

Royal Contract 1021

Chapter 1021: Devil's advocate

He had been staring into a blank space for as long as he could remember. He knew he had several cases to review, but his mind could not focus on any of his work. It kept floating in the air as it reminded him of dinner last night.

After her big revelation, he remembered asking several questions, but after that, he had been quiet, absorbing the news. He had no idea how to react to it. Should he be happy or wary of his current situation? Or rather her situation.

"Did you see David today?" He asked his secretary when he interrupted him with a phone call.

"No, Sir Gerald. He has not come to work yet." He could hear the sadness in her voice as she reported what was happening to their boss. "But Sir Evan is in his office if you need me to call him." She offered instead.

He heard about what happened to his fiancée. It was a terrible accident, and she was still in a coma. David, the managing partner of this firm, had not shown up for work, not wanting to leave her side.

Evan, the other partner, was probably drowning in his workload. He had to take on dealing with the responsibilities of his partner too. Besides that, he learned that Evan was also busy preparing for a wedding.

"No, I will just drop by his office later." He informed her, not wanting to bother Evan at that moment. Then he tried to get back to his work.

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Gerald had offered to help since he was one of the senior partners in the firm, but it seemed he could not also focus on his job. No matter how he looked at the papers before him, his mind kept going back to the woman he had left in his apartment, still sleeping.

It was one of the reasons he avoided entering a relationship since being involved in a commitment always had its complications, especially in his situation.

If his enemies discovered Haley's condition, they would think they could use her and his baby against him. Now, what should he do with her? Should he marry her? But that would put him in a tight position.

"Sir, I think you forgot to answer your call." His secretary knocked on his door, pointing to his phone.

His thought had him going in circles again, forgetting that his secretary had come in because of a phone call. He quickly took the receiver and answered his call.

"I am sorry for keeping you waiting, Governor." He was expecting his call after his rendezvous with Alfred last night.

He knew that, just like Alfred, he would insist that he take the election seriously. The campaign period would start soon. Several entities showed signs of their wish to be endorsed by the Governor.

But Governor Stanley insisted that he preferred him over the other candidates. Now, he might have an idea why he picked him. The Governor was not as clean as he thought he was, based on his association with Mr. Rosley.

“That is ok. I know that you are a busy man. But I talked with my friend, Alfred. He mentioned that you are planning to propose to his daughter soon.” He heard the old politician say.

News certainly flew fast, but it probably added a few details here and there. He could not remember committing to Alfred yet. However, Haley’s father seemed to assume he had already agreed to his plans.

But conversing with the Governor was like talking to Alfred. The man continued his suggestions for the coming campaign as if his opinion did not matter. He appeared to believe that he would go along with their plans willingly.

“You know what, Governor.” Gerald cut the other man short, not allowing him to finish the remainder of his sentence. “I will call you back when I have some free time.” With that, he ended the call.

He did not care if he offended one of the highest-ranking officials in their state. But he was not ready to deal with Alfred and the Governor and their politics, hidden agendas, and interest in manipulating him.

Nevertheless, he knew that they needed him more than he needed them. Therefore, he could dictate how this situation would go, not them. He would take care of them once he had made a decision.

But first, he had to find a solution to his problem before facing his other ones. At that moment, his first concern was determining what to do with Haley and their baby. Like it or not, he was going to be a father. But was he ready to become one?

“I came as fast as I could. But my hearing took longer than I anticipated.” His friend walked into his room, going straight to his liquor cabinet. “Do you want one? I certainly needed one. That judge was busting my tail.”

Mike continued to complain as he poured himself a full glass of whiskey before taking an empty seat in front of his desk. His friend seemed very pissed.

But he could already guess which judge he referred to with his statement. It was his Uncle, Ben. It still sounded weird to think of him as family. He had high respect for the man and his integrity.

He was one of the few judges they could not bribe or threaten. Once he had made his decision based on the merits of the actual case, there was no retracting that for any price.

But Mike did not know about his connection with the judge. He still had not shared the identity of his biological father with him. That was one secret he would hold on to for a bit longer.

“No.” Gerald refused the alcohol since he wanted his mind clear to think. “But I need to know if you have dug up any other details about Alfred and Haley.” That was his only concern.

He needed confirmation of Haley’s involvement in her father’s affairs. If Mike would clear her of any wrongdoing, he could protect her from his enemies. After all, she was carrying his child.

But if she had betrayed his trust. Then, that would be another matter he had to deal with, and he was not kind to people who aimed a knife behind his back.

"At the moment, I still have no conclusive evidence linking her with her father's activities. But they could be covering their tracks." Mike was still unconvinced that Haley was clueless about his father's operations.

Alfred used his business in many illegal activities, like smuggling illegal contraband with his shipping lines and construction business. His daughter handled many of her father's business.

"So, there is every chance she had been privy to the underground activities," Mike concluded as he drained his glass of its content.

"But she may still be innocent." Gerald contradicted his friend, not wanting his words to be the truth.

"Yeah, that is possible." Mike agreed. But. "Can you accept it if it is not?" His friend asked.

He did not doubt that Mike was only doing his job as his assistant, who had his back. He believed his friend had nothing against Haley. He had welcomed her like they were old friends.

He knew his friend was only doing his job of keeping him in line and alive. After all, his mistake would cause them the organization and their lives. And his friend would very much avoid being buried alive six feet under the ground.

"You know you don't have to ask me that." He grew up knowing he would take over his father's empire eventually. It meant having a heart was out of the question. Love and mercy had no place in his world.

He lived in a cruel world where there was no space for anything else except power, money, and survival. The only thing that mattered to him was to keep the position as head of their organization.

"Not even for Haley if she chose to betray you." Mike continued to grill him as if his friend wanted to catch him lying to him and himself. "Can you honestly tell me that you can hurt the woman you love?"

Until now, Mike insisted that what he felt for her was more than just a casual fling, despite how much he had denied it. But if indeed he loved her, though he doubted, he would never admit it to him.

"What is the point of answering your question when you have already formulated your conclusion." Gerald closed his papers, giving up on working on them, and faced his friend, feeling frustrated more when he thought of Haley's pregnancy.

"What if she becomes pregnant? Can you still pretend that you don't care about her?" His friend stood up from his chair and stared directly into his eyes.

Suddenly, his eyes sharpened at his friend's question, wondering if that was a rhetorical question or did his friend expected an answer from him. Still, he could not help if his friend had heard something about her condition.

Nonetheless, he hoped his friend was only acting like his devil's advocate.

Chapter 1022: True colors

Her feet felt ticklish as she left footprints on the sand. Walking barefoot on the shoreline was not something she thought she would experience on this trip.

She moved further into the water, allowing the tide to play with her toes as it glided gently on her skin before returning to the sea. She could imagine the giggles of her son once she brought him along to a place like this.

She was sure that Edison would have a blast and a great time as he played with the sand. She could help him build a sand castle, write his name, or play on the coastline where the water was not too deep.

“Hey, I have been looking for you.” Her partner walked alongside her, but his feet avoided getting touched by the waves.

She wore slip-on sandals that she had removed as she carried them in her hand, while he wore loafers that could absorb water if soaked. She could not blame him if he did not want it to get wet. It did look expensive, like the rest of his clothes.

He could also remove it if he liked, but she believed he was not a man who would like to play with sand. Most city folks she knew preferred city life because of its convenience. They would not care for nature.

