

## Royal Contract 1111

### Chapter 1111 A regular night owl

She was pacing her room after dinner. Thankfully, her father's guests did not decide to stay for long. Now, she just needed to figure out where to go before she made her escape through the back door.

Haley already had her keys, phone, wallet, and some cash. Her passport? Where did she put it? She quickly rummaged through her drawers. Eventually, she found it just underneath her journal.

Who still kept a journal? She did.

She sometimes liked to write her thoughts on it. But it had been a long time since she had done that. During the times she felt alone. It had been her companion during her lonely nights after her mother died.

"I can go to Marcus." She mumbled as she went in circles. But could she tell her brother the truth?

If she did, he would do the right thing. That would be to protect her, even if he had to risk his life. She could not do that to him, not after what her brother and Jacky had gone through.

Alex and Dani just had their baby. Rosella was still in a coma. She could not bother David too. She also heard that Evan had just gotten married. All her friends were also busy with their lives.

She could not just disrupt them and put their lives in danger by seeking help. She did not doubt that they would never hesitate to come to her aid. But that was not what she needed.

"Who else?" She searched her phonebook, trying to find a person she could ask for assistance. She knew she could not do this alone. She just needed a place where she could stay for a few days.

.....

Preferably a friend who would not ask too many questions. Then, she would eventually move out when she found a more concrete solution to her problem.

"Not her." She muttered under her breath as she looked at a name. She believed she would easily give her up once her father questioned her.

She kept looking at the names on her contact list, hoping to find one friend who could help her. As she continued, she finally stumbled on a name. She thought about it, staring at the screen of her phone.

She could not help but wonder if she could trust him. But then again, he was the only one who had been at her side this entire ordeal. Besides, he was Gerald's best friend. If he could trust him, so could she.

Other than that, she remembered that he also offered to help her. Anything he had said to her, all she had to do was call him. So, should she consider him and ask for his help?

"Do you have any other choice?" She asked herself, determining from the rest of her friends he seemed to be the lesser evil.

Without wasting any more time, she pressed his name and waited for him to answer. At least it rang on the first try. Now, if he took her call, she would ask him for help. If he did not, she had no other option but to find another way.

"Hello, Haley." He immediately said on the line as soon as it connected. It would seem he had already saved her number on his phone. How else would he know it was her calling?

"Hi, Mike." She finally greeted her new friend. "I hope I did not catch you at a bad time." She knew she needed his help. But still, she felt awkward asking for it.

Although he was there when she needed a shoulder to cry on, she still could not say they were best buddies. She still hardly knew him except for the small conversations they had.

"No, not at all." He quickly responded. "As I said before, I will always make time for you. So never hesitate to call me anytime you need me." Mike said over the line, giving her the opening that she needed.

"Speaking of help, I have a big..." Emphasizing the last word. "...big, big favor to ask. But I need you to promise that it will be our secret."

So far, that was all she had been asking him lately. He had already kept her relationship with Gerald a secret, even her current pregnancy. Now, she was about to ask him another one.

"For you, there is nothing I won't do." His voice floated to her ears with an air of reassurance. "So, what is it? Name it. I will do it. And I will keep it our secret." He whispered the last part. "I promise."

Somehow, she felt confident that he would never turn her down. And so far, he had not shown anything that had broken her trust. On the contrary, if he wanted to ruin her, he could tell the public that she was pregnant, but he did not.

She bit her lip as she mulled over her decision one last time. But she believed this was her only choice. Mike was the only one who could help her at short notice. Besides, she was sure he would like to know who killed his best friend.

"Can you help me get away from my father?" She finally said to him, which earned her silence on the other end. "Are you still there?" She finally asked after a minute of silence.

"Wait! What do you mean by getaway? What happened?" He finally asked, sounding very concerned. "Are you in trouble or danger?" He followed up his questions.

"It is a long story that I intend to tell you once we are face to face. But I need to know if you can help me." She asked again, hoping that he would. She knew it would be difficult if she did this alone. Therefore, finding someone to have her back could make it easier. She would not mind having a hard time if it was just her. But she also had to think of her child.

She looked at her watch as she waited for his answer, seeing that it was way past midnight. She suddenly could not help but wonder what he was doing at this late of night. She could sense that he seemed to be still wide awake.

Was he busy with work? Or just like a regular night owl, just like her.

## Chapter 1112 An evil fraud

But he might be working on a case, remembering that Gerald usually stayed up late at his office to work on his client's legal matters. Or, he could be out on a date, and she had just interrupted his evening. However, she did not hear anyone else with him.

"Of course, I will help you." He finally said. "Do you want me to pick you up at your house?" He offered.

"No." She hastily responded. "I will meet you somewhere else. Let me see." She said, trying to think of a place where she could safely meet him. Then, she finally thought of the park where she usually passed by on her way to the office. She believed it was a perfect place to meet. No one would notice her there.

"Can I suggest a particular spot?" Mike recommended a location in the park that did not have many people passing by. And he told her that there were no cameras in that area.

She did not know why he knew that. But it was good to know. The last thing she wanted was for her father's investigator to find footage of her going with Mike.

"Ok. I think that will do." She acknowledged and finalized their plan.

"Are you sure that you are not in any danger?" He asked again, still sounding troubled.

"No, at least not that I am aware of." She answered him truthfully. But she did not want to find out by waiting in this house.

"I will see you in thirty minutes." She heard him say. Hurriedly, she made a mental calculation if she could make it in that time.

.....

If she would hurry and leave the house undetected, she could have some time to spare. "Thirty minutes is fine with me." She thought that he might be farther than her. "But please, don't be late." She begged him.

She feared that even if she managed to leave her father's estate. If her father had a whiff of her plans, he would come after her. And a few minutes could mean either her capture or her freedom.

"I promise. I will be there." He said as they finally terminated the call. Finally, Mike had given her hope.

Nonetheless, she still had to figure out how to leave the premises without alarming her father. Of course, she could not get out without being seen by the guards. She was no James Bond. She could not climb and jump off their high fence.

