

Royal Contract 221

Chapter 221 - Another First Experience

"Wake up." He whispered as he nuzzled his nose on the side of her neck. "I have a surprise for you."

He always attempted to wake up early before her. It was not easy since she seemed to have an internal alarm clock that woke her before him. But when he did, he just enjoyed watching her sleep.

It would seem creepy, but he felt lucky to be sleeping beside her. He also liked that her face would be the first thing he perceived as he opened his eyes. To him, it was the best feeling to start his day.

"Hmmm." She responded with a moan, loving the way he was kissing her. "Why are you up so early?" She slightly complained, still feeling the heaviness of her eyes.

Probably from the restless sleep she had due to her terrible nightmare and the crying she did because of it.

"Actually, it is already mid-morning. You have been sleeping for quite some time." He corrected her.

"What?" She abruptly sat up from the bed and looked at her phone for the time.

The information suddenly woke her, and upon seeing the clock on the screen, she realized that she had overslept. It was something she had rarely done in her life.

"Why did you not wake me?" She complained, scrubbing her eyes to make her fully awake.

"Because you need your sleep. We came here so that you can also rest, and I am glad that you sleep like a baby." He informed her as he placed a single kiss on the top of her head.

"About last night." she suddenly remembered everything that happened. "I..."

"We will discuss it more later. But for now, we need to eat breakfast first. I am starving." He began to rub his stomach to make his point.

"You mean you waited for me." She looked at him with so much affection. She felt he did not have to do that. "You should have eaten and did not wait for me or wake me up earlier." She suddenly felt guilty for oversleeping.

"Hey, I wanted to wait, so it is not your fault. I enjoy it better if we eat together." He grabbed the tray that he already prepared and placed it on the bed.

"Ok." She did not want to argue with him since she knew she would not win with him anyway. "What else do you plan for us today?" She voiced out her curiosity.

"Well, I thought we could just enjoy the beach later before we leave." He informed her in between spoonful of the pancakes he prepared.

"But if you have any other suggestions, I am open to it." He offered, thinking that she might want to do something else other than lazed on the sand.

"Nah, I think that is perfect. I can use some color on my skin." She looked forward to sunbath under the sun.

Besides, she did not need them to do something else, just being with him was more than enough excitement for her.

After their breakfast, they lazed under a beach cabana, a few meters away from the waves. But Dani decided to move her lounge chair farther away from the shade, allowing the sun to graze her skin.

She wanted a slight color on her porcelain skin for a change. She liked a difference that would make her glow. She always liked the slight tinge of tan on Alex's skin, something that made him more manly and more attractive.

"Hey, can you put some lotion on my back?" She called Alex, who already had his shades on and comfortably lying on his back under the tent.

He quickly stood up and moved closer to her. "Sure." He untied her top to get more access to her skin as she laid flat on her stomach. He placed a good amount of the lotion on his hands and started rubbing her back with the creamy liquid.

"I meant to ask you this, but for a prince, why do you have slightly rough hands?" She quickly blurted out the question to satisfy her curiosity. She always wondered but always forgot to ask him about it.

Most born rich people she had the pleasure of shaking hands with usually have soft hands because they never used them with strenuous activities like hard labor.

She found herself pondering on what he did that made his hands had some callouses. Working in an office all day with paper and pens would not produce such markings on his palms.

"One day, I will show you why. But for now, I will let that be a mystery for you to speculate and solve." He smiled at her, finding it interesting that she noticed his hands.

"Really?" She abruptly slightly turned her upper body to face him. "You're not going to tell me." She gave him a stinky look, telling him that she was not happy with his decision.

"Come on. I promise you will like it. It will be my next surprise." He swore to her, then guiding her back to her previous position as he started to massage her back.

"I will look forward to that." She finally conceded, enjoying the sensation his fingers were doing on the muscles of her shoulders and back. "You keep doing that, and I might fall asleep right here."

"I won't let that happen." He announced, speaking near her ears and then tying the lace of her top again before standing up before her.

She slowly moved to a sitting position to fix her top, which was still slightly loose.

Before she knew his plans, he already picked her up from the chair and thrown her on his shoulders. He swiftly carried her like a sack of potato towards the waters.

"Oh my, put me down." She protested, slightly shocked by the suddenness of his action.

But she was more astounded as she saw a glimpse of her upper swimwear on the sand near the chair. She realized that she was hanging on Alex's shoulder, topless, exposing the upper portion of her body.

"Sure." He shouted, and the next thing she knew, they were both descending under the slightly cold water.

"Oh, you are going to pay for that." She said with a shaking breath, a trembling body, and with her arms covering her naked breast under the water.

Her body was still trying to adjust to the sudden drop in temperature of the water. But her mind was fuming, trying to find a way to get back at him.

Luckily, it was a private beach, and the next neighbor was very far away. Nobody witnessed his caveman's behavior and her embarrassment.

"Hey, I..." Then, he noticed the way her arms were protecting her body under the water. He realized then what he had done wrong. He thought that he had secured her top, but it appeared that he did not.

"Yeah, do you find this funny?" She asked, wondering if he was enjoying her dilemma.

"Nope." His expression quickly changed. "I find it very sexy." He moved closer to her and removed her hands, and placed them around his neck.

"Ah..." She was suddenly lost for words as she felt his body covered hers under the water. If she was freezing earlier, she suddenly felt like burning at his closeness.

"I just want to enjoy every minute we have left together." He continued to utter to her in that low voice of his.

"Me too." She responded, finally finding her voice in the sensation his body was creating on hers. All her earlier anger dissipated as soon as their skin connected.

"Then, let us enjoy what is left of this day before we go back to the real world." He spoke softly to her.

In a few hours, they would be leaving this paradise to face the life they left behind.

As much as he enjoyed their weekend together, he had a million things to deal with once he got back. His mind was already working on the first thing he would like to tackle.

But for now, he had to put it aside. He wished to concentrate on making their last moment together as memorable as possible.

"Ok." She agreed with his plan, wanting to see what he was up to, excited to know what he would do next.

"You are so beautiful." He uttered as he entangled his fingers on her hair, making her tilt her face until she was looking directly into his eyes.

He lowered his face to hers, claiming her waiting lips. He caressed it with so much tenderness as his hands explored her body under the water.

He believed this would be another first experience for both of them.

Chapter 222 - Positive Outlook

"I'm glad you're finally awake." Dani greeted Jacky, who just walked out of her room, still wearing her pajama.

She arrived late last night, so she was not sure if Jacky was already asleep or out. But she did not want to bother her if she was already sleeping. She just proceeded to her room and went straight to bed.

She woke up early, feeling so refresh and alive. She noticed the glow in her skin that the sun painted on her skin. She loved it. She also felt like the heaviness in her heart decreased down considerably.

"When did you arrive back?" Jacky asked, putting her hands over her mouth as she yawned.

She walked to the counter and grabbed the coffee that Dani handed her. She arrived late last night, but she was not sure if Dani was already in the house at the time.

"Alex dropped me late last night." She informed her friend, who was still struggling to wake herself up.