She had quickly excused herself from the meeting as soon as it was over. She had already answered their questions, and the clients seemed satisfied. All that was left was for them to sign and close the deal. Then, they could go back home.

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But she gathered that the other party still seemed to wait for something as they kept delaying the inevitable. As far as she could determine, nothing else was left to discuss. Their boss made a very lucrative and generous deal favorable to both parties.

“I am sorry. Do the clients need anything else?” She wondered if their clients had forgotten something else. But she doubted since they already covered all there was to discuss.

She stopped in her tracks and turned to him, staring into his eyes, then lowered to his lips when he started to speak. “No. They are all good.” He assured her.

At first, she had no idea what to expect in this meeting. They had dressed informally, but she knew she still had to act accordingly. The meeting took place in a cozy seafood restaurant by the beach.

Based on her interview, it appeared it was one of the chains they already owned. It was a nice restaurant with delicious cuisine to offer. Luckily, she had no allergies to seafood. She enjoyed the sumptuous feast they had prepared.

“Then, why are you looking for me?” She asked, slightly curious. Maybe their boss called him and needed something else. She would not know until he told her.

“I wondered where you went since I saw you turned left instead of right if you were heading back. I thought you might have gotten lost or something.” He looked hesitant at first with his words, but he continued to say them anyway.

He explained how worried he was that she might be lost when she went the wrong way. He looked genuinely concerned as he also looked into her eyes.

However, her lips suddenly twitched when he followed where her eyes were looking. She quickly glanced away, returning her eyes to the beauty of the endless ocean that seemed to touch the sky.

"I thought of returning to the hotel, but I could not turn my back on this." She pointed at the vast blue ocean with a tinge of a few white backdrops created by the waves on the surface of the slightly turbulent sea and the thin lining of clouds above it. "It is simply captivating."

Growing up in a city did not allow her to appreciate nature. Although the sky in their urban neighborhood had a big blue sheet that protected the earth from the elements beyond the atmosphere, it was still not as beautiful as this one.

Then, she had not been in the ocean since it would require several hours of car ride from where she lived. But maybe this time, she might have a little spare time to bring her son along on a short trip.

"Yeah, one of the main attractions of this place. But if you will allow me, I can show you some places more beautiful than this." He offered as he turned his smirk into a genuine smile and returned his eyes to appear innocent.

As if he did not just catch her ogling his lips. What was wrong with her? She immediately reverted to their kiss every time her eyes glanced at those reddish supple flesh. It was like she wished it would happen again.

However, she was surprised by his sudden proposition. She was not expecting that he would want something to do with her other than work after their brief incident with her son.

Now, she could only look at him confusedly, wondering about his intention for asking her out. The last thing she needed was a man who only planned to play with her. But would she ever find such a man who would love her and her son?

"I don't think you need to do that. Besides, I am not here to go sightseeing." Ria declined his suggestion to accompany her to the other sights that made this place one of the most popular destinations in this state.

"Why not?" Zach quickly questioned, still baffled at how easily this woman could shut him down. Most women would jump at the chance to go out with him. "We have nothing else to do the entire day."

That was true. The clients rescheduled the signing in the morning the next day again, giving them the rest of the morning until evening free. Now, she understood why it took at least three days to stay in this place.

But still, it did not mean they could leave and enjoy the rest of their working hours, squandering around this beautiful, magnificent paradise. Although, admittedly, the sound of seeing other places was tempting. Besides, spending more time with him. Her mind kept nagging.

"I plan to stay at the hotel. As a matter of fact, I am just heading back there." She concluded as she turned her back from him and walked in the other direction to return to her suite.

She did not wait for him to stop her since it was not urgent. She could forego her wishes and work on what else the client would want from her. It was a more productive use of her time.

“But...” She heard him say, but she continued on her super fast pace, not wanting to listen to any more of his reasoning. Why? Because she was afraid that if she did, he might be able to convince her.

As she had described him, he was a charming man who could convince companies to buy what they offered. What more, a silly girl like her? She would be no match for him.

He could tell her lies, and she would believe him. It had happened to her before. What guarantee did she have that it would not happen again? Nothing, because she would always be this naive girl who used her heart rather than her mind.

“No more.” She said to herself as she moved faster. But she believed he did not attempt to follow her. Because if he did, he would have caught her easily.

She slightly glimpsed behind her, seeing if she would find him walking close by, but he seemed to stop as he spoke to a girl. She seemed familiar to him as he leaned down and gave her a hug and a peck on the cheek.

That went her short-lived fantasy.

Did she expect that he would waste his time chasing after her?

Maybe if he did not find a more willing victim, but she played hardball, and she lost. But was it a tremendous loss? She doubted. In truth, she felt the attraction between them from the start, but it did not mean she had fallen for him.

It was the precise reason why she should attempt to avoid him. The last thing she would need was for her heart to fall for him. Luckily, her mind was still sane enough to remind her of the past.

“Stop acting like a love-sick puppy.” She told herself as she entered the elevator. Thankfully was void of anyone else.

She looked at her reflection on the metallic walls, reminding herself of what her son’s father had done to her. “You don’t need another one who will make you fall and eventually cry at the end.”

She was not saying that she would not wish for a man in her life. Of course, she did. She wanted to be happy with a partner who would be there to share her life through good and bad times.

She also wished for someone to stand as a father figure to her son. Someone who would accept him and love him as if he was his. But she knew that likelihood of that happening was almost nil.

Therefore, she would stay single for the rest of her life. It was a more logical and rational action than exposing her son to the heartache of involving a man in their lives.

As she remembered his face with the woman in his arms, she could see his genuine gladness to see her. Was she his friend, ex-girlfriend, or current? But it did not matter who she was.

At least she had seen his true colors before she had made a fool of herself, and while it was not yet too late for her.

Chapter 1023: A fighting chance

He entered the room, finding her still sleeping, just like the way he had left her earlier. She hardly moved from her position, seemingly in deep slumber, with the few beeping sounds of the machines that filled the room with its reassuring sound.

As long as they kept the machines plugged in, it meant the patient was still alive. In the meantime, he was satisfied with that condition. It was better than declaring her dead and losing her for eternity.

"There is still a strong brain activity." The neurologist explained to him, giving him hope that she would eventually wake him from her coma state.

However, when? That was the question. The doctors could not assure him that it could be anytime soon. It could be later, tomorrow, or a year after. They could not even guarantee that she would wake up at all.

All he had been holding to was a possibility, a slim chance that she might still come out from this alive. "Her body incurred several internal injuries. We repaired them. But her body still needs time to heal."

Therefore, her coma might be a blessing in disguise as it gave her time to get well. Or, it could be the opposite. They only made it worse, prolonging the agony, but she would never wake up and open her eyes again.

Still, he did not care what the doctors said. He could only focus on the slim chance. No matter how small, it was a possibility that she would wake up. He would take it and wait for it.

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David walked towards her side, sitting on the lone chair he had occupied as he watched her sleep. He never wanted to leave her side, but Roseann convinced him to go home once in a while to shower, sleep and eat.

He managed to do the first one, but the rest could wait because he needed to return to her side. He could barely sleep or eat when he was away from her. He was afraid every second he was not at her side was crucial,

"What are you doing here? I thought I said to..." A woman in a white suit walked into the room.

