

## **Royal Contract 261**

### **Chapter 261 - Exacting Revenge**

"Are you sure that we are in the right place?" He asked his assistant, who coordinated with his prospected new business associate.

Nick repeated the question when they parked in a dark alley in the dimly lit corner of the street. He would never set foot in this place if not for this important meeting.

It was dirty and smelly, but he knew the relevance of the secretive meeting place. His enemies were less likely to look in a place like this and learned of his plans.

While their enemies were busy, it was the perfect time to make new allies to help with his cause. And who was he to turn down a possible solution to his problem offered in a silver platter?

"It is the address written on the note." His assistant said, even his bodyguards agreed that they were in the right place.

It was relatively late, and the street was empty, except for them and the cats that littered the trash on the streets.

It just rained, so the narrow path had several potholes of water scattered on the ground. With the battered buildings surrounding the area, Nick was starting to have second thoughts.

But his eagerness to meet this mystery man was weighing heavily on his curiosity. He would like to hear what he had to say. Then, he would judge it if it would be beneficial for him.

"Fine." He covered his nose as the stench of the trash on the corner began to penetrate his nasal cavity. He was rich. He never did have a reason to come to places like this.

His assistant and bodyguards surrounded him as they knocked on a metal door. A slit opened, and his assistant dictated a password given to him earlier. After a few seconds, the door opened, revealing a large bouncer inside.

As they entered another narrower path, the noise of the place started to indicate that it was an underground club. In the end, a big door guarded by another man opened it for them, showing them what they already suspected.

"Now what." He asked, checking the high-end casino and strip club behind the disguise of an old building.

He had been in such places, but not this one. He never even knew this place existed until now. He wondered who operated this joint. From his point of view, it looked like it was doing well.

He did not wait long as a female hostess, clad in a few strips of clothing, guided him and his companion inside. As they passed by the tables full of men and women enjoying the night, his eyes scanned the place for the man that he was supposed to meet.

His men were ready for any eventuality. He was not taking his chances if ever this man tried to double-cross him. He knew that he did not reach his position in the industry without making some enemies in the process.

At the other end, they climb the balcony where the VIPs had a special place, an exclusive portion only for the wealthy and powerful.

"Please sit down." The beautiful hostess indicated the available seats. "Your highness would be with you in a short while. But for now, let me offer you our best drink on the house."

She started pouring him a scotch and placed it on his hand. "If you need anything else, just tell Ginger and Ester." The hostess pointed to the two ladies who sat beside him. "They would take care of all your needs for the night."

The hostess excused herself and went down and disappeared from his sight. Although he was thrilled by the two ladies on either side of him, he knew he had still yet to meet the man who sent for him.

His assistant and bodyguards stood at his back as they all waited for the man in question. He wondered who he was and what kind of information or help he was willing to give.

But judging from the welcome wagon he just received so far, he was not a man that he could easily manipulate. The man wanted to show him that he had the upper hand.

But the word your highness was not lost in him. It was a clue that he was meeting someone who had a relationship with his enemy, which made the situation more interesting.

"So, do you girls have any idea who I am meeting today?" He grabbed the one on his left and pulled her closer to his side as he nuzzled his nose on her neck, just below her ears.

"I'm sorry, I don't." The girl answered him as her hands moved to caress his chest.

"What about you?" He asked the other girl, doing the same thing he did with the first one. But he also got the same answer.

He decided to watch out for whoever was going near his table. As the clock ticked, so was his patience. He might want to know what this man had to offer, but he never was good at waiting.

At least the two girls were managing to entertain him, but if in a few more minutes, his mystery man still had not shown up. He could kiss this meeting goodbye. He was not waiting like a fool because of his ego trip.

Then, he saw a man. He did look familiar. He believed he had seen him before, but not sure where. From the way he carried himself and the elegance of his walk, he was not just anybody.

"I'm sorry if I was a bit late. But I hope that my friends here made your wait more comfortable." The man indicated to the two ladies still wrapped around in his hands.

The newcomer extended his hand for him to shake, but Nick only nodded to him, not planning to give him the satisfaction after making him wait.

"I will shake your hand, but my hands are busy at the moment," Nick answered back to the man who was yet to introduce himself to him.

It was now his turn to show him that he was also somebody this man should not be messing around with because he did not like the game he was playing.

"I see. Well, I understand." The man took the opposite seat from Nick and crossed his legs as he laid comfortably on the couch.

In a few seconds, another two ladies joined him on his seat. One of the girls handed him his drink, while the other just sat closer to him. But he never laid his hand on them, keeping his free hand on his lap.

"Sir, I believe he is Prince Edward, a cousin of Alexander Princeton." His assistant interrupted him as he whispered the new information he just gathered.

