

Royal Contract 251

Chapter 251 - Sea Of Truths And Lies

"Mom, I'll try to drop by and visit as soon as I am free." She told her mom on the line. Her mom explained what the doctors said about her father's condition, which was all good news.

Although there was no guarantee that he would not have an attack again, the doctors gave them some precautionary measures to prevent it from happening again.

The doctors also suggested some further follow-up consultations to monitor her father's heart activity and if he would need additional interventions.

"Well, I need to go, Mom. I love you." She said to her, knowing she still had a lot of works to do and she could not chitchat with her all day.

Hearing that her father was going to be ok was a huge relief. Now, she could focus again on her work and let the doctors managed her father's health.

At least her mom was there to take care of him and made sure that he followed all the doctors prescribed. Her father could be a stubborn mule, but she could not blame him. She was just the same.

"Dani, Mr. Brown wants you in his office." Jacky walked into her room, dropping some folders on her table.

Jacky did not talk much to the man. Mr. Brown was one of the senior partners in the firm. Although he was not named partner, David and Evan respected him as an equal. He did bring a lot of clients to the firm.

This company was more like a young firm, so basically, most of the lawyers were not aged, but more liked driven by their experience. He was still young, single like David and Evan, but she found him a bit odd.

"As in right now?" She asked since papers still swamped her desk, which needed her attention.

Since she had started working with this firm, she rarely had the pleasure of being in the same room with Mr. Brown. He was a great litigator, but there was no opportunity to work with him on the same case.

For him to summon her to his office was a big break. It was a chance to learn from another mind. She remembered that he was the first to welcome her in this office with a wide smile.

"Well, he asks if you are in a meeting, and I said no," Jacky answered her, meaning she had no excuse to delay or postpone seeing him.

"Ok. Give me a minute." She quickly read the last page of the contract and put notes on it, and closed it.

She did not want to go back and review it just because she forgot what she was doing before she left it. But it appeared she had no choice but to leave the rest of her work for the meantime.

She quickly grabbed her notepad and made her way to Mr. Brown's office, located on the upper floors, together with the other senior partners. If she worked hard enough, maybe she would also find her name written in one of those doors that she passed by.

His secretary quickly showed her inside his office, where she found him waiting. "Please sit down." He offered when she entered the door.

"Gerald, it was nice to see you again." She greeted, hoping that she sounded professional.

Besides David and Evans, she rarely worked with the Senior Partners of the firm. Mostly, it was a group effort on a case and not one on one with them.

She was not intimidated by them. On the other hand, she was excited to pick their mind and learned from the best. She would always welcome any help she could get.

"The pleasure is mine. Anyway, you might be wondering why I ask for you specifically." Gerald walked towards where she sat and occupied the other seat beside her.

He knew that she was still not a litigator, but everyone had to start somewhere. He already saw what she could do, following her progress in the company.

He was confident that she could easily handle this case that she was about to assign to her. But it would require her to work hard on it and fight it in court. That was if she would accept the challenge.

"Yes, why did you ask for me?" She did wonder about it.

She could only think of one reason. Gerald might need some assistance on a case. But there were many more qualified associates that he could solicit help from other than her.

However, who was she to complain when she was the one benefitting from it. She would grab the opportunity to work on a case, especially when it came from him. She was sure to learn a lot.

"Well, I have a client who needs our services. I thought of you because I think you will be up to the challenge of spreading your wings. Figuratively, speaking." He explained further the case that he was handling, observing her reaction.

He was also aware of her background, her advocate of defending the weak against the tyrant in this world. But he also knew the condition of her job in this company.

She would need to represent their clients, too, in exchange for her pro bono cases. So, he wondered how she would handle this situation.

"So, are you willing to work with me and this case?" Gerald asked her as he stood up from his seat and walked back to his table.

He was not going to force her to work with him in this case. That was up to her if she was willing to get her hands in this situation. But it would be a shame if she would decline it.

He was looking forward to working with her, and he felt this was the perfect opportunity to do so. He placed a file in front of him, waiting for her to pick it up.

She took the file and opened it, checking the contents. Then, she closed it again after skimming on it.

"Will you give me until tomorrow to decide on it?" She asked, keeping the file in her hands.

"Sure. You have until lunch to decide." Gerald announced to her. "But I hope you will reconsider it. It is a good chance for you to learn more." He said, hoping that she would take on the case.

He was looking forward to working with her. He found her very beautiful and alluring, but what made her special was her brain. He already experienced how her mind worked, and he was interested to know more.

He wanted to get to know her too, not just as a colleague but on a personal level. He knew that she was already engaged to one of their clients, who said they could not be friends.

"Ok, then. I'll give you my answers by tomorrow." She stood up from her seat and thanked him.

She walked out of the door, glad that Gerald felt she was ready to tackle a case this big. Still, she needed to review the case before she could decide if it would compromise her integrity.

She knew that gaining experience from this case would also help her in the long run. But she still needed to be careful not to get lost in the sea of truths and lies and the line between failure and success.

Chapter 252 - Error Of His Ways

Marcus had been in a meeting since this afternoon. The discussion was going in circles, but no resolution was in sight. Anyway, he felt that it was useless to continue anymore.

"I think we have nothing else to discuss for now." Marcus closed the files in his hands. They could continue the discussion tomorrow when everyone had time to think about it better.

It had been a long day, and all he wanted to do was unwind. But the problem was, his wingman had been missing since he started dating Dani. Now, he usually flew solo or with Evan. David had been usually absent too.

He was not sure why, but going out on dates was also becoming boring without Alex around. Or was it caused by something else that was missing in his life?

"Let's just resume tomorrow." He quickly dismissed the idea in his mind, just like the people starting to vacate his office.

Finally, alone again in his office, he started to check on his calendar for possible activities he could do. He needed a distraction from his unwanted thoughts. But his attention was disrupted by a knock on the door.

"Marcus, your secretary, was not around, so I let myself in if you don't mind." A man stood by the door, waiting for him to invite him in.