Jacky did not seem like she was drunk. But the dark circles around her eyes indicated that she lacked some sleep. Her slumped shoulders meant that she was going through something big.

The only few times she saw her like this was when she dumped Marcus and left Lance. What could be the reason for this disturbing expression on Jacky's face, she wondered.

"Oh, so he is not here." Jacky surmised with indifference.

She was glad because she was not in the mood for socializing so early in the morning. But she just needed some strong coffee to boost her energy back.

"Nope," Dani answered her as she circled her friend around the counter. "What's wrong?" She could not stand it anymore.

She could sense that something happened while she was away but could not exactly pinpoint what it was. But whatever it was, she had every intention of getting the truth from her.

Jacky looked at her as if sensing if she should tell her the truth or dodge her question. But she would make sure that Jacky would choose the former.

"Fine." Jacky knew that when Dani was in her lawyering mood, she would not get away from her interrogation. She might as well come clean to her before she started cross-examining her.

She planned to tell her anyway. She just hoped maybe later after work when she had thought about it more thoroughly. But telling her now might be a better idea. She might have a better insight into her situation.

"Spill it out." Dani could not stand the suspense of whatever Jacky was keeping from her.

Basing on what was happening to her this last week, she could only think of one thing that could be bothering her. But it was better to hear what she had to say compared to speculating about it.

"I think I just broke off with Sebastian last night." She blurted out before she lost the nerve to tell her friend. "We went out last night, and then..." She could not think of the right word to use for what she did.

"You what?" Dani asked, unable to understand what she just did. "I thought you liked Sebastian. I thought you were giving him a chance."

"Initially, that was the plan, but when he brought me to his house and started making out with me." She paused again, unable to continue with what she had to say.

"What happened? Did he..." She was not able to finish her question when Jacky stopped her.

"No, not that." Jacky already sensed where Dani's question was going. "He always was a perfect gentleman. It was me who had the problem."

Sebastian could never hurt a fly. If she only had a choice, she would choose him. He was kind, caring, and everything she wanted in a man. But her stupid heart did not want him. She could not lie to him and keep using him for her selfish need.

"Tell me." Dani encouraged her friend to speak up and tell her what went wrong. She wanted to be able to help her in her situation if she could.

She could see the conflict in Jacky's eyes. Whatever happened between her and Sebastian must have affected her deeply. But she would not know how to help her if she would not tell her the details.

"He was so sweet and romantic. The dinner went well, so when the night was over. We decided to go back to his place." Jacky sipped on her coffee again, hoping for another boost of courage.

"Then," Dani waited for the rest of the story.

She had more than enough time to listen to her. But she did not care if she would be late for work. She would let her friend finish her story for as long as it took.

"Once inside, I started kissing him. I was desperate to feel something for him. I wanted him to be the one." She closed her eyes, remembering every second of that particular scene.

"But disappointingly, I felt nothing for him. It was like kissing a friend. There were no fireworks." Jacky continued with her narration of the event.

She was not sure if she was making sense to her friend. But to her, it made perfect sense that they were not fated to be together. It was difficult to explain how she felt, but that was what her mind and heart concluded.

"What about him? What did he say?" She asked Jacky, who covered her face with her hands.

She could only imagine what Sebastian went through after she told him that they were through. He seemed heavily invested with her friend. She believed that he was genuinely interested in a serious relationship with Jacky.

But who was she to meddle with their affair when she could not even figure out the situation on her own? All she could do was listen and tried to be there for her friend.

"He still hoped that I would reconsider and still give him a chance." She recounted the way he proposed that they kept seeing each other. Maybe in time, she would eventually change her mind about him.

But she knew that time would not change her mind about how she felt about him. No matter how much she invested in that relationship, she knew that it would only give her the same result.

"But what is your final decision?" Dani asked, but already knowing what was on her mind.

She knew that Jacky would not keep using Sebastian by making him hope for something that had no possibility of happening. Jacky was too honest to keep Sebastian for her selfish reason.

"I told him that we have to end it." Jacky dropped her hands on the counter as she stared at her coffee in front of her.

She hardly saw a reflection on the black liquid surface, but she could only imagine her appearance at that moment and sense what she felt inside.

Her hair was all over the place, her eyes were puffy from crying, not because she loved Sebastian, but because she was another lost girl. She was a big mess.

"Don't worry. You'll get through this. You always do." Dani assured Jacky with a comforting smile, a hug, and a pat on the back.

"I hope so. I know so." She decided to change her response, hoping that a positive outlook would change her mood.

Chapter 223 - Could A Tiger Change Its Stripes?

He was already expecting that it would be a long and exhausting day even before the day started. But like any other day, work must continue, and nothing would stop him from accomplishing his plans.

"Please make sure that you have arranged everything by the time our guests arrive," Alex told his secretary as he continued to proceed into his office.

After a relaxing and enjoyable weekend with Dani, except for the part that he discovered what Nick did. He still believed that overall, the trip was a great success.

He enjoyed watching her recovered from her traumatic experience with Nick. With his help, he hoped that she would eventually learn to forget her past with Nick, and they could both continue to build new memories together.

"Sir Alex, your first appointment is already waiting outside. Should I send him in?" His secretary asked.

"Send him in after five minutes." He instructed, checking first all the pertinent matters on his desk.

He better finished his first meeting quickly so that he could prepare for his next one. He felt that he would need all his wits to deal with one of the last people he would like to see.

He questioned if he was still sane for agreeing with his father and the Council. Just like Marcus said, he was leaving himself vulnerable by allowing a snake to enter his kingdom.

The first meeting went by quickly as he had planned. Fortunately, his first investor was easy to convince. His business association with Ethan seemed to work wonders.

"Sir, I was informed by the front desk that your guests have arrived in the building. They are on their way up." His secretary informed him.

"Just send them in." He informed his secretary and closed all the files he had been working on while waiting for them.

He knew that it was too late to back out now. But Dani was right. He was the only one who could decide whether this would work or not.

A mild knock and the door opening wide indicated that his guests had arrived. At least his father and the Council agreed to several of his conditions. It was the only saving grace of this entire arrangement.

Two men, who looked like they just came out from a photoshoot, entered his office, following his secretary. Once inside, his secretary left them and closed the door.

"You have a nice office here, my beloved cousin." The man on the right was the first to talk. As expected, his cousin walked inside the room as if he owned the place, impeccably dressed for the kill.

"Alex, it is nice to see you again." This time, the other man greeted him.

Alex stood from his desk and went closer to greet them. "It is nice to see you too, Edward." He first greeted him since he was nearest to him. "Lance, I'm glad that you agreed to come over." He gave his cousins a firm handshake and a manly hug since they were family, after all.

Lance was one of the conditions he had asked from his father. He believed that Lance's presence could serve as a buffer between him and Edward. Although, he knew that his patience was long.

He offered them a sit on the couch and some drinks. It was time to discuss with them the full extent of their visit. He did not want to prolong the meeting since the sooner they accomplished their goal, the faster he could get rid of Edward from his sight.