He dismissed his assistant, glad that he now knew who the man was in front of him. He had heard of the name and the stories surrounding the relationship of the cousins.

Now, he was more intrigued by the veracity of the rumors. If there was any truth to that, then this prince might have a good use for him. This alliance might prove to be fruitful in the end.

But be warned, he could be cruel to his enemies but a very generous friend to his allies. But if his allies betrayed him, then nothing would stop him from exacting revenge.

## **Chapter 262 - Hundred Percent A Game**

Her day could not be worse than what was about to happen next.

She could already sense the chaos as soon as she woke up this morning.

Then, she forgot something in her apartment, an important file, so she was now rushing back home before going to her office. Alex offered to drive her, but she knew he also had a lot on his plate today.

"Jacky, try to entertain my first client if he came in early. I think I am going to be late." She muttered on the phone as she checked the time on her watch.

"Dance, sing, just think of something." She exasperatedly told her, not caring if the other people on the lift looked at her as if she had gone insane. She was frustrated because her morning did not start right.

But it was not exactly the real reason behind her mood. She was still thinking of what happened last night, her discovery of her father's health condition. It still weighed heavily on her.

As she went out of the lift, she rummaged in her bag for her key when someone called out her name. When she looked up, it was Troy, probably on his way to his jog, judging from his outfit.

"Dani, do you have some time to talk?" Troy walked with her as she continued to move towards her door.

"I am such in a big hurry. I can't even look at you properly." She said as she rushed to unlock her door.  
"I'm sorry."

"What about some other time?" Troy insisted as he waited outside her door.

She looked at him, unable to close the door on him without giving him an answer. She knew that her schedule was tight with all the things that were happening.

"I'll think of something. I will let you know." She finally said to him, which he rewarded with a smile.

"That's good enough," Troy replied as he started to move away from her door. "Thanks." Then, he was gone.

She closed the door and rushed to get the things she would need for the day. She worked on this case the other night and forgot to bring it back to the office. Now, she was rushing to present it to her client.

Once in her office, she found that Jacky was serving some coffee to her clients. She was late, but only by a few minutes, so that should not be too much of a problem.

"Good morning, gentlemen," Dani greeted the two men sitting on her visitor's chair and smiled at Jacky as she excused herself from the room.

She walked towards her table and took out the contracts relevant to their case. The two gentlemen did not mind that she was late but was anxious to finish the negotiation.

After an hour of explaining back and forth, the two men finally reached a compromise agreement between their conflicts of interest. After signing the contracts, with her job done, the two men left her office.

"Jacky, I need a coffee, please, and something to eat." In her haste earlier and with her mood, she hardly had breakfast. Now, her stomach was grumbling in protest.

After a few minutes, she consumed two donuts and a cup of coffee which was quite satisfying. Now, she could proceed to her following schedule without any problems.

But her mind still lingered on her father's condition, but she kept pushing it aside, knowing that she had other pressing matters to attend to at any moment now.

"Where are the papers for my next meeting?" She shouted at Jacky as she started searching for the papers on her desk but could not find them.

"It is here. You asked me to have it photocopied earlier." Jacky reminded her, placing the files on her desk. "What is wrong with you? You seem to be out of whack today."

Dani had always been a person who was always in control. A woman who was well put together. So, seeing her disoriented and a bit crazy was a bit alarming.

She could already sense that something was wrong with her. She could see that she did not seem broken, but she was undoubtedly off today.

"It is Dad. I thought that when they sent him out of the hospital, he was already ok. But it was not the case. He badly needs an operation but refuses to have it." Dani confided to her friend.

She started telling her about their dinner at her parent's house. The way she enjoyed her night together with her parents and Alex only to find out, in the end, the bad news.

"What are you planning now?" Jacky asked, concerned for her friend and with her father. Ethan had always been kind to her. She would not want any harm to happen to him.

"Alex said that he had talked to my dad and assured me that he would take the operation. Dad was only preparing for it." She related what Alex explained to her.

But she still felt unconvinced with his explanation. As if there was something wrong with it. But she was not about to start doubting Alex. If that was what he said, then it was what it was.

"Then, you have nothing to worry about, I guess. Alex is probably right. Your dad is just preparing himself for it. Getting operated on will surely not be easy." Jacky could only imagine the pain, especially after the medicines wore off.

During those times, she was young. There were so many instances that their foster parents would hit them. But not enough to cause life-threatening injuries, but enough to inflict so much pain.

They never landed in the hospital, her and some of the other kids, but she could remember the pain of the bruises and wounds they had to self-medicate.

"I'm sorry to interrupt your mood, but I think your next meeting is already outside." Jacky paused her thoughts as she heard someone outside.