If he was slightly not in the mood earlier, now, he was irritated. He was the last person he wanted to see today, but he still maintained a smile on his face.

He was a good man, reminding himself. He did not have anything against him as a person. Besides, he was Alex's cousin and close friend.

But he could not explain why he was not comfortable dealing with him. Well, he might, but he did not want to consider that. It was childish, and he believed that it was not even possible.

"Yes, Lance, come in. Alex already notified me that you are coming to see me." Marcus said as he gestured for his visitor to take the seat in front of his desk.

He stood and walked to the other side of his room. "Do you want a drink?" He grabbed two glasses, offering one as a friendly gesture. He certainly needed something strong alcoholic drink to relieve some of his stress.

As he mentioned earlier, he did not have any grudge against the guy since he had not done anything wrong against him. But it did not mean that he was comfortable hanging around him.

"Sure." Lance took the drink, not wanting to offend his host. "Well, Alex informed me that I will be working under you for the next week. I was wondering if there won't be any problem with us working together."

Lance was quite aware of Marcus' past involvement with Jacky. He felt that it might have some conflict if they were going to be working together. He was unaware of what kind of relationship the two of them had, but he knew Jacky was devastated by their breakup.

After his visit earlier and his discovery about Jacky's feelings for him, he began to contemplate if he should also pursue his feelings for her. It had been an idea that had him on edge all day.

"Why would there be any problem with us working together?" Now, that piqued Marcus' interest. He poured another glass for him and offered again, but Lance declined this time.

As much as he was not interested in working with Lance, he still maintained a professional stand when he was around. Now, he wondered what was going through Lance's mind.

What made him think that working with him would be a problem? Was he sending that kind of vibe to him, or did Alex mentioned something to him to make him assumed that?

"I only wish to clear the air between us. I don't want any problem between us since you are Alex's best friend and partner in this company." Lance said, hoping that he would not cause any problem for his cousin.

"I'm sure that we have nothing to clear between us," Marcus stated, still puzzled by his statement. Although, he could think of one reason for this unusual circumstance.

"If this had anything to do with Jacky. You can calm down because what we had is over." Marcus could see what was going through Lance's mind.

He would not be this good in his job if he could not easily read a man's expression. Anyway, it was all over his face that all of this was about her. He had heard that Lance had started seeing her again.

Was that an issue with him? Well, as far as he knew, it was none of his business who Jacky dated. If Lance wanted to see her, then that was not his problem anymore.

"Then, you heard that I am dating her again," Lance stated, wanting to see his reaction.

He admitted that when he first saw Jacky, he felt the connection between them. Then, he started liking her more every time they were together. The more he spent time with her, his feelings for her grew more.

But if he was going to pursue her, he wanted to make sure that he was not stepping on anyone's shoes. As he said, Marcus' was Alex's best friend. He did not want to cause any rift between them.

"Yes, but as I said, her dating had nothing to do with me." Marcus reiterated, wanting the issue between him and Jacky over.

Admittedly, he did realize the mistake and the pain he caused to Jacky's feelings. Until now, he regretted those moments. But he could not take it back. It was over, and he already knew Jacky would never forgive him. He moved on, believing that there was no more room for him in Jacky's heart.

Now, he was not about to stand against Jacky's happiness if Lance was willing to give it to her. Who was he to ruin Jacky's life once again? It was the last thing he wanted.

"Then, I guess I am glad to hear that." Lance did not come here to ask Marcus for permission to date Jacky. But he needed to see if Marcus still had any feelings for her. Now, all he needed to know was what Jacky felt for Marcus.

Because once he courted Jacky, it would be him against his family and their ways. He had to be sure that Jacky was ready to fight with him for that. He could not go into this relationship blinded by love.

There were many things at stake. Unlike Alex's relationship with Dani, theirs would not be easy. Was he ready to explore and take a risk with Jacky?

"Then, don't let me stop you. As I said, what we had is over." Marcus expressed with confidence.

He had no business messing with Jacky's life after what he did to her. He knew he had no right to show his face again in front of her. After weeks of mulling over his actions, he understood that he made the mistake of hurting her.

And now, all he could do was let her go as he realized the error of his ways.

Chapter 253 - Game Of Words

"What are you doing here?" Dani asked, surprised to see Alex standing by the door.

It was already an hour past her official working time, but she was still reviewing the case that Gerald gave him. She was hoping to stay a little longer, so she could give him the answer regarding his offer by tomorrow.

She was halfway through the report, but she would need probably another hour or two to grasp the essence of the case. But so far, she found it intriguing.

"I was waiting for your call. I texted you about thirty minutes ago, but you did not answer.." Alex said as he walked further inside her office, not waiting for her to invite him inside.

He went straight ahead to her table and grabbed the phone on the corner, looking neglected. As he suspected, his messages, calls, and several ones from other people remained untouched.

He also noticed that it was in silent mode again. He knew that Dani was not intentionally ignoring his call, but she had this bad habit of turning her ringing tone off.

"You did." This time, she felt guilty that she had disregarded her phone again. She placed it temporarily in silent mode while she reviewed some of her files earlier but forgot again to set it back to ring tone.

She did not like to lose her concentration when she was working on several depositions. Usually, Jacky informed her of her calls if it was an emergency. But Jacky already left earlier because she had a date.

"Yeah!" He placed the phone back on the table and faced her. "But anyway, aren't you finished yet?" He glanced at the stack of papers still scattered on her desk.

"I was planning to work overtime on this because you told me earlier that you will be late." She did remember talking to him about getting a late dinner instead. He had a last-minute conference call from an important client.

"I was, but we finished earlier. That was why I was calling." He tapped his fingers on the phone for emphasis. "What is this?" He curiously asked since Dani was working on it.

He started picking up a few files and stumbled on something that caught his eyes, noticing a name on the list. He wondered why it looked familiar, but he was unsure where he had seen or heard it before.