So, how could she exit the front door and the gate without anyone stopping her? Then, an idea came to her. It was not perfect, but it had to do. She only hoped that no one would suspect anything.

But before she could even pick up her carry-on bag, a knock on her door alerted her. Who would be up this late at night? Her father usually retired before the clock stroke midnight.

She quickly kicked her bag underneath her bed and grabbed her robe, covering her body. Then, she pulled her shoes off, walking barefoot on her carpeted floor.

"Who's there?" She asked as she moved closer to the door. Then, she remembered her hair. Quickly, she pulled the knot, letting her hair cascade down her shoulders.

"I am sorry, sweetheart. I saw your lights on, so I decided to come over. Do you mind if we talk for just a minute?" Her father's voice resonated on the door.

"Just a second, Dad." She answered, pretending that she just came from the bathroom. "Yes, Dad. What is it?" She immediately asked as soon as she opened her door. "I was in the bathroom." She explained with not so many words.

"Oh!" Her father walked with her further inside her room, letting his eyes roam on the decorations on her wall. "It seems it had been a while since I was here last." He said. "I remembered that pink covered this entire room."

"If you have not noticed, I have grown up, Dad." She notified him. But she agreed with him. It had been so long since he had visited her in her room. She was still in her teenage years.

But something changed in him during those times. And it only worsened as the year passed. Even her mother noticed it when she was alive. Now, she did not know when her father became a monster.

Was he always had been this cruel, evil man that she idolized a long time ago? A man who hid in the guise of a good man. Or some circumstance changed him into the man that he was today.

"Yeah. And I believed I missed most of it." He said, looking regretful. She could not tell if that was genuine remorse or one of his acts to get her sympathy. But based on her latest experiences, it could be the latter.

"Anyway, what is it that you need, Dad? It is a bit getting late." She pretended to be sleepy, yawning in front of her father to make her point.

She just needed him to get back to his room and sleep. Then, she could go on with her plan. As long as the guards did not suspect anything, they would not bother her father.

"Of course, you are right." He nodded, agreeing with her. "I came here to talk about Michael. I know Gerald just died. But I don't think you should mourn his death for too long."

She knew it. Her father would not even let Gerald's body rot underground. Now, here he was, thinking of how to secure his plans. "What are you saying, Dad?" She pretended not to know what their plans were. "What about Michael?"

"Michael will be running for Governor, and I think you should stand by his side as his wife. He already expressed his wish to marry you. I think this would be a good match for you." Alfred said as if he was thinking of her well-being.

She heard everything that he wanted from her. But he never asked what she wanted for herself. That was how their relationship had become. She was only an object to her father that he could use to strengthen his hold on power and money.

"But..." She slightly protested. "I don't think marrying him is the solution. Besides, I don't even know him." She said.

“Once you are married, you will get to know him. Then, you will discover that he is a decent guy. And eventually, you will fall in love with him and forget Gerald for good.” He said as if Michael was the solution to her problem.

But she already knew better. The man was an evil fraud, just like her father.

Chapter 1113 Did she die?

She waited until her father was out her door before shoving her robe off her body. Then she pulled her bag from underneath her bed. She had already wasted a few minutes, but the park was nearby, so she knew she could make it as long as there was no more unnecessary stop.

Besides, she believed that Mike would wait for her. He would stay until she arrived at their meeting place. At least, she was counting on that as she gradually moved towards her door, placing her ears on the surface.

“Please...” She mumbled to whoever was listening to help her. She only needed to convince the guards that she was going out and nothing was out of the ordinary.

She walked toward the staircase, carrying her handbag and carry-on, looking in all directions. When she saw that the coast was clear, she descended the stairs and strode fast toward the parking lot.

Fortunately, her father’s room was at the other end of the hallway. It would be hard for him to hear her leave. He would only know if someone would notify him.

“Ouch!” But sometimes, the more she tried to be careful and silent, the more she bumped into things. Quickly, she grabbed the vase before it shattered on the marble floor. That would be a noise that would be hard to miss.

“Careful.” She chastised herself as she moved toward the back exit, this time being extra cautious. Getting out of the house was easy since no guards roamed inside. However, outside the parking area was the tricky one.

Immediately, she rode her fastest car and dropped her things on the back seat. She squared her shoulder as she started the engine of her car. Then, she pressed the button that opened the massive doors.

As soon as she came out of the small building, a guard waved his hand and stopped her. Then he flashed a light on her face, probably trying to identify her from the low light outside.

.....

“I am sorry, Ms. Rosley.” The guard said as he quickly put the lights out of her face and saluted, giving her the signal to proceed.

That was easy, breathing a little easier as she wiped the tiny beads of sweat on her forehead. It would be a lie if she said she had not peed, even just a little in her pants from that little incident. But the problem was not over yet. She still had to pass the guard at the gate.

She took out her phone and placed it on her ears as she neared the metallic blockage that separated their property from the public street. Then, she acted like she was talking to someone on her phone as she stopped at the gate as the guard checked again who was inside the vehicle.

"I am already on my way." She said. Then, "What did you do? Damnit, that is not how you resolve a situation." She pretended to talk to someone about a problem, showing them her frustration, letting the guards think she was on her way to her office or at a construction site.

"Don't let another of those stupid men continue, or else I will sue their asses." She shouted again. "Wait for me! I am on my way." She recited the line in her head. Then, she put down her phone and smiled at the guards.

"I guessed problems don't stop even at night." She muttered to the man that was closest to her window.

"That is true, Ms. Rosley." The guard said. "But it is a bit late. Maybe one of my men could escort you to your destination." He suggested.

"No, that won't be necessary. I think I can manage just fine. Besides, it won't take long. I will be back before you know it." She coolly performed, hoping the guards would not see anything suspicious in her actions.

It would seem her act did work as the gates opened, and the man moved aside, saluting in her direction. "Drive safely, Ms. Rosley." Then, she was out of the property of her father.