"Ok. Send the next client in..." She looked at her watch, contemplating the time. "Five minutes." She gathered her papers and reviewed her next case before facing her new client.

She did not want to face someone in need with a clouded perception and an inability to analyze rationally. The only way to serve them was to be in her best performance.

She needed to be in her hundred percent A game before she could handle her case, assuring her clients that it was her best effort.

### **Chapter 263 - Potential Client**

"Get me a meeting with Ethan today." He ordered his secretary as he started checking his schedule for the day. "Thanks, Alona."

He could see that his plate was fully packed today with meetings with investors and projects updates, among other things. But he needed to squeeze in seeing Ethan regarding an urgent matter.

He could not wait until tonight because he wanted an answer at the earliest possible time. He suddenly remembered what he said to Dani. He could not disappoint her.

"I'll get to it right away," Alona answered him but remained standing in front of his desk. "Someone is here to see you. He is insisting, but he has no appointment."

She usually did not allow visitors who had no business in their office, especially without a relevant reason. But instinct had taught her that this one might have something that her boss might need.

She had been an assistant for a long time. When her former boss sold this company to Alex, she thought she would be out on the street. But Alex agreed to keep her because of her skills and knowledge of this job.

"Who is it?" He asked, skimming through the files piled up on his table. He had a lot of workloads until the weekend, and then there was the charity ball. His parents were also arriving soon.

"He said his name was Ms. Stockholm. You don't know him yet, but his business is urgent." Alona explained as she looked at his boss. "He said that it had something to do with Nickolas Travis."

Now, she knew she had captured her boss' attention when he finally looked up from his papers. She had been privy to the things happening around the office.

She handled some of the communications between her boss and Marcus. But she signed a confidentiality agreement, so she knew she could not tell anyone about the companies or her boss' secret.

Not that she planned to betray his trust in her since he genuinely liked Alex. He was a great boss and a good person. He reminded her of her former boss that helped her family a lot during her time of need.

Hearing Nick's name certainly sparked his interest in this man. But how sure was he that he could rely on his information? "Do you have any background about him?"

He was sure that Alona had already dug up some details about their visitor. Basic information that could help him assessed the intention of this man. Whether he should accept whatever he had to offer him.

"Yes, of course. Mr. Stockholm had a legitimate business here in the city. It is small but thriving. He had no prior criminal records or suspected of any crimes on record." She started giving him details of what she found on the internet and through their sources.

"So, he is clean," Alex mumbled as he contemplated on what he just learned. "But he may be just good at hiding his dirty works. Anyway, send him in."

He wanted to get the meeting over with since he was also curious about what made him come to his office. He had not heard his name before, but it did not mean that this man could not be dangerous. He still needed to proceed with caution.

"I'm sorry to disrupt your busy day, but my business is crucial, and I must discuss it with you immediately." The man who introduced himself as Mr. Stockholm said.

"Please take a seat." He offered, studying the man under his gaze.

A man, maybe in his late thirty came in with a friendly smile on his face. He still looked young and seemed like an authentic businessman who could blend with ease in a crowd.

But he was not easily fooled by men like him. He could sense that something was different in his stance. The way he scrutinized his office with his subtle gaze indicated that he was also studying him.

He was not just a small-time player, wanting to get his attention for a business proposal pitch. He was a cunning man in disguise. Now, his interest only increased more as he pondered on what he came here to do.

"Thanks." He took the seat offered to him and made himself comfortable. "I guess you are wondering what I am doing here, probably thinking I am a spy sent by your enemies."

On the other hand, Alex just sat straight in his chair and stared at him, waiting for him to continue. He was not going to respond to him until he figured out what else he had to say.

"Well, I won't discount that. Better be cautious than sorry." Mr. Stockholm continued. "But you can call me Lord. I know. But what can I do when my mom thought it was a great name." He slightly chuckled at his joke.

But when Alex failed to see it as funny, he continued. "Anyway, I had been working for Mr. Hamilton for a long time. But since he is a bit indisposed at the moment, I thought that you might be interested in some facts."

He had a legitimate business as his front, but he liked his other work more because of the thrill it gave him, and the return was quite rewarding too.

"Can we cut to the chase? As you can see, I still have other priorities in line for today." Alex had no time to chitchat with this man. If he had something for him, better present it now, or else, his door was open, and he could leave.

He still had to verify, with Ethan, the identity of this man and if his work was reliable. He had his investigators, but if he proved to be good at his job, then maybe he could also use his help.

"I understand. So, I would cut to the chase. I am here to offer my services. I am good at what I do, and I guarantee you the quality of my information." He started explaining his initial business.

He was in the business of knowing what was happening around him. That included the past, the latest events, and the secrets behind it. He could only make predictions on what might happen in the future, depending on his collected data.