He never liked snooping around other people's work unless it involved his business. But this one had intrigued him for an unknown reason. But he placed the idea at the back of his mind, classifying it as insignificant.

"Just a new file that I am reviewing for Mr. Brown." She said, shrugging her shoulders as if it was no big deal. She gathered the papers and closed the file, seeing that Alex was more appealing than her work.

She would have told him more, but she had to abide by their confidentiality clause with most of her cases. She could only share a few facts that were already public knowledge.

"Well, then, can I sweep you off of your feet and whisk you away into my chariot." He took her hand and pulled her until she stood up in front of him, almost leaning close to him.

He could not let her work herself to death. If he had his way, she never had to work a day in her life. But he knew that would never make her happy.

So, he would settle to stealing her once in a while from her precious job. He believed that was the only way to get his fair share of her time. For now, he would be content with that.

"Do you mean your pumpkin carriage?" She teased him as she leaned forward to touch his nose with her finger, loving the way he stared at her. She always found herself lost in those eyes of his.

She appreciated that Alex always tried to be patient with her. It was rare to find a man who could put up with her shortcomings. She believed that men like him were an exception.

"I stand corrected. Well, as you can see, there is a time limit before fairy godmother reverts us all to a mouse, so I suggest we start moving before it strikes twelve." He answered her back, wearing that boyish smile that she loved so much.

He could see that she already forgot about work. Well, it was indeed his intention. He believed that one of them should remind the other when they were both overworking themselves.

"Oh, is that so? We should hurry then." She extracted herself away from him to arrange her things.

Before she could move away, he grabbed her by the waist. In one swift movement, she was back in his arms again, with his mouth covering hers in one sweet kiss.

The kiss started innocent, slow, and tender, but as a few seconds passed, it gradually escalated, increasing in its intensity until both of them were left panting for air.

"I thought we were in a hurry." She asked him, still catching her breath in the process.

She was not complaining as she remained enveloped in his warm embrace. She was suddenly in no rush to get away from him as she longed for the kiss to continue.

"Well, I thought that we should kiss first before we run out of time." He teased her as he gave her a light peck on her lips once again.

"Well, if you keep doing that, then both of us won't be going anywhere. Your pumpkin carriage would turn into soup, and we..." She tapped on her lips, pretending to think.

"We have to go." He finished for her. He finally said the magic word as he held her shoulder and turned her around before spanking her lightly on the butt to make her move. "Go get your things."

"No, you did not just spank me." She slightly twisted her head to him and gave him a hard stare. "I'll get you next time." She warned him.

Instead of retaliating, she started fixing her things and gathering the papers on her desk. She still planned to take the files and reviewed them later or early in the morning before work.

Well, she had until tomorrow to give Gerald an answer, she thought as she dropped the file in her bag and walked back towards her man, who patiently waited.

He only gave her his boyish grin, charming her with his smile. "Come on. You can spank me all you want if you hurry up." He pulled her towards the door, not giving her time to answer him back.

"What are your plans for tonight, my prince?" She suddenly asked, wondering why they were in a hurry. "Should I be wearing my glass slipper?" But knowing him, she would never get an answer.

Her mind still occasionally went back to her work, but she quickly shoved it at the back of her consciousness. In the meantime, she promised that her time should be solely for her man.

She learned that they both enjoyed their little banters, referring to old fairy tales and royalties altogether. It was funny and adorable at the same time, a game of words they love to play.

Chapter 254 - Embrace The Future

He drove them to their destination, still keeping his plan as a surprise. He always enjoyed seeing Dani's face lit up when she liked what he came up with every time they went out.

"So, you will be working on a case with Gerald." He had no idea why he suddenly asked the question.

Personally, and when it came to business, he did not have any connection with Gerald. There was just no opportunity for him to use his expertise. Marcus, David, and Evan were a good enough team for him.

But he had heard of his accomplishment and the many good things he had done with his career. David and Evan trusted him and treated him as equals because he was that good.

"I am still thinking about it. Gerald offered me this case, but I need to finish reviewing it before I make my decision.." She related to him.

She was comfortable talking to Alex about her job. He was a good listener and most times gave good advice. Although he never once insisted on his opinion concerning her work.

"Well, I don't know the guy personally, but his reputation with his job is pretty impressive," Alex admitted. "I won't say working with him is such a good idea, but it is not bad either."

He would not blame Dani if she decided to work with him in this case. He believed, for her career, it would be a good move for Dani to learn from a good mentor. And if rumors were correct, Gerald is one of the best to teach her besides David and Evan.

But he knew working on such cases would require her to work closely with him. He knew he could trust Dani regarding her working with the opposite sex, but could he trust the guy.

"So, you don't mind if I proceed with this case." She looked at him from her angle, studying him as he drove with ease through the mild traffic.

She was slightly bothered about the time she would be spending in this case if she did agree to work on it. Cases like this would require time and devotion, which she felt would affect her time spent with Alex.

But from what she had analyzed so far of the case, she already knew it was an opportunity hard to pass up. She believed that she could learn more from experienced compared to just sitting around, studying some files.

"I know that even before I met you, you already have a career that you want to pursue. I will never stand in the way of that as long as it is what you want." Alex explained what he thought of the idea.

"But I will say that it will suck that you will be busy most of the time that you are handling that case." Alex glanced in her direction. "It would mean less time for me." He pretended to be melancholy about their situation.

"Stop it. I have not said yes to it anyway." She punched him in his arms, making him smile at the process.

But she was glad that they were able to talk about it. She never wanted to keep anything from Alex. As much as possible, she preferred to discuss matters with him even if they disagreed about it.

At least, they would know the sentiment of the other. Eventually, find a way to resolve the matter amicably. It was what she had seen with her parents and would very much intend to do with their relationship.

"Fine, I was telling the truth. But honestly, if you think this will help with your career. Then, go for it." He would be vigilant about watching over her. Only to make sure that she would always be safe.

He kept insisting that it was because he was concerned for her safety at all times. He had nothing against her working with another man. But it did not mean that he was comfortable with it.

