

Royal Contract 201

Chapter 201 - A Treasure

When they stopped in front of the structure, Jacky felt like a shiver went through her body. The place was very familiar to her. She was surprised that Sebastian brought her to Marcus' favorite restaurant.

It did bring back some of their memories together, but it still did not change the fact that he was someone she did not want to have any relations with ever again. She was moving on, and Marcus was already in her past.

"Shall we go in?" Sebastian asked as he assisted her out of his car and towards the restaurant. "I think I failed to mention earlier that you look beautiful tonight." He whispered just near her ears as the host ushered them into their reserved seats.

She could only nod and smile at the sweetness of his voice. If only she could feel a spark in his voice as it caressed her skin, but unfortunately, she only felt a fondness for him.

"Thanks for going out again with me." He said as he looked beyond the menu in his hand.

"I am happy to be here with you." She said with a cheerful smile. Well, she was indeed glad to be in his company. He knew many interesting topics they could talk about, besides having a great sense of humor.

After ordering, her eyes could not help but wonder if he was here tonight. She was hoping not to bump into him anytime soon, or if possible, never, but Marcus frequented this place.

"Are you alright? You seem to be a bit preoccupied." Sebastian remarked as her eyes continued to wander around the room.

"Yes, sorry about that." She admonished herself. She should be focusing on her date and not someone who was not even there. "I just remembered something."

"Anyway, do you remember Robbie? He wanted you to have this. It is just something he drew for you as a thank you for sitting with him." He handed her a folded paper.

"That is so sweet of him." She unfolded the paper and checked the drawing of a small kid. She could picture him doing it on the other side of his mom's bed as he waited for his mom to get better.

She suddenly remembered Andy. She was so busy with her life that she had failed to update him lately. She wondered what was going on with his little brother.

"He kept asking when you will come back to the hospital. I think he had a little crush on you. I can't say I blame him." He said, giving her a boyish grin, which she believed was one of his charms.

"Well, I hope that his mom gets better soon." She did love kids since she had taken care of some of them when she was young.

She also dreamed of having her own someday when she finally met the right man for her. Would it be Sebastian? She could only ponder on it, but she believed that Sebastian might be a good husband and father material based on her assessment.

But for her, she still was skeptical. But as she said earlier, she had to learn to open herself to the possibility. Because she believed Sebastian was a good catch. It would be a waste to dream of something she could not have when someone was already sitting next to her that was real.

"She is. In a few days, we could send them home." Sebastian told her. They talked more about things that interest them both.

Finally, she found herself enjoying her time with him that she did not notice someone walked in and had his eyes on her.

The only time she learned of his presence was when he stood in front of her and greeted her. "Jacky fancy seeing you here."

"Marcus, I am not surprised to see you here." She acknowledged the man she had wished not to see tonight.

Then, Marcus turned from Jacky to her date and extended his hand to him. "Marcus, Jacky's friend." He introduced himself, assessing the new man in Jacky's life, not that he should care.

"Sebastian." He took his hand with a bit of caution. He could sense the slight animosity in Jacky's welcome to his presence. He suddenly realized that he must be the reason why she was searching for someone earlier.

But he was not about to snoop around their business unless they made it his business. He would wait for Jacky to tell him if she felt comfortable sharing that part of her life with him.

"Well, just came by to say hi. I don't want to keep my date waiting." Marcus gave them a curt nod and a smile before turning away and walking back to his table. A young, gorgeous lady was indeed waiting for him. Jacky noted when her eyes followed him involuntarily.

She would be lying if she denied that she still felt the invisible string that pulled her to Marcus before. Maybe it would take time before she would eventually sever all her ties with him. But she intended to do so.

She also realized that although she did not feel the same attraction for Sebastian compared to what she had with Marcus. It was still better to be in a relationship with someone who respected and would probably love her one day.

"So, about him. He was my ex, and we did not end on good terms." She suddenly felt that being upfront with him about her past was the best way to keep whatever relationship they were building.

She might as well tell him slowly bits and pieces of herself if she would like to keep dating him. At least, if he thought that he was not worth his time, she could find out right away and not when they were already in too deep.

"I did figure that much from the way he was looking at you. But you don't have to tell me anything yet if you are not comfortable." He was not going to force her if things between them were still raw.

He knew what a heartache could do to a person, and getting over it was usually hard. But he believed that Jacky deserved a chance to be happy. If luck and fate would have it, he wished he could help her make it better.

"Thanks for understanding." She looked at him, seeing him in a different light for the first time. He was a person she could easily talk to, and somehow her heart seemed to know that she could trust him.

Maybe it was time that she gave herself a chance to find love with him. If she could only focus her attention on him, then she might eventually feel the same way.

She could not keep pining on someone who was not a possibility, even if he seemed to be the best choice among the three. But concentrate on what was real, sitting just from across from her.

"I like you. And every time I am with you and discover new things about you only makes me like you even more." Sebastian told her what he thought of her.

He knew that she was still keeping a lot of her past hidden inside that heart of hers, but he was willing to wait until she was ready to open it to him. He believed that a girl like her was a treasure to be cherished.

Chapter 202 - Blend In With The Crowd

She woke up this morning very frustrated and disappointed by his absence. Her hands seemed to be searching for him right next to her even before she opened her eyes, only to remember that he did not come to visit last night.

Alex finished very late in his meeting and decided that he should better stay at his place than let Dani wait for him. As an understanding girlfriend, she agreed with him even if all she wanted was to wait for him.

But she figured he must be tired, and his apartment was closer to his office than hers. She should be more considerate with his needed rest. She just had to wait a little longer to see him. She figured that a few more hours or half a day would not matter that much.

She decided to knock on her friend's door. After a few seconds, she opened it with a frown on her face. "What?" She asked sleepily.

"Jacky, I am going for a jog." She told her, observing her friend's appearance. "What happened to your date last night?" She could not stop the curiosity in her voice.

She heard her came in late last night, but she appeared to be alone.

"It was fun. Sebastian brought me to a nice restaurant. We run into Marcus. We had dinner. We left. He brought me home and kissed me goodnight at the door." She stated like she was in a marathon, then started closing the door.

"Wait! What?" She stopped the door from closing. "You ran into Marcus. What happened?" She did not expect that.

"Nothing. Marcus was out on a date. He just said hi and moved on. Nothing much to talk about." Jacky said as if she did not care.

