

## Royal Contract 211

### Chapter 211 - The Supportive Boyfriend

"Are you sure that you are ok to go back to work?" Alex asked, still trying to convince her that she should still rest. He buttoned up his shirt as he watched her slightly struggle to get dress.

Although she seemed to be doing better and the swelling on her foot had toned down to almost normal, he still felt she should take it easy and lay low from work.

"Another day of confinement inside this house, and I will hang myself," Dani warned him with a sharp look if he insisted on stopping her.

She had been staring at the walls of her apartment for far too long. She could not take another minute of watching another movie or laying down wide awake. She needed to get back to her job before she lost her mind.

"Fine, Dani. I'll drive you to work and pick you up later. Or else, I will lock you up inside this room." It was his turn to give an ultimatum. "And I will ask Jacky to lessen your workload today. You need to take it easy."

"You can't do that. Besides, you are not my boss. I already have several backlogs on my cases. I can't afford to slack off anymore." She reasoned to him as she started to apply light makeup on her face.

"I told you that David and Evan understand your situation. They already asked for some assistance from the other associates to take your immediate cases." He again pointed out that there was no hurry for her to go back to work.

It was not as if she went on a vacation and abandoned her obligations. She was in an accident and needed a required rest. Any businesses allowed their employees some sick leave to recover, and that included their company.

"You can't always use your influence with my boss to excuse my absences." She said, a bit frustrated and irritated with him as she sat in front of the vanity mirror.

It was not the first time that he meddled with her career. She knew that it would not be the last if she did not put a stop to it. Although she knew that he meant well, it was still not his right to interfere in her life.

"But I only did it because you had an accident, and you need your rest." He was not yet finished with his statement when she interrupted her by holding out her hand.

"It is beside the point. I know I am given special treatment because of my association with you. It is the same reason why I did not work for my father because I want it to make it on my own." Showing him how upset she was through her reflection in the mirror.

"I..." Alex was supposed to react to her claim, but she stopped him once again. He decided to shut up, just stood behind her, and listened to what else she had to say.

"Let me finish." She dropped everything she was doing and turned to look at him. "You can't keep coming to my rescue." She breathed heavily at her situation. "I even think that the only reason they hired me in the first place is that you had something to do with it."

She finally voiced what had bothered her since she found out his connection to the company. To her mind, he had something to do with why she immediately got the position despite her lack of experience.

"I'm sorry if you felt that way. I was not aware, and it was not my intention." He knelt in front of her and looked directly at her face.

"And regards to your employment with the firm, I had nothing to do with it. I only learned about your association with them when I accidentally heard your name mentioned as a new hire." He continued as he forced her to look at him.

"Fine." Finally, staring straight into his eyes as Dani saw the sincerity of his statement. "So, you have nothing to do with me getting the job with the firm."

"But I still want to become a good lawyer. Not just a name on the door that says I am working there. People already thought that I was only in this position because of who my father is. That is not what I want." She entwined her fingers through her hair and ran it through the strands, and then she worked on putting it into a bun.

"I like them to realize that I deserve to be there because I work my ass out with every case I handle. I also work this hard because I want to help those people who need me." She suddenly felt that she had to explain herself for him to understand her reasons.

She did not want to blame him because she knew he was only looking after her. But there were things that she considered to be too much, and this was one of them. He was overdoing the protective and saving part.

"Ok. I understand. I will try to limit interfering with your job." But when he saw the frown on her face, he immediately rephrased his words. "I will stop interfering with your job. Better?"

Alex learned that he had to back off from Dani. He could not control someone like her because he was one independent and intelligent woman. It was one of the things that attracted him to her in the first place.

"Deal." She agreed, quite satisfied that she won this argument.

She appreciated the concern that Alex was showing her, but he could not run her life. It was not how she wanted their relationship to work.

Moreover, she would do anything to get back to work. She could not stop thinking of the cases she needed to finish evaluating and needed filing in court.

"Ok. If that is what will make you happy. Then, that is what we will do." Alex said, admitting his defeat. He stood up and placed a solid kiss on the top of her head, and moved away to let her finish.

"Thanks. Now, shall we finish up here and go to work because I don't want to be late." She stood up from her seat, putting some weight on the table in front of her for support.

Then she took the clutch at the side and used it to walk. A minor accident would not stop her from accomplishing her tasks. She never used excuses before, and she was not about to start now.

She was an independent and strong woman who had work hard to get where she was now. She could not give that up now, just for him, no matter how much she like him.

"Then, we shall." He offered his hand for support while she used the crutch on the affected foot.

He could see how she fought through the pain these past few days to prove to him that she was capable of doing things on her own. He admonished her for her stubbornness but admired her resilience too.

And she was right, Alex realized. She was capable of taking care of herself. She had been doing that even before he came into the picture. So, he had to stop playing her knight and start to be the supportive boyfriend.

## **Chapter 212 - Absolute Power**

Hopefully, in a few more days, she could freely move around without the wooden support.

When they arrived at the office, instead of just dropping her off at her building, Alex decided to visit David in his office. "I just have a few things to run by him." He told her.

Of course, she refused him when he offered to carry her inside the lobby. She could manage to walk using her crutch. She did not want to be the center of the gossip around the office for the day. So, he settled to assist her to her office.

"Thanks again for bringing me to work." She whispered to him after their not so short kiss.

"Remember, I'll pick you up again later." He reminded her before he moved out of her room and out of her sight. If not injured, she would walk him to the door or at the elevator, but today, he had to settle for a wave of her hand.

After he was gone, she emerged herself to her work, once in a while calling Jacky for the things she would need.

In the meantime, Alex went straight to David's office to discuss some business and a personal matter. As of now, he could not depend on Marcus in his objectivity, so he needed another set of advice to guarantee that he was not making a mistake.

"Do you have a minute?" He asked his friend, who had squeezed him into his busy schedule to accommodate him.

"What can I do for you, Alex? You know I will cancel everything if you need me as long as it is a life or death situation." David spoke with a taunting smile on his face.

"Funny, man. But seriously, I have it is something I need your expertise." Alex walked inside and made himself comfortable.

Alex believed that Marcus' ability to analyze his circumstances might be bias due to his relationship with Dani. He thought that getting David as a backup would give him a better angle on his situation.

"You know I am always here for you, whether it is business or personal." David put aside his work and gave his full attention to his friend. "So, what is it?"

Alex started narrating to him what he and his father talked about regarding his situation in the palace. His father offered him a semi-solution to his problem, although it was not a guarantee get out of jail free pass card.