She slammed her hands on the steering wheel, happy that she had made it. She still had enough time to get to the park. Therefore, there was no need to hurry.

But when she looked in her rearview mirror, she noticed another vehicle exiting their gates. She was sure it came from her house. Damn, that guard had her followed even if she said she did not need one.

"Now what?" She asked herself, but she was not giving up.

Quickly, she stepped on the gas, speeding slightly from her regular speed. Although, it was still not fast enough to lose anyone in a car chase. She checked again on the mirror, and she believed she could still see the car not far behind.

She could not let them catch her or follow her to where she was going. That would beat her purpose. She had to find a way to lose that vehicle, or else she could kiss her escape goodbye.

Should she call Mike?

"No!" That would only complicate things. She had to stay calm and figure this out. But she was almost at the park. She needed to find some answers quickly.

Then, she saw that the stoplights were about to change to red. She knew she would not make it with her current speed. Then she had to stop. What should she do then?

"No, don't do it." She should not risk her life. But what future was waiting for her if she could not get away from her father now? What life was waiting for her child at their hands?

She could not even imagine marrying that evil man. How could she even think that she would allow him in their lives? That he would have a say on how to raise her child.

“No, I can’t live like that.” She said as her foot pressed hard on the foot pedal.

She saw a very bright light before she closed her eyes shut.

In a split second, she saw her life flash before her eyes.

Oh my! Did she die? Would that be so bad?

Chapter 1114 The icing on the cake

She still felt her body shaking from her nightmare. But, of course, she could not let Edison notice it. He did not need to know the problem. He did not need to meet his father as far as she was concerned.

But, of course, for her to protect her son, she had to deal with Ryan. She believed she had to stop him before he made a stupid move of fighting for custody of their son. Moreover, there was no way that she was going to marry him.

“Good night, my sweetheart.” She mumbled to her son, whose eyes were finally closed.

She planted a soft, mild kiss on his forehead before moving away from his bed. She was careful not to make unnecessary movements or sounds, not to wake him again.

He said that she was making a lot of noise, causing him to wake up in the first place. At least it took just one story for him to fall asleep. But she did not know that she was making all those sounds. As she had said, she was having a nightmare.

“I hope you never meet your father.” She mumbled, knowing that it would never do him no good to have a father like Ryan.

But she would do her best to protect him from the likes of him. A man like Ryan did not deserve to have a child. And her child needed a better father than he could ever be.

She returned to her room, hoping she would fall into a dreamless sleep. But after approximately thirty minutes of tossing and turning, she was still wide awake.

“Aaahhh!” She hissed out of her frustration.

.....

Every time she closed her eyes, she could see his face smiling. And it was not anywhere near comforting. She could feel her body shuddering with disgust. She just wanted him out of her life and her thoughts.

Finally, giving up, she stood up and found her phone on the nightstand. She grabbed it, intending to search for a video or a game that would divert her mind away from her thoughts.

“What are you doing?” But instead of surfing the net, she found herself dialing his number. “End it.” Her mind said, but her fingers stayed frozen as she waited for someone to answer.

She should not be calling him at this hour since he might be already sleeping. Or he could still be out with his friends. She remembered the time that she saw him with his friends in a club.

But the phone kept ringing, and when she thought he would never pick up, his voice suddenly sounded in the speaker. "Ria. Is that you?" He asked, probably wondering why she would call. "Is there something wrong?" He hastily added.

She could hear that he had just woken up. She could surmise it in his raspy voice. Now, she felt terrible for disturbing him. But she knew she had to answer him before he became worried.

"Sorry. I don't know what came over me. But I could not sleep. Then, I was about to play with my phone when I accidentally dialed your number." She explained. But it was not an accident, as her mind reminded her.

"That is ok. You don't have to apologize. You can call me anytime you want. I am just glad that you are ok." He said, making a big sigh. But she could hear how genuinely concerned he was.

She could only guess that he was trying to make himself comfortable on his bed as she heard some ruffling on the phone. But that was not all, as her mind wandered to a different path.

"Ok. It was not an accident." She confessed, suddenly feeling guilty. "I don't know why I called..." Then, she stopped. "That is not true either." Taking a deep breath.

"What I am saying is that I think I want to hear your voice so I can fall asleep." She finally admitted.

"Why? Did something happen, or did you happen to miss me?" Finally, she could hear the teasing in his voice. But she did not mind. Truthfully, she found it sweet that they could finally feel comfortable with each other with tiny matters like this.

"Well.." She hesitated for a second. "I had a horrible nightmare. Then, Edison woke up." She said. "And I believe I miss you too." Adding the last part in a shy whisper.

She knew she should be comfortable saying these things to him, but sometimes, her fear got the best of her. She could not stop her self-doubt about her ability to land with a good guy like him.

As they said, he was a good catch, one of the most eligible bachelors in the city. For him to end up in the news cycle, he was either a celebrity or belonged to a high social circle. The latter seemed to be more appropriate for him.

"I can come over now and tuck you to bed. I can even sing you a lullaby. If you have not heard, I have a good voice." He proudly said.

That was a nice thought, but that would beat her purpose.

"No need to come over. I don't want you driving at this hour." She said, thinking that he should not get out of the comfort of his bed. "But I don't mind a few lines if you like to show off your beautiful voice. That is if you dare." This time, it was her turn to tease him.

"I would prefer that coming over and tucking you to bed with a good night kiss." He rumbled. But he knew he had no choice because she was calling the shot. "But a song it is, then. And I promise you. You will fall in love with my voice."

When she heard his first hymn, she knew she had to eat her words. He did have a fantastic voice. Damn! He was good. And the fact was, she was not just falling in love with his voice.



She realized that she had fallen in love with him. And his voice was just the icing on the cake.

Chapter 1115 Who was this man?

She touched her face, feeling her hot breath come out of her lips as she gasped for her dear life. Immediately, one of her hands slid down her belly in a protective stance.

Damn, that was close.

