticker. Fucky fuck, this was the most coveted badge! The one they only gave to world leaders! The only other person he had seen so far wearing that badge was Bill Clinton! How the fuck did Charlie get one? All he did was run Asia's biggest tech company!

Trying to mask his envy, Eddie blurted, "Hey, are you attending my panel—Apocalypse Asia: How to Secure Your Assets When the China Bubble Really Bursts?"

"I'm actually on my way to give a talk to IGWEL. What time do you go on?"

"Two o'clock. What's your talk about?" Eddie asked, thinking that he could somehow tag along with Charlie.

"I don't have anything prepared, really. I think Angela Merkel and some of the Scandinavians just wanted to pick my brain."

Just then, Charlie's executive assistant, Alice, walked up to join them.

"Alice, look who I found! I knew we'd bump into someone from back home sooner or later," Charlie said.

"Mr. Cheng, so nice to see you here. Charlie—could I have a quick word?"

"Sure."

Alice glanced at Eddie, who looked only too eager for her to continue while he was standing right there. "Er . . . would you mind coming with me for a moment?" she said diplomatically, guiding Charlie into a side reception room furnished with several lounge chairs and glass-cube coffee tables.

"What's up? Are you still trying to recover from sitting at the same breakfast table with Pharrell?" Charlie teased.

Alice smiled tensely. "There's been a developing situation all morning, and we didn't want to disturb you until we knew more."

"Well, spit it out."

Alice took a deep breath before beginning. "I just got the latest update from our head of security in Hong Kong. I don't quite know how to tell you this, but Chloe and Delphine are missing."

"What do you mean missing?" Charlie was stunned—his daughters were under round-the-clock surveillance, and their pickups and drop-offs were handled with military precision by his SAS-trained security team. Missing was not a variable in their lives.

"Team Chungking was scheduled to pick them up outside Diocesan at 3:50 p.m., but the girls couldn't be located at the school."

"Couldn't be located . . ." Charlie mumbled in shock.

Alice continued, "Chloe didn't respond to any of her texts, and Delphine never showed up for choir at two. They thought maybe she sneaked off with her classmate Kathryn Chan to that frozen yogurt shop like she did

last time, but then Kathryn turned up at choir practice and Delphine didn't."

"Did either of them activate their panic codes?" Charlie asked, trying to remain calm.

"No, they didn't. Their phones both appear to have been deactivated, so we can't trace them. Team 2046 has already spoken with Commander Kwok—the Hong Kong police have been placed on high alert. We also have four of our own teams searching everywhere for them, and the school is now reviewing all their security-camera footage with Mr. Tin."

"I'm assuming someone's talked to their mother?" Charlie's wife—from whom he was estranged—lived in their house on The Peak, and the children spent every other week with her.

"Isabel can't be reached. She told the housekeeper that she was meeting her mother for lunch at the Kowloon Cricket Club, but her mother reports that they haven't spoken all week."

Just then, the cell phone rang again and Alice quickly answered. She listened in silence, nodding her head every now and then. Charlie looked at her pensively. This couldn't be happening. This couldn't be happening. Ten years ago his brother Rob had been kidnapped by the Eleven Finger Triad. It was like déjà vu all over again.

"Okay. Tor jeh, tor jeh," Alice said, hanging up. Looking at Charlie, she reported, "That was the leader of Team Angels. They now think that Isabel might have left the country. They spoke to the upstairs maid, and Isabel's passport is missing. But for some reason she didn't take any suitcases."

"Isn't she in the middle of some new treatment?"

"Yes, but apparently she didn't show up at her psychiatrist appointment this week."

Charlie let out a deep sigh. This wasn't a good sign.

CHAPTER TWO

fullerton hotel, singapore

Every month, Rosalind Fung, the property heiress, hosted a Christian Fellowship Banquet for three hundred of her closest girlfriends in the opulent ballroom of the Fullerton Hotel. An invitation to this occasion was highly coveted by a certain segment of Singapore society regardless of their religious affiliation as it was a seal of approval from the old guard (there wasn't a single Chindo or Mainlander in sight), and also because the food was heavenly—Rosalind brought in her personal chefs, who took over the hotel's kitchens for one day and prepared an enormous buffet feast consisting of the most mouthwatering Singaporean dishes. Most important—this biblical bacchanal was completely free of charge thanks to Rosalind's generosity, although guests were asked to contribute something to the offering basket immediately following the closing prayer.

Having strategically chosen a table closest to the buffet area, Daisy Foo sighed as she watched Araminta Lee standing in line at the noodle station dishing out some mee siam. "Aiyah—that Araminta! Bein kar ani laau!"

"She doesn't look old. She just doesn't have any makeup on, that's all. Those supermodel types look like nothing on earth without makeup," Nadine Shaw said as she tucked into her steaming bowl of mee rebus noodles.

Dousing her mee goreng with more chili oil, Eleanor Young commented, “It has nothing to do with that. I used to see her swim at the Churchill Club, and even when she was coming out of the pool dripping wet, she looked beautiful without a stitch of makeup on. Her face has just taken a turn, that’s all. She has one of those faces that I always knew would age badly. What is she . . . twenty-seven, twenty-eight now? It’s all over for her, lah.”