"Are you sure you are, ok?" She suddenly felt concerned about the news.

"Go away. All I want to do is sleep." Jacky finally answered back before she closed her room, and all was silent once again.

"Bye. But if you need someone to talk to." She knocked once again to taunt her friend, who was never really a morning person.

But all she heard was her groan followed by a soft bang. She assumed it was a fluffy object, like a pillow, that hit the wooden door. It was her cue to leave her alone.

She wanted to ask her more, but she knew it was not the time. But for now, she had to get out and clear her mind.

She made her way out of her apartment and into the elevator. She could feel the stiffness of her body from the way she had tossed and turned on her bed last night.

"Good morning, Jack." She greeted the doorman, who always had a friendly smile on his face.

"Have a good run, Miss." Jack greeted her as usual. "But be cautious. It seems rain is in the air," Jack warned as he appeared to be feeling the slight chill in the wind.

"Thanks. I'll take note of that." She did look at the sky and notice some clouds forming not far from where she was, but she guessed it was still too small to cause rain. But she did feel a bit cold, but not enough to stop her from making her run.

She continued on her already routine path, running alongside some other joggers. She did notice the two men that followed her not too far, but they were still keeping their distance, the way she wanted it.

Alex did not like the idea of pulling her bodyguards at this time. But at least, he agreed to a compromise. Two only with the condition that they would not interfere in her daily routine unless in extreme circumstances.

She was almost through with her run and was on her way back. But she accidentally tripped on a ball that crossed her path, thrown by a boy playing on the grass. It rolled on her way, and she was not able to avoid it.

"Oops!" She could feel herself falling, unable to control her movements. It happened so fast. All that was left for her to do was readied herself for the impact.

Fortunately, somebody caught her fall before she hit the pavement. That would have been a bad fall, and she could be seriously hurt if that happened.

"Oh! Thanks so much." She said as she steadied herself in the arms of the stranger. She was still a bit shook by the incident as she tried to calm her nerves.

"I am just glad that I was able to grab you before you landed on the ground, Dani." The man said as he continued to hold on to her.

She finally looked up to see a familiar face. "Troy, I did not see you jog earlier." She said as she felt relieved that it was him who saved her.

When she looked around, she could see that the two guards watching her were already on their way to rescue her, but she signaled them to go away.

She did not like the other people to notice that men were guarding her as if she was someone important. As far as everyone should know, she was the same as everyone else.

"I woke up late and decided to get some coffee first." He stated, helping her regain her balance. But when she tried to put pressure on her left foot, she suddenly felt a slight pain.

"Oh my, look at what I have done to you." She gasped upon seeing the coffee that spilled on his shirt as she tried to ignore her foot. She thought that the pain would go away as she moved it more.

"Don't worry about it, but at least you manage to wake me up." He teased her, which also made her smile. "Anyway, are you through because I am just starting?" He asked as he let go of her.

"Yeah, I am on my way back. I started early today." She said, moving a bit towards the opposite direction. "I hope you have a nice run."

"Sure. Well, hope we can run together next time." He told her as he also started to move on the other path.

But before he could go far, he turned around and noticed that Dani was limping a bit. She was favoring her right foot. He surmised that something must have happened on her other foot.

"Are you alright?" He was at her side in a few seconds. "I think you sprained your left ankle. Do you want me to look at it?" He asked as he stopped her from moving any further.

"It is probably just some cramp. It would go away in a little while." She tried to step on it some more, showing him that she was ok, but the more she forced it, it only turned worse.

"Let us sit over there. Let me have a look." He tried to convince her when he saw a bench a few meters from where they stood.

Having no choice because of the growing pain, she finally conceded and allowed Troy to lead her to the bench.

"I have to see what is wrong with your foot. It might hurt a bit." He warned her, knowing how painful a sprain could be if it were the case.

She only nodded when he knelt in front of her and started to carefully took off her shoe and sock. But she still felt the pain in the slight movement.

"As I suspect, it has started to swell." He told her as he inspected her foot further. His suspicion was correct. Dani did have a sprained ankle. "You can't walk on that." He told her.

"I think I can still make it back home." She insisted as she tried to put her shoe back on but failed.

"Let me help you instead. We can grab a cab, then assist you up to your apartment." He suggested since he could not think of any other way that she could go home.

"Fine." She finally conceded after a few seconds of thinking about it, knowing that she had no other choice. At least it was Troy, her friend who was helping her, not some strangers she did not know.

"Are you ready?" He asked as he held on to her shoe in one hand and stood up to assist her.

"Just give me a minute." She told him, preparing herself for the pain that was to come. But as she sat down, her eyes wandered to her two bodyguards.

She could still see the men hovering near them but pretended to be doing something. She did see one of them holding a phone. Was he reporting to Alex about what was happening to her? Or, maybe he was only talking to someone else.

Sitting now on the bench had given her time to study those men that she usually ignored. She wondered if Troy even noticed the two. But in fairness to them, they knew how to blend in with the crowd.

Chapter 203 - Invasion Of Privacy

They slowly made their way out of the park. He placed his arms around her shoulder and his hands on her elbows to serve as her cane.

"Don't try to use your injured foot. Putting pressure on it would only cause more swelling." He kept giving her caution because he was concerned that it would only worsen its condition.

But when he noticed that she was still having difficulty walking on one foot, and she kept limping with her injured foot. He decided to do something else.

"I hope you won't mind if I carry you instead. I don't think it will help if you keep hurting yourself further." Troy explained, stopping on the sidewalk as he waited for her to agree with his suggestion.

"But I think..." She was about to decline his offer when somebody else at her back interrupted their conversation.

"That will not be necessary. I'll take over from here." A manly voice spoke behind her, but she did not have to turn around to know who it was. That tone belonged only to one man she knew too well.

She was not surprised at all that he was here, remembering one of his guards on the phone earlier. She already had put two and two together and surmised that they were reporting to him her every action.

But she wondered how he managed to come quickly to her rescue when the incident happened just a few minutes ago. Unless his men already informed him that she went out for a run.

She felt that his men violated her privacy, and she could not help but fume inside. That was one of the reasons she never liked having men following her.

His father used that to manipulate her every movement before. She did not like that he was also imploring the same tactics.

"What are you doing here, and how did you know where I am?" She suddenly asked as she turned around and looked at him.