"Marcus thinks that I should not take the deal. It was a high risk. But you know how much he does not approve of my association with Dani personally. So, I think his opinion might be a bit skew regarding the matter." Alex pointed out to David.

"Well, it did sound risky, but if you play your card right and in place a highly secured system in your company, I am sure that this might work in your favor." David agreed with Alex's plans.

David also thought that it might help with most of his problems with his family and his future. He had always known how Alex felt conflicted between his family and his dreams. Now, he added Dani to the mix.

"Thanks, man." Alex left his friend, convinced that he made the right decision.

On the other side of the world, in the Palace of the King. King Edward and his son, the Prince, also held their private meeting. The King finally heard a word from the Council of Elders about their final decision on the fate of Prince Edward.

"Father, you can't be serious." Prince Edward shouted incredulously after hearing what the Council had ordered him to do.

The Prince did not want to conform with the decision of the Council. At the same time, he was furious that his father had agreed to such a demand. For him, his father was the ruler of this land, and he should not bow down to the wishes of the Council.

"I am very serious. I do believe that what the Council recommended will be good for you. It will prepare you once you become King and rule our Empire." King Edward stated in his authoritative voice.

As much as he loved his son, he could not deny that he was not ready to rule. It was one of the reasons why he could not deny the Council its power to veto his wishes to pass on the crown to his son.

He might have done things that he was not proud of in the past. But he was not as irresponsible and immature as his son when he took over as the new crown king to the throne.

"But father..." Prince Edward was about to complain again, but his father silenced him by waving his hand.

"As your King and your father, I order you to abide by the ruling of the Council of Elders or faced the consequence of disobeying it." King Edward decree.

"What would happen if I decide to disobey your order?" Prince Edward questioned with defiance on his expression.

He found the ruling of the Council as unjust and a ploy to degrade him as the next ruler of this kingdom. By birth, he had every right to rule this Empire that had always been what he had believed.

Due to the jealousy of his uncle, the great Duke of Blackstone, the Council had ruled against him. He also drove a wedge between him and his father.

Only because the Duke wanted the throne for his son, Alexander, but he would not let them get away with their plot against him. He would fight for his crown and make them pay for their betrayal.

"And as punishment for disregarding my direct order, if you ever decide to do so, I will have no option but to ban you from this Kingdom and disown you of all your rights and title." The King said with a strong warning.

It was not a threat but a ruling in their kingdom that, as their King, he could not break even if he was his son. But, as a father, he could only hope that his son would finally heed his warning and amend his ways.

"All of this is utter bullshit. I don't know why you tolerate the Council when they are undermining your authority as King." Prince Edward started pacing around the office of his father.

"No one will force you to do what you don't want. It is up to you to do as you wish. But remember that we have rules that we need to follow. In this day and age, being King is earned and not handed down." His father reminded him.

Although he believed that he could find a way to overthrow the Council's decision if he so wished. Like what his father did, he could also make new laws if he wanted since he was, after all, a King too.

He could abolish the law about succession that his father did. But he also believed in that law and wished to make it irrevocable. So, the next in line to the throne could never change or remove it, especially if his son was to rule.

His son needed to know that being King is not pure glamour and power. It was a big responsibility not only to his family but to their entire Empire. That included the next generation to come.

Prince Edward had to learn the hard way that being King did not mean absolute power.

### **Chapter 213 - Unexpected Road Trip**

"Where are we going again?" She asked, still a bit stunned by his sudden appearance in her office.

She was indeed expecting him to pick her up, but she assumed he would arrive a bit later. Maybe an hour or two more. It was almost a week since her accident. She was still trying to catch up with her work.

She still had at least two cases she wanted to review before the weekends. She was way behind her schedule with all the other activities she had been doing on the side.

"Therapy. It is something that will help your feet get better faster." He announced as he started closing the files in front of her. "But we need to hurry. It will be a long drive. By the way, I already packed a few things that you'll need for the weekend."

He knew that he still owed her a weekend getaway. He had been planning this for weeks, but something always came up. They did not even celebrate their first month anniversary because both of them did not even remember it.

Now, he planned to make up for his slack and double his effort to use this time, creating a memorable experience for the two of them. In addition, if they did not do this now, who knew when they would have this opportunity again.

"Stop that. We talk about this. You said that you would not interfere with my job again." She uttered in exasperation, reminding him about their talk not so long ago. She tried to open the file again, but his hands prevented her from doing so.

"And I am not. Technically, your work expired approximately three minutes ago, as soon as I entered your office. So, I believe you are free to go." He explained, pulling the file from her hand and putting it back on the file on the side of the table.

Although he was guilty of using a loophole in his promise, he only did it for her. She needed intervention for her safety and health condition. If he did not do this, she would not stop working this weekend.

"It doesn't mean that I can pack up and leave just like that. I still have a few papers to finish." She quirked her brow at him, unamused with his reasoning and action.

"Your next job will be on Monday. I assure you that you will be here on time. You can finish it by then." He cockily said as if he had all this precisely as planned. He also seemed to have an answer to all her questions.

"Really? That is how you are going to play this." She gave up, waving her hands in the air, realizing that she would not win with him and his logic no matter what she tried.

"I am only doing this for your welfare. It is what the doctor exactly ordered." Repeating what the doctor said about relaxing and not overdoing it.

"For my foot to heal faster, I have to travel to an unknown destination that only you know where." She mockingly said to him and looked at him as if he had gone mad.

"Not exactly. I told Jacky all the information, just in case of an emergency, and she needed to contact us. But don't bother to pry any details from her because she is not going to spill." He advised her.

He knew that Dani would still try to find out his surprise from Jacky despite what he said. But this time, he felt secure that Jacky would not say anything because this was her idea in the first place.

Dani was a workaholic like him. They had been working hard these last weeks, then the accident. He tried to plan for a getaway, but he always ended up postponing his surprise for one reason or another.

"That is not fair. Why does it always have to be a surprise when you can share the idea with me? It will be much better if we can plan it together." She tried a new tactic to make him spill the bean.

She never did like surprises before, maybe because of a traumatic incident in her past. But lately, she never minded Alex's creative imagination and his effort to make it unexpectedly great.

She found herself looking forward to it, even excited if she dared to admit it to him. But she would not because she did not want to inflate his ego.

But then again, he had never shown that he had an ego to inflate. Dani only said that because she could not beat him in his game. Maybe she should up her game too, so the next time, it would be her giving him a surprise.