"I took a bath." He said, but that was it. At least he managed one.

"David..." The woman looked exasperated as she continued forward into the room. She stopped to check on the monitors before facing him. "It was not a request when I asked you to leave my sister's side."

"I can't stay away, Roseann." He would not even look at the doctor, knowing she was about to talk some sense to him. He understood what she was saying, but he knew he would not be sleeping at his home without her.

And eating would be like pushing some papers and sand into his mouth and forcing it into his body. He just had no appetite for anything at the moment.

"You are not helping my sister if you become sick." The younger sister of his fiancée reprimanded him. Then, when she finished checking her sister, she turned to him. "Come. You are going with me."

She pulled him out of the chair and dragged him outside the room. He wanted to pull his hand away from her, but he did not want to offend one of the people who were nice to him. He knew she only wanted to help him.

"Where are we going?" He asked as she finally let go. They entered the elevator, which was empty of occupants, and she pressed a number.

He saw the elevator move upward instead of the lobby as he shared the small space with her. He initially thought she was throwing him out of the hospital.

She did not answer him immediately as the doors of the moving cart opened. He followed her on the hallway of the hospital floor, wondering where she was taking him.

Truthfully, he would rather stay with her sister in her room instead of roaming this place. She might wake up and find herself alone and disoriented about what happened to her.

"I am going back..." He was about to threaten her when she stopped him.

"We are here." She showed him a room for doctors. At least, that was where doctors rested and waited till they had another schedule.

"It is the doctor's lounge." She guided him inside. "I want you to sit down." Pulling a chair for him and waiting until he obeyed her command. Her face said that she was not taking no for an answer.

He would like to protest, but what was the point as he sat quietly on the chair and watched her move around the room? She opened a private refrigerator and pulled out a plastic container and a juice box from inside.

She placed them before him. "It is a sandwich and a cold salad." She pointed at the food she placed before him. "I need you to eat before I allow you back to my sister's room."

He could tell that she was not joking. Her serious expression told him she was not ready for another argument. Then, he realized that maybe she was right. He was not helping anybody by going on a hunger strike.

He would be a burden to Rosella if he got sick because of his stubbornness and stupidity. She would need someone healthy who could take care of her.

"Thanks." He finally acknowledged the food she gave him.

He grabbed the sandwich as he watched her move to the other side of the room. Then, she went back, sitting right next to him. "I am sorry if I need to force you, but you need it." She also told him.

"I understand. I guessed I needed it to wake me up." He admitted he had been living like a ghost for the past few days. He passed through the day without any other thought going through his mind than her.

He had barely thought of work and other responsibilities, thinking his only obligation was to stay at her side. He wondered how Evan and his work colleagues handled what he left behind.

"That is perfectly normal. I am also like that, but Mom and my friends pushed me to work so I would not think about her condition." Roseann confided in him.

"I know you love her, but this is not the way to show her." Her future sister-in-law continued. "We need to continue living for her. You need to go back to your life, one way or another."

He wished he could deny her words, but it was the rational thing to do. Staying at her fiancé's side was more counterproductive. First, there was nothing he could do to wake her up. He could sit all day at her side, and nothing would happen.

Then, he neglected the people who also depended on him. Evan was supposed to get married. Now, he realized that he had buried his friend under a pile of paper works, unable to do anything else.

"We all love her and do what is best for her. But we have to remind ourselves that she will not like to see us ruining our lives because of her. She will hate it if she wakes up and finds us mourning her condition." The young doctor made a point.

Her sister was still alive. And yet, he was acting as if he had already lost her. He could only imagine his appearance since he had refused to look in the mirror. He could feel it in his body how her situation zapped out all the energy in his body.

He must also lose a few pounds from lack of food and sleep, feeling the saggiess of his body and the tension in his muscles. He had lost sight of reality as he buried himself in his misery.

"I think you are right." He began but stopped. "I know you are right." He corrected his statement. "I already mourned for her when she was still fighting for her life."

His mindset was not someone who still had hope, but he was someone who had already given up on her. She was still alive, as Roseann reminded him. She would not want to wake up to a man who looked like him.

"I know you are concerned about her. But you can do nothing if you keep sitting at her side." Roseann pointed out again. "But you can be more helpful to others if you go back to work."

Then, she reached out to him, placing her hand on the top of his knuckles, resting on the table. "I promise that any sign that she is about to wake up, you will be the first to know." She squeezed his hand to assure him he had nothing to worry about or fear.

"I will do my best not to let anything happen to my sister." He knew that was the best she could do while he had to leave her to face his other responsibilities.

Did he wish to leave her side? Of course not.

However, he had to face the truth that she might not wake up anytime soon. But it did not mean that he was giving up on her. He was only putting his faith in whoever was listening that she would eventually wake up when the time was right.

Nonetheless, Roseann could never guarantee that her sister would be ok, but she would be there to give her a fighting chance. And that should be enough in the meantime.

Chapter 1024 Family of three

The weather was a bit cold but not enough to stop her from exploring the outside. She did not want to stay cooped up in her room if she could gaze at something as beautiful as the view before her.

The sky was a picture of blue and white with a tinge of gray on its clouds. Maybe it might rain later or not, depending on the weather. But at the moment, she was taking advantage of being out underneath the bright sun.

“Ms. Dani, I think it is time you rest inside.” The nurse assigned to care for her walked toward her. The older woman reminded her that she had been on the roof of her apartment for quite some time.

One of the things that she did to preoccupy her time was tending to her flowers, consisting of roses and perennial plants. Since she could not go far, she devoted her time to the garden made by her husband at the top of their living quarters.

It was a hobby that she enjoyed while she could not perform her regular tasks. But something that she might not do if she had any other choice. She knew she belonged in the corporate jungle, not in a beautiful garden.

“Yeah, maybe you are right.” She felt mild fatigue after several minutes of moving around the small space. Truthfully, every day had been a struggle to move. And it slightly got worse as her due date came closer and closer.

The doctors said it was still a week from now, but it could come earlier or later than the exact date. Therefore, she already had her and the baby’s things packed, just in case it came a week earlier.

She did not want to be caught unaware and unprepared. This child was their first baby, and she did not want any harm to happen. She would protect the growing life inside her with everything she got.

“Could you help me clear my things?” Usually, she could manage to clean up after her mess and walk back to her room by herself to rest. But she felt something different about her as she sat on the soft cushion.

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She felt like most of her energy was zapped out of her. She sensed something funny with the way she felt about her body. She could not pinpoint anything that hurt, but she lost the energy to move around.

“Sure, Ms. Dani.” She watched her nurse clean up before she finally closed her eyes. She just wanted a few minutes to recover from whatever had caused her sudden weakness. “Are you feeling alright, Ms. Dani?”

She probably noticed her sudden change of demeanor. She came up here full of life, but now, she just felt exhausted, and she had not done anything that could cause that.

“Yeah, I am, just tired, probably from staying too long under the sun.” She told her, but she kept her eyes closed. “I think a few hours of sleep will cure this.” She assured her. “Can you help me up?”

With her big ball-sized belly, it was not easy for her to move, much more standing up from a couch. Usually, it would be better if someone would assist her.

But as she opened her eyes and stood up with her, she felt her head slightly spin. Then, she felt something gush down her legs. Did her bladder just burst?

“Oh my!” She sounded shocked and slightly dizzy, but she remained standing as water filled the floor.
“What is wrong with me?”