She never liked the way his men meddled with her affairs. She was not in danger, so there was no reason for them to do what they did. And she would let Alex know that she did not appreciate how he was manipulating the situation to his advantage. Getting information of her whereabouts as if he did not trust her.

"I was already on my way to your apartment just a few blocks from here when I talked to Ben. He told me that you went jogging and had an accident." He started explaining. "So, I figured to go straight here and checked if you are ok."

Suddenly, her heart melted when she saw the worried expression on his face. She felt like a fool believing the worse of him. She needed to stop presuming that Alex was anything like her father, who loved to handle the situation in his favor.

Alex was different. She believed that he genuinely cared for her and was only thinking of her wellness. "Oh!" She finally acknowledged his reason and chastised herself for her thoughts.

Then, she accidentally stepped on her affected foot, making her winced in pain, then she turned to her other foot for support. "Are you alright?" Troy tried to steady her again, then Alex was immediately at her side too, holding on to her other arm.

"I think we should go home so that I can take care of that," Alex said, making sure that Troy heard his words. If anyone were about to take care of Dani, it would be him.

Although Dani kept telling him that Troy was just a friend, he could not seem to trust him. There was something about him that did not feel right. Besides, the clear indication that he was interested in her more than a friend.

"Thanks again for helping Dani," Alex said to Troy in the friendliest tone Alex could manage.

But he also admitted that he might be wrong. His bad experiences in the past might be clouding his judgment. So, he was cautious not to jump to any conclusion until he could find any concrete evidence against Troy.

He did not want to end up on the wrong side of Dani's graces because he accused her friend of wrongdoing when he had no proof. It would ruin her trust. He did not want that to happen.

"It was nothing. I am happy to help a friend." Troy smiled at Dani and nodded to Alex. It was a missed opportunity to spend more time with Dani. But he was sure that there would still be other times.

"Ok, let us go home," Dani finally agreed since she was also having a hard time standing up between the two men, who were so obvious, not comfortable being in the same space.

"Take care of that foot," Troy said as Alex picked her up, bridal style.

Alex could not wait to walk away from Troy, but he had to wait for Dani's signal.

"Thanks again for saving and helping me." She told Troy and nodded her head to Alex as they moved towards the car.

She saw Troy smiled at her before continuing on his path back to the park. She now sat in the back seat with Alex beside her as they traversed the busy street back to her apartment.

Ben, the one that called Alex earlier, was now in the front seat. He took over as the driver of the car. But like all professional security men, his eyes focused on the street in front of him.

"Do your men report to you everything that I do?" She knew she had to ask the question before it started to mess up with her head. Better to hear it from his lips than to find out from somewhere else.

She looked at Ben and his attention never waiver on the road. But Dani was well aware that his other senses were keen on checking also for other possible threats around them.

Although she knew that he was only concerned about her safety, she still did not agree with the part that he might be spying on her daily activities.

It would appear to be an invasion of privacy, and she was not ok with that.

Chapter 204 - Painful Reunion

"Do your men report to you everything that I do?" Alex heard her asked him.

He wondered where she was going with this question, but he was willing to oblige her by answering her truthfully. Well, he had nothing to hide anyway.

"Just only pertinent information about your safety." He told her, glancing in her direction.

"Oh, ok." She replied back but with slight hesitation. She wanted to ask more, but she could not think of a better way to rephrase her question without sounding offensive.

"My men don't report to me what you do or where you go to if that is what you are asking." He finally looked at her directly in the eyes to prove that he was telling her the truth. "I only asked them to make sure that you are secure at all times."

His men were only there to assure him that she was always safe and not spy on her. But he could only guess that she had a bad experience with men trailing her from the way her father had over-protected her.

He could not blame Ethan for doing so. If he would have a daughter someday, he might do the same with her. Hopefully, not worse.

"I am just wondering because I saw him calling you earlier on his phone." She pointed to the man behind the wheels. Then, she lowered her head, feeling ashamed for doubting his intentions.

"Just for the record." He extended his hand to touch her face and make her look at him. "He did not call me to report to me. I called him. I want to make sure that you are at home because I was planning to surprise you with breakfast." He told her.

"Ok. I'm sorry for questioning your intention. I understand now." She smiled at him. She wanted to tell him how much she regretted distrusting him, but no words came out of her mouth.

"That's ok. I know you never like the idea in the first place. But thanks for indulging my request." He grabbed her hand and placed a kiss on top of it.

"I am just not comfortable having strange men following me around." She told him, lowering her voice as not to offend the man in front of them.

"Don't be afraid of them. I will not have placed my men as your protector if I do not trust them with my own life." He assured her.

"Yes, now I can breathe more comfortably even if they keep following me around." She informed him with a sigh of relief. Somehow, his assurance gave her some peace of mind. She had nothing to fear from them, and they were not there to watch her every move.

"I brought you donuts." He pulled a paper bag at the side of the car. "I thought that we could share a breakfast to make up for my absence last night."

He knew that it was the perfect bribe to win her over. She loved her sweets. He knew that he could get away with that even if he had done nothing wrong. But he was happy to see her smile.

"Oh! I love donuts in the morning." She uttered with delight but quickly winced again when she accidentally moved her foot the wrong way.

Then his eyes shifted to her injury. "Can I see?" Alex spoke up. His voice suddenly pulled their attention back to her foot which was starting to hurt a little more.

"Ok." She held her legs closer to him. Then he assisted her by pulling her legs towards his lap as he checked on her foot.

Then, she realized that her other shoe was still with Troy, seeing her bare toes. She had forgotten all about it. She decided that she could get it later, once she felt better.

After a few minutes, she had forgotten all thoughts of Troy and her shoe as she felt relief from what Alex was doing. He started massaging the sides of her feet, letting his fingers caressed the surrounding unaffected area.

His ministrations were giving her some relief which was also affecting some other parts of her body.

"I miss you." She whispered to him, remembering the craving she had for him these past few days, especially last night. Now, she forgot about the pain that was causing her discomfort.

"You don't know how much I miss you too." He declared, remembering waking up earlier without her by her side.

He quickly rushed to visit and surprise her, only to find out that she was jogging with Troy. Then, his concern grew when he heard that she had a sprain during her run.

"But I think we should attend on the nasty sprain before anything else." He told her as he positioned her feet again in his lap where she would be more comfortable.