At that moment, Lorena Lim and Carol Tai arrived at the table with plates piled dangerously high with food. “Wait, wait . . . who’s aging badly?” Lorena inquired eagerly.

“Araminta Lee. Over at that table with all the Khoo women. Doesn’t she look haggard?” Nadine said.

“Alamak, bite your tongue, Nadine! Didn’t you know she just had a miscarriage?” Carol whispered.

The ladies all stared at Carol, mouths agape. “Again? Are you joking? Who told you, lah?” Daisy demanded, still chewing on her mee pok.

“Who else? Kitty, lor. Kitty and Araminta are the best of friends now, and ever since this latest miscarriage, she’s been spending a lot of time at Kitty’s house playing with Gisele. She’s completely heartbroken.”

“How often do you see Kitty and Gisele?” Lorena asked, marveling that Carol could be so forgiving of her ex-daughter-in-law—the same woman who had cheated on her son, Bernard, with a man Kitty met at the funeral of Carol’s late husband and who subsequently dragged Bernard through a particularly acrimonious divorce and custody battle. (Of course, it didn’t hurt that Carol abhorred her son’s new lifestyle of yoga and “that ridiculous Jurassic diet,” both of which she considered to be satanic.)

“I go over to Kitty’s at least once a week, and Gisele comes to church with me every Sunday,” Carol proudly reported.

“Is it healthy for Araminta to be playing with your granddaughter when she just lost her own baby?” Nadine wondered out loud.

“Aiyah, I’m sure old Mrs. Khoo must be giving Araminta soooo much pressure to produce a grandson! It’s been five years since she married Colin! My Nicky and Rachel have been married for two years now, and they still won’t give me a grandchild!” Eleanor complained.

“But Araminta is still young. She has plenty of time, lah,” Nadine argued.

“With all of Dorothy Khoo’s side disinherited, Puan’s side good-for-nothings, and Nigel Khoo running off and marrying that Russian cabaret singer, who is obviously too old to seh kiah, Colin and Araminta are the last hope to carry on the Khoo name,” Daisy commented. Having been born a Wong, of the tin-mining Wongs, Daisy had an encyclopedic knowledge of Singapore’s social history.

The ladies all shook their heads, casting pitiful glances at Araminta, who to anyone else but these women’s hypercritical eyes looked perfectly gorgeous and lovely in her yellow striped minidress from Jacquemus.

“Well, Eleanor, your niece Astrid just arrived. There’s one girl who never seems to age,” Carol observed.

All the women turned to look as Astrid descended the sweeping curved staircase with her mother, Felicity Leong; the society queen Mrs. Lee Yong Chien; and another elderly lady decked out in a cobalt blue

sequined hijab.

“Who is that Malay woman wearing that ginormous ruby choker? If that center stone looks as big as it does from here, it must be the size of a lychee up close!” Lorena exclaimed. Having been married into the L’Orient Jewelry family for more than three decades, she definitely knew her rocks.

“Oh that’s the Dowager Sultana of Perawak. She’s staying with the Leongs, of course,” Eleanor reported.

“Alamak, having royalty as houseguests is such a nuisance!” Daisy complained.

Lorena, like most of the other women in the ballroom, scrutinized Astrid from head to toe as she walked to her table wearing what appeared to be a crisp men’s button-down shirt tucked into exquisitely cut navy-and-white gingham cigarette trousers. “It’s true, Astrid actually looks younger and younger every time I see her. Isn’t she in her late thirties by now? She looks like an MGS girl coming off the school bus! I bet you she must be sneaking off somewhere and getting things done.”

“I can tell you she hasn’t had a thing done. She’s not the type,” Eleanor said.

“It’s how she puts it all together. The other girls her age are dressed up like Christmas trees but just look at Astrid . . . hair in a sleek ponytail, ballet flats, not a drop of jewelry except that cross . . . is it turquoise? And that outfit! She looks like Audrey Hepburn on the way to a screen test,” Daisy said approvingly as she fished around in her new Céline handbag for a toothpick. “Blah-dee-hell! See what my snobby daughter-in-law forces me to carry? She gave me this fancy handbag for my birthday because she’s embarrassed of being seen next to me when I’m carrying my no-name purse, but I can’t ever find anything in here! It’s so damn deep, and there are so many damn pockets!”

“Daisy, will you please stop swearing? We are in the Lord’s presence tonight, you know,” Carol admonished.

As if on cue, the Christian Fellowship Banquet’s hostess, Rosalind Fung, got up from her table and walked onto the stage. A short, plumpish woman in her mid-sixties with a frizzy spiral perm, Rosalind was dressed in what seemed to be the regulation uniform of every middle-aged old-money Singaporean heiress—a sleeveless floral blouse, probably purchased from the clearance rack at John Little, taupe elastic-waist pants, and orthopedic open-toe sandals. She smiled happily from the podium at her gathered friends.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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