When she finally looked down, she could see a pool of liquid that came out of her. She did not want to panic, but she felt her heart race, wondering if something was wrong with her and if it would affect the baby.

Instinctively, her hands went to her belly, feeling her child inside her womb. She wondered if the baby could feel what she felt at that moment. She hoped not as she tried to calm herself down.

“Don’t worry, Ms. Dani. That is perfectly normal.” The woman beside her attempted to comfort her as she wrapped her arms around her. Then, her nurse helped her back to the cushion to rest.

Her nurse quickly reached her wrist, checking her vital signs. She examined her temperature and asked questions about her condition while staying as calm as possible.

“Your water must have broken. You are now in labor.” The woman said calmly, concluding her situation, explaining what just occurred, aiding her to relax and not feel anxious.

She had read about this condition, but fear took over rationality, making her forget everything she had learned about childbirth. Luckily, she had someone with her who understood it.

“What shall I do?” She was not usually jittery, but she had a life depending on her. She could not afford to make a mistake. With what happened to Jacky still fresh in her mind, she did not want to take any chances.

“I need you to relax while I call for an ambulance. There is no need to panic because we have time.” The woman spoke gently to her as she took out her phone and dialed the emergency services.

“Keep taking deep breaths.” She repeated before relating to whoever was on the other line their circumstance.

“Ok.” She followed her instructions, taking shallow breaths. Then some deep ones as she slightly slowed her beating heart. “What did they say?” She quickly asked as soon as she noticed her nurse stop conversing on the line.

“The ambulance is on the way. It will take a few minutes, but that is fine.” The nurse again kept reassuring her. “We will wait here until they arrive.” With her delicate condition, she knew her nurse would not risk putting her in a car and driving her down to the hospital. It would be safer if they would wait for the ambulance that was on its way.

The specialized vehicle had trained medical staff who could assist them with her condition. At the same time, the ambulance had the needed equipment she might need on the way.

It would take several minutes to drive from her place to the hospital. Many things could happen along the way if she could not have access to their first aid treatment if some complications occurred.

“Can you get my phone?” She requested, remembering that she had to make some phone calls. She remembered leaving her phone on the table near the roses.

She had to call her family to inform them that she was having the baby. It was a surprise that everyone was anxious to hear. And she could not wait to tell them all.

She wanted everyone she loved present at the hospital to welcome her child to the world. She also needed her husband to be by her side to share this momentous occasion in their child's life.

"Wait here. Don't move." Her nurse said as she ran to the other side to get it. As if she was going anywhere with her condition.

She quickly took the phone from her and dialed his number, wanting to hear his voice. It only took her several rings before he answered her call. It would seem like he had his phone ready on standby, just in case. The doctor did say it could be anytime soon.

"Is everything ok?" He immediately asked. She could hear the worry and concern in his voice as he waited for her to answer.

In truth, he had been reluctant to go to work this morning, but she convinced him to leave since he had an important client to meet. Who knew that she would go into labor now?

"Yeah, I am ok." She answered him, not wanting to add to his anxiousness. "But my water just broke, and about to go into labor." She informed him as calmly as she could muster.

She could still feel her heart beating much faster than it should while her lungs were breathing shallower as she felt a mild discomfort. But nothing hurts yet. She did not believe she was in physical labor yet.

"You are what?" He seemed to be panicking at the sound of his voice. Her words seemed to fail to register in his mind. "Wait!" She did know what he was doing as she heard noises on the other line.

"I said I am about to give birth to your child. So, get your ass out of your chair and have Tom drive you to the hospital. The ambulance is about to pick me up now." She could hear the nurse talking to some people.

She assumed it would be the medic about to take her.

"Oh! Yes." He suddenly sounded ecstatic. "I am leaving now." She still did not feel like he was himself. She had not seen him panicking before. It was something she never thought she would experience with him.

"Alex," Dani called his attention. "Get Tom to drive you." She reminded him before she passed the phone to Ben, who was now standing with the medic. "Call Tom." She instructed as she looked at Ben.

Her bodyguard automatically called his leader to tell him to notify him about the current development.

Then, she allowed the medical specialist to take over the situation. She believed they knew more than she did about what to do under her condition.

She lay silently on the gurney as they wheeled her out of her apartment. But all she could think about was her baby as her fingers caressed her through her skin.

"I will be seeing you very soon. Just hold on for just a few more minutes." She mumbled caressingly through her lips, hoping her baby could hear her.

She could not wait to hold her baby in her arms. Soon, they would be a family of three.

Chapter 1025 First-name basis

She stared at the four walls of her room with nothing else to do. She tried to watch a movie, but nothing caught her attention. But something else piqued her interest. A paper bag she had left on the floor.

Zach was wrong about buying a swimming suit since the meeting only involved eating and nothing else. She pulled out the skimpy garment from the bag and stared at it.

"What a waste." She whispered as she thought of the price it had cost to buy this exquisite piece of clothing in her hands. Then, she threw it on the bed, moving toward the balcony to smell some fresh air.

It was a refreshing feeling to breathe the coolness of the wind coming from the shore. It was indeed free of harmful and toxic contaminants that polluted the air in the city.

She suddenly realized that maybe they were right about this trip. She could finally feel like she was on vacation as she stared at the clear blue sky and the vast blue-green ocean before her.

It was certainly different from where she had grown up, finding the place peaceful and void of the busy and noisy buzz of the city. Would she love living in this kind of place? Maybe.

"I think it is time I call my son." She reminded herself before she forgot all about him. She turned away from the enchanting view surrounding her and returned to the room to look for her phone.

She called him earlier but barely said a few words before Sasha told her he had fallen asleep while listening to her voice. It was his nap time. But he might be awake by now as she dialed the number.

"Edison, it is your Mom." She heard Sasha call her son. She could also sense the commotion and excitement in the noise he made.

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"Mamaaaa..." He said in his cute voice that she had been missing since she left him. "Missie youuu..." She could tell that he was imitating what Sasha instructed him to say.

"I miss you too, my darling." She gently spoke to him, wondering what he had been doing while she was away. She asked him a few questions but could barely understand his responses.

She could only surmise that Sasha was telling him what to say, but he could hardly catch up to most of it. But the important thing was, she knew he was ok. That was good enough.

Then, she heard the bell ring, indicating someone was at the door. Somehow, she could guess it might be her partner since she was not expecting anyone else.

She could ignore him, pretending that no one was inside, but it could be about their job, his reason for seeking her out. After all, she left him with a beautiful woman in his arms. Therefore, he might not be interested in her.

Besides, his interest in her was only fleeting. It must be over by now.

"Wait!" She finally walked toward the door with her phone still in her ears as she listened to his son mumble words she did not understand. Well, he was trying to tell her a long story of what happened to him today.

If she was with him, she could understand him more clearly since he would use his hands, body, and facial expression to tell her more about his story. But she could only imagine what he might be doing while talking to her.

"Yes?" She was suddenly surprised to see not her partner but someone else. It was not the hospital staff since he seemed to be wearing expensive casual wear.

Moreover, she believed she had introduced himself to her earlier as the hotel owner they were staying at since he was present in the meeting. He was one of the other clients that they met only this morning.

But what was he doing at her doorstep?

"Hello, Ms. Barbara." The man greeted her with a friendly smile.