"I think we have no choice." Already thinking of how inconvenient it would be to be disabled in this way.

"But I doubt if we could do anything else but lay on the couch all day." She said regretfully.

She was hoping that they could go out this weekend and spent time doing some activities. But now, she would be stuck inside the house doing nothing. Maybe she could use this time to work on her pending cases.

"I'm sure we can find something interesting to do while laying on the couch the whole day and night." He teased her with his smile.

"I'm sure you will never run out of ideas in that big brain of yours." She taunted back as they started bantering inside the car until they finally reached her apartment.

"Shall I carry you to the threshold?" He once again jokingly said as he carried her to the lobby for everyone to see. Then, they were inside the confine of the elevator.

Once inside her apartment, he placed her down on the couch and knelt in front of her. "First, can I kiss my girl?" He pulled her, careful not to touch the foot with the sprain.

"Thanks for coming to my rescue." She said and finally acknowledged that she appreciated his effort to see her.

Then, as soon as their lips touched, they were both satisfied. The longing they felt for each other for these last few days suddenly disappeared. All that mattered was to be back in each other's arms.

They planned to savor every minute they were together. It was a painful reunion, but it was all worth it.

Chapter 205 - Hand And Foot

"Oh."

"Keep still."

"Uhmm"

"It will hurt more if you keep moving."

"Be careful."

Those were the noises she heard behind her closed door that awoke her from her deep sleep. When she opened her eyes, her ears tried to search for the source of the sounds.

Jacky quickly stood up from her bed when she pinpointed the commotion was just outside her room, not far from the living room. Based on the voices, she assumed that it was Dani and Alex on the couch.

But what are they doing? She could not make out what was happening because the barrier between them was muffling the sound.

"I am trying to be careful. You have to keep still." Alex said to Dani.

Jacky did recognize the voice of Alex, confirming her guess earlier.

What was he doing this early in the morning in their house? What are they doing outside of her room, probably in their living room? She quickly moved closer to the door and strained her ears on the wooden door to listen to the activity going on their couch.

"I can't take it," Dani mumbled almost in a whimper.

"But you have to, or this might hurt." Alex kept insisting. "It might sting a little, but it will eventually feel better after you get accustomed to it." He continued with whatever he was doing.

"Oh, ok!" Dani conceded to whatever Alex was about to do to her.

Jacky had enough. She could not keep on listening behind the closed door like a peeping tom. She quickly opened her door and walked out of the room to stop them from whatever it was they were about to do.

"Whatever you two are doing? You better continue that inside your room. I don't want to see or witness the two of you having sex in the living room and on our couch." Jacky shrieked and cringed at the thought.

She moved out of her room with her eyes still closed, with one of her hands covering the portion of her face. She did not want to see her friends naked in front of her.

"Jacky, what are you talking about?" Dani looked at her friend as if she had gone insane. "And will you please open your eyes? We are not having sex here. What gave you that idea?"

"You can open your eyes, Jacky. I am just helping Dani with her sprain." Alex explained their situation.

After the initial surprise, Alex could not stop the laughter from coming out of his mouth. Upon realization of what Jacky thought they were doing on the couch.

Slowly, Jacky removed her hand and opened her eyes to check the state of the two. But when she saw that they were fully clothed, she suddenly felt foolish for assuming too much.

She blamed it on her sleepless night.

"What happened?" Jacky immediately moved to their side and looked at Dani's condition. "By the way, sorry for jumping to my conclusion."

"That's ok," Dani uttered, holding to her friend's hand. "I accidentally stumbled on a ball that crossed my path and probably twisted my ankle." She said, trying to change the subject. "Luckily, Troy was there to break my fall."

She contemplated not telling them about what Troy did, knowing how Alex felt about him. But she figured if Alex was to find out from his men what happened, he might think that she was keeping things from him.

Dani figured it would be better if it came from her, even if Alex would feel uncomfortable hearing about it. Besides, both of them did promise that they would not keep anything from each other.

"I told you that jogging is not good for you. Look at what happened to you." Jacky nagged like a mother hen as she stood to get some more ice in the fridge.

"It was an accident. I could have sprained my foot even inside this room, and I could have done nothing about it." She tried to defend her hobby from her friend.

Trust Jacky to blame her running since she never liked to exercise or wake up early in the morning. But Jacky never did need it. She had a body that could make any man fall on their knees.

"What are you doing here, anyway?" Jacky shifted her attention to Alex when she returned with the new ice pack.

She figured that Dani and Alex might have a plan to go out before the accident happen. That was the only logical explanation for it.

"I was going to make up for my absence last night with a bag of donuts. But I learned that she was in the park, limping in pain, so I went straight to her instead." He once again explained his sudden appearance in the park and their apartment so early in the morning.

"Ok. Where is the donut?" Jacky asked, moving away from them as Alex pointed at the corner where he dropped it earlier. She immediately grabbed it and went back to the kitchen. "I am making us some coffee."

"Does that feel better?" Alex asked as he carefully applied the cold compress on the swollen area again. It was probably getting a bit numb from the ice.

In his assessment, it would probably take a week or two before she could have full use of her foot again. Until then, she should rest as much as she could. She should not abuse her foot in the meantime.

"Yes, I think it is lessening the pain. Thanks." She told him as she finally rested her body on the backrest of the couch.

Then, Alex fixed her foot slowly on a throw pillow and planted it on the coffee table in front of her. Finally, Alex relaxed next to her and moved his head closer to hers.

"So, what do you think we should do on this couch? Do you think sex is still out of the picture?" Pointing to Jacky, who was busy in the kitchen.

"You are so naughty." She reprimanded him, but she still felt the slight tingling of the excitement of having him next to her. "What about we wait for the coffee and have breakfast first, then decide later on what else we could do on this couch." She suggested, feeling the grumbling inside her stomach.

"Fair enough." He held her hand on his and pulled it to his lips, planting several kisses on each of them. He figured that he would have to settle for this for the time being. What was important was that they were together again.

"Here is the coffee and donuts." Jacky lowered the tray on the table and settled herself on the lone chair adjacent to them. "So, I guess you won't have any plans today." She summed up.

"I guess not. We will just be cuddling here on the sofa the whole day." Dani said resignedly. All her plans down the drain.