"I gathered that the Council already discussed the purpose of your travel and your one-month stay here in this country." Alex started the conversation, observing the reaction of Edward to his words.

"Of course, we are well aware of our situation," Edward answered him as if he was the one in charge of the situation. "We are here to learn from you and follow all your rules."

He would not have agreed to this if not for his father's threat, but he would indulge him and the Council if that would mean he would get the throne at the end.

Besides, he was looking forward to seeing what his cousin had been busy with that made him turned his back on the throne. He believed that Alex had a bigger plan that he had been keeping from them.

Edward intended to figure all his secrets and divulged all of them to the Council. It would surely secure his place as the next heir to the kingdom.

"Good," Alex answered Edward, not at all convinced with his best behavior act. He could already see the wheels on his head-turning, waiting to see where he could do the most damage.

But he wished to put some sense into him, in the month they would be working together. He needed Edward to take the responsibility of being a king seriously.

It was an impossible task, but he welcomed the challenge. If it would also help his cause, he would do everything to aid him to be the next successor to the throne.

He just needed to convince the Council that Edward was a changed man. That Edward was also the rightful heir to the kingdom. That should put a stop to the Council of Elders from hounding him to take over as their king.

"Lance, I hope you did not mind if I included you in the arrangement. I think you would also benefit from this." Alex turned to his other cousin, who sat quietly, tinkering on his phone.

He knew that having him around would make working with Edward more bearable. At the same time, they could also discuss the future business arrangement they had been planning for a long time.

"I don't mind at all. I look forward to a month of exploring this beautiful and lively city." Lance told him.

He had been here several times before, but this was the first time he came here with significant purpose. Most of the time, it was more of visiting some friends or a social event.

At the same time, he also had some personal reason why coming here was perfect timing. He could use this time to visit some friends and acquaintances.

"I hope that you two would take this arrangement seriously. I don't mean partying and socializing all night. You are both needed to report to me every day." Alex reminded his two cousins.

He was putting his life and business on the line to make Edward a suitable King, fit to rule their kingdom. He planned not to fail. But as he said, it would seem to be an impossible task, but he had to try.

"I understand," Lance answered while Edward only nodded as his acknowledgment.

Lance knew that he would benefit from studying from Alex since he had achieved so much in quite a short time. He would like to learn from him so he could also apply it to their business and improve.

"I will be giving you different tasks to perform in this office to train you for your responsibilities once you go back home." Alex continued to point to them what he expected them to do while they were under his training.

"Of course, we would do what you ask of us as long as it is reasonable," Edward stated as if he was not bothered with what Alex just said.

"The Council had instructed me to give them a weekly evaluation of your progress, and hopefully, if you work hard, that would convince them that you are worth to have the kingdom." Alex gave him an ultimatum that he needed to take this seriously or else.

In truth, he could have easily said no to his father about this entire arrangement and declined the throne altogether. But there was still a tiny part of him that tried to convince him to do the right thing.

It was not only for himself but for his father, their family, and the people who were counting on them. They were the people who had become a part of his life.

"Of course, we understand." This time, it was Edward who responded.

"Then, I expect your full cooperation." He finalized the meeting.

Their kingdom all deserved a good king that would serve their interest and not his personal gain. He just hoped that he could create one in Edward. But the question was, could a tiger change its stripes?

Chapter 224 - No Culinary Genius

"Dani, where are you?" Alex spoke up as he entered her apartment.

He could not wait to share with her what happened to him today, but that could wait after dinner. What mattered at the moment was to see her. It had been a long day.

"I'm in the kitchen," Dani answered back.

She already gave Alex a key to her apartment so that he would not have the trouble of coming and going. The same goes with her in his apartment. It saved them the time of answering the door.

"I brought someone for dinner if you don't mind." Alex appeared in the kitchen with a man behind him.

Dani turned around from the food she was preparing and was surprised to see a friend. "Lance, welcome to my home." She quickly dropped the spatula in her hands and moved to greet him.

"I hope you don't mind if I drop by unannounced. Alex invited me for dinner, and I thought we were going to his apartment." Lance said as he gave her a friendly hug, as his eyes wandered around the apartment.

"Of course, I love to have you here. You are always welcome to visit any time." She said, glad to see Alex's cousin. "I hope you can appreciate my cooking." She warned him.

"I'm sure that it can't be worse than mine," Lance assured her that he was up to the challenge. Who was he to complain when he could hardly boil an egg?

He was the typical prince who did not have the opportunity to do other things except his obligation to his title. He grew up doing only manly duties, which included studying, the arts of war, sports, but nothing domesticated.

Unlike Alex, he was not allowed to study outside of their country. He never had the chance to live independently. Having this opportunity to stay here for a month to learn from Alex was a dream come true for him.

"Why don't you boys make yourself comfortable while I finish dinner?" She told them, even offering them a bottle of wine and two glasses.

"Maybe we could help." Alex offered as he moved closer to hug and kiss her.

"I have it covered." She replied after catching her breath, suddenly embarrassed at how they were behaving in front of Lance. "Sorry about that."

"I don't mind. I'm glad that my cousin met you." Lance stated as he poured the wine in the two glasses and seated on the kitchen counter. Still, his eyes occasionally looked in the other direction.

He wondered if Jacky would show up in this apartment, remembering that she mentioned she lived with Dani. He was hoping to see her.

"Why don't you two catch up while I finish this?" Alex offered as he forced Dani to sit down on one of the chairs.

"Are you looking for someone?" This time, Dani could not help but asked as she kept catching him, checking her place.

If her guess was correct, she believed that she knew what was going on. Lance might be looking for Jacky, but she was out to visit Andy.

If she had known that Lance was arriving tonight, she might have stopped Jacky from leaving. She did not even know that he was coming to the country. She believed Alex failed to mention it to her.

"Just admiring your apartment. It looks neat and beautiful." Lance was surprised by the sudden question, so he came up with his lame excuse.

"Oh, you have to thank Jacky for that. She did most of the decorations and the cleaning around here." She knew that mentioning Jacky's name would spike up his interest.

It was like hitting a bullseye. Dani saw Lance's eyes lit up in the mere mention of Jacky. She could not wait for him to follow up her statement with a question.

"Speaking of Jacky, I thought she also lives here. Where is she?" Lance asked casually, hoping that he did not appear to be too eager to see her.

Well, it was not as if he went to this part of the world only to see her. He was here to study under Alex, so he could also become a good businessman.

But it did not mean that he could not see some of his friends during off-hours. Well, Jacky became a close friend when she went to visit their country. So, he felt that it was a common courtesy to see her while he was here.

"I'm sorry, but she went out tonight." Dani felt sad that Lance missed the opportunity to see her friend.

She was curious if it was fate, making a move to allow the two to be closer, or fate just playing a wicked trick once again. Well, if she could do something about it, she wished to aid the first choice.

Jacky deserved to be happy for a change. Her life had been not easy growing up. Then, hooking up with several douchebags did not help either.

But breaking up with Sebastian was a big heartbreak for her. She felt that she already had a perfect guy. But could not seem to love him to commit to him.