She released the air filling her lungs and blinked her eyes several times to assure herself that she was alive. She had survived. However, her ordeal was far from over.

“Go!” She shouted to herself.

Instinctively, she pushed her foot on the pedal harder as her car sped off. She looked in the rearview mirror to see that no one was following her anymore.

The other car had to stop at the red light because a large truck crossed the street just in time for her to pass by. The truck had to make an emergency break, thinking it would hit her car, but by some miracle, she escaped by a hairline.

“Thank you.” She said to her guardian angel as she quickly turned toward her destination.

She knew she had to turn again, taking a longer route, but that would at least guarantee she would lose her tail. By now, her father’s security might have figured out that she had spotted them.

They would have alerted their boss and her father. In a few minutes, her father would order a manhunt for her return, and her chances of escaping would become slimmer. Therefore, she had to hurry.

.....

“Where is he?” She mumbled as she looked around the park after she had parked the car at a safe distance.

She believed she had followed his instructions, but where was he as she turned left and right? He could be anywhere, but it was slightly dark and hard to see.

Then, a man walked by on the other path, but he looked in her direction. “That could not be him.” She whispered to herself, suddenly feeling scared out of her mind.

Thankfully, the man just walked straight ahead and never looked back again. Now, she could feel her knees shaking. Did he already leave? Was she late? She wondered as she looked at her phone.

No, she was just on time. It meant she was not the one that was late. But where was Mike? She needed to get out of there before her father found her. She was not confident that she had left the securities with a significant lead.

She started tapping her feet on the grassy ground as she hid behind a large tree. But her eyes kept searching the premises for any signs of life. But so far, she came empty.

"Give me your bag and phone." Someone suddenly spoke behind her, but before she could react, the man grabbed her phone from her fist and turned it off. Then, he removed the card inside before he threw the phone on the cement ground with force.

She watched her phone smash to pieces at what he did. But again, she did not have time to do or say anything as he grabbed her bag from her other hand while taking her wrist in a firm grip.

"Let us go. You will not need your phone where we are going. Your father could track you with that." He said as he walked on a different path, going through the thick bushes and trees until they ended up in another part of the park where his car was already waiting.

"Get in." He said as he opened the door and shoved her bag into the back seat of his sports car. "We don't have much time." He reiterated when she did not move.

She was still in a slight shock after his sudden arrival. She thought someone was robbing her when he unceremoniously snatched her phone. Her brain was too fried to recognize his voice immediately.

"Ok." She finally answered as she quickly sat on the passenger's side. "You know, you should not sneak up on a pregnant person like that. You almost gave me a heart attack."

She reprimanded him as soon as he sat in the driver's seat. But still, she was glad that he came through with his promise that he would come and help her. Still, he could have executed her rescue in a much better way.

Then, they were speeding away from where he had parked. And several seconds later, exiting the park in the back exit. She did not know that he could drive fast. They were already going more than a hundred as they hit the open street.

But what did she know about him? Not much. All she knew was that Gerald trusted him, so she concluded that she could do the same.

"I am sorry about that." He finally spoke as he maneuvered the fast car effortlessly through the thin traffic. "But you did not give me much choice." He said, sounding a bit ticked off.

She was about to say something when he interrupted her. "What you did was reckless?" He added with a hint of disapproval in his voice.

"Wait a minute! What did she do?" She mentally asked herself, suddenly confused by his accusation.

She just hid behind the tree and waited for him. What was so reckless about that? Unless there were hidden wild animals in the park, she did not see any danger earlier, except for the man that looked at her. But nothing happened.

She still did not understand why he sounded pissed off.

"What are you talking about?" She finally asked as she stared at his face. "How did I become reckless?" She wanted some clarification. She had no clue why he would say that when she could hardly dare to do anything dangerous.

"How quickly have you forgotten? Are you sure you don't remember? Or are you simply playing dumb?" He asked again.

But after a few seconds, his expression changed, looking more concerned about her well-being. His earlier annoyance had gradually faded.

“As I said, I had no clue what this is all about.” She exasperatedly told him as she momentarily turned away to check where he might be taking her.

“Ok. Let me refresh your memory. Beating the red light.” He said, pointing his index finger up as if he was counting. “Almost crashing your car with that truck.” He added another finger. “And lying to me.” He had counted three offenses she made.

She looked at him, stunned by his statement. She could not believe that he knew. Besides, she did not lie to him.

“You saw that.” Now, she was surprised. “How?” She questioned him, wondering how he knew what she had done earlier. Unless he was there or someone told him.

Who was this man?

Chapter 1116 Was that even possible?

She rushed through the lobby and ran until she could reach the elevator. She only comfortably breathed when she was safely inside the packed metal box on her way to her floor.

She could not be late today. Her boss specifically told her that she had to be early today. But that stupid nightmare made it hard for her to sleep. Luckily, hearing his beautiful voice eventually lulled her to a dreamless and peaceful sleep.

But unfortunately, she turned off her alarm clock this morning, but her mind refused to wake up. She returned to her pillows and blanket, grabbing a few more minutes of sleep.

“I am sorry.” She suddenly said as she accidentally stepped on a foot. They looked like a can of sardines without the red sauce.

Thankfully, a few were left on the top floors, giving her room to breathe. It was slightly suffocating inside with the assorted perfumes and the lack of oxygen. But she was glad when she finally came to her floor, breathing airconditioned and cold air.

“Ria, finally.” She heard her name across the hall as her boss peeked through the hallway. “Come. I need your help.” She said as she beckoned her to hurry and follow her.

She rushed toward her office, wondering what the problem was. She did not have to ask what as she entered her mini cubicle blooming with flowers. She could hardly wait to see the card, already knowing who had sent her three bouquets.

She picked the first one, the smaller one. But the card said three. Then, the next one, the same size as the first flower, she had checked. It said two.

“Who sent it?” Josey and Brenda simultaneously asked as they stood behind her and waited anticipantly.

.....

Of course, they were also aware of the news circulating in the office grapevine.