"What about you? Any plans to go out." Alex said as he picked up a donut and started feeding Dani a small piece.

"Nothing so far. Sebastian is on duty today." Jacky explained as she also picked up a piece.

What should she do under her circumstance? Dani wondered as she sat immobile on her seat. She never wanted this feeling of being useless, where people would wait on her, hand and foot.

Chapter 206 - Did Not Stink

"If you cook like that every day, Alex, I will never have second thoughts of marrying you," Jacky said as she savored the succulent taste of the dish she just had.

Now, she knew why Dani was head over heels in love with him. Although, she would not say that out loud. Dani would not appreciate her preempting her feelings.

Even Alex seemed to be in the same boat. Jacky just wondered when would Alex and Dani realize that they felt the same way and admit it to each other. But that was not her business. She needed to shut down her thoughts before she blurted them out loud.

"I told you, if ever you decide to change profession, you might consider opening up your restaurant." Dani agreed with Jacky as they gathered around the living room.

They just finished dinner, and Jacky could not stop praising his culinary skills. She did agree with Jacky about the cooking skills, but about the marrying part. She still had not thought about it.

"Well, I'll leave the two of you alone. If you need anything else, I will be just in my room." Jacky pointed at the door near the living room, winking at Dani as if Jacky was reminding her of the earlier incident.

"We'll probably finish the movie we are watching, then retire for the night too. In my room." Dani added the last part to assure Jacky that her message was clear and received.

"Goodnight." Jacky closed her door on them and laid down on her bed with the phone in her hand.

Jacky did not feel like watching a movie with them anymore. She only felt sad not having someone to cuddle with while Dani and Alex appeared so into each other. She wanted that too.

She suddenly remembered her last date with Sebastian. The way he was making all the effort to make their time together almost perfect. As much as she wanted someone to be with her, she suddenly felt guilty for using Sebastian.

After he dropped her off at her door and kissed her passionately, she still did not feel the spark she hoped for in their first kiss. She then realized that it was time to admit to herself and Sebastian what she truly felt.

She was only using Sebastian as a rebound for her failed relationship with Marcus and Lance. She could not use him for her selfish reasons.

Back in the living room, the two remained sitting on the couch as they watched and goofed around, enjoying the easy and stress-free time together.

"Are you staying the night?" She asked as she scooted closer to him. She wished he would. She would like to snuggle with him even if they could do nothing else.

They just finished several movies and watched some series that both interest their fancy. But both never had the chance to watch it with their busy schedules.

They did enjoy watching the same movies but contradict at some points in the plot or the characters. Well, they figured that they could never agree on most things because they were both hard-headed and stubborn at times. But they could settle it with some compromises.

"I want to stay. I have nothing to do tomorrow as well, so expect me to pamper you all day too." Alex told her as he cuddled her body on his while they sat on the couch.

He cooked their lunch and dinner, making it an extra special dish because he wanted to feed her a delicious meal. Even Jacky enjoyed the food that he served them.

"Are you sure? I don't want to waste your time taking care of me. I'm sure Jacky will not mind looking after me until I can slowly use my foot." She tried to reason with him.

It was enough that he sacrificed his entire day trapped in her apartment without much to do but watch the television and cooked for them. But another day of that, she felt it was already abusing him and his kindness.

She suddenly remembered the time back on their trip where she was ill. Alex had taken the time to take care of her until he had nursed her back to health.

"I don't mind being stuck here with you. Even if it takes a month for your foot to heal, I will gladly stay and take care of you." He said with a beautiful smile on his luscious lips.

"You are insane for wasting your time here when you can do so many other things with your time." She responded, finding it hard to believe that Alex would choose to be with her during this time of her minor crisis.

But who was she to complain when she was the one benefiting from his affection? She would take as much as she could while he was still giving it to her. Who knew how long their relationship would last?

She was not a fool to believe that what they had now was a sure thing. She had learned in her past that not everything lasts forever. She also had to be realistic and be prepared for all eventualities.

"Yes. I am insane about you." He slid a bit closer to her and started playing with her hair, twisting it in his fingers.

"What are you doing?" She asked, slightly shifting her body away from him so that she could face him at a better angle.

"You know I like you, but I think you need a bath." Alex started inhaling the scent of her hair and moved closer to her neck. Then, slightly back away. "You stink."

"No. I don't." Dani denied his claim, slapping him in his arms and looking at him like he just declared war.

She eventually tried to smell herself, sniffing her clothes, then her armpits. She did not care that Alex was watching her. She would prove him wrong.

Then, realizing that she still wore her clothes from earlier. She had forgotten to change into something else or take a shower due to the incident.

Her sweat earlier must have dried up and clung to her clothes, but she believed Alex was exaggerating. She did not stink.

Chapter 207 - Ready To Surrender

"I was just joking," Alex said as he started laughing. "You should have seen your face. I thought you are about to smack me on the face for saying that." He said in between his chuckle.

"That is not funny." She pouted her lips as she punched him again in his arms. But she doubted if it even hurt him one bit, but it did make him stop.

"Ok. I am sorry. You were so serious, I wanted you to smile, but I think I only made you mad. I guess I still need to work on my jokes." He apologized, grabbing her hands as he peppered them with tiny kisses.

But he did enjoy taunting her once in a while. He always found it cute when her face contorted to its angry state. When her lips make that pout or the thin line and her eyebrows frown or raised upwards, he could not stop adoring her every quirk.

"You do that because you are not funny at all." She admonished him, but his lips on her skin were slowly dissolving her resolve.

She could never stay angry at him, especially when he kept that boyish grin on his lips as he stared at her. She was just no match with him when he started turning up those charms.

"Am I forgiven," Alex said so sweetly as he looked into her eyes. Those eyes knew she could not resist him.

It could read into her eyes and know what she was thinking. Oh, she hoped not because she was not even sure what it would read in the depths of her soul.

"Well, you are, but you owe me one." She told him, pretending to think of a way to get back at him. But she was never good at retaliating or pranking him back. Somehow, she would find a way.

"But I do think you need to freshen up." He said seriously this time. "Come on. I will bathe you before I tucked you in."

Alex grabbed the remote and turned off the movie. He carefully scooped Dani up from the sofa and carried her to her room, moving slowly not to hurt her foot.

Although she said to him that it did not hurt that much since she had taken pain medication. Still, he did not want to cause her unnecessary discomfort as he carried her like expensive porcelain.