"I like to surprise you. Even if you say that you don't want it, I can see it in your eyes how much you enjoy it." He pointed out, remembering the times her eyes brightened and twinkled like a Christmas light in the things they did.

He slowly lifted her from her seat, and then he sat on her chair, pulling her to his lap. He cradled her in his arms and pulled her for a kiss. He had wanted to do that since he entered her room.

"Can I say no to this trip?" She asked when her breathing had even out, but already knowing what he would say to her.

"Are you?" He answered her question with a question, daring her to say it. But deep inside his heart, he already knew her answer.

"Let's go. I don't want us to be late." She stood up and leaned on her desk for support. Although she could already step on her injured ankle again, she still felt slight pain when she leaned her weight on it.

A few minutes later, they were in his car, driving in the mildly growing traffic. As he informed her earlier, she saw her bag in the backseat together with his.

She wondered what kind of clothes he packed inside. It would give her a clue of where they were going. But she already gave up on knowing his plans. "I figured we could grab a quick bite on the way. Maybe stop by a local diner if you don't mind." He asked, continuing to concentrate on the road ahead.

"I don't mind at all." She had no problem with eating in diners. She would not mind doing anything with him as long as they were doing it together.

She noticed the car of his men following them not too far from them. Just enough to come to their rescue if they would need them. She wondered if she would ever get used to them just like him.

Will their lives always be in danger because of who he was? She was born wealthy but never felt the fear for her life. But since she associated herself with him, her life had turned upside down.

She quickly shut down where her thought was going. She looked at the man at her side and concentrated her attention on him. She was going to enjoy this unexpected road trip and looked forward to their extraordinary, new adventure.

## **Chapter 214 - New Adventure**

Alex stopped by a small diner along the way, but instead of dining inside, he decided to take out the food and eat in the car.

They did not want to attract any attention to themselves. Although Alex and Dani were not a celebrity, their photos were still splashed on the news not so long ago. Someone might still recognize them without their disguises.

"Are we still far from our destination?" She was hoping not. She could see that Alex was already tired and he had been driving for two hours now. There was tremendous traffic going out of the city, and it was very frustrating to be behind the wheel in such a condition.

"Don't worry. I handled worse." Alex assured her, quickly glancing at her with his reassuring smile. Then, he focused his attention back on the road. "We're not that far anyway."

Finally, they arrived at a beautiful driveway with a massive house at the end. "Whose house is this?"

It was a modern house with huge glass windows everywhere. She wondered if he owned the place. They arrived a bit late, but the lights brightened up the place.

She saw the security men were the first to roam around, securing the place. She guessed staying with him would mean getting used to his men.

"This is David's place. He is loaning it to us for the weekend." Alex answered her as he grabbed their things and guided her to the front entrance.

After pressing a password to the keypad, the door opened, and they entered the narrow hallway that led to the spacious living room.

"Does anyone lives here?" She asked, checking out the minimalist style of the interior of the house.

Although the house was too big for her liking, she did appreciate the simplicity of the decorations and the functionality of the furniture compared to it being grand.

In her opinion, the lack of feminine touch only indicated that it was one big bachelor's pad. It figured, judging from what she observed with his friends, who did not do committed relationships.

"No, but someone comes to check and clean. David only uses this house when he needs to unwind from the stress of his job. He loved to surf as a hobby." Alex informed her.

"Oh, I never knew that about my boss. That would explain the surfboard trophy in his office." She did not put much thought into what his friends do outside of work. "What about you? Do you like to surf?"

She always wondered what else he could do because he seemed to be good at everything he did. Nobody could be that perfect, not even him.

Then, she realized that after the trip. There was no particular instance that Alex formally introduced her as his girlfriend to his friends.

Maybe the opportunity had not come up because they were living in their bubble. Or, he thought that since they already knew each other, there was no more need for it. She quickly thrashed the thought away.

"Unfortunately, I am not. Surfing was not a popular sport in my hometown, so I never had the chance to learn it." He continued to walk further inside until they stopped in the middle of the living room.

"Did David not offered to teach you?" She believed that Alex could have learned it if he wished. She always saw him as the athletic type and quite adventurous too.



"By the time David introduced it to me, I was already busy with my studies. And then, with building my business. I never have time to focus on it." Alex explained. "By the way, the kitchen is over there." Pointing to the other side of the room.

"Oh! So, you mean during college, and until now, you have been all work, work, work, and no play." She quirked her brow at him, finding it hard to believe his claim.

But at least she learned a new thing about him. He now had one thing he could not do. But was there a point in his life that he was a womanizer like his friends?

As the saying went, friends with the same feathers flocked together. But would that make a difference in her opinion of him? She could speculate or find out, but did she have the guts to ask?

"I'm not as perfect as you think. I also go out with my friends. Drink in bars, parties, and the likes. But I always knew my limits." He continued his tour of the place.

"You said that you like going out with your friends." Then, she paused for a few seconds to recompose her line of questioning. "Are you as wild as them when you were young?"

"If you are asking if I changed woman like I changed my shirt, then sorry to disappoint you. I am not like that." He dropped their things on the floor and moved to the far end of the house.

"Oh. I assumed with friends like Marcus. You might be like him back then." She felt ashamed for even thinking then asking him about it.

Although she always sensed that he was different from his friends, she sometimes could not help but wondered if he only changed recently or when he met Tyra.

Until now, she still wondered why he and Tyra did not work out. From the way Tyra acted around him as she remembered it, she was still very much in love with him. What about him? Did he still love her?

"As I told you before, I have more respect for women to use them for my satisfaction. Maybe it was the way my parents raised me. Or the values I learned from my grandparents." He opened a sliding door towards a large veranda, revealing the panoramic scenery of the backyard.

Alex did remember his friends trying so hard to influence him to their ways. But remembering Nanna's words, he knew she would crawl out of her grave once she heard he hurt a woman for selfish reasons.

"Wow, this place has a magnificent view." She pointed out as she walked out of the room and into the open air.

She always loved to go out of the city and explore what nature had to offer. Something she enjoyed when she was young, vacationing with her parents to different parts of the world.

Now, looking at the darkness outside, sprinkled with stars above the sky, she could not remember a night like this back home. But then again, when did she had time to look outside and enjoy the view.

"Yes, one of the many reasons why David bought this place." He remembered when David first bought it and showed it to him.

He could see the fascination in David's eye with this place. It had nothing to do with the view but with the real estate agent selling the property.

He also loved this place. But he preferred something else, something closer to his heart. Maybe something that his future wife would also like to share with him. So, he would wait for her before investing in an estate.

"I could see that now." She agreed with him, but thinking that they were referring to the same reason.