"By the way, I don't do referrals. I prefer to find my clients that I can work with." He added, knowing that Mr. Princeton must be thinking why Ethan never recommended him to his business.

He usually had no use of the things he discovered in his search, but it did not mean that it was not valuable information. He just needed to find someone who had more use to it.

It was a matter of connecting point A to point B, redirecting the information to the one who had more use to the data. But of course, he sold his hard work at a price.

But he never did like working on both sides of the fence. It was just messy, and sometimes the conflict of interest could ruin his credibility.

"This is my resume. I hope you will find my services relevant to your business." He handed Alex a brown envelop. "My contact is inside." He excused himself, not wanting to take much of Alex's time.

He already did what he came to do. Identifying that Alex had a close tie with Ethan, he felt Alex could be a potential client.

## **Chapter 264 - Grab The Opportunity**

The morning was almost over, and she was still conflicted about accepting the case with Gerald. She did find it quite interesting, but something was still holding her back.

When her instinct conflicted with her logical thinking, she usually went with the former, but she also believed that opportunities like this were rare.

"Jacky, do I have any pending calls or meetings." She asked her friend and assistant. She knew she was only looking for something to distract her mind from finalizing her decision.

But sometimes, it helped to find something to divert her attention, and when her mind relaxed a bit, that was the time that she would go back to the dilemma in her hands..

"You are all clear for this morning. Well, except for your meeting with Mr. Brown." Jacky informed her.

Jacky strolled around her room, taking the files Dani had finished dealing with and clearing her table. Then, she placed the new files that she had to deal with for the afternoon meetings.

"Thanks." She took a deep breath, turning around and gazing at the tall skyscrapers ahead when Jacky moved out of her office.

She allowed her eyes to wander around the view outside, but deep inside, her mind was circling with the situations she had to face. First was her father's condition, then whether to take the case.

She could not understand her hesitation from tackling such an opportunity to work with a good case and a great mentor. Anyway, it was probably because of her father. She finally concluded.

"I'm going to Mr. Brown's office." She notified Jacky, stepping out of her office, carrying the file she had been studying for the last hour.

As she rode the elevator to his floor, though she already made a decision, her mind still kept arguing between the pros and cons of accepting the job.

But as she neared his office, she knew that she already made up her mind. There was no going back from her decision. She greeted his secretary and waited for her turn to enter his office.

"Mr. Brown will see you now." The pretty blond informed her as she opened the door to his office.

She quickly walked into his office and took a seat offered to her. "Hi, Gerald." She greeted him.

"It is also good to see you. I hope you have already come up with a decision?" Gerald was not known to playing around.

Time was significant to him, and so were his cases. Right now, he needed her decision. He was hoping that she would agree. He was looking forward to working with her.

From the first time he met her, he already could tell that she would do amazing things. So far, he only heard good things from what she had done for this company. This firm was lucky to have her.

"I have." She answered him, blowing a bit of air to ease the shakiness of her voice. "I am taking the case."

That was it. Dani had finally made a decision. She was taking the case whether her instinct was telling her that she should not. But there was no valid reason for her not to take it.



Except for the fact that it would be a difficult one to handle and time-consuming, she could not think of anything else. Those had always been part of her job description, so that was never an excuse.

"That's great then. I am excited to work with you and pick your young mind." Gerald expressed with a friendly grin.

He was indeed glad that she accepted to work with him. It was an opportunity to learn more about her and see what she was capable of doing.

"But I do have a condition." She never did like asking for preferential treatment, but in this case, she needed to. "I will only be able to devote time to it, at the earliest will be in two weeks."

She wanted some time to deal with the charity event this weekend. She knew that Alex had made a lot of effort to make it extra special for her. Although she never asked for it, well, she still appreciated what he was doing for her.

Then, another week to take care of her dad. She wanted to be at her mother's side when the operation of her dad happened. She certainly could not work on a case if she felt a bit overwhelmed with her situation.

"You want the case to wait for you until you are ready," Gerald asked, quite surprised with her appeal.

"I know it is a bit unusual request, but I have a personal issue going on at home. If you think that it will impede the case, and then I will have no choice but to give it up." She would feel disappointed if he decided to give it to someone else.

But she was not that special for him to wait for her. Many eager lawyers in this firm would probably jump at the chance to work with him on this case.

"I'm sorry if you think I only wasted your time. I do believe it will be better if you give it to someone else." She hurriedly added, seeing the flabbergasted expression on Gerald's face.

"If there is nothing more. I think I better leave." She stood from the chair, feeling that it was the right decision. She could not keep the case from proceeding because she had somewhere else to be.

"No. Wait." Gerald quickly halted her from her steps and caught her attention. "I was not expecting that from you, but I think I understand."