"What about you? Are you not taking a bath with me?" She asked as he made her sit on the edge of the tub.

"Hmmm!" He pretended to be thinking about it as he opened the faucet to let the water flow on the big white marble basin and prepared what she would need.

"Can you grab the lavender?" Dani requested, and he moved to drop some lavender oil on the water.

"What else do you need?" He knelt before her and waited for her answer.

She smiled at him and moved her lips close to his. But before their lips could touch, she shifted her head to the side of his face and started sniffing on his neckline.

"You kind of stink too." She taunted him. "I think you also badly need a bath."

"Do I now?" He answered her with a cute laugh. "Then, if you say so. Maybe I shall take a bath with you." He started removing every single piece of clothing until he only had his briefs left on his body.

"Oh, aren't you excited to take a bath?" She continued with her teasing.

"I am, so shall I help you with your clothes." He carefully removed her clothes, especially when it was time to pass it through her injured ankle. Thankfully, he was very gentle. She only felt a slight pain.

Then, he slowly lifted her body and placed her inside the tub, submerging her into the slightly warm water. After removing his remaining clothing, he also followed her and entered the tub behind her.

It was not the first time they bathed on the tub together. But every time Alex joined her, Dani could swear that it was always different from the last. As if he knew what she needed at the moment. She felt calmer and safer when his arms started to envelop her body.

"Why did I get so lucky to have a prince take care of me?" She mumbled as she felt his hands caressed her arms, her back, and every part of her body that he could reach.

"Because you are my princess, and you deserve to be taken care of by me, only me," Alex said, emphasizing the two last words.

He never felt this need to be possessive, as if every time he saw her with Troy, his blood wanted to boil. It took everything in him to control himself. Because he always knew that he could trust her.

But he was not sure if he could trust that man. He was shady on his radar, and he realized now that he should be looking into him. He just had to be careful that Dani did not find out about it because she might not appreciate that he was checking on her friend.

After a while,? "I think we had enough of cleansing ourselves," Alex pulled himself up from the tub and dried himself, and wrapped a towel around him, then he assisted her out of the water and wrapped her up on a towel and a robe.

He carried her once again to her room and placed her gently on the bed. He took out one of her nightgowns and underwear and helped her get dressed.

"Now, off to bed." He instructed as if she was a little girl.

He laid her down on the bed. He also carefully placed her affected ankle with a pillow to support it. Then he gave her a sweet kiss on the forehead, covering her up with a thick blanket.

"What about you?" She asked, suddenly yawning and feeling the heaviness of her eyelids.

She could feel the darkness wanting to swallow her up. It must be the medication she took that suddenly made her sleepy.

"I'll get some pajamas on. I'll be right beside you in a second." He assured her as he searched inside his bag for some change of clothes.

She felt satisfied to hear that and waited for him to lay beside her. He always made her feel like she was the most delicate thing he ever touched.

But she had always known that she was not. She had learned to fend for herself ever since she had moved out of her father's care. However, Alex managed to make her believe that she needed him to protect her.

"Good night and sweet dreams." These were the last words she heard before her eyes closed shut. And his embrace was the last thing she felt as he cradled her body in his firm yet gentle arms.

But before she lost all her consciousness, a thought played on her mind. Her world was beginning to revolve around Alex. She was becoming too dependent on him.

She could not deny that she wanted him so much. The intensity of her growing feelings for him terrified her. She was afraid of what it would do to her. She was not sure how to explain it.

Somewhat it felt like she was ready to surrender all of herself to him.

Chapter 208 - Win-win Situation

"Are you sure about your plan?" Marcus said, pacing around his office, thinking of a better way other than his plan.

He knew that his friend had been in a tight spot because of the deals he had made this past few months. But entering into these new ones was not something he wished to agree on upon learning the key parties involved with it.

"I think my father is right," Alex said as he thought of what his father suggested during their breakfast the other week.

"Don't you think you are taking an unnecessary risk by agreeing to this?" Marcus pointed to the paper in his hand.

"Not if we put some necessary precaution. I think we can pull this through." Alex insisted, knowing that he wanted this to work. "Dani also thinks that it is a good idea."

After thinking about it this weekend and even talking to Dani about this situation, Alex realized that it might be the solution he needed. It might be the answer to his problems.

But of course, like all agreements, it also had some downsides and flaws in it. But Alex believed that he could control the situation and worked it out to his advantage.

"Are you positive that you have thought of this thoroughly and was not just influenced by what Dani said?" Marcus questioned him again with his decision.

It was not that he was undermining Dani's capacity to think of this objectively. But he feared that Alex and Dani's feelings about their relationship and their agreement might be clouding their judgment about approving this plan.

He wanted to think that there was another way other than this, but it would seem that Alex was already dead set in doing this. What else could he do? He was just a friend and an employee under his company.

"I know what you are thinking. My decision had nothing to do with my relationship with Dani. As I said, I don't allow how I feel about her influenced what I do with my business." Alex assured his friend, seeing the doubt in his expression.

In his analysis, the positive outcome would seem to outweigh the negative possibilities. There might be a risk, but it was not enough to convince him that he should turn this opportunity down.

"But how can you be sure that you are looking at this objectively?" Marcus still felt that he might not have seen the whole picture. Despite his respect for his friend's ability to control his emotion, Marcus believed that Alex might be thinking not with his head but with his heart.

"Trust me, man. I know what I am doing." Alex could not keep arguing with Marcus. It might only end up badly, knowing how he felt about his relationship with Dani and his association with Ethan.

Lately, they had not seen eye to eye in their decisions, and he did not want to fuel that misunderstanding and create a bigger one.

"Ok. What else can I do but trust you? But if things turn into shit, you know I will always be here to help you clean it up." Marcus said with slight disapproval in his tone.

It was not just a reminder but also a warning that he should be cautious in whatever he had planned to agree to because it could end up badly, in his opinion.

"Thanks, Marcus. I always know that." Alex told him, thankful to have a friend who always had his back.

He prepared himself for his next meeting. But later, he had to call his father to inform him that he finally agreed to the Council's suggestion. Honestly, he was unsure of how his father was going to take his news.

Because from their last meeting, he seemed to be hesitant to tell him about the plan. But since it was the Council's decision, his father had no choice but to discuss it with him.