"Hi there, Mr. Stark." She responded with slight hesitation as she returned his warm greetings.

"I am sorry but do you think you can spare me a few minutes of your time." He eloquently asked as he remained standing outside her door. "I hope I am not interrupting an important call." Pointing to the phone still in her ears.

She still listened to her son, but her mind was trying to figure out what this man needed from her. Why was he here, talking to her, instead of Zach, the coordinator assigned to this negotiation? Usually, it was him they contacted, not her.

"I am currently talking to my son, but if you could wait a minute." She offered instead since she could not just hang up. But she could not turn her back on the man since he might be here about the contract. She pointed to the phone in her hands as she gestured for him to wait.

"Sure." He responded as he stood by the door while she closed her door without inviting him inside her room. He was a stranger even if he owned this building.

"Honey, I need to go for now. But I will call you again soon." She had no choice but to cut her conversation with his son short. But she could not do it in front of him. "I love you." She replied to his jibberish words.

"Lab yu, Mommmiiiiiee..." His words still stuttered, but she still understood it.

"I love you so much." She repeated, but they could not keep talking as much as she wished. "Can I talk to Sasha?" She requested, knowing the girl was listening to their conversation.

After telling her a few things and listening to her short report, she had to end their call. She hung up the phone and prepared herself for her visitor, still waiting outside her door.

"I am sorry for making you wait." She was surprised that he was still out there. Most of these people would not bother. Instead, they would send their assistants to deal with her.

But here he was, not at all, looking bothered by her action. "Don't worry about it. I also have a daughter that I find hard to leave alone." He shared with her as he patiently stood outside.

"Oh!" But that should not surprise her, she thought. "How old is your daughter?" She could not help but ask. But a man like him could be married by now. Although, he still looked young to be a family man.

"She is turning four soon." He answered her. "But if you don't mind. Shall we continue this conversation at my office? I just had a few things I need to clarify with the contract. It seemed that my secretary could not get hold of your partner."

She was not surprised by that one. Judging from the woman in his arms, he might be somewhere they could not reach him. He must have turned his phone off since he believed that his responsibilities were over for today.

She could already imagine what he might be doing. But she quickly shut them off, not wanting to picture the complete detail. The last thing she wanted was to cloud her mind with terrible thoughts of him with a woman.

"Oh. Sure." She did not mind since it was her job to present their proposal and smoothen things with their clients. "Can you give me a second to get my things?"

After a few minutes, she sat before his desk as he pointed out some things that he felt were vague in their proposal. Although some were just additional incentives, she still explained them thoroughly to him.

Truthfully, there was nothing much to discuss on the contract but some minor details, as she observed. But it was her job to clear all these few confusions.

Then, he invited her to lunch when his secretary opened the door, and a man in uniform carried several trays of food. "I hope you don't mind since it is lunchtime. It will be rude of me if I will not ask you to eat with me."

He stood from his desk and ushered her to the other table, where the server laid out all the food. She could see some variety, but it was too much for just two people.

"I don't mind eating in my room." She was about to make her excuse, but he stopped her.

"Please, I know you have not ordered anything yet." When she raised her eyebrows at him for questioning, he quickly added. "I checked with the staff before I ordered this food. But it would be a crime to waste all this food. Please join me." He requested with a dashing smile.

When she seemed to be unconvinced, he again pleaded with her. "Please, it is just lunch. I only want to hear more about your company." He continued. "We can discuss it more as we eat."

It sounded like it was a legit reason, so how could she say no to that? Besides, she could always leave if she felt uncomfortable around him. So far, he seemed to be a gentleman and genuinely interested in her company.

"Ok. But I need to leave as soon as lunch is over." She told him, not wanting him to think that she would like to stay for more than that.

She allowed him to guide her to a chair while he took the opposite one. "Do you mind if I call you Ria while you call me Jay?" He suggested as he offered her the food before them.

She was unsure if it was wise to call a client on a first-name basis.

Chapter 1026 Her

What was he doing?

He paced back and forth inside his room like a madman. He turned around and came face to face with himself through his reflection in the mirror. Truthfully, he did not like what he saw.

Zach had told himself that he would act professionally around her. He would put aside his attraction since he knew it could not go anywhere. He had no plans of taking her seriously because she already had a responsibility.

Not that he was afraid of commitment. Maybe someday, not now. And besides, what if it did not work? He would only be adding to what she had gone through.

He was not as cruel as his friends, who used women like they were just their playthings. Therefore, rather than pursuing his growing attraction to her, he opted to avoid it.

"But what are you doing?" He asked again, staring into his eyes as if he was waiting for his image to dare to respond.

Why was he acting like a stalker, following her around when she seemed to avoid him as well? He did not have an answer to that. But every time she was close, he wanted to be near her.

He tried following her on the beach after their meeting, despite his mind reminding him that he should not. At first, he hesitated, thinking that he was breaking his rule. In addition, she might reject his invitation.

But all his reasons went out the window when his eyes focused on her. She looked like a sea goddess as her hair flew with the wind. He enjoyed watching her as she played with the water on her feet.

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The next thing he knew, he walked toward her, concocting some excuse to talk to her. But she shut him down by rejecting his offer to take her around. He should be thankful since she seemed to be doing him a favor.

"Then, why are you sulking like a schoolboy, rejected on his first date?" He again looked at his face, which seemed very disappointed.

When she walked away from him at the beach, he intended to let her go. But after a minute or two, he changed his mind. He felt a force that would not let him see her leave.

He ran after her. He knew he could easily catch up with her. But someone blocked his path. Yes, a woman from his past suddenly greeted him. It had been a while since they had last seen each other.

Despite their separation, they remained friends. Although, she moved away while he stayed. It was not just the long distance. He knew they were just not meant to be.

Let us say that they were not a perfect match.

"How are you? What are you doing here?" His ex asked as he halted to greet her properly, hugging and kissing her on the cheeks.

"I am good. I am here for work." He responded. "What about you?" It was only polite that he should ask her the same thing. "What are you doing here?"

He asked her as he looked at her beautiful face. She became more beautiful than the last time he saw her. But that did not distract him from following the retreating back of the woman he was chasing a while ago.

"Would you believe it?" She asked as she wiggled her fingers in front of him. A big stone sparkled in his eyes as the sun bounced off its glassy surface.

"You are getting married?" He excitedly asked, thinking she was finally engaged to some lucky man. He would know since she was a great girl. It just happened that they would not work.

"No, dum dum." She expressed with a silly face. "I am already married. And this is our honeymoon." She corrected him, gesturing to the other ring on her finger.

Then, a big burly man with his face covered in a beard strode toward them. He recognized him as one of his old friends that he had not seen for a long time.

"Zach!" He greeted him with a bear hug. "So, you met my wife." The man turned to his wife and wrapped his arms around her shoulders.

"I would not have guessed that you would end up together." He remembered how they kept fighting in the good old days. But it seemed life had a funny way of showing his sense of humor.

He chatted more with them, trying to catch up with the past and the present. He suddenly realized it had been some time since he had seen his old friends.

Then, he eventually excused himself and left. He debated whether to follow Ria into her room and convince her to go with him. But fate seemed to intervene on his behalf, reminding him that he should not pursue his plan.

Therefore, he proceeded to his room to lock himself before he did something stupid and barged into her room. And what? Take her. That was stupid.