She could hardly wait to see what the large bouquet had to say as she took three cards out. The first card was for her immediate supervisor, Brenda.

"It is for you." She handed the first flower to her and the card.

It said that he hoped her boss would be more understanding today if she could be a little cranky.

She read the next card and gave it to her superior boss, Josey, with the card. It also said she should not be offended if she kept yawning during a meeting. Maybe her boss could give her a much longer break if it was not too much to ask because she had a rough night.

"What did you two do last night?" Josey asked, looking suspicious with a mischievous smile.

"How rough was he?" Brenda added with a giggle as the two suddenly bombarded her with questions.

Damnit!

"It is not like that." She tried to explain as the two shrieked in excitement. She could see they were genuinely happy for her, but she could not say the same thing to the others.

She had to talk to him about this. Now, he was fueling the flames of their situation. He was giving the gossipmongers something to talk about with this stunt. Luckily, she could trust this two with her secrets.

"Then, what is it like?" Brenda asked again. "Was he gentle at first before she released your wild side?" She could not help but shake her head at what she was hearing.

She knew sex and read about it. But to talk about it in this manner. It was all a new experience for her. She did not even know how to answer them. Or whether she should dignify their questions with a response.

"You know what? I think we have work to do." She decided to end the conversation before she started spilling every detail of her sex life. Then, that would be scandalous.

"Now, you are just being a killjoy," Josey muttered. "What I will do to have a man like that on my bed." She added dreamily.

But she knew Josey was only joking because she was happily married to a kind and decent guy with two kids. She doubted her boss would cheat on her husband for one great-looking piece of ass.

She could help but picture her boyfriend with nothing but his naked butt standing before her. It was these two's fault, but she could not blame them for daydreaming about him. He was indeed a gorgeous specimen of a man.

"Come on, you two. Time to work." Why did she feel like she was ordering her bosses? On second thought, she just did. She started showing her bosses to the door. "Give me five minutes, and I will join you at your office."

How she suddenly wished she had time to get some coffee. She would have to wait till her coffee break. Then, she should probably call Zach to thank him for the flowers.

He did not have to do that, but she appreciated the gesture. Somehow, it made her feel very special. When was the last time she had received this kind of attention? Never. Her ex-boyfriend was never showy and romantic. But then again, Ryan was nothing like Zach.

“As much as I like your boyfriend and the flowers. I can’t give you a long break.” Brenda said to her. “We are just swamped today.” She reasoned.

“Don’t worry about that. Zach is just joking about it.” Although she knew she still lacked sleep. Still, she would push through until she finished her shift. She was here to work, and that was what she would do.

Finally, the two left her to arrange her things before starting her day at the office. She took the last card and read it while placing the flowers in an empty vase.

I WILL ALWAYS BE HERE FOR YOU. NO MATTER WHAT.

NEVER HESITATE TO COME TO ME FOR ANYTHING.

I AM HERE FOR THE LONG HAUL.

I. L. Y.

ZACH.

What?

She blinked her eyes a few more times, wondering if she saw things that were not supposed to be there. But it was still there, three initial letters that could mean anything.

But what?

I like you.

Maybe.

I loathe you.

She doubted.

I love you.

Was that even possible?

Chapter 1117 Savior

She woke up feeling famished. But thankfully, the comfortable bed and the knowledge that she was safe from her father had made her sleep free from any distractions.

Last night, she thought asking Mike to come to her rescue was a mistake. She even feared for her life, thinking that Mike was working for her father. Insane right? But that was what she got for watching too many action movies.

Fortunately, Mike clarified the matter with a reasonable explanation.

"Hey, why did you not wake me up?" She asked when she walked into the large living room where Mike was sprawled on the sofa, watching a news program on the widescreen.

She sat on the other side of the sofa and checked what was happening around the globe. It seemed it was not only her who was having a horrible life. Some were worse than hers, but it did not make her feel less worried about her future.

"I knocked twice, but you did not answer." He finally turned to her, lowering the volume of the television. "I also peeked by the door. But I swear I did not enter." He pointed that out.

"Ok!" She believed him. Besides, she trusted him, except for that little incident last night, but she quickly shoved her doubt away.

"I just needed to make sure that you are ok. But you were snoring. So, I know that you are just fine. I decided to let you sleep a few extra hours." He reasoned, which was understandable.

But. "I don't snore." She threw a pillow at him but laughed. But how would she know when she was fast asleep?

.....

Still, a lady did not like to hear such things. Only men snore soundly at night, as far as she was concerned. But it seemed that she was also doing it. But Gerald never mentioned anything about that to her.

"It is probably from your pregnancy. I read somewhere that being pregnant can cause changes in the body and even sleeping patterns." Mike noted, assuring her that she probably did not snore before and she would stop after she gave birth.

But she was skeptical about his theory. She had not read anything like that in the books she had studied about her condition. Besides, why was Mike reading books about pregnancy?

He was not even married or had a girlfriend that she knew. "Are you hiding a wife I did not know or a child you fathered with some woman somewhere?" She questioned with her eyes narrowing at him.

If she was going to stay with him, she believed she should at least get to know more about him. He might be a friend of Gerald, but he was not her friend, not in every sense of the word.

Based on Gerald, Mike could not hold a serious relationship, meaning he was just like Gerald. Now, she could not stop thinking of Gerald as he remembered him again.

But she promised she would stay tough and determined for their child. She was not going to cry anymore and concentrate more on how to raise their child.

"Of course not. I will never fall into that trap." Mike expressed, denying her question. "I don't know what you did to Gerald, but that would never happen to me." He continued, shaking his head in rejection.

His reaction told her he might be telling the truth. Still, it did not answer her curiosity. "Then, why are you reading pregnancy books?" She finally asked.

"Because I want to know how I can help you. I don't know a thing about a pregnant woman. Therefore, I have to read up." He told her as he stood up from his seat.

She was not expecting that from him, touched by his action. He did not have to do that. But still, she appreciated that he took the time to know about her condition.