"We'll see." She answered him, shrugging her shoulder since she still had made any decision about it.

She had to check the remaining reports and weighed their pros and cons. It would affect her other cases and her personal life. But if it was worth all of that, then maybe she might take the offer.

"Anyway, why do I seem to know where we are going?" She asked, realizing that the direction where they were going was becoming very familiar.

Setting aside the case, she finally understood his surprise as her focus shifted to the road they were heading. How could she forget this place when she grew up in this part all her young life.

"Because your mom called me earlier and begged me to make you visit them. I will not do this if I don't think that you miss them too." Alex said as he grabbed her hand and kissed it before going back to driving.

"You did this for Mom." She felt teary-eyed hearing the thoughtfulness of the man sitting beside her.

After talking to her mom earlier, she felt guilty for her lack of time to visit her father, who was sick and hospitalized. But now, Alex made it possible for her to see her parents and spent some time with them.

In a few days, she knew that her time would be more hectic if she decided to take on the case. Then, there was the fundraising this weekend. Even if she was surprised by it, she still appreciated the intention of Alex to help.

"Well, I also did it for you." He knew that Dani sometimes acted tough around people, showing everyone that she could control her emotions. But he knew her even better than anyone else.

In a short time, he knew her. He discovered she had a heart that was pure and kind. Despite her status in life, she still defended what was right from wrong, regardless of who was on the other side of it.

She was a beautiful person, inside and out. She deserved to be loved, cared for, and protected, and he was more than willing to tackle the task.

"Thanks. I love it." At the moment, she could only express in words how much she appreciated his actions. But later, she intended to do more. That was the least she could do.

All her young life, she believed that she had a perfect life until it was all shattered with the hard reality that it was not real. Now, she lived her life fighting for her place in this world.

"I love you." He answered her with a sweet smile on his lips.

He was happy to see that his surprise brought a beautiful smile to her face. It was the only reward he looked forward to whenever he planned to do something for her. He never wanted anything else.

"I love you, too." She replied to him, feeling an overwhelming sensation in her chest as she watched him as they slowly approached their destination.

Maybe she truly deserved a man like him. After all that happened to her, she finally believed that it was time to embrace the future set for her.

Chapter 255 - Going Down In History

She arrived early at home, still debating whether it was wise to go on a date with Lance. She felt she deserved to be happy, and Lance seemed to be the guy who could make her feel that way.

However, she also believed that there was a big chance that she was setting herself with a big heartbreak. Even worse than what she had with Marcus.

But was she willing to let the opportunity of love go to waste because she was afraid of being hurt again? Or was it better to have love and be hurt than to not love at all?

"What are you going to do?" She asked as she stared at herself in the mirror. She already had her dress on, and all she had to do left was to put on some light makeup, then she was good to go.

She could remember all those stories about an ordinary girl and a rich guy who entered a serious relationship. Most of them usually had the same conclusion. It just did not end well for the girl.

Could she expect that hers would be different? What was so special about her that she could believe she was the exception? Or was she only setting herself for the pain of going down the same fate?

If she did not follow what her feelings dictated right now, technically, she already broke her heart in the process. So, would it make sense to take the risk instead and hoped that it would have a different outcome?

"If Dani is sitting right now in your place, you know what you are going to tell her. Go out and have fun and stop thinking of the future." She muttered to the reflection staring directly at her.

Well, she knew she would say that to her friend. However, applying her words to her present situation was a different story. She could talk about it all night, but it would not change anything.

Lance was no ordinary guy. He was gorgeous, rich, and a prince. Lance belonged to a kingdom with a big palace and many servants. He was capable of having everything he wanted with a snap of his finger.

All the while, she was not her friend, Dani. She was not rich and not a princess. She only had this apartment that Dani was kind enough to share with her. And she had to work hard to get, barely, what she wanted.

"But you are just going out with him. It is only for a few bits of fun. It is not as if he plans to offer you more. Just enjoy the moment." She tried to convince herself.

He was perfect, and she had no business messing with him. But would it be a nice story to tell her future kids and grandkids that she once loved a prince? And it was the best feeling in the world.

That was it. It was an experience that not many women would ever get to experience. She was lucky, at least, to be able to tell the tale. She started fixing her makeup, just putting some light tinge on her face. She did not want to look like she was trying too hard to land the prince. She just desired to enjoy the night and maybe maintain their friendship.

"Wait." She shouted when she finally heard the signal that he was already at the door.

She grabbed her bag and sprinted to the door. Then, once she reached it, she took a deep breath and calmed herself down. She did not need to appear too eager to their date.

She promised that once she opened that door, she would do her best to enjoy it and not think of anything else but the fun they would be having. The future would be the future no matter what happened tonight.

"Hi," Lance muttered, whistling at what he saw once she presented herself.

Jacky was beautiful, but not the kind that you would see in the magazine. She was not perfect that she would stand out and command the crowd. But her beauty had been both inside and out.

Her physical beauty did attract him to her initially, but her personality had what hooked him in, line and sinker. He could not do anything about it but see where this would lead them.

"Shall we go?" She asked as she was about to close the door, but he stopped her by tapping her shoulder and pointing directly to her toes.

Yes, her toes, which to her embarrassment was exposed to Lance's view because she was not wearing any shoes. There went her calm and collected demeanor as she hastened back inside to wear them this time.

"Oh my! I'm so..." She was saying, returning to his side, but he placed a finger on her lips to silence her.

She felt so humiliated for making a big blunder like that. Who forgot to wear their shoes on a date? Only she, because she was overly obsessing about things that should not matter.

"It's ok. I find it adorable." He told her. "I think your toes are cute."

He was not lying, finding her feet and toes quite dainty. But everything about her, according to his taste, was adorable. He enjoyed looking at her and discovering new things about her, including her toes.

"Well, at least I made you smile. It is a good start." She finally admitted as she started laughing, and not long, he laughed with her.