"Oh, maybe I'll see her some other day," Lance said with a slight disappointment in his tone, but he still maintained a smile on his face.

But maybe she would hurry back and still see him if she called her. "Until when are you staying here?"

But then again, it was rare that she had the chance to see Andy. She did not want to interrupt their reunion tonight. Maybe there was still time for the two of them to meet again.

"A month, more or less." He was not sure of the details. He might stay longer if needed.

But his concentration was not on her question as her first statement kept replaying in his mind. Jacky was out on a date. Was this a first date? Was she serious with the guy?

"Oh, shit!" He suddenly burst out, unaware that he said it out loud.

He was so caught up with his thoughts that he found himself reacting to a situation in his mind. He was not even sure if that was the case.

"Hey. Is something wrong?" Alex, who had been busy fixing what Dani was preparing, suddenly turned to look at them.

Well, he found Dani's ways around the kitchen and how she prepared the food a bit messy. In addition, he had to fix some of the seasonings, which were either too bland or too much.

She was perfect in other things, but she still needed to work on her culinary skills. But Alex did not mind. At least Dani always tried her best to prepare something edible for him and Jacky.

"Oh, nothing. I just remembered that I forgot to do something." Lance quickly looked at them, wide-eyed as he realized what he just did.

"If it is something important, maybe I can help," Alex said, a bit concerned that he might need some help.

As his guest, he would like to assist them with their needs, even providing them their protection and apartments. Although, Edward refused the detailed security assigned to him since he brought his own.

"Don't bother. It doesn't matter. No need to trouble yourselves." Lance continued to make his excuses, chastising himself internally for his blunder.

He was not sure where those thoughts came from or why he was even thinking about it. The last time that he saw Jacky, he told himself that she was just a friend. Then, what was he doing now?

"Come on, help me prepare the table. I think Alex is about to finish my work." Dani grabbed Lance's arm and guided him to the location of the plates.

Lance helped her carry the things they would need into the table and also grabbed the wine on his way back and forth to the table. Dani had almost finished the table preparation when Alex brought the food they prepared.

"Come on, let us eat." Dani offered the first dish to Lance. She was confident that it would be good, judging by the sumptuous aroma coming from the delicious dish.

"Thanks again for having me," Lance said as they all started to dig into their food.

"Stop that. We are friends, after all. You are always welcome in my home." Dani tapped his hand on the table as she looked at Alex, who supported her words with a smile.

"I know you would love this. Dani is a superb cook." Alex said as they continued to eat.

"You can stop pretending that you did not tinker with my cooking." Dani jabbed him in the ribs, pointing out the obvious.

"Ok, you are lucky that you won't be tasting her cooking for today," Alex told Lance the truth, which earned him a glare from Dani. "What? I thought you wanted me to be honest." Alex responded to her action with his boyish grin.

"Funny, but in all honesty, this is much better." Pointing to the food in front of them. She could not help but admit that he was telling the truth.

"I'm sure that could not be that bad." Lance chuckled when he saw that Alex was making some silly sign that it was worse.

"Hey, it is not that bad." This time, she was complaining, but instead of getting mad, she could not help but laugh, realizing that it was not that good either. She had been feeding Jacky, and Alex crapped all this time.

Well, in fairness to him, his cooking was way better. It did smell great compared to when Dani was the one cooking. It would taste perfect too, judging from its appearance.

Dani knew that Alex had been subtly adjusting her cooking without telling her. She pretended not to notice, but she did not mind since, who did not want to eat good, delicious food.

She admitted that she was no culinary genius like him.

Chapter 225 - More Than Friends

"Thanks for a nice dinner and warm welcome," Lance said as he stood up from his chair. "But I think I better head back to my apartment."

He knew it was getting late, and he already gave up the idea that he would still see Jacky. She might still be having a good time with whoever she was out with tonight. But again, it was none of his business, as he kept reminding himself.

"Ok. Remember, you are always welcome to visit us anytime." Dani said with emphasis on the last word.

She was sure that Jacky would be more than happy to see him. She could already visualize her reaction once she finally saw Lance. Their reunion would be full of excitement.

"I'll take note of that," Lance said, hugging Dani again before looking at Alex. "What about you? Are you staying over?" He asked Alex.

But seeing that Alex was not showing any indication that he was about to leave, he already knew the answer. It would seem that his cousin had it bad for Dani. Alex deserved to be happy, he thought.

"Yeah, I'll just see you at the office tomorrow." He told Lance as they said their goodbyes.

As Lance walked in the hallway to the elevator, he took out his phone from his pocket to check on an incoming message. Busy with his phone, he did not notice someone was also walking on his path until he collided with her.

She, on the other hand, was rummaging at that moment on her bag for her keys. She did not see the man that was also on her path. It was too late to avoid him as they collided with one another.

"Woah!" He grumbled, instantly regaining control of his body seconds after the incident. But when he saw the girl was about to fall, his swift reflex managed to hold on to her hand and pulled her to him before she completely lost her balance. Unfortunately, she lost the handle of her bag as it toppled down on the floor.

"You should watch where you're going." She mumbled under her breathe, quickly recovering from her shock. She bent down to pick up her things, scattered on the floor.

He also bent down to help her with her things, and when he looked at her, he suddenly realized who the girl he had bumped into was. It was Jacky, but she was too upset to notice him as she gathered her things while blabbering nonsense angry words at him.

"Hey, Jacky." He finally uttered softly as not to irritate her any further. He did not mind her ire since it was also his fault. But he was glad he ran into her before he left.

This time, Jacky looked up, curious about the voice that called her name. It did sound familiar in her ears but only speculated imagining things.

But her shocked earlier when she nearly fell on the floor was nothing compared to what she felt at the moment. She had no idea how to describe the way her heart pounded and jumped almost out of her chest.

"Hi! Remember me." He asked as she remained quiet and just continued to stare at her face.

His imagination did not do her justice. He thought as he saw her more beautiful than before. Or, was he still under the spell of the shock of earlier, he shouted on his head to wake him up from his daydreaming?

"Of course, Lance, I'm sorry." She slightly stuttered in her speech. She tried to breathe steadily, regaining her composure. "Anyway, what are you doing here?" She felt her last statement sounded much better.

How could she forget him when all she could think about was him? She still could not believe that he was here. It suddenly felt like she was dreaming as she stared into his face and then into his eyes.

"No, it is entirely my fault." He immediately took the blame. He helped her up when they finally finished collecting her things. "Alex invited me for dinner. I thought this was his place. As it turned out, it is yours and Dani."

He still did not let go of her hand immediately, remembering how it felt when he held it before. He was suddenly transported to the time that they enjoyed each other's company.

"No, I meant here in the city, out of your country." Jacky tried to explain further to get rid of her confusion.

She still could not believe that he was present in front of her, staring at her as if she was a social experiment.

"Oh! You meant that. I'm here for business." Lance told her as he finally moved back a few steps away from her.

He did not want to crowd her space since she seemed to be ok now. The initial shock of seeing him again had probably worn off, he thought as he started to observe activities in her eyes again, and her body began to slightly relaxed.