Maybe that was why he knew how to console her. Somehow, he understood what she was going through. She thought he was just a womanizer and could always work his way into a woman's pants with his charms. Not that it would work on her.

"Let me warm some food so you can have your breakfast. Or should I say brunch?" He corrected, seeing the time was almost noon.

"I can help you with that." She said as she quickly followed him to the kitchen.

But he insisted that he could do it since she was his guest. He pointed she should sit on the counter stool or on the table, whichever she preferred, and wait.

"You can cook dinner later if you like. Just give me a list of the items you need so I can buy them in the grocery." He offered her. "And include all the other items you will also need. I know you did not pack much. You will need some supplies."

He was right about that, too, she thought. She did not bring any of her toiletries and a lot of stuff she used daily. She barely had clothes to wear. But would she need all of those things? She guessed not.

"I will write down later what I need." She told him, already making a mental list of necessities, not luxuries.

Suddenly, she could not help but think of what would happen now. She might have escaped her father's clutches, but it did not mean that her ordeal was over. Truthfully, she believed it had just begun.

How could she build a future for her child when she could not return to work? Then she had no money since her father would have frozen her accounts by now.

She had a few dollars in her wallet and some money in her other bank account that her father could not touch. But would that be enough for her and her child to survive? She doubted.

Besides, she was supposed to hide from her father, so how could she apply for a new job? With one look at her name, everyone would know who she was, especially in her field of work. Then, what? She would be back to square one.

"Here." Mike placed a cold fresh juice before her. And she believed it was not from a carton but a freshly squeezed fruit. Then, he grabbed two plates he had arranged and placed one before her.

"This looks delicious." She said, smelling the sweet and tangy aroma of the salad and the sliced meat before her. "Did you cook all of this?" She asked as she quickly dug into her plate.

Could you blame her? She was feeding two people and quite hungry, as she felt her stomach growl at the sight and smell of food. Maybe if the food did not taste that good, it would still taste delicious.

However, she was glad that the taste matched its appearance. It was perfect. Her first bite told her that she wanted another serving. Again, blame it on the hormones.

"Unfortunately, nope," Mike said. "I can cook but not that great." He added. "But the woman who came here every day cooks and clean for me. I can only heat the meals whenever I want to eat them."

His explanation made sense. Gerald described Mike as the perfect bachelor. Anyway, at least he hired someone who knew what she was doing and not some sexy maid who he could fool around.

"Where is she?" She asked as she munched on the salad with gusto. "I want to meet her. Maybe she could teach me how to cook."

She believed his cook was better than the ones her father hired in their household. They might be first-class chefs, but their food was more aesthetic than sumptuous.

And, of course, now that she was going to be a mother, she had to learn more things that would help her to raise a child. Of course, that should include cooking delicious and nutritious food for her baby.

"She only came here in the morning to buy some groceries and cook. Then, she cleans the house when nobody is around." He told her. That explains the list of groceries.

He intended to ask the maid to do her groceries. That was a relief because she wondered if she could ask him to buy her feminine stuff. It was too personal to ask a man to buy for her.

But she could not go to the groceries. Not when her father's security and investigators might be looking for her at this very minute. With his father's resources, money, and connections, she doubted she could survive a day in the street without him finding her.

Luckily, Mike helped her. "Ok. Maybe I can meet her tomorrow morning." She told him. Then, she also realized something. "By the way, thanks." She said. "For helping me even if you did not need to."

She knew she had already thanked him last night. But she felt it was not enough. She appreciated it very much, how he had risked his life for her, remembering what he had done to secure her escape and safety.

"No need to thank me. I am doing this for you, the baby, and my friend, Gerald." He repeated what he had told her before.

Still, she would always be grateful to him, no matter what happened, for his act of bravery and kindness. He might be the biggest asshole because of his womanizing ways. By the way, she hated those kinds of men.

But just this once, she excused him for what he was. She would ignore his past sins because she believed he was their savior.

Chapter 1118 A wife with a career

She woke up late since she had to catch up with sleep. Having a child might have its breathtaking moments, but it was not as pleasing when he started to fuss in the middle of the night or almost anytime he felt like it.



But she wondered how she could have slept this late without being interrupted by his cries. And where was Alex? Did he leave for work without waking her up?

"Oh, no!" She shouted as she abruptly jumped out of bed, thinking that Alex must have woken her up before leaving, but she returned to sleep instead of doing her morning routine.

Now, what happened to her son? Why was he not making any sound as she stared at the baby monitor? It had its lights on, so it was working. She quickly ran out of her room and into the next room, his nursery, checking on him.

However, her son was not there. The crib was empty. She even checked the floor and all the nooks and crannies of the room, thinking he might have fallen. Impossible for an infant, but she still searched.

"No..." She started to panic, thinking that someone must have taken her baby, as she dashed downstairs to alert their security. They must find him. The cameras must have caught whoever took him.

She ran towards the front door, focused only on catching whoever had taken her child. But she almost had a heart attack when a hand suddenly touched her on her shoulders as she was about to open the door.

"Hey, where are you going?" She heard his voice and saw his face as she abruptly turned around. "Is there something wrong?" He asked with concern etched on his face.

She immediately released the air from her lungs as relief rushed through her blood. "Ares." She said, seeing her child tucked safely in her husband's arms. "Alex, what are you still doing here?"

.....

She quickly took the child in her arms and hugged him firmly. Was this what it was like to be a mother? To be constantly in fear for her son's wellbeing, she wondered.

"I tried to wake you up, but you were still fast asleep. So, I thought I might as well take a turn in taking care of this little rascal while you get your much-needed rest." Alex told her as he carefully watched her.

"Are you ok? You look pale." He added as his hand touched her cheeks to check on her.

She was still trying to catch her breath from her recent scare, but she was feeling much better now. "I am ok. But I think my lack of sleep is getting to me." She said, allowing her husband to usher her back to the living room and sit with her.