She already said that nothing was supposed to ruin this night. She would make all the bad things great because it was a memory she wished to keep.

"You certainly did. I hope you can keep up." He was already looking forward to a fun night with Jacky.

Somehow, he felt the change in her compared to their last time together. It felt like the girl he met back home was back, the carefree and happy girl who made everything he did more exciting.

"Well, count on it." She whispered near his ears as they stood side by side inside the lift. "But be warned. You might enjoy it too much. You might start missing me." She did not know where that came from, but it felt right to voice out her feelings.

This night was going down in history, at least, her life story.

Chapter 256 - Right Man For The Role

"I heard that your parents are coming to town to attend the charity ball," Laura said excitedly, looking forward to seeing Katherine again.

They were gathered at the large dining area, having their dinner. Laura was so ecstatic when Alex agreed to bring Dani home for tonight, she quickly arranged for an intimate dinner for all of them.

"Yes, I am glad that they decided to come," Alex replied to Laura, also looking forward that he would be seeing his parents again.

Although he sometimes did not see eye to eye with his father, he still did miss them, especially his mother. In addition, he also would like his father to see what he had accomplished in the life he chose.

"It is also a good thing because we seriously need to talk about your wedding arrangements," Laura told both of them. "If we will let the two of you take over the preparation, we don't think there will be any wedding happening soon."

She only wanted the best for her daughter. After all, she was their only daughter.. For her, she deserved every good thing that this life could offer.

"Mom, we are both busy with our work. Besides, you and Katherine are more qualified to handle such matter." Dani made her excuse, not wanting to discuss the wedding anymore, and put Alex on the spot.

After her last conversation about marriage with him, the topic never did come up again. She still had no idea what would happen with the wedding now that they were in a relationship.

She was doubtful if she was ready to say I do and engage herself in a binding commitment. She believed she was still young and still had a great career ahead of her.

There were many excuses why she should not marry yet, but only one reason why she should. Although she loved Alex, was that enough justification to get married.

Then again, maybe she was only hesitant about the notion of marriage because Alex had yet to open the topic for discussion. She was afraid that she might be the only one seriously thinking about it.

"I agree with Dani. I think you and Mom will do better in handling the preparation." Alex agreed, acknowledging Dani at his side.

He moved his hands under the table and grabbed hers. He could sense that the topic was a bit uncomfortable for Dani. But talking about marriage was not the right time. Well, not in front of her parents anyway.

He had thought about it since they had discussed it before but never had the chance to continue. It was just that they both got distracted with her father's incident, then the pile of work. He could not find the right timing yet.

"Enough with the wedding. I am sure my lovely wife and your mother are doing a great job." Ethan interrupted the conversation and looked directly at Alex. "If you have time, maybe we can discuss something while you are here."

He had been confined in his house like a prisoner by his wife. He could not work and take part in his business until the doctors gave him clearance to work.

"Ethan, if..." Laura was about to scold her husband, but he stopped her.

"Alex and I will only have a stress-free conversation about sports and the weather. While you two bond and have your girly talks." Ethan waved his hand as if to make a point.

For once, he wanted to get away from Laura. He felt that she was overdoing it, but he had no way to disappoint her. So, for a few minutes, he needed an escape.

"Don't worry, Laura. I will make sure that he will have a relaxing time while with me." Alex assured her, seeing the conflict between the couple.

He might not understand yet how this couple's minds worked, being married as long as they had. But he was enjoying how this lovely couple handled their situation.

They also reminded him of his parents, who did have their fair share of arguments. But they always managed to resolve them through a compromise.

"Well, I am glad that I can depend on you. I feel like I am raising another child with his stubbornness," Laura exasperatedly stated as she served the desserts.

She loved her husband, and losing him was not an option. She still wanted to grow old with him. Have their grandchildren running around the house and spoiled them rotten.

She would do anything to prolong his life, even if it meant locking him in this house and preventing him from dealing with his company. He already worked himself to his limits, almost causing his life. She believed that was enough. Now, it was time that he devoted himself to his health and how he would live long.

"You are just overreacting, but I promise I will only enjoy my time talking with Alex." Ethan even put his hand to his heart to swear to his wife.

He did enjoy his time with the few times he had the pleasure of having Alex around. He was intelligent, witty, and charming, a combination of the making of a great man.

He could already see a great future ahead of him. In truth, he could see himself in him. If he had a son, he wished it would be Alex. Luckily, that would soon come true once he married Dani.

"Mom, come on. I want to tell you something." Dani diverted her mother's attention with her stories, allowing her father to escape.

The two men made their excuse to go to her father's study, while Dani encouraged her mother to show her the newly landscaped garden.

"Alex is a godsend. I am so happy that you are marrying him." Laura muttered as they moved towards the table at the center of the lawn. "I can sense that he is a good man, unlike..."

She could not say the name of that man. He was a despicable person. She was glad that Ethan discovered what kind of man he was before their daughter married him.

"Yes, Mom. Alex is very different from Nick. Alex is perfect." Dani dreamily said as she laid her head on her mother's shoulder.

She suddenly felt like a child again, confessing to her mother her deepest feelings, such as her crush, first kiss, and the many things she had gone through in life.

How she wished that she could be young again and tell her everything she was feeling. But it was not that simple anymore. There were things she had to keep to herself and handle on her own.

"Do you love him? I meant do you feel like your world will collapse if you lose him. Like nothing else matters when he is with you." Laura started stroking her hair as if she was her baby girl again.

She missed this so much, but she knew that her baby girl had grown up. She might not be their princess anymore, but at least, she found her prince instead.

"I do. I love Alex so much." It was the first time she admitted it out loud to her mother, and it felt so good because it was not a lie.

She knew if anyone could understand what she felt, it would be her mother who loved her father so much. She wanted a man that she could share that kind of love.

For the first time, she suddenly felt confident that Alex was the right man for the role.

Chapter 257 - Meaning Of Perfection

"I'm counting on it." He whispered back as he placed his hands on her waist to assist her out of the elevator, answering the challenge in her voice.