"Shall we go and see our room? We can explore the place tomorrow. I know you are tired, and your foot must be hurting by now." He voiced out his concern as he guided her towards the stairs and moved to the second floor of the building.

"I can hardly open my eyes." She stated as she walked close to the bed and sat on it. She wiggled her toes to relax her foot and ankle. Although she could walk on it, she could still feel the stiffness in the affected area.

He just dropped their things on the side of the cabinets and laid down on the bed beside her. "Me, too," Alex responded with a yawn, stretching his arms and body, finding a comfortable position.

She turned her head to him and a smile formed on her lips. She was exhausted from the week that she had, but somehow, it was all worth it, now that she was here with him.

After cleaning up and changing into nightwear, Dani laid beside him and snuggled close to him. She let the darkness claimed her, with a single thought, excited with the new adventure they would be sharing.

## **Chapter 215 - Fingers Crossed**

"Wake up, beautiful." She heard a voice trying to penetrate her consciousness.

Her eyes remained close, but she did recognize his voice. She wondered if she was dreaming. Well, Dani wished she was not. She liked for him to continue to whisper sweet nothings to her.

Slowly, she felt his lips grazed down her earlobes, down to the side of her neck, teasing her to awareness. Finally, she opened her eyes to the beautiful view of his eyes gazing down on her. She would prefer this to any dream.

"Why did you stop?" She complained as she pulled him back to her to finish what he started. She devoured his lips with hers, not caring anymore about whether she was sporting a bad breath.

She had finally felt more comfortable around him, ever since the day that he raised her confidence about herself. Although there were still moments that she felt a moment of hesitations, most of the time, she had become bolder and bolder in her actions.

"Oh, we need to stop because I already plan something special for us to do today." He tried to pull himself away from her, but she did put in a fight.

When he finally managed to unhook himself from her grasp and stand up, he looked at her as disappointment spread across her face. She was not thrilled with his plans. He could tell.

"What is more special than me?" She pointed out as she stretched her body in front of him, revealing her body covered by her flimsy nightgown.

The first time she seduced him with this tactic, she had failed. But she would try again and see if she learned a thing or two from that experience.

"You are not playing fair." This time, it was his turn to protest. He moaned out of frustration as he debated between his plans and the one already laid before him.

He already mapped out their activity for the day, but he wondered if he could control his response to her temptation. He believed that she had managed to improve from her last attempt. Now, his ability to think straight had just gone out the window.

"Oh, is that so? Is it working?" She teased him more by pulling her hair up above her head, running her fingers on her exposed neck.

She let her fingers continued their downward path, allowing his gaze to roam all over her body, remembering how he had enjoyed kissing it earlier.

"I think I just created a monster." He seriously uttered, using a mild tone. He followed it with a manly laugh as he jumped into the bed and started tickling her as payback.

After a few laughs, he pulled her towards his solid body, trapping her in his embrace. "I will blame you if we did not eat any breakfast today."

"I'm sure with that body. You'll survive a little starvation." She played with his muscles, using her fingers to trace its lines.

"Enough talk." He covered her lips with his to silence her.

He felt he could not control all his pent-up need for her anymore. For a week, he had restrained himself from touching her, giving her time to recover.

But now, seeing the same hunger in her eyes, there was no way he could deny them of their satiable need to feel satisfied. He covered her body with his and peppered her body with his tender kisses.

But he still made sure to consider not to hurt her foot with unnecessary movement. After all, he still believed that it was still raw despite her claim that her foot had fully healed.

"Oh, I miss this so much." She voiced her longing as her hands continued to explore his body, giving pleasure where she could reach and touch.

She knew that he was only thinking of her condition. But she believed that she was well enough to do strenuous activities. He was too much of a gentleman to force himself on her. So, this time, she was making her move.

"You don't know how much I want you in my arms again. How much I wanted to possess your body and make it mine again." He whispered to her in between their ragged breaths. "Only mine." He continued in such a low tone that she almost missed it.

She had seen that he was not immune to jealousy at how he handled her friendship with Troy. But she contemplated if he was the possessive type. It was not the first time that Alex spoke of owning or possessing her.

But sometimes, she also spoke of nonsense in the heat of passion. She disregarded what Alex had said and concentrated on the sensation he was giving her.

He continued his expert ministrations on her body as if she was an instrument that he could easily manipulate to create the right rhythm. Then, at the end of it all, they would produce a perfect melody.

"That was great." She breathily mumbled as she felt her world shook from its intensity.

In her mind, she believed it was not the best sex they ever had. But it was indeed the most explosive, probably because of the waiting. However, it was only her opinion since she was not an expert.

Eventually, both of them caught their breaths after indulging their yearnings. Alex pulled her to him until her head laid on his chest. He started running his hand on her hair, caressing its softness in his fingertips.

"Yeah, it was." He suddenly remembered their first night together. He was slowly seeing the girl he met that night in her. Her confidence had grown, and she was ready to take what she wanted.

Then, silence befell them as they were both lost in their thoughts. Minutes passed, and all they could do was feel each other's heartbeat and hear each breath they took, staring at nothing but the blank space in front of them.

"I..." He was not sure what he was about to say. But he had to stop himself from saying it because he was doubtful if he was ready for that.

He did not know why it suddenly entered his mind. Was he feeling that, or was it just a spare of a moment thought after the tremendous, passionate encounter they shared?

"I think you outdid yourself." She taunted him as she continued to run her fingers on his chest, not being able to find the right words to say after such an experience.

"You too." He responded with a chuckle, finding her words a bit funny as he kissed the top of her head.

"I think it is time to hit the showers. We better hurry because I am starving. I think you are too." Hearing her stomach started to growl.

He tried to divert their attention from his thought. He was glad that Dani did not seem to notice his fumble. But he had to seriously think about where their relationship was going and what he felt about her.

The clock was ticking for the both of them. Alex was already questioning if his latest decision would help him or not. Maybe it could help prevent him from marrying too soon. Maybe not.

But he had his fingers crossed that it would not backfire and bite him in the ass.

## **Chapter 216 - The Love Bug**

"You should have said that we are going sailing. I would have moved my ass faster." She told him mockingly, seeing the boat he was pointing at a dock on the other side of the wooden walkway.

Although she was not against going on a cruise on an open ocean, she was not fond of small boats. Put her on a big yacht or a cruise ship, and she would enjoy her time under the sun, in the middle of the blue waters.

But boats that barely accommodate two to three people frightened her. It gave her the chill to be confined in a small space, seeing the vast ocean around her.