"I thought you had left, and when I checked the nursery and found Ares gone, I lost it." She confessed to him, feeling like she was losing her mind.

She only felt that kind of fear during their kidnapping incident. And it was not a memory she would like to relive. She had buried it deep in her mind, but somehow, it had crept back in.

"Hey! Come here." She felt him pulling her into his body with their son and enveloping them in his warmth. "It is just the fatigue and the trauma of what happened to us recently."

She knew what he was referring to, believing he might be right. Even though she did not get the chance to bond well with Gerald as her brother, they had been friends and her mentor.

His death had made an impact on her life, in a way, adding fear to the trauma she already had. Dying due to natural death was acceptable, but his death was not a health issue nor an accident but caused by an unknown entity or probably a group.

It was only innate for her to fear for her life and her family, believing that the world was unsafe. She had never cared if something happened to her life before, but just thinking that something would happen to Alex and Ares sent a chill down her spine.

"I guess." She could sense that her husband had a point.

"Besides, we should get a nanny in the day to help with Ares. He is becoming a handful every minute." He said, turning his face toward their son, who was quiet and listening. "Aren't you?" He said, which earned him a smile as he tickled Ares's chin.

He had been insisting on it. Although their mothers came once in a while to check on them, they could hardly do much. But a nanny would be full-time in a day. So, all she would have to worry about was the night shift.

Maybe, it was time that she tried it. It did not mean she was abandoning her child. She was only getting a new pair of hands to help out. She finally realized she was not a horrible mother if she asked for help.

She would be if she neglected her child because she could not stay awake. Luckily, Alex stayed today. But what if he also had an emergency at the office? What then?

"Ok. We need to hire one." She finally conceded, thinking it was best for their little angel. She would never forgive herself if something happened to him because she was sleeping on her watch.

"Great. Besides, I think you need to go back to work soon." Alex said as if it was a fact.

"Why? Is there a problem with the office?" She quickly asked, but the last report said the company was doing fine under Alex's administration.

"The company is great, but you are not." Alex pointed at her heart. "You might say you love it here, playing housewife and mother to our child, but I know you also love what you do out there."

"But..." She was about to contradict his words, thinking that he and Ares needed her more than the company. He was already doing great with it. She did not have to go back.

"I did not marry you because I want a housewife who will bear my kids. I love you because of who you are." Alex stopped her from saying more. "You will still be a good housewife and mother if you follow your dreams." He said, assuring her that he would not mind a wife with a career.

## Chapter 1119 A blooming romance

It was an exhausting morning as Brenda and Josey worked her butt out. The only time she had her rest was during bathroom breaks. She was not complaining since that was her job.

Truthfully, she was glad she still had one despite her absences. In another company, they might not have been so kind. This position was an opportunity she would not waste just because it was hard.

"I know this is short notice, but I don't think we can go home early." Brenda just sneaked into her cubicle and informed her. "I think you need to call your nanny to extend her watch on Edison?"

"Oh, ok." Ria was not expecting that. But she should since she had already seen the piles of work they had to finish for today. "I will call her now." She assured her boss that she could count on her.

"Anyway, I saw your boyfriend rushing in the hallway. Are you going out to lunch with him? I can cover for you for an hour." Brenda offered with a wink. She already knew the naughty thoughts that were going through her mind.

"Unfortunately, he could not even make it to our lunch date in my little cubicle." She gestured to her tiny table and chairs. "Since the boss is absent today, they are also swamped with work. He said he had to accompany Sir Marcus on a lunch meeting."

At least she had the flowers to accompany her during lunch. But her boss offered to join her since she did not feel like eating with their other peers. "I will see you in a jiffy, I guess," Brenda said as she strode toward the door. It was almost lunch, with just a few more minutes left.

But her phone rang, which made her boss turn to her. "Speaking of the devil." She excitedly uttered.

"I will give you a few more minutes before I come back. Even phone sex would do. Don't make the man wait too long. They say blue balls hurt like bitch." She mumbled with a giggle escaping her lips.

.....

"Go! I think Josey is already looking for you." She told her, shooing her out of her tiny office, feeling slightly embarrassed with her suggestions.

She suddenly regretted telling her that she was taking things slow with her relationship with Zach, including their sex life. Brenda disagreed with her decision, telling her that a guy like him would not wait for her forever.

"A man has needs. And if you can't give that to him, he will find it somewhere else." She could still hear Brenda's words going through her head.

But Zach said that he was willing to take it slow. But was she making a mistake of making him wait? But what if? There she was again with her endless what-ifs.

Maybe, Brenda was right. She was overthinking her relationship with him. She had judged him prematurely because of her past, but he was not her ex. Zach was a better and decent man than Ryan.

Then, she remembered her phone call as it kept ringing in her hand. But it was not Zach as she checked the screen. "Hello, Tabby." She immediately picked up, anxious about why he had called.

She hoped that he had discovered who was trying to investigate her. She simultaneously wished that it was a false alarm. Suddenly, she could feel her heart quicken its heartbeat.

Luckily, Brenda had already left. Ria did not have to explain to her what was happening. She could already see that her hands were shaking and her face must be turning white from the lack of oxygen.

Yeah, she was already panicking.

"Hi, Ria. I hope you are not busy. I called thinking that it might be your break." He said, excusing himself for the time.

At least he knew when to call, she thought as she tried to rein on her fear and take control of her breathing. "That is ok. You are just in time." She answered, realizing that it was indeed her break. "Have you found out anything?" She quickly asked.

She knew that beating around the bush would not cut it. She was already on her full stretch. Keeping it longer would only make her snap. She had to find out as soon as possible.

"Yeah, about that. I have tried my best to dig into the file, but it was not as easy as I thought. Only the leading detectives had access to those kinds of cases." Tabby informed her, which had deflated her hope.

She had learned that Tabby was still relatively new to the company. Although he had proven his worth to his boss, he still had to earn his stripes before getting promoted to the elite group. But in time, she believed that he would get there. But not in time to look into her case.