He stood from his seat and walked towards her while she stood in place, unable to process what was happening.

"I think I can ask some other associates to help me while you wrap up whatever you have going on. Well, are you still interested?" He finally asked her, standing a meter away from her, waiting for her answer.

She could not believe what she was hearing. Gerald was willing to consider her request. She was still going to be working on the case if she accepted it.

If she already closed a door and a window still opened, that should mean that she should grab the opportunity.

**Chapter 265 - The Longest Forever**

"Are you sure about your plan? Should you run this with Dani first?" Laura asked as she talked to Alex about his plan to visit Ethan.

Well, she could see that Alex's intention was good. He was only thinking of what was best for Dani.

But she wondered if he thought of what was best for him. She did not like the idea that he was keeping this from Dani. Well, especially when it had the potential to cause problems in the future.

"I plan to tell her all about it, but I need time. I hope that you will keep it between the two of us." He understood the concern Laura had with his situation.

But he had thought about this and deliberated with the pros and cons. As of now, he believed this was the right thing to do.. Doing this for Dani was the only way to fix all their immediate problems.

He would deal with the consequences later when they arose. In the meantime, he had to take quick action on their present situation. And at the moment, time was not in abundance.

"I know that you feel obligated to help us because of Dani. But I don't think this is the right way." She sat in front of him in a coffee shop where they both agreed to meet.

Alex did not want to talk to Ethan without running by Laura his plans. But Laura did not like to discuss it inside the house, avoiding Ethan from overhearing their conversation.

"Well, once I marry your daughter, you will be my family too. You will automatically become my parents too. And I will do anything for Dani." Alex knew he had to convince Laura to agree with his plan.

"I feel like I should be thankful that you want to do this, but not at the expense of putting you in a delicate position." Laura felt she had to tell him what she felt about his plan.

As much as she wanted his proposal, the consequence and possible outcome of it in the future was a risk she was not sure she wanted for him.

But she was touched by his words. He was already considering them as his family. She suddenly felt so much love for this young man. Now, she could fully see what her daughter had seen in him.

Why Dani fell in love with this magnificent man, finding Alex so selfless that he was willing to risk his future for them.

"Don't worry about me. I am sure that I can resolve this in a matter of time. Let us just focus on the problem at hand." He told Laura, who was still unconvinced with what he wanted to do.

"Give me some time to settle this matter. When everything is stable, then I will tell Dani everything." Alex promised his future mother-in-law. "Besides, once I am her husband, I am obligated to tell her everything."

Alex never broke his eyes connection with Laura's, making sure she understood that he was serious about all his intentions. He had all of this under his control.

"I don't know why I am doing this. But fine. I agree. But as soon as a problem goes out of control, you have to tell Dani and me about it." She warned him.

Well, she might be a housewife now, but she did have some good experience in the past about running a company. She was willing to contribute any help.

"I promise," Alex swore, feeling like he was dealing with his mom. Katherine and Laura did have so many similarities, now that he had noticed it. "So, do I have your blessings?" He asked as he looked expectantly at Laura.

He suddenly felt like a child waiting for his mother's approval for him to go to the prom. It was silly, but he was delighted to feel that way with Dani's mom.

Laura was a wonderful mom, and anybody she would consider her child would be so lucky. She had so much love to give. No wonder Dani was like that. Dani grew up in a family full of love.

Now, he was in no doubt that Dani would also be a wonderful mother to their kids in the future. He could already imagine her taking care of them with so much affection.

"Yes," Laura uttered in a whisper, still doubtful of his plan. But this time, she was willing to go along with it.

That snapped Alex from his daydreaming, bringing him back to the matter at hand. Having kids would come soon enough when the time was right.

"Ok. I will have to see Ethan." Alex said to Laura, proceeding with his next step.

He did not want to waste time because, at the moment, he was in a rush. But he wanted to prioritize this situation because of its importance.

"Well, he would be at home where I left him to rest and mope around about his decisions in life," Laura stated as she took a sip of her coffee. It was indeed good to get out.

She could not wait for Katherine to arrive, and they could discuss the wedding. It was the only thing she was busy with nowadays that distracted her from Ethan's condition. Or else she might die first because of worrying about him.

"Shall I give you a lift home?" He offered, even if he knew that she had someone drove her in their meeting place.

He would enjoy a few more minutes of her company on their way to her house. It was like he was talking to his mom when he was with Laura.

"Sure. I could use some more conversations." Laura felt that ever since Ethan had been sick, it was just the two of them all day and night.

She had no issue with being with her husband, but a moody Ethan was no picnic. She understood that he only wanted to go back to work, but she wanted him to have his operation. So, who should win?