To study their opponent's body language, as well as their facial expressions, were part of his combat training. It helped him to know their weaknesses, which he usually used in his business clients or competitors.

"Oh, that's good." Jacky found herself speechless and disappointed.

What was she thinking? That he would come flying to see her and proclaimed his undying love for her. That is very stupid, Jacky. Besides, she did not even know if she was in love with him.

She knew that ever since meeting him, she had constantly thought of him. They had a strong connection. She felt comfortable around him and enjoyed every moment she shared with him.

If that was the definition of love, then she might be in love with half of the men she dated, including that scumbag, Marcus. But there must be more to it than just those classifications to say that it was love.

"By the way, since I am already here. Maybe it is your turn to show me around." Lance still maintained his eyes on her face, trying to read the way her face changed from one emotion to another.

He wondered what went through her mind as she quickly masked the sadness in her eyes with a smile on her lips. "Sure. Just tell me when you are free, and I'll give you a tour of the city."

"Then, maybe I should get your number so it will be easier for us to communicate." He took out his phone and unlocked it, handing it to her. "Just pin in your number."

"Sure," Jacky complied, thinking that it was only fair that she should show him the same courtesy he did for her.

In all honesty, Jacky liked him and would jump into an opportunity to have a relationship with him. From the few times she spent time with him, she knew that he was a good catch.

But that was not the issue here. The question that plagued Jacky's mind did not have anything to do with him. Because as far as she knew, he was perfect. An ideal man for most single ladies around the world.

The problem all had to do with her. Was she worthy of a guy like him? Was she a good catch for him? She was a nobody who happened to be a friend of somebody.

That was the only common denominator of their friendship. Other than that, Jacky and Lance were a world apart. That was her opinion, and she had accepted the fact that they could not be more.

"Then, I will assume it is a date," Lance said, not meaning that they were going on a date but more of scheduling a time to spend some time together.

His eyes studied her as she returned his phone to him with her number. He knew he did like her because she was different from the women he dated before. But his situation was different.

Having girlfriends was quite common on royalties like him. But going on a serious relationship was something else. Just like what Alex had to go through, Lance also had to choose a good wife that he would have to present to her family and the Empire.

He could only marry from noble birth or the same stature as his. Jacky did not fit the criteria of that. Then, what was he doing going out with her? He had no idea.

"Of course. I'll see you for your tour." Jacky corrected him, just making sure that she was not jumping to any of her conclusions.

She abruptly cut her thoughts before it started assuming anything more. Lance was only here for business and nothing more.

She was taking him to visit some places only to return a favor. That was it.

Lance was not here to make any declaration of love. Nor, anything remotely similar to a prince, who was about to sweep her off of her feet.

"Bye, for now." Lance took her hand and placed a chaste kiss on top of her knuckles. It was more of a sign of respect rather than some romantic notion.

He moved to the elevator, leaving Jacky staring at his back. Before he rode the lift that would take him down, Jacky immediately rushed to her door, opened it, and closed it again, not wanting to see him go.

As Lance walked out of that building and rode his car, once again, he began to contemplate why he felt that way upon seeing Jacky again.? He knew that they had developed a friendship while back in his hometown.

Was he mistaken with his assessment of his feelings for her? Did it become much deeper? Did he want them to be more than friends?

Chapter 226 - In A Trance

"I thought that Edward would be your only apprentice. I did not expect to see Lance, too." Dani walked away from the sink after finishing up the cleaning.

She was indeed surprised to see Lance with Alex earlier. Well, better him than his other cousin, she thought, cringing at the thought of seeing Edward again.

But she knew that it was unavoidable. One of these days, there was every possibility that their paths might cross again one way or another. She just hoped that he would behave more appropriately the next time they met.

"I decided to make some adjustment on the arrangement with my father," Alex stated as he sat on the chair by the counter, sipping on his remaining wine as he watched her moved around the kitchen.

She insisted that she should clean up since he finished her cooking. So, he was left to sit and entertain her with things that happened at work. He welcomed the chance to relax for a change.

The entire day had been exhausting, especially when he had to deal with Edward. The last thing he wanted was to train someone who did not wish to be in the same room with him, not now or ever. But both of them were left with no other option.

"Do you think Edward would take it seriously this time? From the way you talked about him, he seems to be too much trouble." She stated her observation as she also sat down on the chair beside Alex and grabbed another glass.

In the short time that she had the displeasure of talking to Edward, she already knew that he was not the kind of man she would like to deal with. Edward reminded her so much of Nick in a way. So, it never felt right when she was talking to him.

"He had no choice but to work on improving himself. It is his right to the throne that is at stake." Alex shook his head, thinking if he was only wasting his time with this endeavor.

Could he make Edward a better person in a month, when he had his entire life to build who he was today? Did he only set himself up to fail? But he knew he had to try because his future was also at stake in this.

"But what made you believe that he would actually change and not just pretend to follow the rules? For all we know, he might be doing this only to please his father and the Council. Then afterward, he will revert to his old ways." Dani could not help but voice out her opinion on the matter.

She knew that Alex had already thought of his plans thoroughly before he had agreed to this arrangement. But she did not see a problem of pointing out some things.

Sometimes, it helped to brainstorm some ideas that could shed some light on his plans. Maybe it would further improve his current situation.

"Honestly, I don't know. There is no guarantee that Edward will suddenly find himself a reformed man. But you know I have to try, or my father and the rest of my family will never stop hounding me to take the throne." He knew that it was a tremendous risk, but it was a worthy one.

His mind had not changed between the time he left that palace and the time he had returned. Until now, he still had no plan to take the throne and the responsibility attached to it.

"Will it be that bad if you become King?" She knew she should not be asking him about this, but she wanted to learn more about the man sitting beside her. She had to learn all his secrets and all the things that made him who he was today.

"Yes and no." He answered her question, unable to give her a definite one. He contemplated on how to better explain to her his situation.

"What does that mean?" Once again, his answers created more riddles than answers.

"I know that taking over the Empire would be a piece of cake. I already trained my entire life in the ins and out of it even before I went to college here." He began with a few insights into his younger life back in his hometown.

"So, what is stopping you from taking over the kingdom?" She felt like digging into his life would lead her to more understanding of how his mind works.

"Because it is not mine. Not by birthright or my hard work to take. It felt like I am stealing it from the people who deserved it more than I do." He knew that Dani would not understand what he was talking about since she had never gone through the same thing.

"But you are not taking it from anyone. The people are giving it to you to keep it safe." She felt that was how she would interpret his situation.

"Anyway, why would I want that when I already have something here that I built with the use of my mind and my two hands." He pointed out as she automatically gazed down at his callous hands.

"Ok, if that is how you feel about it. I don't like to see you stressing yourself on a person who never deserves it in the first place." Dani could feel the tension in his movements. As if he was tired of dealing with the same issue over and over again.

"And I am glad that you are here to remind me of what is important to me." He pulled her into his lap and cradled her body with his. With her back on his front, he wrapped his arms around her and rested his chin on her shoulders.