It felt like the ocean or whatever creatures lived beneath it would suddenly gobble them up in one enormous bite. Well, she had an active imagination. What could she do? She could not help it.

"I thought that you might be interested in some adventure." Alex guided her towards the direction of the boat.

"If you mean riding that not-so-big boat, I might as well hold to an oar and start rowing it myself. I think I feel much better." Dani pointed on a boat moored on the far end.

She suddenly imaged a movie they had watched together where the boat suddenly capsized in the middle of nowhere.

"Come on. It is not that bad." He tried to reassure her that it would be fun. Then, he followed the direction she was pointing, seeing the lone boat at the end of the dock.

"Hmmm." He thought of something adventurous that they did to convince her that it would be great. But the only thing he could remember was the bike ride which did not end well.

But he was enjoying the discomfort she felt as they neared the boat in question. He could feel her hesitation to go on a boat trip with him. He was counting the seconds on how long before she declined to join him.

A few meters away, upon seeing the size of the boat up close, she knew that it was not happening, not in a million years. "I'm sorry, but I will have to put a rain check on that. I think my foot could not handle the pressure of sailing."

She had no idea actually of what happened during sailing, but one thing was for sure. She was not riding that to find out, not now or ever.

"But I thought you said that your foot is doing well. I do remember you saying that it was as good as new." He challenged her, catching her lie with her own words.

"Fine. It is not yet that fully heal, but it is doing much better now. But I won't still risk it by riding that boat." She insisted as she turned around to walk back to where they came from before.

"Wait." He said, trying to stop her from leaving.

"Besides, I am hungry, and you promised me breakfast. I don't think we can eat in that cramped space." She interrupted him as she continued to walk, distancing herself from the boat and away from him.

Then, she suddenly stopped when she heard him laugh out loud. She turned around to learn that he was not following her. "What is so funny?" She asked as she went back closed to him.

"You," Alex answered her question with a chuckle. He was finding it hard to control his laughter.

He did not intend to mislead her, but it was not his fault if she jumped to her conclusion. Besides, he only wanted to see how she would handle such a situation. Now, he knew.

"What do you mean?" Puzzled by his unruly reaction.

She did not understand why he found it funny that she did not want to ride the small boat. It did not make sense.

"Come on. Indulge me and walk with me." He offered his arm for assistance and waited for her to take it.

They continued to walk, but instead of going for the small boat, they turned ninety degrees on another pathway not quite visible to her because of the structure covering it.

It revealed a bigger boat moored on the end of the dock. "I think this is more to your liking." He whispered in her ears as they approached the boarding ladder connecting to the yacht.

"You should have told me that I made a mistake instead of making a fool of me." She pinched him on the side of his body, but he easily dodged her second try.

"Well, that should teach you not to assume the worse." He pointed out as he ushered her near the not-so-small boat.

"Still." She halted her words before she said something she would regret. She admitted that he was also correct. She kept assuming for the worse in him when she should be trusting him.

"Welcome aboard to the Lady Rose." A man dressed as a cabin crew assisted them to the top of the deck. "This way, Sir, Mam."

"Is this yours or David's?" She asked, curious about its history and the name. In her limited knowledge of boats, she remembered that owners usually named after an important person or a significant meaning in their life.

"David, of course." He assisted her on the stairs that led them to the upper deck.

"We already prepared what you instructed." He showed them at a table with an already set breakfast.

"Thanks," Alex said to the young man. "Can you inform the captain that we are ready to set sail?" He ordered, in which the man nodded in understanding.

"If you need anything else, just ring this bell." He pointed on an old-fashioned ringer used to call someone's attention. After serving them some drinks, the man hurriedly walked away down the stairs to the lower deck.

"Well, what do you think?" He picked up the lone rose on the table and handed it to her. "Happy more than a month anniversary." He picked up her other hand and kissed it gently.

"It is perfect." She did not count the luxurious ship they were on, but the effort he had made to make this weekend getaway very special and memorable. "Sorry for forgetting about our month anniversary too."

She never did celebrate such a romantic tradition before, but she appreciated the gesture Alex had made. Nick had never been the romantic one. She could not remember if he ever thought about a single person other than himself.

She suddenly questioned what made her fall in love with him in the first place. Alex and Nick were millions apart. There was just no comparison.

Every time Alex took her into one of his surprises, she experienced something first, which was quite exciting. She believed that she was becoming addicted to his surprises.

"Shall we eat? I don't think I can continue to listen to your stomach grumbling." He once again teased her as he opened the lid of their special breakfast.

Well, he would admit that David outdid himself by gifting them with this trip. He was the one who suggested it to him. Now, he wondered if his friend also caught the love bug as he named his boat to a particular girl.

### **Chapter 217 - Dictate The Destiny**

After cruising the ocean and enjoying the view of the shoreline from another perspective, it was time for them to head back to the docks. It had been another shared experience that they could add to their memories together.

"Thanks for bringing me here and for taking a break to spend it with me." She uttered as the soft breeze blew her hair to the side.

She stood on the railings by the starboard, enjoying the view of the dolphins playing not so far from the boat's location. She had always been fascinated with the earth's natural resources.

She admired how nature painted the world and beautified it with its colors and wonders. The sound the wind, the water, and the birds created in her ears were classical music that could calm all her nerves.

"It is the least I can do to make you relax and enjoy. Besides, I also like having you around." He also moved closer to her. "I also love the view."

"Yeah, it is beautiful out here. It is quite peaceful." She did enjoy every minute of the moment they shared. She could only wish they could freeze time to prolong it a bit longer.

"But I will apologize in advance if the next weeks will be a bit more challenging for us." He spoke near her ears as he stood behind her, with his arms wrapped around her waist.

"I understand. I told you to do what you think will be best for your situation. I will always be here to support you." She reminded him.

She knew that he was about to face a dilemma and was a bit torn by his options. She was glad that he thought to discuss it with her, taking her opinion into account. But at the end of the day, it was still his decision to make.

They stayed in complete silence for a few more minutes, just savoring the feeling of being at sea. It would be a while before they could probably go back into another adventure together.

"What's next on your agenda?" She questioned when they disembarked on the docks.

"Oh. I was thinking of dinner at a local restaurant not far from here." He guided her out of the port and into their waiting car.

After a few minutes of driving, he escorted her to a local bar and restaurant. According to David, it was one of the best that served fresh plates of assorted seafood.

An old, bubbly man in an apron seated them at a table near the waters. "This is our best seat for a lovely couple. I hope you are enjoying your honeymoon." It was indeed located a bit farther from the other patrons, giving them some little privacy.