He liked the way he felt when his hand made contact with her body. It suddenly felt right that he was holding her, in a way, protecting her. It suddenly seemed that he was just exactly where he should be.

"Where are we going anyway?" She asked as they settled into his car. She did not care where they went. Anywhere was good as long as it was with him.

As she said earlier, she planned to make the most of this night, whether this be the first or the last time they were together. She was not going to sulk and think of tomorrow, but only the moment.

"Oh, I think a nice dinner.. Then maybe you'd show me around." Lance said as he maneuvered on the street with ease as if he had lived here all his life.

He could see her from his peripheral vision glancing at him occasionally. He wondered what was going through her mind as she kept quiet, looking outside her window.

"Oh, let me see." She appeared to contemplate the many options. What could be interesting with a man like him? She kept thinking as she stared at nothing.

Then, her eyes landed on the man that had his eyes on the road. He drove with precision, not speedily due to the light traffic but with smooth precision.

But then again, he was a race car driver. Driving anywhere might be a piece of cake for him, like everything else about him. He was a man who could have anything he wanted in life.

After several more moments, they were seated in a fine restaurant, eating some delicious meal and laughing at what Lance had said. To her, it was all great. A night she wished to remember.

"Ok. Your turn. What is your favorite place to go to when you are happy?" Lance asked as he sipped his wine.

There were still a lot of things he wished to know about her. He believed that what he knew about her so far barely scratched the surface of her true identity.

"I..." She tapped on the table with her fingernails as she thought of his question but failed to think of one. "I don't think I have one."

She never really went to any particular place to celebrate nor when she was sad either. It just did not occur to her to go anywhere, except probably in her room.

"What about a favorite thing to do when you are not working?" Lance found it unusual that someone like her did not go out that much.

He always saw Jacky as a bubbly person who was so alive and so much fun. He suspected that she must have a lot of friends besides Dani and would always be out with them.

"I don't know if you will believe me, but I don't go out much. I prefer to stay at home and locked myself in my room." Jacky confided in him.

She was a homebody, but she also liked going out. But going out on her own was boring. The only fun she had in the past was dating. But she gave up that life. So, she had preferred her solitude.

"Well, I am indeed surprised, but I do believe you." Lance was not expecting her answer, but he was more perplexed with his reaction.

It was as if he was happy that she did not go out much or party all night long as he suspected before. He liked what he was hearing about her.

The idea of showing her around to places she had not been was becoming more appealing to him. It meant more time spent with her.

A prospect that he was slowly looking forward to more and more.

"Well, there was a time in my life that I did enjoy the fast pace, the nightlife, and the fun of being young in this city." She began to tell him. "But Dani showed me a different life. A more peaceful one."

She felt like he deserved the truth about her. Not the illusion that she might have painted to him when she hid her past from him. If he would eventually like her, he had to know all her secrets.

"I..." Lance was about to react to her statement, but she continued before he could say more.

"I dated a lot of men, hoping to find the right one. But they all ended up wanting one thing from me. After the fun was over, it was over." She uttered hastily, not wanting her voice to fail her.

She was uncertain where all her courage to tell him everything was coming from, but she knew she had to do it. She could not live in a lie and make him believe that she was something else.

That was not fair to him, and she feared that if he found that out from somewhere else, and then he would hate her. She could not live with herself if that happened.

"I don't think that would matter much now, since as you said, it had been in the past." Lance took her hand, hoping to assure her that he understood.

He did not expect to hear that, but did that change his perception of her. He doubted it. They all had a past that they were not proud of, and the fact that she was strong enough to share hers was truly admirable.

"But it should." She insisted, knowing that what she did in the past had consequences that would follow her until the end, maybe even to her next life.

"But if you think differently about me, I don't blame you, but that is who I was." She was not looking for his pity, but she wanted to come clean.

"I don't care about it." He finally concluded, pulling her closer to him on their joined seat and cradling her in his arms.

From the moment he met her, she had changed his belief about perfection. It was not how many things one had accomplished in life. Nor did it have anything to do with how beautiful one looked physically. It should go beyond that.

Knowing what she went through in her young life and surviving it, owning to her many mistakes, and trying to stand up with her head still held high. To him, that should be the meaning of perfection.

Chapter 258 - No Words To Express

"Are you alright?" He walked towards her and stood just behind her back, staring at her in the reflection on the mirror. "What seems to be the problem? Come on. Hit me with your best shot." He teased her, making her smile a bit.

He rubbed her shoulders, hoping to ease whatever was bothering her. Well, he could see it in her expression, the heaviness in her eyes. As if there was a burden she was carrying.

He noticed it earlier during the car ride, but she was trying so hard to appear ecstatic about seeing her parents that he did not want to burst her bubbles.

"It is nothing." She answered him with a forced smile.

She was brushing her hair as she prepared for bed.. It had been a long day at work, then a surprising night with her parents. She knew she was exhausted, but she was feeling too anxious to sleep yet.

She did not want to dampen his spirits by unloading on him another of her problems. It would seem that all she had been doing since they started this relationship.

"Stop that. I know it is something." He lowered his head until they were eye level on the mirror and gazed at her real hard.

"What?" She uttered with a questioning look at him, not wanting to be intimidated by his stare.

"Stop hiding it from me." He said as he pulled her to her feet and made her faced him. "When your forehead creased like that, and your lips started smiling like you are constipated, then it is something."

"Really?" She could not help but genuinely smile at his choice of words to describe her facial expression. "You're going for constipated."

She did not anticipate that from him. Well, as he said before, he was terrible with his jokes and delivery. But he certainly did make her smile which was in a way very effective.

"What is wrong with that?" He jokingly asked, which only made her smile more as she buried her face in his chest, hiding her face from his further scrutiny. "But it did work." He whispered in her ears.

He continued to watch her in the mirror, knowing what was going through her mind. But he would not push her to tell him until she was ready. He could only stay at her side and serve as her support.