At this point, he wanted to say that she was the most important person in his life right now. But he feared that saying it might scare her away. He still needed to figure out how he truly felt about her.

"I'm sorry if you feel pressured by my constant questions." She softly spoke as she felt his steady breathing by her neck.

She knew that this business of his father and the Council considering him as a replacement for Edward weighed heavily on him. She wished only to find some way to be there for him, to give him support.

"Don't be. I like it when..." A loud bang by the door cut short his words as someone abruptly entered the room.

They immediately stood up and rushed to the source of the noise and found Jacky staring into space, leaning her weight on the door behind her, with her bag clutched on her chest.

"Jacky, what is wrong?" She asked her as Alex also moved to her side.

But Jacky failed to respond as she continued to stare at the space in front of her. She appeared to be thinking deeply of something, but she was unaware of what was happening around her.

Dani stood in front of her friend, wondering what happened to her. But she seemed to be elsewhere as her eyes glazed with her internal thoughts. Jacky appeared to be in a trance.

Chapter 227 - Magically Clicked Into Place

"Hey, Jacky. Are you ok?" Dani quickly moved to her aide, thinking of the worse thing that could have happened to her.

She quickly checked her appearance, but she seemed to be ok. The only thing that looked out of place was her bag, which looked a bit disorganized. Was she robbed? She wondered as Jacky failed to answer her.

"Jacky?" It was Alex's turn to call out to her. He waved his hand in front of her face, but her frown suddenly shifted into a smile as if she remembered something great.

Alex moved aside, thinking that he might have made it worse as Jacky slowly moved out of the door and towards the living room. Still, failing to acknowledge their presence.

"Jacky. Are you drunk or going crazy?" This time, Dani could not take it anymore as she grabbed her friend and started shaking her by her shoulders.

She tried to smell if she reeked of alcohol, but Jacky still emanated the perfume she wore earlier. She was not drunk, but what was wrong with her.

"What?" Jacky finally responded and looked at them with that silly grin on her face. But she was still unaware of what just happened and the expression on her face.

Jacky quickly raised her brows, but when she saw the questioning look on Dani's face, Jacky realized what she had been doing for the last few minutes since she entered the apartment. She might have looked like a fool, daydreaming about a certain someone.

Then again, it was a waste of her time to think of such stupid notions when she already knew that there was no future in it. But then again, who said that dreaming was not allowed.

"You tell us. What's going on with you?" Dani examined her friend once again, snapping Jacky again from her thoughts.

Then, something clicked in her mind, figuring out what might be the reason for her friend's weird behavior. If the timing was right, she could only guess that Jacky might have run into Lance.

It was the only logical and obvious answer to her behavior right now. She was in shock, ecstatic, and then down because she saw the man that she had been dreaming of all this time.

She must be undergoing a roller coaster of emotions preventing her from comprehending what was happening at the moment. But would she admit to that? All she could do was speculate.

"I'm just happy because I saw Andy. We had so much fun together." Jacky remembered his brother and used him as an alibi.

But what she said was true. She did have a great time with Andy. It had been a while since they last saw each other, so spending a few hours with him today had been a great way to use up her spare time.

She promised him that she would come back soon to visit him or even take him out on a trip. She could not help the smile that showed again on her lips upon the thought that she would see her brother again soon.

"Oh, is that all?" Dani believed that Jacky genuinely enjoyed her time with Andy. But the way she acted earlier was not due to Andy. She was convinced about that.

It had nothing remotely anything to do with the sweet, young boy she recently visited but everything to do with a big, handsome boy who just left their apartment earlier.

"What else could there be?" Jacky said, playing innocent, not wanting to get caught as she grabbed her bag. "I am tired, so I better leave the two of you alone. I already had my dinner, so I am going straight to bed."

Jacky kissed Dani goodbye and waved to Alex as she entered her room without looking back. She finally closed the door and leaned on it. Glad that she was able to get out of there before Dani could question her any further.

Although she wished to share her feelings with Dani, she did not want to do it in the presence of Alex. That was just not right. She knew she could trust Alex, but he was still Lance's cousin.

There was every likelihood that whatever she would say in front of Alex, it might get back to Lance, by accident or whatever means. She was not about to risk her feelings to be broadcasted when she was not even sure about it.

"Oh! Think carefully about what you are doing. You can't keep breaking your heart because you might not be able to put it together again." She reminded herself as she stood in front of her vanity mirror, staring at her reflection in the mirror.

She undressed and changed into her pajamas. Lying down on her bed, she realized that whatever she felt for Lance had been more complicated than what she wanted it to be. She knew she had to put a stop to it before it eventually broke her apart.

She knew Lance was a good man, and he would never intentionally break her heart. But he never did promise her anything but friendship, and she should not be dreaming or expecting more.

"Come on. You have to stop making a fool of yourself." She told herself, suddenly thinking of Sebastian.

She knew it was the right thing to do. Break her communication with Sebastian while they were not in a deep relationship. It would only break Sebastian's heart more if she did it when they were a month or more into the relationship.

Because she knew that even if they were in a year into the relationship, she might still break it with him and destroy his heart in the process.

She did not regret doing it now while it was still raw and could still heal, instead of waiting till it was too late to fix things.

On the other side, Dani and Alex sat on the sofa, contemplating what just happened to Jacky. Dani did not wish to share her observation with Alex since she did not want him to have a manly talk with his cousin about Jacky.

That would be awkward for her friend if that happened. So, she just pretended to accept what Jacky said about Andy. "I am glad that Jacky enjoyed her time with his brother."

"Are you sure that it was really about him? Because if you ask me, I think it has Lance written all over that incident." Alex was not blind with the way the two hit it off back home.

So, he would not be surprised if they found themselves in the same situation when they reunited here. If he was right, he could assume Lance and Jacky saw each other in the corridor.

"Are you also thinking of what I am thinking?" Dani said as she eyed him with curiosity.

The smile he gave her answered her inquiry, but the question was, could she trust him with their secrets? Would sharing her information help Jacky or only worsen her situation?

"I am thinking that two people were miserable when they separated but found themselves smiling again when they saw each other again." He was not naming names, but he knew they were thinking of the same thing.

The only problem that he found himself with was if he should do anything about it. Should he and Dani meddle with their affairs or let fate take over from here? But would destiny do the right thing or only play its cruel jokes?

"Funnily, I think we have the same thoughts." She admitted as much, but would she tell him more.

"Come on. I suppose we need to sleep on it some more. Because as of now, my mind is shifting to another great idea." He said as he pulled her towards him until she was straddling him on the couch.

"I think I like the way you are thinking. But I don't deem Jacky would appreciate seeing us here again once she decided to go out of her room." Dani reminded him, thinking of their last incident.

"Fine, to the room then." He picked her up and rushed her to the room, making her hysterically laugh while he tickled her side.

"Don't you dare drop me down?" She warned him between her laughter.

She never felt more alive whenever she was with him. It seemed like that if they worked together, nothing could go wrong. As if everything they do just magically clicked into place.