"Oh, we sure are," Alex answered, humoring the man who appeared to be in authority of the place. Probably one of the chefs or the owner from his posture.

Immediately after the words left his mouth, Dani looked at him with a stunned expression, followed by a jab on the ribs. But he responded to her with a sweet smile and a kiss on her hand.

The man gave them a friendly smile that showed them a missing tooth on the side. "Please choose from our different selections." The man was a clear romantic as he seemed pleased with Alex's little display of affection.

"Ok, just give us a minute," Alex informed the man as he waited for Dani's preference.

"Why did you not correct him?" She asked when the man was out of earshot. He, on the other hand, continued to choose from the menu.

"Because he seems to be so happy. I did not want to burst his bubbles." He explained as if it was the only right thing to do.

"You think you are so smart, aren't you?" She looked at him funnily and wiggled her fingers, signaling for him to come closer.

When he finally leaned forward to her, she grabbed his face with her two hands and pinched his cheeks, putting some pinkish colors on them.

"What is that for?" He protested as he tapped his cheeks to ease the sting caused by her actions. He was not offended at all. In truth, he found their mini squabbles enjoyable.

"For being so cute." She smiled at him too sweetly. Then, they both eventually laugh at their silliness.

She believed that she was no match to his charms despite how many times he would make her blood boil. But honestly, she also thought that his weird sense of humor was quite effective in breaking down her barriers.

It somehow loosened her up from her dark and depressing outlook on life. Her gloomy world had lit up because of him. Somehow, he managed to make her look forward to his amazing surprises.

"Ready to order." The man was back with his seemingly welcoming smile. "If I may suggest, we have a lovely combo, specially designed for happy couples like the two of you. It is a good source of energy to keep the night going." The old, sweet man winked at them and gave them a mischievous smile.



"Well, I guess we'll have that," Dani answered with a laugh, unable to dampen the man's excitement, finding the man adorable.

"What was that?" Alex was the one to question her this time.

"Ok. You were right." Acknowledging that what Alex did was the right thing to do.

After ordering a combination of different fish and crustacean delicacies, they settled into a comfortable conversation about whatever subject came to mind.

"Ouch," Dani yelped in surprise. The spike of the crab accidentally made a slight cut on her thumb finger when she tried to remove its shell cover.

"Let me see." He pulled her fingers to check on her injury, but she quickly pulled it away.

"It is nothing, just a tiny cut." She assured him. "I'm not going to die with this." She wiggled her fingers to him when he seemed to doubt her words.

"Ok. Then, let me help you with that." He grabbed the plate of crabs and removed the shell coverings for her, even putting a few delicious, juicy flesh of the crab into her mouth.

"This is so yummy." She uttered in pure delight as they ate with gusto using their hands. Completely not minding the mess they were making.

After a while, they went back to their chit chats and occasional bantering. Then, Dani suddenly found herself asking him some personal stuff.

"So, you are saying that after college, you did not plan to go back home." She was not surprised by this news because she already figured it out before. But the reason behind it still intrigued her. "Why?"

"Because I like it here. I want to build a life here. I enjoyed the freedom that my life here provides." Explaining to her why he chose to stay.

"Back home, my life would be bound with my responsibility to continue the line of succession either as Duke after my father. Or..." He stopped his lips from saying what else was in the tip of his tongue.

As if, by voicing it out, it would mean he had to accept his fate. But not if he could help it, he would dictate the destiny that he wanted for himself in the future.

## **Chapter 218 - Advance In Rank**

"Or..." She heard him said. But it was as if more of an afterthought that he did not wish to share.

She could not blame him since, in her opinion, titles were not just mere descriptions. It also entailed obligations.

"Or possibly King." She decided to finish the sentence for him, seeing his hesitation to continue.

She had always been curious about his reason for declining the throne. And the thought had been plaguing her mind since she had learned about the possibility of him becoming King.

She did not have the nerve to ask about it before. But now that she was seriously contemplating getting deeper into their relationship, she figured it was time to learn more about Alex and his other life.

"Yeah, something like that." He took his wine and drank its content, shaking the thought that had started to creep into his consciousness.

He never liked talking about The Empire since he never wanted to have anything to do with it. He left behind his life and his family for a reason, and he wished to keep it that way.

But fate seemed to have another idea as it kept throwing him back to his past and playing with his possible future. It would seem that he could not run away from it.

"Why don't you want to be a Duke, or more importantly, a King." She asked, not having a slight idea of what was going through his mind.

Although, she might be in the same situation as him. An heir of a kingdom she did not want to rule. Still, she felt that they might have a different reason for not wanting their rightful inheritance.

"Because it is just a useless title. And I never believe in what it symbolizes." He spoke about it as if it was the last thing he would like to discuss. "And I don't even believe in our old, outdated traditions." He continued in resignation.

He figured that Dani was right. She had every right to be informed about his past, present, and future. If they were to move forward in this relationship, her life would be affected by every decision he made from this point in their lives.

"But are you not even in the slightest bit interested with the title or to be the most powerful man in your kingdom?" She questioned his rationalization.

Most men or women would fight and kill for such an honor and title, but here he was, heir to one of the most prestigious titles there was, refusing to have anything to do with it.

"I don't need it and don't want it. Being a duke or a king doesn't mean anything to me." He stated his view of the matter.

"But, it is obvious they need you." She pointed out what she remembered from his birthday party.

"The Empire in the old times represented the ruling class. But over the years, as a new government emerged, our kingdom became more like a symbol of the past." He informed her.

Eventually, The Empire had no choice but to evolve, in order, to survive in the era of modernization and industrialization, refusing to die down like the fate of the other kingdoms.

But the new government dissolved the power of The Empire to rule over the land. Only the status of the nobility in the society remained intact.

"If being king doesn't give you the power to rule over your land, then what is the purpose of the title." She spoke with curiosity in her voice after hearing his narration.

Why does Edward want it badly while he never cared much about it? Why did the Council want him to replace Edward as King? It was a very intricate riddle in her mind that only he could answer.

"Despite stripping The Empire of its right to rule, the kingdom continued to flourish and increased its wealth. The government gave them some incentives in exchange for their powers." He continued to tell her their history.

Many still respected the Royal Family and what it stood for, but the others began to think that the nobilities were mere celebrities or rich snobs, nothing more.

"The Empire became one big corporation where The King acted as the head, the Council of Elders served as the Board of Directors. then the remaining nobilities its stockholders." He expressed what he thought of the kingdom today.