For now, she could only hope that Alex's plans worked because all she wanted was for her to spend the longest forever with her husband.

## **Chapter 266 - Not Even Cold Yet**

"So, Laura tells me that you ask for a meeting. I wonder what you said to her to make her agree to this. My people were not even allowed to have ten minutes alone with me." Ethan said with a smirk on his lips.

He walked towards his desk and sat at the center, looking as intimidating as ever. He might be in house arrest by his wife, but he was still the king in this house.

After their talk the other day, he thought it would take a while before Alex would show himself in his presence. Alex did get on his nerves when he kept insisting that he should undergo the operation.

"Well, Laura was a more sensible person to talk to, compared to you, so it was easy to explain to her the reason why I am here," Alex calmly said to the man that he needed to cooperate with his plan.

He knew that he approached the situation the wrong way on their last talk. In his excuse, he was surprised by the news.. But this was his chance to remedy the situation and possibly get his support.

"Is that so, then you should be talking to her, not me." He raised his brows at him and lifted his feet on the desk, indicating that he was getting bored by their conversation.

He only confided with him about his condition so that he could help him with his daughter. He was sure his wife was about to divulge their little secret to Dani to seek her help in ganging up against him.

It did not give him the right to meddle with his affair and his decision. Who was he to tell him what was good for him and not? He was the only one who could determine that for himself.

"Come on. I am sorry if I overstep my boundaries. I am here to make amends." Alex remained standing as he observed the man before he proceeded to inform him of his plans.

"Tell me, what bad wind brought you here today," Ethan said, still a bit annoyed with him for siding with his wife and not taking his side.

He expected Alex would understand his situation, but he suddenly felt betrayed when he listened to his wife's opinion. As if his reasons had no merits at all.

How could he take the operation when there was an enormous risk that he could die, while many alternative medications could still cure him, which was far less invasive.

"Well, for one thing, your daughter. She is very concerned about you. She is blaming herself for whatever happened between the two of you. She is afraid to lose you if you don't get the operation." Alex pointed out.

Alex walked towards one of the chairs and sat down without waiting for an invitation. He knew it was not coming anyway, judging from Ethan's reaction.

But he knew that he was doing all of this because of Dani. He was not leaving this room without an assurance that Ethan would reconsider taking his much-needed medical care.

"All of you don't understand that you are giving me more stress by forcing me with that ridiculous procedure." Ethan felt more exasperated hearing about Dani's condition.

It was the last thing he wanted for his daughter. As much as possible, all he had in mind was to protect her from all of this. Now, hearing that she was blaming herself made it even harder for him to decide on what to do.

But he could not let his company go to waste all because of his failing heart condition. There must be another way, other than going on an operation.

Because at this point, he could not die without someone he could trust to take over his company. And if ever he did survive open-heart surgery, there was no guarantee what would happen to his company.

It also took a long time to recover from this kind of surgery if ever he did survive. He was afraid that his investors would pull out and create a panic. His companies would eventually run to the ground.

"Then, let me help you," Alex said as he uncrossed his legs and looked at Ethan directly in his eyes.

"Listen to what I have to say."

He needed his attention. He needed him to listen to his idea with an open mind. Or else, he might quickly shut him down. But if he could only convince him, then he believed that things would work out just fine for everyone. Well, at least for Dani and her family.

Ethan gave him a questioning look as if he was doubtful that he had something that he would need from him. What could he possibly offer that the others were not able to provide him?

"Ok. Give me your pitch, and let me see if you have a brain in that head of yours." Ethan was throwing insults at him because he dared to presume that he had something that he needed.

But in truth, he had always admired him. He was just a sore loser, throwing tantrums like a child because he was not getting his way. Laura was calling the shots, and he could not stop her.

He loved his wife too much to make her unhappy. The situation was tearing him between letting her wife win or thinking about the future of his legacy that he wanted to leave to Dani.

"I am talking about your question at the hospital." Alex reminded him, but Ethan only frowned his brows as if he could not recall what he said that day.

But Alex was not falling for his trick. He knew that Ethan's mind was still as sharp as a fox. He would not get fooled that easily, but he was going to indulge his whim and let him play dumb.

"If you don't remember, then let me refresh your memory. You asked me if I would want to take over your company." His eyes never wavered away from his, not wanting to lose in the little staring contest they had going.

He knew to convince him that his plans would be perfect for both their current dilemma, first he had to appear confident and collected. He could never show him that he had any weakness.

"Oh. That one." Ethan still pretended that he was surprised to hear about that again. "So, what about it?"

Of course, he did remember all of it, but he wondered what Alex had in mind. He could see that he was heavily contemplating what he was about to say next. But he was already preparing for it.

"As of now, we are about to go to war as both our enemies just formed their alliance." He took out the envelope that was in his bag and handed it to Ethan.