Chapter 228 - The Last Person

"Sir, we traced the person who was responsible for buying a number of the shares of the company." The auditor who was in charge of the accounts told him.

"Who was it?" Nick asked as he stopped whatever he was doing to focus his attention on the man standing in front of him with the files in his hands.

He already suspected someone, but he did not expect he would eventually learn his identity this fast. He must be getting careless for him to catch him this early in the game.

Ethan was cunning, but he was not stupid. He must have something up his sleeves. He had to be more careful around him because he had suspected all the while that Ethan was not done with him yet.

He was not done with him too. His new game was only beginning, and this time he intended to win. But his thought was cut short when his man spoke the name of his secret investor.

"He is Mr. Alexander Princeton. He is the CEO of..." The man was not able to finish as he silenced him.

"I already know who he is," Nick shouted in anger as he trashed the papers in front of him, making them scattered all over the place. He was starting to know Alex too well.

He did not see that Alex would target his company and him, but he should have thought about it. From the way, Alex tried to protect Dani from him. Alex was turning out to become a pain in the ass.

First, he took a large portion of the industry upon his arrival. Second, Alex took Dani from him. Then, he learned that Alex was working with Ethan.

Now, instead of Ethan, he just found out that Alex was the one messing up with his company. He had to find out what he was doing, buying his shares. Or, was this all Ethan's doing? Are they teaming up and planning against him?

"Sir, what do you want me to do with this information?" The man remained standing as he held on to the papers.

He had worked hard for this company. Although his boss was temperamental with his dealings with his employees, he still paid well. He could not lose this job. He needed the enormous salary he was receiving for doing a magnificent job for him.

Nick remained silent for a while as if his earlier outburst had passed. He needed to keep calm so he could devise a new plan. He did not reach this point in his career to give up and lose to a man like Alex.

"Now, find out what he is doing with my shares. I want the full details. Who is working with him with this move?" He instructed his man to dig more.

He had to prepare for whatever Alex was planning. Compared to him, Alex was still a tiny fish in this big corporate world they belonged to. He believed that he could easily swallow him whole.

But with Ethan supporting him, Alex had a whale covering his back. And it would be hard for him to tackle both of them at the same time. He would need an ally that he could use against them.

"Yes, Sir." The man immediately left him to do his bidding. He knew that finding him the information he wanted would be tricky. But if he did it right, it could be rewarding.

Nick was finally left alone with his thoughts, not minding the mess he created earlier. He knew that his timeline should move up when Alex was starting to meddle with his plans.

"I'm leaving. I have an emergency. Cancel all my schedules for today." He called his secretary.

He grabbed his coat and left his office in a hurry. His secretary would deal with his office and tidied it up. As of now, it was the least of his worries. He had more important things to do.

He had to find a way to bring Alex and Ethan down and take his rightful place at the top. He was still hesitant with his plans because he knew that it was not enough to bring Ethan down. He needed more.

"Cassie, where are you?" He called her as he maneuvered his car along with the traffic.

At Cassie's house, she answered her phone after the third ring. "My house. Why?" She frowned her brows as she heard the agitation in his tone. She already knew that something happened, and it was not good.

She wondered what it was, but asking him over the phone would do her no good because it would be a futile effort. He would never divulge any information until he felt it was the right time.

"I'm coming over." He said and ended the call without even waiting for her reply.

She had planned to go out shopping, but now it would seem she had to cancel and wait for him instead. She dropped her bag back at her vanity table and checked on her appearance in the mirror.

She decided to change instead into something she knew he would like. Maybe that would make him happy and tell her everything that was bothering him. Any information he would share with her would be valuable in her plans.

"Let me see if you can resist this." She took out the new lingerie she bought the other day just for him.

It would surely make him wild just by seeing it on her. She hoped he would not tear it into pieces because of its delicate material. She did like this pair. But then again, she could always buy a new one.

She was about to get out of her room when a knock came on her front door. She wondered if that was already Nick. She did not find out if he was already near when he called.

But the soft knock did not seem to be him. He was usually impatient and demanding. So, Cassie contemplated who could be behind the door when she was not expecting anyone else.

"Wait." She shouted as she grabbed her robe and wrapped it around her, tying the belt tightly on her waist.

When she opened the door, she was indeed surprised because he was the last person she wanted to see right now.

Chapter 229 - Seeking Revenge

"Hi! Did you miss me?" He moved towards her without waiting for an invitation from her.

He grabbed her waist and pulled her closer until there was no more space separating them. She barely closed the door as he lowered his head and claimed her lips without her permission.

But as soon as his lips touched hers, she knew that she had lost, finding herself mesmerized by his kiss, trapped in his embrace. His power over her was still eminent at the way he dominated them.

"Wait!" Cassie suddenly pushed him, pulling herself away from him when she felt him starting to remove her robe. But this was not the time for their reunion.

She surely had missed him. It had been a long time since they were together, but it was a necessary sacrifice for the fulfillment of their dreams.

"What?" He asked, a bit frustrated that she pulled away from him. "I'm tired of being separated from you. You know how much I miss you. I am tired of doing this mission for you. Why can't we go away and start over somewhere else?"

He had been thinking about it for a while. It was an option that was slowly becoming a good alternative compared to the life they had now. If only he could convince her to do what he wanted.

"You know why." She answered, irritated at him as she secured her robe back together. "You can't be seen with me. You can't be here." She started to panic, realizing that Nick could arrive at any moment and catch them.

"Remind me again why we are doing this. Because my brain seems to have forgotten why we need to do this." He moved to the living room and sat on the couch, not planning to leave any time soon.

"Because I need to do this for my family. For the injustice that they had suffered under the hands of the great Ethan Hamilton." She said as if that should be enough reason for all of this.

"But they are dead. We are still alive." He told her, not at all convinced that they should continue with their plans.

"I told you I would make them pay for everything they took from my family," Cassie answered stubbornly, refusing to listen to his reason.

She was full of contempt, her hands fisted at her side, and her eyes glazed with so much fury, just thinking of the past.

"I understand that. I know I promised that I would help you achieve that. But is it not enough that you had ruined Nick and Dani's relationship? You also destroyed Dani and her father's bond." Nick said, pulling Cassie on his lap when she came close enough to his reach.

"That would never be enough. I want to see the great Ethan on his knees begging for forgiveness. I want to see him suffer just the same way as my father did." Cassie said, remembering the saddest part of her life.

She saw his father killed himself for losing everything he had worked hard for, pulling a gun on his mouth. He could not accept that he had failed as a father and a husband to provide a good life for his family.

She would never forget the hardship that she and her mother had to go through to survive. But only to end up with a mother who did not know what to do until she also succumbed to drinking and drugs, ending up dead due to an overdose.

"But we are already doing ok. You are not poor anymore. And you already have me. Why do you need to take revenge when we can both run away and have a good life together?" He could hear the plea in his voice as he tried to make her see his point of view.

He could understand the pain she was going through. They were both broken by the system when they found each other. They swore to help each other climbed out of their hell hole.