"Then, whoever becomes King gets control of the Empire's entire resources." She finally understood Edward's intention.

Still, she could not fathom Alex's rationale for not wanting the crown. It seemed to be the answer to all his hard work. It was already an established business that he only had to take over.

"Yes, that is correct. So, whoever becomes The King, inherits the entire Empire." He agreed with her conclusion.

"Then, why are you refusing the chance to be The King, not that I want you to take advantage of it. I only wish to understand it." She did not want him to misconstrued her curiosity with anything else.

"Because I refuse to follow a tradition that I don't believe in and wish to abolish." He stated, thinking of the many things he had to learn and blindly obey as he grew up.

"Such as." She wanted him to elaborate on his reason. She could tell that it was not just a whim on his part that he felt this way. There was a deeper story behind his need to get away from his written fate.

"Many, like me, deserve to be free to choose their path. A life that they desired other than the responsibility bestowed on them at childbirth." He explained further.

He could already think of several names that felt trapped in this life. But because of fear of bringing shame to their family, they turned their backs on their dreams. And swore their life to The Empire.

He believed one of them was his father. He devoted his life to the kingdom, making sure that it would continue to grow. He would have succeeded in a different path, but he could not sever his tie to the throne. He could never turn his back on his obligations.

"I understand your sentiment since I also share the same circumstances," Dani stated, also wanting a different path, not the one already created for her. She understood what Alex wanted.

"If I will want a kingdom, I wish to have what your father has created. I will build my Empire from hard work and not because of my birthright." He told her as they finished their meal and prepared to leave.

He had seen all the nobilities working hard to create a magnificent kingdom, only to serve a future king that did not give a damn. But since it was his birthright, nobody could do anything about it.

He could think of one person who felt entitled all his life. Because he was the future King, he did not feel the need to work hard. As the son of the King, he had no accountability for his actions.

In his opinion, many others deserved to be in his position. The other nobilities also had the right to rule their land. But The Empire refused to give them that power. The hierarchy did not permit them to advance in rank.

## **Chapter 219 - Haunted Memories And Dreams**

"In a way, I got a better glimpse of your life, growing up. It is not hard to imagine because, in a way, we do have some similarities." She could relate to him from past experiences and understood what he had gone through in his life.

"Did you never, ever did consider becoming King just to save your kingdom from destruction or bring it back to its famous glory?" She could not help but speak out loud what was in her mind.

"Yes, at some point, I thought of it. But I believe that my being King will not be the solution to the extinction of our ways. I don't even know if I will be a good King." That was his response to his question.

He believed that he might even be the reason for its downfall. As of now, all he wanted was to demolish its hierarchy system and gave the lands and property shares to its rightful owners.

He believed he would treat The Empire like the companies he bought and restructured it according to its need to make it more functional.

"Well, enough about the kingdom." He was through talking about a kingdom that he did not wish to be a part of but could not seem to run away from, no matter how he tried.

Back at the house, exhausted from the long and exciting day they had, both decided to call it a day, retiring to their room to spend a few more minutes enjoying each other's company.

This time, no talking was necessary. Dani thought that they already had talked too much today. All she needed now was him, wrapped around her body.

Feelings and body language were mainly their way of communication. A few moans and groans were the only noise heard in their room, indicating only one thing, their satisfaction. After that, there was only silence.

She immediately fell asleep, but Alex remained wide awake, staring at the beautiful woman beside him. "How did I become so lucky?" Despite his past and his situation, he still managed to find a gem in his chaotic life.

He began to contemplate on their future. He wanted to know if he was indeed in love with her. But how could he possibly know if that was what he felt?

"I love you." He said in a barely audible sound as he leaned forward and touched her face. She could see that her breathing remained even, and there was no sudden movement on her part, so she was completely asleep. She did not hear his words.

He wanted to try the words on his lips while she was not aware. He heard somewhere that if he said it out loud to the other person involved, eventually, he would feel if it was true.

But sadly, he was not sure if something changed in him. He was still as clueless as before he said the words. He knew he deeply cared for Dani, but love was such a complicated feeling.

"I want to marry you." He tried again. Deep inside, if he had to marry, he would like that person to be Dani. But as she said before, she would not marry without love.

More than an hour later, he noticed Dani thrashing on the bed. She appeared to be having a troubled dream, more possibly a nightmare. He was about to wake her up when she suddenly uttered a name.

"Nick..." She whispered, looking like saying his name was causing her so much pain. Then, she started yelling. "No, no, no..." Repeatedly.

At that moment, he could not stand by and listen to her anymore. He had to do something. He grabbed her by the shoulder and started to shake her. "Dani, wake up. Wake up."

He kept saying until he saw her open her eyes with tears threatening to fall. But he could see that she was still lost, trapped in her dream. Her eyes glazed with the fear of what she was going through.

"Hey, wake up. It's just a dream." He pulled her into his arms as he tried to calm her body down. She was still shaking in fright. He wiped the sweat that formed on her forehead with the palm of his hands, seeing her broken expression.

At this point, he knew something serious was causing her distress. It was not a random dream, but something that had bothered her for a long time.

"I'm sorry," Dani finally recovered, becoming aware of her situation. She had another awful dream, and Alex had witnessed it once again. Somehow, his warmth had started to relax her body and level her breathing.

"Are you ok?" He asked, feeling that she was regaining her consciousness. He smiled at her to reassure her that everything was going to be ok.

"It must be..." She was about to say something when he stopped her.

"No. I am not taking your excuses and lies. You are going to tell me what Nick did to you." He said firmly, using his stern voice to send his message across that he was serious.

Something was wrong with this picture, and he was not allowing her to keep hiding it from him. He would find out what was troubling her right now, whatever it took.

Hearing the concern in his voice together with the toughness in his expression, she knew that it would be harder for her to keep hiding things from him. But she was anxious to reveal her secrets to him.

She could not stop the tears that burst down her cheeks as she recalled her past. "It is not that simple." She told him as a sob escaped her lips, unable to continue with her words.

"I know it is difficult, but you will need to trust me with whatever was bothering you. Let me help you." He shifted his voice to a softer tone, hoping that she would find it easier for her to share her troubles.

He knew that telling him about her past would be difficult, but he had to try to help her. Then, he realized that he also had to come clean with her about his past. But it was not his time. He had to concentrate on her needs first.

She nodded her head. "Ok." She replied, suddenly realizing that she had to tell him everything. If there was any consolation to this entire situation, at least she was baring her soul to a man she trusted with her life.