That was unexpected. It was not what Ethan wanted to hear from him, but it did catch his attention. Ethan did not need to look at what was inside the envelope but could already sense the warning in Alex's tone.

His business was more in danger with his current health condition. He needed a solution fast. He suddenly felt alarmed that vultures and hyenas were already circling his body when it was not even cold yet.

## **Chapter 267 - Necessary Evil**

"I think you need to see that." Alex knew that it was a gamble that he had to take. He just hoped that it would not cause more stress for Ethan and worsen his health condition.

Laura trusted him that he knew what he was doing. He had to make sure that he could play this right and execute it according to his plans without compromising Ethan's health condition.

"Where did you get this?" Ethan asked as he slowly examined the content of the envelope.

It was a detailed report that was familiar to him, at least the style. But the content was intriguing, at the same time, a bit disturbing. Whoever did the investigation did a great job.

Then he saw some photos of two men having a serious conversation. It would seem that Alex was into something here.. He did recognize the two men.

"From someone you might know, Stockholm. Does that name ring a bell?" Alex explained how he showed up in his office and offered his services since he could not get hold of Ethan.

He watched Ethan's reaction, hoping to find some clues on what he was thinking. He was a hard man to read as far as he had observed in the times that he was with him. But he was starting to see some telltale signs.

"Ah, that man is quite a genius. He proved valuable to me. If he offered you his services, then you are a lucky man." Ethan said as he continued to look at the rest of the papers.

He finally realized why he recognized the manner the report was written and arranged. It was his good friend who provided the information. It just guaranteed that it came from a good source.

Now, what should he do with the information? It was not the first time that his competitions or enemies teamed up to take him down. It was a regular occurrence that he could easily handle.

But not in his current situation, not when he was also fighting for his life. His company now would be more vulnerable to attack once they learned of his condition.

"If you think he is that good, then maybe I will." Alex took note of contacting the man for more of his services.

If that man could provide him with more valuable intel, it should help him with his current situation. Having two enemies merging up with a common goal would not be easy to beat.

In all honesty, his business could not handle two attacks coming from opposite directions. His company, if compared to Nick's company, was still relatively small. But with the right resources, maybe it would not be bad at all.

If he was not careful, Nick might find something that could destroy him now that his cousin was helping him. So, he better came up with a good solution before that came to that point.

"Anyway, what are you proposing again?" Ethan had enough of the chitchat. It would seem that his time was running out.

He wanted to get into the heart of the matter and find solutions to all the problems at hand. If Alex was the only one available to him, then he had no options left but to hear him out.

So far, he was proving valuable to him. Maybe he had something good cooking in that head of his. He would like to see if it would coincide with what he had already thought of a long time ago.

"I want you to have the operation. Then, hand over the company to me while you are out of commission. Let me handle all the operations and deal with the threat at our backs." Alex stated his plans with confidence.

Upon hearing his proposal, it took Ethan a few seconds to process it. Then, he laughed out loud with the ridiculousness of his proposition. "You want me to hand over my company to you, to trust you with all of its operations."

"Yes." He answered, showing Ethan that he was not intimidated by his response.

"I am sick, but not yet insane. Why would I do that? How do I know I can trust you?" But in truth, he knew that he was the only answer to his problems. "Let alone give you rein to my company."

What happened with Nick still weighed heavily on him, but he felt that Alex was different. His instinct might have been wrong with Nick. But this time with Alex, he was confident that it was not.

He still wanted to be cautious and analyzed this matter more carefully before he made his final decision. Nothing wrong with double-checking and being smarter this time.

"I understand your hesitation." Alex expected this kind of reaction from him. He would feel the same way if a similar thing happened to him. But he had prepared for it. "But as of now, you need me. And because I want to do this for Dani."

There was no indication if he had convinced Ethan. His face remained blank from any emotion. But he could sense that he was listening to his proposal, which was a start.

"Still, how do I know if I can trust you? Nick tried to marry my daughter to get my company. Here you are, not yet married to Dani, and you are already thinking of taking over." Ethan looked at him, also trying to study his intention.

Then, he stood from his table and walked towards the window to stare outside, looking at the garden that his wife designed for them. It was one of the things that usually calmed him down.

He wanted so much to believe Alex since it would be the easiest way to resolve his problems. He could peacefully take the operation and make Laura happy. He would not worry about Dani's future anymore.

"What if I have a solution for that?" Alex told him, which brought Ethan's attention back to him.

He knew that it was a risk that he was taking. But it was the only solution he could think of in the short period available to them. He would not resort to this if he could find another way.

But there was so much at stake. Suddenly, it was a necessary evil Alex had to take.