"Yeah, it did. Thanks." She finally looked back at his face, which was full of love and concern.

Once again, she questions when did she become so lucky in love. Because as far as she remembered, she sucked at it. But who was she to complain when it presently made her so happy.

She would take what the world wanted to give her and make the most of it. At least, that was what she believed, that the world was finally on her side. In her love life, at least, she thought.

"Now, let me see what else I can do for you." He pulled her towards the bed and gently laid her down.

He did not follow her immediately, wanting to watch her as she stared back at him. He saw a beautiful woman lying down, waiting for him. But more than that, he saw the love that was overflowing in her eyes.

He knew that once he laid beside her. He would also feel the quickening of her heart and her heavy breathing, like the way he was feeling at the moment just looking at her.

"Why are you still standing there?" She asked as she crawled further up the bed and laid on the pillows by the headboard, waiting for him to follow. She wiggled her fingers at him. "I want you."

He just smiled, suddenly reminding him again of a particular scene in the past. It was not exactly like this, but it had some similarities. They had come a long way since that day.

The first time he craved to touch her and only wished to possess her. During that time, there was no love involved, just pure lust and carnal desires. It was not love at first sight but more of the yearning of the flesh.

"I want you too." He finally answered her back as he started climbing the bed and moving towards her position.

The scene might be familiar, but the feeling was different because at this moment, what was about to happen was intertwined with emotions. It was still full of desire but mixed with so much love.

When his hands made contact with her skin, he knew that sparked flew all over the room, and their touch ignited the fire in them. Only their satisfaction could extinguish the flame that was consuming both of them.

"You make me so complete. I need you in my life." He whispered in between their ragged breaths.

His lips continued their exploration on her lips, cheeks, neck, and even further down her body, making her moaned for more. He loved it when she was in excruciating pleasure.

Knowing that he could give her intense satisfaction was more than enough motivation for him to continue to do more. He would make sure that she reached her peak before he found his.

As they finally found their release, both laid entwined in each other's arms. With contented smiles on their lips, they waited for their hearts to calm a bit and their breathing to slow down.

She changed her position on the bed until her head laid on his chest. Hearing his heartbeat and feeling his chest as it went up and down, she suddenly felt the stillness she had been searching for since she left her parent's house.

She tilted her chin and looked directly at his face. His eyes were closed, but she sensed that he was still awake. "I found out that my dad refused to undergo a much-needed operation."

If her father did not take the operation, what would happen to him. If he did, would he survive it? Was she ready to lose him?

She never felt this frightened in her entire life. She did lose a few people that she loved in this lifetime, but this one was different.

It was like her fear gripped her heart and was about to tear it apart. She was suddenly lost and had no words to express how she felt inside.

Chapter 259 - Between Two Options

Dani told him what was bothering her, but only in a whisper, not wanting to wake him up if it turned out that he was already sleeping. Saying it out loud and hearing it coming from her voice suddenly made the impact much intense than she felt before.

She felt a tear drop down her cheeks without any warning. The brave front she had been wearing the entire ride home had finally crumbled to pieces. She could not stop the flood gates from bursting anymore as she buried her face back on his chest.

"I'm afraid of what is going to happen to him." She said between her sobs as she remembered her mother's defeated expression.

She comforted her mom, showing her that they could be strong amid their fear. But she was not sure if she believed what she said to her mom. In truth, she was not that confident.

She suddenly regretted their fights.. The time that she had spent away from her family. She wanted the lost time that she wasted being mad at her father.

"I know," Alex answered with no sign of surprise in his tone. He enveloped her firmly around his body and kept his lips on her hair, wanting to give her solace.

He had known about it because that was what Ethan had discussed with him in his study. Like any human being, Ethan was also afraid to take the surgery. To go under meant a fifty-fifty chance of survival.

He was not ready to leave his family, in case it was not successful. Well, not until he had some guarantee that his wife and especially his only daughter was in good hands.

"How did you know?" His words made her look up to him again. Focusing her eyes on him was not easy when tears clouded her vision, but she wanted to see his face. When she finally saw him, he did not seem fazed by the news.

Dani was surprised that he knew about it when she only learned of it when her mom told her in the garden. She wondered how long ago he had known and why he had not told her about it.

She wanted to confront his father about it, but her mother made her promise to give her father a few days to think about it. After all, he should be resting and not taking on another stressful situation.

Although taking the operation should be his priority, she and her mother knew that they could never force him to do it. He was stubborn like her. As much as it was a negative quality, it made them who they were, strong and independent.

"Your father mentioned it to me while we were in his study." He finally told her. He did promise that he would never lie to her.

But at the moment, he needed to be careful of what he might say.

He did promise Ethan to keep some of their conversations private between only the two of them.

He wondered which had more weight, keeping Ethan's secret or telling Dani everything. But he would cross that bridge when it was necessary. Presently, he would only say what he felt was needed.

He knew that it would not have been easy for Ethan to talk to him, let alone trust him. After Nick's stunt, the trust must be hard to come by to Ethan. He did not want to break his trust.

"Oh! He was more comfortable talking to you about it than me." She suddenly remembered the barrier that she set between her and her father.

She used to be his confidant. Now, he could not even tell her that he was seriously ill. She blamed herself for their current situation, wondering if there was a chance for her to remedy their relationship.

She could recall how they were inseparable when she was young. How her father taught her how to ride her first bike, then eventually drive her first car. They loved to share ice cream while they watched some horror movies. He was her world back then.

"No. That is not it." He quickly retorted, not wanting her to feel left out. He could already see her struggle as she wrapped her mind to the entire situation. "Hey, you should not feel like that." He made her tilt her face to him and stare at her eyes.

He was not fully aware of the story behind the conflict between Dani and her father. All he knew was the rumor he had heard. Something happened in the past that brought a rift in their relationship.

But despite that, they still managed to maintain a father and daughter relationship but not probably the same way as before. He could sense that something was holding Dani back from bonding with her father once again.