Growing up being told that she was perfect, she eventually assumed that she could do no wrong. With everyone envying her life, it made her conclude that she was indeed a princess.

But what Nick and Cassie did to her. The betrayal of love and friendship destroyed everything she had believed in her entire life.

She was not invincible like her father had told her. She was just like everyone else, capable of being hurt.

"Just start where you feel comfortable." Alex took her hand and placed it on his cheeks to provide her with some emotional support.

"Nick made me believe in love when he started courting me. He became my world, and I thought I was his." She began to recount to Alex the relationship she had with Nick.

It was a past that she had run away from but had eventually caught up with her. A relationship that she wished to forget. But her haunted memories and dreams never stopped and left her mind.

## **Chapter 220 - A Victim Of Abuse**

"Please, tell me everything. I'm here." He kept encouraging her to continue, seeing the fear in her eyes.

Was she afraid of Nick? Did Nick physically abuse her? His mind worked overtime as he waited for her to continue. Several more questions plagued his mind, but he did not want to jump to any more conclusions.

He had always known that Dani appeared quite capable of taking care of herself. She had always been strong and stubborn to do things her way.

But now, he discovered that she also had her weakness. Just like him, she was not perfect. She was hiding a terrible past that had been creating havoc inside of her.

"I'm here. I will never leave you. I will protect you from the likes of Nick." He kept encouraging her, seeing the hesitation in her expression. He wanted her to confide in him what truly happened with her relationship with Nick.

Hearing her tell him about how Nick had manipulated her life according to his satisfaction made him want to strangle him in his sleep. Give him the taste of his own medicine.

"When I discovered that she was sleeping with my friend, that was the time that I decided to end my relationship with him." She disclosed with him.

The heaviness in her heart was still there, not because she still loved Nick, but the damage he had caused was still raw in her mind. It was as if she could not move on, remembering the shame and humiliation she felt.

She longed to cut the chain that bound her to her past and her association with Nick. She wanted to get away from it all, to find herself released from the pain.

"What about the dream? What was it all about?" He knew that there was more to the story than she was telling him. He had to know everything before he decided on what to do with the information.

"I discovered them in bed together in his apartment before our wedding, talking about how he was only using me. The only reason he was marrying me was because of my money." She painfully spoke up her unpleasant memory.

She recalled the agony of standing outside that door, listening to their laughter. The way they talked about their relationship, years of love that she devoted to him like it was nothing but a big joke to him.

"What happened next?" He knew that sharing her dreadful past would never be easy for her, but it was a necessary evil she had to go through for the healing to follow.

He gathered that sharing something weighing heavily on her heart would lighten the burden she was feeling. He could carry some of that load for her and help her deal with it.

"He told Cassie that he never loved me, and no man would want someone like me." She had to pause because what she was about to say next was very difficult for her to share.

"He had to force himself to kiss me and make love with me because I was never good in bed. He said that all I could do was f\*cking vanilla." Remembering every word that Nick said that day.

Finally, she was entrusting with Alex, the darkest secret she had locked at the deepest corner of her mind.

It was an insecurity that was not easy to admit. The shame enclosed with it was enough to destroy Dani's confidence in her ability to build a real relationship. The fear of rejection had prevented her from pursuing a more serious relationship.

She suddenly felt Alex stiffened beside him. His hands balled up at her side. He tried to hide it from her, but she sensed it. He was also greatly affected by her revelations.

"You know that none of that is true, right?" He said as calmly as he could muster. "Nick was a bastard and a liar. He never deserved your love."

It took all his control not to run out of the door of their room. Then, he would haunt Nick down and beat him to a pulp. He finally discovered how Nick had broken her with his lies.

He now understood why she was not confident with her sexuality despite her strong personality. He could see how Nick had destroyed her by cheating, exploiting her, and degrading her.

"I know now. You make me believe in myself." She swiftly took in a large amount of air and released it simultaneously with all her sorrows.

She slightly felt a weight in her shoulders lightened up. Alex's support gave her the courage to open up to him and help her eased the burden she carried in her heart for a long time.

It was hard for her to admit to him her weaknesses, but she knew that he was the only one who could heal her completely. He was not an enemy but someone she was willing to trust with her life.

"Because you are a great person. Intelligent, beautiful in the inside, as well as the outside." He pointed to her face and in her heart. "Another thing." He added.

He figured that it was not about him. It was all about Dani and her feelings. He had to be careful to consider what she needed and not what he felt he had to do. To help her, he needed her to trust him even more now that she revealed her inner secrets.

He laid on the bed and pulled her to him until she straddled him on the bed. He stared into her eyes and started to wipe the tears that were still visible on her face.

"What is it?" She asked as her fears and insecurities slowly subsided, as excitement slowly took over.

She knew that getting over what Nick did to her would never be easy. It would probably take a lot of time. But with Alex at her side, she felt that she could do it. She had high hope that she could love and be happy again with Alex. Someday.

"Never believed Nick. Trust me." He held out his hands and moved her hair away from her face. He wanted to see her beautiful face. "You are absolutely great in bed." He pulled her to him until her lips covered his.

Suddenly everything was quite clear to him. The day he first met her at the bar. Why she got drunk that day? Why she had to prove to herself that she could be wild in bed? It was all a way to disprove Nick's claim.

She was not after the one-night stand, but only to cleanse herself of what Nick had done to her. It all suddenly made sense to him. She was the innocent girl he had seen that night.

He was not wrong with his first impression of her. His instinct to protect her from the predators that were around her had been accurate.

He was glad that he was the one who took her home before she went with somebody else. All of a sudden, he was thanking fate for letting their path cross at the bar. Then again, when their eyes met again at the elevator.

"Remember that you are one of a heck of a woman. Anybody who would end up marrying you is one hell of a lucky man." He pulled her even closer to him, wanting to feel every inch of her.

He found himself thinking if he would be the lucky guy who would put a ring on her finger and be his wife. Honestly, the thought was starting to grow on him.

Every minute he thought about it, the idea of marrying her became more appealing to him. But could he actually go through with it and marry her?

"Thank you for listening to me." It was more than she could ask from him.

"Thanks for trusting me." He knew listening to her was not enough. He needed to do something more.

He was not going to allow Nick to continue to ruin her life. He would put a stop to him. He would make Nick pay for what he did to her. And put an end to his plans.



He figured that her past relationship with that scumbag had been rough, but he did not know the extent of it before. But judging from the way it affected her now, he surmised that it had been worse than he initially thought.

It was transparent that she had been a victim of abuse, not physical but emotional.