"So, what now?" She could not help but ask with a voice lacking luster.

She could not keep looking over her shoulder, wondering if someone would suddenly show up behind her or at her doorstep. She was already having nightmares about it. What more if she found herself in a horrible situation?

"I will still try to get a hold of those papers. I made some friends I think I can convince to look into it. I promise I will do everything I can to get some answers." He said to her.

She believed that should be good enough for now. At least someone was still watching her back. But she wished that she never had to and that the entire ordeal would go away.

"But I need to know something." He suddenly asked her, making her snap back in attention.

"Sure." She knew she did not want to keep secrets from him. She sensed that she could trust him completely.

He was the only person that would never leave her, except for her son. Hopefully, she could feel the same way with Zach, remembering the initials he placed on his notes.

"Tell me about your ex. I mean Edison's father." He asked her, believing, of course, that he was the first suspect.

Who else would want to investigate her except him? She told him everything about him, including their recent unpleasant encounter. She believed the more he knew about him, the better he could evaluate her situation. That was the only way he could help her.

"How well do you know your boyfriend?" He asked, which slightly stunned her. She was not expecting that he would even mention Zach. "This is just a standard question." He clarified. "I need more information. So I can assess your case more thoroughly."

That made sense to her. Still, she doubted that Zach had anything to do with this investigation. She stood by her first suspicion that Ryan was more likely to be behind this.

“Enough to know that Zach had nothing to do with this.” She defended him, knowing that her boyfriend would not need to have her investigated because she almost told him everything he needed to learn about her.

Besides, why would he need that when it was not like he was proposing to her and marrying her? They were still far from that because what they had was just a blooming romance.

Chapter 1120 A handyman

She woke up with the delicious smell of waffles floating in the air. But unfortunately, it was just her imagination or maybe part of a dream that she could not remember.

Still, her stomach reminded her that she needed breakfast and fast. She was already starving. She did not know that being pregnant would give her a large appetite. If she kept going at this rate, she would look like a whale before she gave birth to her baby.

“What is for breakfast, Imelda.” Haley greeted the cook that visited them every morning. She could tell she was baking something delicious in the oven, smelling its mouthwatering aroma.

She saw that the cook was already busy with several menus on the kitchen counter. She usually pre-cooked some dishes that Mike could reheat when he arrived home.

It seemed Mike did not want a permanent maid that would stay in his house. Of course, she could understand that since he was a bachelor. Having a woman living under her roof would cramp his style.

“I am baking a blueberry muffin. I hope you like that. By the way, do you have any particular allergies so I would know what to watch when I am cooking your meal?” Imelda asked as she continued to chop some vegetables.

“No. I don’t. So, you have nothing to worry about.” She moved beside the middle-aged woman that was old enough to be her aunt. But not that old to be her mother.

“That is good to hear.” She smiled at her as she continued with her work.

“What do you want me to do with this?” She pointed to the other vegetables on the counter as she took a chopping board and another knife from the drawers.

.....

She had nothing to do. Besides, she liked to learn more about cooking. And she discovered that she was a good teacher. Therefore, she decided to wake up early to meet with her in the kitchen.

“Just diced them,” Imelda instructed while she immediately did what she asked. But as she cut the potato, something caught her eye, moving outside the window.

She was unsure, but she wondered if that was Mike. She only saw his back but only for a second. Therefore, she was uncertain. What was he doing at home? Usually, he was early to work.

“What’s next?” Haley asked as she finished performing her task, but her mind still wondered where the man went. Then again, it could have been the gardener fixing the lawn and the garden.

Quickly, the minutes passed as Imelda taught her a new recipe. It was amazing that the Mexican lady knew many dishes, not just Mexican food. Now, she was learning a variety of meals she could cook for her child.

At least that was one problem she could scratch off her list. Still, she had a long one that had no immediate solution. But she was not losing hope because she would find a way. She always did.

"You see. You are a fast learner." The cook complimented her cooking as the aroma of their dish wafted in the air.

She already had one hot muffin and a glass of warm milk, and now she was hungry again. She took another muffin and shoved a fourth of the slice into her mouth, savoring the sweet, sumptuous treat.

"I have a good teacher." She mumbled with her mouth still slightly full. At that moment, she did not care about poise or decorum. She was hungry, and she was about to fill her tummy.

She swallowed another mouthful of the bread just in time for a man to enter the backdoor in the kitchen. It was not the hardener, that was for sure, but he was wearing casual clothes. No scratched that.

He was wearing some work clothes, like the ones a handyman used when they worked in the garden or carpentry. He did not look like the man that she used to know.

"Mike, what are you doing here? Aren't you supposed to be at work?" She concluded that he was the man she had seen earlier. "And what are you doing with those clothes?" She asked, pointing at his outfit.

She could not help but wonder why he was not married. He had many girls fawning over him, so that was not the problem. He was good-looking, attractive, and charming. She did not doubt that he could easily pick any woman he wanted.

But as Gerald said, that was not the problem. It was him.

He did not like commitment. He was against settling down and marriage. And most of all, he did not want kids.

She could not help but wonder what had happened to him to become this man. After spending a few days in his house, she realized he was not that bad. She was enjoying his company.

"It is a Saturday. I don't work on weekends." He informed her as he grabbed a bottle of cold water from the fridge. "But I like to help Mario in the garden. Then fixed some broken things inside the house once in a while."

Ok, that explained his work clothes and his presence.

But that also reminded her that she had to find a solution to her problem. She could not keep staying in this house for a long time. She did not want to overstay her welcome.

But the problem was still the same, where would she go, and what would she do with her life, especially with a child on its way? If Gerald was alive, she knew he would help her. But he was not here. She was alone.

"I guess you are truly a hardworking man," Haley commented. "And a good man." Taking his words and applying them to her.

She guessed he was also referring to her. She was a mess when he took her in. Then, he somehow tried to fix her. Now, she almost felt better, not brand new, but functioning.

He was, without a doubt, quite a handyman.