"Then, how should I feel? I knew I ruined my relationship with my father. Now, I may lose him for good, and I don't know how to fix what I have broken." She felt so disappointed with herself.

For the first time, she felt like she made a huge mistake when she judged her father without giving him a chance to explain himself. She did not even try to see it from his point of view.

What if she only saw it in the negative light, with her mind tinted with Nick's betrayal? She began to doubt her earlier assumption that her father might have done something unforgivable.

"Hey, stop thinking like that. Ethan is strong, and he will survive this." He wanted to reassure her, but they both knew that he could not predict the future. Anything could happen, and there was nothing he could do about it.

"But you don't know that. Dad could die if he doesn't get the operation, but he could also die on the table." She felt so conflicted with the circumstance but could do nothing to help her father. She hated feeling hopeless.

His father was one of the richest men in this city, if not the world. He had many resources at his disposal, but the sad truth was. None of those could guarantee to prolong his life.

"This is what I know. Ethan would be fighting for his life because of you and your mom. He planned to have the operation scheduled as soon as he was ready." Alex said to her.

That was not exactly what they had talked about during their private meeting, but that was what would happen. Alex would ensure that because he did not like seeing Dani suffering because Ethan refused to be rational.

She had been through a lot in her life. Now was not the time for her to go through another heartache because of someone she loved. If he had to do something about it, he would.

"Did he say that? He agreed to have the operation." His words brought back hope in her heart that maybe her father might have a chance.

"Yes." He knew that he was lying, but he had no option. There were some exceptions to him keeping secrets from her, and this was one of them.

He would do what he could, anything to bring back the smile on Dani's lips. He would agree with whatever Ethan wanted if it meant Dani's happiness.

If left with choosing between two options, he would pick Dani all the time.

Chapter 260 - Actions Speak Louder Than Words

She looked at him from her seat, avoiding seeming like she was staring. She did like gazing at him from her angle. He was so charming, like the way a prince should be.

"Are you sure you don't want to go anywhere else?" He asked as they cruised down the street towards her apartment.

He was hoping that he could spend more time with her. He was looking forward to a night where she would show him around town. Instead, she asked him to bring her home.

"I'm sorry, but I don't feel like painting the town red." She smiled at him, pointing to her red stiletto shoes. "But I will offer you wine and a movie if you like to join me."

This time, she turned to him, watching his reaction to her offer.. Just like him, she did not wish for the night to end, but for some reason, going out and sharing him with other people did not seem romantic with her.

Not that she was planning to seduce him. She just wanted some alone time with him where they could share a quiet moment. Maybe talking about life in general or just watching the movie silently.

"That seems more appealing. Don't mind if I do." He accepted anything as long as it would keep him at her side.

He seemed desperate, but somehow it was what he felt, especially when he thought that the night was about to end. He was not even sure if she planned to go out with him again.

He was finding it hard to read her after she told him about her past. But he never cared about it since fate must have dealt her with a hard life, but how she rose above it. That was more relevant.

"Then, prepare to cry because I save a good movie I want to watch." She teased him, knowing how men never like dramatic scenes.

Most of them would look for actions, sports, and anything other than romantic and crying scenes. But Jacky did remember Marcus, watching with her whatever she wanted.

She quickly erased her memory of him. Well, if that was even possible, instead, she placed it at the back of her consciousness, hoping to bury it at the deepest portion of her mind.

"You can't scare me with that. My sister already made me endure such torture." He jokingly said, but something was missing in his smile.

He never mentioned his sister to her before because he did not feel its relevance. But her name just rushed out as if it was necessary to include her in the discussion.

"Well, she is one wise girl. I can already tell." She uttered with a bit of surprise and curiosity. It never occurred to her that he might have siblings.

She thought that just like Alex, he would be an only child. But she was glad to hear that he had someone to share his childhood with, not just his cousins and friends.

She always wanted a big family, not having a real one. She always dreamed of kids running around when she finally settled down with a husband. But it would only happen if she found a man to love her.

"Well, she was. She was younger than me but always had been mature for her age. Sometimes, I believed she was born in a young body but an old mind." He stated as he recalled his sister's face.

He did miss her. Every year that he visited her, he wished that their memories and her face would always remain in his mind. But some of it was slowly fading away.

But he knew that his love for her would never, ever change. He might forget most of what they shared growing up, but the feeling of her next to him would always stay in his heart.

She noticed the way he talked about his sister in the past tense. She knew that she understood him correctly, based on the solemn expression on his face.

"What happened to her?" She finally asked, knowing that her presumption was correct. "But you don't have to answer me. It is none of my business."

She suddenly realized that it was not the time to be nosy about his life. It was not a topic that she should be prying about him. It might be a sensitive subject that he did not want to discuss further.

"She died because of a tumor in her brain five years ago. She was still very young, but there was nothing we could do." He smiled at her, glancing at her as he continued to drive them home.

After that, both fell into silence as he relived the past, and she processed his revelation. She extended her hand on his, which rested on the steering wheel, and gave it a slight squeeze.

She might never understand the feeling of loss because she was yet to lose a loved one. Her parents never counted since she never met them anyway. But she knew the feeling of having a sibling.

After twenty minutes, he sat in her living room with a glass of wine, waiting for the movie to start. She took the remote and sat beside him, making herself comfortable as she turned on the screen.

"I'm not good at talking about Sydney. She was my baby sister. Losing her had been hard for us. But I am glad that I was able to share that with you." He held her hand as he stared at her face.

He moved closer to her on the couch until they were inches apart. He could see the many questions swirling in her eyes but was afraid to ask. He could see that she was holding back.

Maybe someday, they could talk about all of this with ease, but as for now, he was thankful that she kept quiet about it. It was as if she sensed that he was not ready to tell her.

Finally, he pulled her in his arms, letting her body rest on his as they began to watch the movie. It was not romantic, but it was comforting.

Getting to know someone did not always have to involve talking. Sometimes even silent actions speak louder than words.