But after a few more minutes of staring at himself, the walls, and the view outside, he knew he could not stop himself. "I must be going crazy." He mumbled as he exited his room.

Then, a few minutes later, he was knocking at her door. He loudly banged his fist on her door, but nobody answered. He repeated, thinking that she might be in the bathroom. Still, all he heard was silence from the other side of the door.

He remembered she said that she would return to her room. Yet, she was not in there. Hence, where was she? He wondered where else she would go when she did not return to the beach. He would have seen her if she did.

“Have you seen the lady occupying this room?” He asked a cleaning lady who exited the adjacent room. She might have noticed her leave. He could not think of anywhere else she might have gone, but maybe this woman had seen her leave.

“Oh! The Miss is with Mr. Stark. He came by earlier, and I saw them leave together.” The woman informed him before she pushed her cart away from him to enter another room.

He wondered what that man would need from her. He quickly pulled his phone out of his pocket and realized it had run out of battery. He must have forgotten to charge it last night since his mind was preoccupied with something else.

Her.

Chapter 1027 Already out on a date

The client might have been trying to contact him, but he could not reach him. Therefore, Mr. Stark came to see her instead. Maybe he could find them in his office if he hurried. If they were discussing the business, that was the only place they would be.

How could he be so irresponsible as not to charge his phone? But he had nothing to worry about since Ria could handle the negotiation even in his absence. After all, she did half of the work.

He had not been in his office since they usually met at a restaurant with the other partners or a boardroom. But it was not hard to find since it was within the building.

“I am sorry, but do you have an appointment.” The secretary asked since it was the first time she must have seen him. “Because Mr. Stark has a business lunch meeting in his office now.” She informed him, not allowing him entry to his office.

“No, I don’t, but that is my partner in there with him. I was late, but I am here now to join them. Just tell your boss that Zach Andrews is here to see him.” He explained to her. It was not true, but if his assumption was correct. The man was initially looking for him, not her.

The woman looked at him skeptically as if she did not believe him. But he maintained his stance, exuding confidence before her. Eventually, she dialed the connecting phone inside the office.

“Excuse me, Sir. I know you said not to disturb you, but a Mr. Zach Andrews here, wanting to see you.” She spoke on the phone and then waited for a reply.

Somehow, he did not like what he heard. It was usually normal in private meetings, not wanting to be disturbed. But something about this one did not sound conventional. But he put it aside as silly nonsense as he waited for the man to acknowledge his presence.

He could not hear his response but could try to read her facial expression. However, she was good at her job as her face concealed her thoughts. She had a good poker face, probably honed through long experience dealing with people in her line of work.

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"The boss would finally see you now." She stood up from her desk and ushered him into the closed double doors. When he entered, she quickly closed it behind her, leaving him in the presence of their client.

But she was not there.

The man was not alone, although he was in a meeting with another familiar face. They were present in the meeting earlier. Now, he wondered where Ria was.

"Mr. Andrews, I am glad you save me the trouble of looking for you." The man greeted him as he gestured for him to take the other seat.

The other man present in the meeting also shook his hand before he focused his eyes on the man behind the desk. Still, his mind wondered where she was since the cleaning lady said she had gone along with him.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Stark? Is there a problem with the papers?" It was the only thing that he could think of at the moment as he tried to focus his attention on him instead of trying to look for her.

Besides, she was a grown woman. Why would he be afraid that something horrible might happen to her?

"You can call me Arnold. Mr. Stark makes me sound old." He suggested as he pulled a folder out of his desk drawer. "Jay said he could not find you earlier, but I am glad he finally did."

Damn! He thought in his mind. It was not this man who went to look for him but his son. They had met him earlier during the meeting, and now Ria must be with him. But where?

"Arnold sounds great. Then, call me Zach." He liked that they could forego the formality. But as much as he felt good about this meeting, his mind was not the same.

He kept thinking about where the younger Stark took Ria. He could hardly concentrate on what the other two gentlemen inside the room discussed. Although, he did try his best to give them his attention.

"What do you think?" The man asked him, but he hardly listened to what he said. He only blankly looked at the older man as if he wanted to decipher his thoughts. "Are you ok? You seemed to be a little bit distracted." His host concluded.

"I just had a few things on my mind, but if you are about to ask about the contract..." He was ready to make something up, but the man beat him into it.

"Don't worry. I think I like it." Then, he tapped his chin as if thinking. "I love it. Therefore, I already signed it." The man told him. Then, the other man beside him congratulated him.

"That is great news." That part he understood pretty clearly as he took the folder he handed to him. When he checked the documents, it was all signed, as the client had said.

It was a welcome surprise since the meeting earlier. The older Stark seemed satisfied with the contract, but his son still had minor issues with some clauses.

That was what he remembered. But what could have changed his mind? Still, he should be thankful that they had already accomplished their mission. But why did he still feel like a heavy weight was on his shoulder?

“You can now celebrate with your partner and not think about it. Take the rest of the day and tomorrow to explore our beautiful place.” The man encouraged him, shaking his hand and concluding the meeting.

But he still had one issue. He wondered if his son was with Ria at that moment. Was he only protecting her, or was he jealous? Of course, he denied the latter. He believed she was his responsibility because she came with him.

He did not like that she was with him because the man looked like a prick, and she might not be safe with a man like him. Ok! He had no idea who that man was. He should not be judging him.

But still, he did not appreciate that she should be out with a stranger. She hardly knew him. And she was already out on a date with him.

Chapter 1028 Shortly

No one was taking a life.

Not today.

On the contrary, they were here to welcome a new family member as he stared at the people surrounding him with mixed anxious and excited expressions on their faces.

He could not blame them since he had also felt the same way as he rushed to the hospital to be at her side. But the doctors informed him that it might take a while before their baby would see the light of this world.

“The doctors believe our child wants to make a grand entrance.” Alex jokingly informed everyone who was lounging patiently in the waiting room.

As much as he wanted the suffering of her wife to end and finally meet his child, he had to endure the wait just like the rest of their family and friends.

“I am sure it will not be that long now.” Laura walked toward him, standing before him. Then, her palm captured his face, cradling both his cheeks as if he was a child.

He remembered that his mother used to do this when he was a child. Maybe all mothers utilize this technique to calm their sons or daughters during stressful situations.

Anyway, he was glad that his mother-in-law came as soon as she heard the news. Dani wanted their entire family to be here to share this wonderful day. His parents were on their way, but their flight might take a few more hours.

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Hopefully, they would be here in time for his child’s delivery. If not, they would be here to see their first grandchild. They had been expressing their wish for a new prince or princess in the family. Now, it was about to come true.

“Aren’t you going to tell us yet the gender?” Jacky stood beside him, joining in the conversation.

He was glad that she seemed fine to talk about their baby. Maybe she still felt the pain of losing her child, but she was managing it much better now. He only hoped it would continue until she and his bestfriend were blessed again with another one.

“You already waited this long. A few more hours or minutes would not kill you.” He was adamant about safeguarding their secret.

He and his wife decided to determine the sex of their child. But they kept that information to themselves, refusing to reveal it to anyone else. Because for them, it should not matter if they had a son or a daughter. The only thing they cared about was the health condition of their child.

And, of course, he needed assurance that his wife would be ok after her labor. He heard that there were occasions when complications happened during childbirth.