"Then, I guess you don't need me anymore." Marcus left him to his job. He also had several appointments he had to attend since he was also a busy man.

Back on his own, alone in his office, he turned around and faced the magnificent view of the city outside. It was one of the things that fascinated him to stay in this place and called it home.

Another he would think would be Daniella Hamilton. It would seem that he was getting way too deep in his relationship with her. After spending the entire weekend cooped up in her home, he thought that he would find himself suffocated by their relationship.

But the opposite happened. Like when Alex and Dani were in the palace, Alex felt that it was what he wanted, to be with her. He liked taking care of her and doing mundane things with her.

"Sir, your next appointment is here. Should I send him in?" His secretary asked as she peered in the door, alerting him of the present.

"Send him in." When he nodded, his secretary opened the door and allowed his new investor to come in.

He was looking forward to meeting the man because he was one of the leading manufacturers of electronic materials in this city. His investment in his company would surely boost his company up in the leader board.

The meeting took longer than he intended, but he was sure that it was worth every minute. He was able to convince the man to invest in his company.

"It was a pleasure doing business with you. I will have my secretary call yours to set up another meeting for the contract signing." Alex informed his new business investor.

Now, he needed to call his father and discussed his decision on the subject matter. He could not prolong it any longer because the sooner he had settled this issue, the better.

"Dad, I won't take this long and waste your time. I will agree to what the Council wants, but there are certain conditions that the Council will also need to reconsider if I am to do this." Alex had thoroughly thought of this condition of his.

If the Council finally agreed with his terms, then he would have no qualms about their suggestions. It would be a win-win situation for all of them, according to his book.

Chapter 209 - Not Love At First Sight

"Are you sure you can manage on your own? I can cancel my date with Sebastian if you need me around." Jacky asked as she moved around her.

She knew that Dani was feeling way better today compared to the last couple of days. But Alex insisted that she should take an extra day off before going to work again.

Although Dani could already move around the house using a crutch, she was still uncomfortable leaving her alone unattended. She even skipped work today to keep her company.

"Go on with your date. I am not disabled. I can still make use of the other parts of my body. Besides, in a couple of hours, Alex will be here to take care of me." Dani said, assuring her friend that she was ok.

If she could push her friend out of the door, she would, but it was a bit difficult in her current state.

"But Sebastian and I can go out some other time. I will feel more at ease if I stay here with you. Something might happen to you and no one to assist you." Jacky pointed out as she sat down beside her friend.

In truth, Jacky was dreading seeing Sebastian tonight because she decided to tell him the truth. She did not want to lie to him anymore. Besides, he had the right to know what he was getting into if she wanted to give their relationship a chance.

"Don't worry about me. I am more than capable of taking care of myself. Here." Dani grabbed her phone and placed it inside her pocket, tapping it for emphasis. "Ben is in my speed dial. I will call him if ever I will need help."

Although Ben's number was on her phone, she lied about the speed dial. Dani felt that it was the only way her friend would stop worrying about her and go out on her date.

"Fine. But if anything happened, make sure to call me too." Jacky instructed as she stood up and grabbed her bag.

She knew that she had run out of excuses and had no choice but to meet Sebastian in thirty minutes. She insisted that she would meet him at the restaurant near the hospital.

It was more practical instead of him traveling back and forth to pick her up. His shift would end shortly, and he said he could not wait to see her again.

She wondered if he would still feel the same once he told her how she felt about him. After she revealed everything about her, would he still want to see her?

"Be careful and enjoy your date," Dani shouted before Jacky walked out of the room.

Dani could sense that her friend was going through something, but she felt that maybe it was not the time to talk about it when she was about to go out. Maybe later, she would inquire about it.

Her thoughts went back to Alex and what he had shared with her last night. She wondered if her advice was the best for the situation. After all, she did not have a clear view of the entire scenario.

But she trusted that Alex would find the best solution for his problem even without her help. He would not have reached his position without having sound decision-making skills.

"Now, what should I do." She thought as she settled on the sofa and a movie as she waited.

Although she had enough of lazing around, she had no other options since Alex and Jacky guaranteed that she had no access to her paper works.

Jacky, on the other hand, found Sebastian already waiting at their reserved table. She sometimes wondered how a resident could afford such luxuries.

"I hope that I did not make you wait too long." She told him, greeting with a kiss on the cheeks as he stood to assist her on her seat.

She found out from some colleagues that new doctors barely earned enough, especially if they have student loans they had to pay. Now she could only conclude that either he was spending beyond his means or he was loaded.

Those parts of his life had not been a topic of their discussion before. She was not sure if he was avoiding telling her that he was broke or rich. Or it just did not come in their conversation.

"Not at all. I only came out of surgery a few minutes ago. I thought that it was me who was late." Sebastian assured her as they started to order.

Dinner, as usual, was superb. Conversations went smoothly between them since it was basically about Dani's accident or his patients in the hospital.

During dessert, she felt it was time to toughen up and tell him about her confession. So, here it was, she thought as she cleared her throat. "Sebastian, I." But it seemed that it was easier to think about it than to do it.

Once again, she inhaled deeply, garnering enough courage to say her piece that she had rehearsed in her head a hundred times before meeting him.

"Before you say something, will you mind if I go first?" Sebastian interrupted her as he stretched his hand on the table and firmly gripped hers.

"Ok." She replied, feeling a slight relief that he was giving her time to recompose herself.

She was known to be a blunt person, always speaking her mind. But it was a different story when she knew that she was about to hurt another human being, a man who had only shown her respect and kindness.

Sebastian also took a long breath before he continued with what he had to say. "From the few girls I had dated, you intrigued me the most. I like you." His hand kept its hold on hers as he searched for what else to say. "I want to keep seeing you."

The first time he saw her in the club dancing, he found it difficult to take his eyes off her. He had no control of himself when he introduced himself to her. It was not love at first sight, but an attraction he had never felt before with another woman.

Chapter 210 - A Rare Gem

"But you don't even know me. I can be a serial killer or a gold digger." She tried to dissuade him from his plans to pursue her.

"Are you? But I highly doubt it." He stared at her as if he was reading her expression.

"I'm not, but I can still be a terrible person that you should not associate yourself with, and besides, you should not be too trusting." She insisted as she thought of what she had done to him.