Now that they both had earned enough money, he felt that it should be enough for them to start afresh. He was tired and wanted to have a good and peaceful life with her.

"No, we are not yet through." She looked at him, trying to read his expression.

"But I think..." He wanted to tell her that he did not want to push through with their plans, but she stopped him.

"Please don't tell me that you will abandon me just like what my parents did. They just left me with all their problems on my own." She let the tears ran down her cheeks, seeing the hesitation in his eyes.

She pulled him to her, kissing him passionately, not wanting to lose the only person who truly understood who she was. She straddled him, holding on to him, afraid that he might leave her for good.

When she pulled away from their kiss and looked into his eyes, she saw the familiar love they had shared ever since they had met. He had been her protector, and she took care of him. It was a relationship of giving and take.

"I am not leaving you. I can never do that to you. But I hope that whatever you are doing is healing you and not breaking you into pieces." He looked into her eyes, making her see that her pain was also his.

"I know what I am doing. I need to do this to be whole again." She insisted as she stood firm.

"I hope you are right. Because I don't know if I can put you back together again if that ever happens." He answered her, remembering the time he first took her in his arms.

He knew that what they had was complicated. He loved Cassie with her whole heart, and he knew that she felt the same way about him. But her hatred had prevented her from having a piece of mind.

He swore to help her during those dark times so that she could finally find peace. But he was not sure anymore if what they were doing was the right thing to do. If seeking revenge was the way for her to heal.

"If you don't want to help me, then I can't stop you from leaving." She stood up from her position and walked to the door, opening it for him. "I will hate to see you go, but I will not stop you."

She loved him, but if he did not wish to help her anymore, and then she would not keep him. If she had to do her mission on her own, she would.

"I love you, and I wished you would reconsider my proposal. But if not, I am still not leaving you. I will wait for you until you wake up from this nonsense." He told her as he walked past her into the hallway without a goodbye and without looking back.

She closed the door with tears running down her cheeks. She could not stop now, not when she was so close to her victory. If it was their destiny to be together, and then she would find her way back to him.

But she would not stop just because of him from seeking revenge.

Chapter 230 - Personal Motive

She was still slumped on the couch, thinking of the man that just walked away from her. He might have said he was not leaving her. From his actions, there was a warning in the way he left.

She would not count that he could wait for her anymore. She saw in his eyes that he had enough of her plots and schemes. He was ready to move on. But she was not.

"Pull yourself together. You can do this." Cassie quickly moved to the bathroom, fixing herself.

It was the only way she could accomplish her goal. It was necessary to achieve her dream. Cassie knew that any time Nick would come knocking on her door. She did now want him to see her messy state.

She could not allow him to suspect that anything was amiss. She had to continue her charade to continue to earn his trust. He was the only key she had to get close enough to destroy Ethan and Dani.

A continuous knock on the door indicated that the man she was waiting for had finally arrived. She was glad that it took him longer than she initially thought. He did not see her other guest.

"Hi!" She said seductively as soon as she opened her door to him. He stood out there with a scowl on his face. But he lightly smiled upon seeing her only on her robe. She knew he liked surprises, and she planned to make him happy. That would earn her a reward.

When he was in an ecstatic state, he tended to talk more than he planned to share with her. That was always her goal, to extract as much information as she could for all her plans.

"You look like you are expecting company." He teased her, knowing what was hiding under that thick fabric.

He could not wait to peel it off her skin and see what surprise hid underneath it. Knowing her, she already had something planned for him, a few of the things he liked about her.

"Well, I am, but it would seem that he is not coming. What about you? Do you want to come in?" She decided to play his game.

To him, she was just a dumb bimbo that he used for sex, but for her, he was the dumb fool that she was using for her purposes. A time would come that she would dump him too.

The time for her to execute her plans would come soon enough, against them who used her family and her for their selfish needs. That would also include Nick, who never truly appreciated her.

"If you insist. I guess another man's loss, my gain." He grabbed her and pulled her closer to him as he kicked the door closed.

The movement and his words reminded her of the man who recently left. The man that she would rather be with right now. Not the man that had his arms around her.

But she quickly shoved the thought deep in the bottom of her mind. She needed her wits to deal with a man like Nick. She could not be emotional, or else she would lose in this game.

"Then, let us make sure that it is worth all your while." She pulled him further into the room until they stood in the middle of the living room.

She pushed him down on the couch and slowly took the robe off her body, making a show in front of him. She knew how he loved a tease, and that was what she was giving him.

After a few minutes of dancing, he grabbed her hand and pulled her to him, making her sit on his lap. He started toying with the fabric of her lingerie, liking the feel of it in his touch.

"Show me what you can do." He ordered her as he laid back on the back of the couch, placing his hands on both sides of the backrest.

She immediately changed position, kneeling in between his legs. She started removing his coat and tossed it on the empty chair. Then, she unbuttoned his shirt and kissed the skin exposed to her touch.

Slowly she went down, unbuckling his belt and working on removing his pants. She knew his favorite, and she would make sure that she performed her best.

"Is this to your liking?" She asked, giving everything she got to satisfy his cravings.

"Yes." He groaned as he felt the buildup in his body.

When he could not take it anymore, he grabbed her arms and pulled her to him, making her straddle him. He wanted the gratification that only she could give him at the moment.

He knew he could always go elsewhere, but at the moment, he needed something from her too. Then again, he was glad that he decided to come here today. It was like hitting two birds with one stone.

After they had their release, both laid down on the couch, with their bodies quite satiated. However, their minds had a different story as both planned their next move.

"So, what went wrong today?" She placed her well-manicured hands on his chest and played with the curls that spread on his skin.

"What made you think that something went wrong?" He asked, curious about her question.

"Because you are here during office hours." She stated her observation.

"Well, you are starting to get me too well." He was not sure if that was a good thing or not.

Not now, that he just saw someone he had seen before leave the building. It was too much of a coincidence because it was not the first time he saw him in the same proximity with Cassie.

But he would give her a small benefit of a doubt, but it did not mean that he would not look into her. If he found out that she was double-crossing him and working with someone else, he guaranteed she would regret the day she decided to betray him.

"It is my job to know what you like and dislike. It is the only way I can give you everything you want and need." She had to appear convincing. He could never suspect that she was only using him.

Soon, she will be free from him. She just had to push through a little more. She would finally achieve justice for what happened to her and her family.

"Well. let me tell you something that happened today." He had to feed her something. A lie that he could use to catch her loyalty to him.

He wished that she was not lying to him, that she was working with him and not against him. It would be such a waste to lose someone like her if he learned that she had a connection with that man.

"I just found out that a shipment would happen in the docks. One of Alex's shipping lines planned to smuggle something big." He opened the topic.

"What do we have to do with Alex?" She asked, not following his line of thought.

She seemed to be genuinely disinterested with Alex, he thought. "He is now working with Ethan on a project." Nick continued with his statement.

The way her eyes lit up at the mention of Ethan's name confirmed that she was planning something more than she was willing to share with him.

He knew that she was helping him against them because he asked her, too, but he did not realize that she also had a personal motive.