There were instances where the father would have to choose between the mother and the child. Or, in a worst-case scenario, he could lose both of them in a snap of a finger.

It was a nightmare that he never wished to come true. He would not know if he would want to live without Dani and their child in this lifetime. He hoped fate was still on his side and would not deal him with such destiny.

“You and Dani and your secrets,” Jacky exasperatedly uttered when he would not reveal the gender of his child to her or anyone else in the room. They would all find out together once Dani delivered their baby into the world. “But I am happy for both of you.” She added.

“How is she doing?” Haley moved closer to the group with Dani’s secret brother with her.

“If you need me, I will just sit over there.” Marcus excused himself. But Alex knew he was avoiding being in the same space as Gerald.

Marcus still believed that his sister was better off with someone else. But he and Dani could not convince Haley otherwise. He could not blame his friend since he had also known what kind of man Gerald was.

If he had a sister, he would not want her to have anything to do with this dangerous man. Although he was trying to act civil around him, he still could not forget his participation in which he almost lost his and his wife’s life. Something like that was hard to forgive and forget.

“She is doing well. In pain, but the doctor said that it was only natural.” It was hard for him to watch her, seeing how her face contoured in pain whenever she had a contraction.

But she assured him that she was ok. For how long, he could not help but wonder. As the time for her to deliver the child, the pain would increase, and her condition could turn critical, especially with the complications she had already experienced during her pregnancy.

The doctors suggested an operation, but she refused it. She wanted natural birth delivery of their child. She only agreed to a caesarian section as a last resort.

"I am sure that she will be just fine." Haley attempted to comfort him, but he already knew the odds. But he was hoping and praying for a better outcome.

He could see a few more people further inside, waiting to talk to him, but he saw a doctor approach, and his attention went to him immediately. He turned in his direction and waited for his announcement.

"Mr. Blackstone." The woman in a pinkish scrub suit called to him.

"How are Dani and my baby?" He quickly responded to the doctor, interrupting her statement out of excitement and nervousness.

"I am here precisely because of that." She seemed to chastise him for cutting her off. "They are both being closely monitored. So far, they are doing fine and stable."

The doctor had taken good care of Dani, and he did not doubt what she said. She was one of the best doctors in this state. Therefore, he knew that his wife was in good hands.

Still, he could not help but feel terrified because even the best sometimes lose without any reason. It just happened despite all the best circumstances. He just hoped that it would not be in this case.

"It will not be long now." She told him, reassuring him again, just all the times he had accompanied his wife to see her.

He would finally see his child shortly.

Chapter 1029 Vulnerable side

She would be honest. She was slightly skeptical about spending more time with this man, even if it was just lunch. First, she did not like to go out alone with a stranger, even if he was a client.

Then, she felt uncomfortable around him since she had not been out with a man, even if this was not a date. It felt somewhat intimate. The only time she went out with someone was with Zach. She still could not forget what happened next.

"I could still remember how my girl would destroy everything she touched. The more I told her no, the more she did it." Jay told her, explaining his experience with his daughter.

But the delicious food and the friendly and humorous companion had her changing her mind about him. He seemed easy to talk to and always had a warm smile that put her at ease.

Besides, he barely asked anything personal about herself but mostly did the talking about his daughter. He seemed to be very proud of her. But she wondered about his wife. He had not mentioned anything about her.

"But I am sure that she had outgrown that phase. I also am starting to experience the same thing with Edison." Ria shared with him.

It seemed that being a parent was no piece of cake as she discovered new things that could drive her crazy, either with worry, horror, or laughter, when it came to her son.

“Unfortunately, four years old might be the worse. At least for me. My daughter is beginning to get more and more curious about things. I am afraid she may become an evil genius someday.” He jokingly said, referring to his daughter, who had created mayhem from time to time.

“I am sure she is not that bad.” She could not believe that he was serious about how he would describe his daughter. She could still see in his eyes how they sparked every time he talked about her.

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“Yeah, she is not. She is also quite adorable most of the time. Intelligent, just like me, I guess. But she is sweet and affectionate.” He proudly said.

She could see that despite what his daughter did. With all her mischievousness, he would love her wholeheartedly, without any doubt. It was like every parent would turn a blind eye to their child’s mistakes a few times. Because to a parent’s eyes, their child could do nothing wrong.

Of course, eventually, parents would have to teach their kids some discipline. So their children might learn that they would need to follow the rules of society.

“I believe our kids would eventually find their interest and mellow down.” That was what she observed growing up and what she had learned from the child psychology books she read. “We just have to be there to support and guide them to the right path.”

She was no expert in parenting or child psychology, but her mother’s instinct told her she should follow what she believed would be best for her son. No parent would guide their child to a disastrous future. At least, not her.

She tried to share a few things she learned about her experience and the things she learned about child development. She hoped she could impart a few tips to help him raise his child.

“I better follow your advice.” He told her as he raised his glass to her. “To the great future of our kids.” Tossing with her.

She lifted her glass, filled with lemon juice, in the air since she refused to drink wine. Her terrible experience had taught her a valuable lesson she should never forget. She was being more cautious now.

“To our kids.” She agreed as she clinked her glass to his. She could not help but be more talkative when discussing her son.

But if the man had probably asked her more about herself, she might have refused to answer him and ended the meal quickly. However, he had been a gracious host, entertaining with his light sense of humor and friendly attitude.

“Your husband must be one lucky man to have such an intelligent wife and loving mother to his adorable son.” The man complimented her as he leaned on his chair and stared at her face.

Suddenly, her apprehension returned. She had no issue talking about their children. But as she said earlier, her life was not something she would like to discuss with a stranger.

“Unfortunately, I would not know since I am solo parenting my son.” There was no use lying about it. As much as she did not want to reveal things about her, if this man liked to know this basic information about her, he could have easily discovered it on his own.

“Oh! I was not expecting that.” He seemed genuinely surprised as far as her interpretation of his reaction was concerned.

It was not like she had something written on her forehead telling everyone that she was a single mom because her boyfriend left her when he learned she was pregnant. So, how would this man know?

“What about you? I am sure your wife is doing a great job caring for your daughter.” As much as she did not want to pry into his affair, she had no choice. She needed something to break the awkwardness of her situation.

But how his face changed told her that she should not have asked that question. He took the bottle of red on its chiller and refilled his glass before taking a large gulp of his drink.

Then, he finally looked at her, slightly shaking his head. “You will think that it would be easier to talk about her after a year had passed, but it is not.”

He took another sip of his drink, looking away from her and into the beautiful view outside his window. His eyes seemed to look at the ocean, but she knew his mind was elsewhere.

“I am sorry for my nosiness. You don’t have to answer me.” Ria quickly told him, assuming that something horrible had happened to his wife based on how he had reacted.

She wanted to snap at herself for her wrong timing and her insensitivity. She knew she should not be meddling with another person’s affairs. Nonetheless, she did not zip her mouth and let her tongue run away with her words.

But in a way, she was glad that she saw a different side of him. Insensitive, it might seem, but she felt a slight relief when she saw a glimpse of his vulnerable side.

Chapter 1030 A cry of joy

His eyes could not help but to roam around the room, noticing the plain background in the walls and the lack of ornaments to decorate the place. The only things surrounding him were the equipment, tools, and the bed positioned at the center.

He did not want to focus on the beeping sounds of the machines around them. The doctors said that they were only monitoring the status of the mother and the baby, nothing that should worry him.