"I know we all have a back story that we are not comfortable to say on the first few dates. But I know if you will only give us a chance to tell our stories, then maybe we might end up liking each other more." Sebastian was hopeful that he was able to persuade her.

From the way she looked at him earlier, he could already tell that she was about to end whatever they had when it hardly even started.

"But what I am about to tell you might change your mind? Please let me say it first before you tell me that you want to continue seeing me." Jacky pleaded before he started insisting that he liked her.

Jacky believed that after hearing her out, Sebastian might not look at her the same. No man would like what she did. It was unforgivable, even in her standard.

She swore never to do it to anyone, but she unknowingly did it anyway. Now, she realized her mistake. She would be surprised if Sebastian would still want to see her after this.

"You make it sound like you did a very terrible thing, but whatever it is, let me be the judge of that. But I hope you will also take note that I am not perfect too." Sebastian wanted to encourage her to say what was bothering her.

"Ok. We need to stop seeing each other because I only used you as my rebound guy from my past relationships. It is not fair to you for me to treat you in such a manner. You are a decent guy, and you deserved more than a girl like me." She babbled as fast as she could before she lost the nerve to voice them out.

"Wow, that was a mouthful." He whistled, slightly teasing her, but he only intended to lighten the mood.

"I'm serious." She chastised him after seeing him smiling at her discomfort.

"I am serious. What I gathered from what you said is that you used me as a rebound guy, is that correct?" He looked at her direct in the eyes to show her how serious he was.

She was expecting that he would respond with an outburst, but he turned as calm as a cucumber as he studied her under his gaze. She could only nod at his question.

"Does it had something to do with the man we saw the other day?" He suddenly remembered the ex-boyfriend they met at the restaurant. She seemed affected by his presence. So, it was the only logical explanation he could think of at the moment.

"Partly yes, and no." She had no idea how to explain to him what sort of mess she was in currently.

"What do you mean? Do you still like him or love him?" Sebastian had to know the history and the extent of her feelings to the other man to gauge how he would like to pursue this topic.

"It is a long story, and I don't know if you want to hear all about it," Jacky said, debating whether she should tell him or end it right now and leave.

"Well, we have all night. Would you want to talk about this more privately?" Seeing that she was having a hard time talking about it in front of all these strangers around them. "Here is the thing. If by some bad luck that we did not work out, I still want us to be friends."

"If you are sure, maybe we can talk at your place. My place is not ideal since Dani and Alex will be there." She suggested after contemplating his offer. She felt that it might be a good idea to talk about it.

"But I don't want to intrude in your place if it will be a problem. We can probably talk in the car." She did not want to be a burden to him and dumped her issues on his lap.

"It is no problem. You are always welcome to my place." He assured her, thinking that it was probably the best place for them to talk seriously about what else she was keeping from him.

They left the restaurant and rode his car to his place, which was not that far. He told her that it was convenient for him to stay nearby, so he had easy access to the hospital.

As soon as they entered his apartment, she finally realized that he was rich. No ordinary doctor could afford a place like this. He immediately offered her a seat in the living room.

"Would you like a glass of wine?" He offered as he walked towards the other side of the room.

"Sure." Then, when they both settled down on the couch, she blurted out something. "I'm not having sex with you." She suddenly felt embarrassed for saying that.

Not that she was a prude or saving herself for marriage. On the contrary, she was what others would call a bit slutty. But not tonight or anytime soon.

"Of course not. We are just going to talk about why you think we can't be an us." He pointed out, slightly smiling a bit to make her a bit comfortable.

But amuse that she was nervous beside him. A characteristic that he never associated with her before.

"About your question? I was in love with Marcus for a while. Well, I think I was. But he did something that broke my heart. Now, I am not sure if I don't love him anymore, or I am just angry with him for what he did." She planned to lay it all out to him.

She knew she could not keep dodging his questions. She had to come clean to him if there was a chance that they could even be friends.

A single tear started to drop in her eyes. She had no idea why or what it was for, but she could not stop it as another one rolled down.

"I'm sorry, I am not sure why I am crying. But I want to believe that we are over now." She continued.

"Don't worry. Let yourself grieve. I think that is one of the things that you did not do when you broke up with that guy." Sebastian encouraged her to cry because that was a natural reaction to pain. It was a way to release her emotions and start the process of healing.

"But there is something else. Right after we broke off, I also met another guy. But I believe he is far different from Marcus. He made me feel special during the time that I felt so alone." Thinking about Lance still made her miss him.

She believed that he was someone that she would have a difficult time forgetting. She was uncertain if she developed feelings for him in that short time, they were together. But he certainly made an impact in her life.

"Oh. Are you still together?" He asked, thinking that she might still be in a relationship with another man.

"Nope, we are not. We never had a relationship. Maybe I just put a color to his kindness and friendship. But somehow, it affected me when we parted." Jacky admitted what she had kept denying to herself.

"So, now you think that by dating me, you are using me as a rebound from your failed relationship with them." He finally concluded for her.

He thought about their situation.

If he looked at it from another person's perspective, it would seem that she was telling him the truth. But in his opinion, she was just a lost grown woman, trying to find her way back to normalcy.

Fate had dealt her a bad card, and she should not pay for it. That was unless she did deserve it, but he doubted that she did. She might have a bad past. But from the way he saw it, she could use a break.

"Yes, can't you see that?" She insisted as she wiped the tears that dropped on her cheeks. "So, I don't think it would be a good idea if you keep seeing me or become friends with me."

She was not sure if Sebastian was only mocking her or he was genuinely concerned about her from the way he was acting. But to her, no sane man would want to be a part of her life.

"Hey, stop that. I care for you, whether you want to believe that or not. But I do. I don't care if you felt that you had to use me to get over the two men in your life. What matters to me is that you were honest about it." He touched her face with his fingers just below her eyes and started wiping away her tears.

"Don't do that. Don't take pity on me. I don't need it." She slapped his hand away from her face, unamused with what he said.

"Stop it, Jacky. I am your friend for now. If that is what you need." He pulled her to him, giving her a firm embrace and enveloping her in his warmth.

"Please, just for tonight, let me be your friend." He supported her to continue to cry on his chest, allowing her to release all her pent-up emotions.

He was not sure if his actions would make a difference, but he genuinely liked Jacky. He believed that she deserved a second chance for happiness. He thought that she was a rare gem that he did not want to let go of just like that.