However, he could still feel his heart working overtime. He had never felt more anxious in his life other than today. But, like most times, he had to act bravely in front of her. She needed him now more than ever to stay strong.

“Are you ok, Dani?” He asked as he held her hands firmly in his. With his other hand, he caressed her hair to reassure her that he would stay by her side.

He could see that she was attempting to hide her pain. But as much as she tried, it was still visible in her eyes and facial expression. He could only wish he could take her place at that table, but unfortunately, all he could do was be there for her.

His respect and love for his wife had only increased each minute he witnessed the sacrifice she endured to give him a child. No amount of his what he did for her could compare to this.

"Yeah! I am ok, Alex." She reached out her hand and touched his cheeks, but she quickly retracted them as another set of contractions hit her body.

She automatically placed her hands on a protective gesture underneath her bulging belly as if afraid something terrible would happen to their baby.

At that instant, he felt like he was the luckiest man in the world. How many men could honestly say that they married their soulmate? He would bet that men like him were rare.

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"What do you want me to do?" He could not help but slightly panic as he saw her struggle in her position. Then, he remembered what they had practiced in their Lamaze class.

It was supposed to teach him how to handle her situation and support her through her hardship, but it seemed he was failing to deliver his end as he allowed his fear to take over.

He had to snap out of this negativity as he focused his eyes on her wife's face. He had to be the husband she needed and the father that would guide his child into this world.

"Don't worry. Just hold my hand." Dani said between her gasping breath. "Just don't leave me." She continued as her face contoured with the pain.

He noticed that the pain had increased every time the contraction came closer. Based on what he remembered from the classes, the baby was coming soon, and he could not wait for this to be over.

"I will never leave you." He promised as he pulled her hand into his lips, wanting her suffering to be over and finally to see his child. "But I need you to breath with me."

He finally recalled what he had learned as he guided her to a breathing exercise to lessen her discomfort and pain. Somehow, it also relaxed him and cleared his mind.

He used the sound of their child's heartbeat as his pattern as he continued to coach his wife in the breathing process. "Inhale..." He waited for her to take a deep breath. "Exhale..." He nodded as she expelled the air from her lungs.

"It seemed that you are doing a great job here." A voice sounded at his back. When he turned around, he saw the doctor walking further into the room with a reassuring smile, telling him that he had nothing to worry about Dani's condition.

"He is a tremendous help," Dani proudly said, sounding slightly better as the contraction subsided and the pain visibly lessened. "How is our baby?" As her face managed a smile.

The doctor did not answer her immediately as she checked the devices attached to her body. From her expression, she seemed satisfied with the result, but they still waited for what she had to say.

"It seems that everything is going as planned. It will not be long now." The doctor assured them as she excused herself because she still had to check on something else.

But in the meantime, as they waited, they felt more comforted that their child would be ok. It was what they needed for now as they held each other's hand and waited for the next contraction.

The doctor said that if the contraction came closer and the dilation of her cervix increased, it would be time to deliver the baby. But from what was happening, it would be coming sooner than later.

"We still have not decided on the name." She looked up at him, staring into his eyes. Then, her eyes looked down at her swollen belly as if she was asking their unborn child a suggestion.

He also had given several possible names on the list, but he wanted her to like it too. It must be something that both of them would automatically agree upon once they saw the name.

But all his proposals seemed nice, but it was not it. It did not sound like it would fit his child. Besides, Dani did not seem to connect with the name either.

"What about Arthur, Lancelot, Henry, or Philip?" He jokingly said, voicing whatever name popped into his head. He only wanted to divert her attention to the pain he could see in her eyes.

"What do you think of..." But before she could finish her question, another wave of anguish covered her beautiful face.

He quickly moved to her side, cradling her petite frame in his broad chest. Then, he guided her once more in her breathing exercise. But it seemed his tactic was barely working as she started shouting in pain.

It appeared that she had reached her tolerance for pain as the contraction increased rapidly. He could also hear the heartbeat monitor speeded up compared to a few moments ago.

"We will have a name soon enough, but first, we should focus on delivering our child to this world without any hitch." Alex did not wish to add to her problems at that moment.

He did not wish to burden her with the triviality of naming their child. That could wait but trying to help her with her situation as he watched her twist in pain as her hold on his hand tightened was his priority.

"Ok," Dani answered him with a forced smile on her lips in between her pain. Until now, she tried to appear strong despite her circumstance for his benefit. But he could tell her body was undergoing tremendous agony by looking into her eyes.

"Come on, let me help you." He encouraged her as he asked her to breathe with him again.

The nurses around them were fussing around, checking her vitals and the monitors. It seemed the baby was coming since they were already on high alert.

He could not help but wonder if it would have been better if she had gone into operation, but it was her body. She should decide what was best for her and their child. All he could do was stand by her side and be her support.

"It seemed that the time has come." The doctor entered the room with a brimming smile. "Are you both ready to see your baby?" She asked, looking at the patient and then at him.

"Yes, we are excited to see our baby." He exhilaratingly answered as he squeezed her hand to assure her of his presence. But more than that, he was also anxious to see her suffering end.

He could not help but want to take her place as her face contorted in what could be one agonizing moment. He extended his spare hand into her face, setting her hair aside as it started to cling to her glistening forehead.

"Then, shall we get this show on the road?" The doctor instructed the nurses around her to proceed with whatever they were supposed to do.

On the other hand, he remained sitting on the edge of the bed, supporting her with his body as she struggled while delivering their child. He knew pain, but he had not witnessed anything like this before.

He had watched her wife endure it, not asking for anything to alleviate the pain. She fought hard as she breathed, shouted, and forced with all her might to push their child out in the open.

"Come on. I know you can do better than that." The doctor calmly exclaimed to his wife as if she had not yet given her all. "A few more big pushes, and we will be all done." She encouraged her as she buried herself in between his wife's legs.

He knew how to make a baby, but he had never wondered how they came to the world. Yes, a mother had to give birth to them, but how precisely, he never had a clue.

Now, he could not stop but admire a woman's courage to go through this painful process of bringing life to this world. He thought being pregnant for nine months was sacrifice enough, but witnessing today's event showed him that it was more.

"I can see the head." The doctor announced. "Now, I need you to give me everything you got." She added as the other people in the room did what they had to do. "Alex, help her." The doctor called his attention, alerting him to do his part.

"Come now, baby. I know you can do this." Alex started whispering into her ears as he leaned closer to her. "For our baby, I know you want to see her as much as I do." He massaged her shoulder and arms as he coaxed her to follow him.

But all he heard from her was her heavy breathing followed by a few anguish cries. "Alex, I am so tired." She squeezed the words out of her lips as if she was asking him for help.

"I know, but I am here. I will help you get through this. Just follow my voice." He knew then that she needed him more than ever. "Come on, take one deep breath and then push." He tried to remember what he had learned, hoping it would help in her current situation.

"Come on, guys. I can see it, but your baby needs your help." The doctor informed them.

“You heard the doctor. Come on, Dani. Our baby needs you to push harder.” Alex whispered again in her ears as he wiped more sweat that covered her face. “One deep breath and push.” He commanded, hoping that would push her to her limits.

“Aaaggghhh!” It appeared to work as it had given her strength to do what he had asked. She kept breathing and pushing hard.

Then, he heard it.

A cry of joy.