## **Chapter 268 - Exceptionally Vulnerable**

She was viewing an old rerun of television series when the door opened, and he strode towards the living room. She made room on the couch and patted the seat beside her.

"How was your day?" Dani asked when Alex presented himself in front of her, looking exhausted.

It was late, and he probably went through hell from the shadow that cast over his face. She knew that running a multinational corporation must not be easy, especially for him.

He was still building his name in the industry. It would not be easy to prove to investors his credibility since he was not from around here. He might be a prince from his country, but here he was still a nobody.

"Tiring." He uttered as he released a big sigh and sat down beside her, dropping his bag and his coat on the side of the couch and giving her a soft peck on the cheeks. "You?" Returning the question..

He undid his tie and tossed it on the side as he settled his head on the backrest of the cushion. His day had been a roller coaster ride between dealing with clients and his secret rendezvous with her parents.

But he knew he could not share that part of his day with her. Not yet anyway. If she knew about it, he feared what she might think of the idea. There was also a chance that she might never agree with it. He could not risk that.

"Same, I guess," Dani replied, sitting closer beside him.

She also had a very frustrating day. After the meeting with Gerald, everything went downhill for her. She had a ridiculous case that she never bothered wanting to think about again.

She was glad to have the case resolved immediately, or she might lose her mind talking to her client's irrational point of view. The rest was the unending paper works that needed her attention.

"Have you eaten? I can whip a simple meal if you're hungry," Dani offered as she turned to his side, tucked her feet under her, and watched his face with his closed eyes.

She liked the feeling of brushing his short soft hair through her fingers. She knew it somewhat relaxed him. But what she loved more was the feeling of just being close to him and touching him.

"Yes, I had dinner with some clients. What about you?" He forgot to tell her that she should not wait for him.

In his excuse, this day was just too chaotic for him to remember everything. He opened his eyes to see her staring at him. Seeing the concern in those beautiful orbs, he suddenly felt guilty for not taking time.



"I already had with Jacky." She told him, but she never tore her eyes away from him. "You have not answered my question?" She raised her brows, thinking if he was dodging her question or he was simply tired.

"I'm sorry. It had been crazy today. I have an investor who wanted to pull out because of some mishap in the accounts. I had to handle it before it worsened. Then there is the charity event." He knew he was making up excuses, but those were all true.

But he was also omitting some truths. In his defense, he was not lying. He believed it was better this way in the meantime. He did plan to tell her when the time was right.

His mind went back to the earlier events. It was very unusual for a mistake like that to happen. But he already had his best team handling the situation. He wanted answers because he suspected foul play.

"Do you want some help? Maybe there is something I can do." She asked, understanding the stress he was going through.

It was the exact reason he asked Gerald for some time before she dealt with the case. She already figured that her hands would be full of activities this week and the next.

"Nah. I think you already have things you need to focus on than messing with my problems." He said as he touched her cheeks with his fingers. "But I appreciate your offer."

He believed he would never have enough of her. He craved her every day that she was not around, but when she was near him, all he wanted was to have her closer to him.

"What about you help me with something else?" He ran his hands through her hair and pulled her closer to him until her face was only inches from him.

Then, he eliminated the gap between them, claiming her lips for an intense kiss, full of longing. He explored the crevice of her mouth, playing a sparring game with her tongue.

He wanted to do that all day, but he felt it was not enough. He grabbed her by the waist and pulled her until she sat on his lap, taking control of their situation.

She buried her fingers on both sides of his hair, deepening the kiss, satisfying her yearning for him. Then, she abruptly stopped. "Wait." She gasped as she tried to catch her breath.

She suddenly remembered something that she wanted to ask him. It was the reason why she was waiting for him in the living room. She did not want to get distracted by her desire and forget all about it.

"What is it?" He was suddenly bothered by her quick change of mood. He wondered if he did or said anything wrong, but he had no idea what.

"I know what you did earlier." She started but paused as she licked her lips that went suddenly dry. It was not unusual since she was still breathing heavily.

He was suddenly on alert, thinking that maybe she had a whiff of what was happening. Did Laura or Ethan mention anything to her? But that was unlikely. Probably it was something else entirely.

"What are you talking about?" He asked, maintaining a calm demeanor as he watched her reaction. He would wait rather than speculate.

"Dad called me tonight. He said that you convinced him to have the operation." She stated in a bit of hesitation. Honestly, she was still confused about how she felt about it. "Thank you."

She knew Alex said that her dad told him that he planned to have the surgery. But her dad told her otherwise. He said it was Alex's words that influenced his decision.

"Oh! I did nothing. I think you and your mom were what truly convinced him." Alex said, feeling slightly relieved.

He let his fingers traced her cheeks, trying to calm himself down. He thought that Ethan blew his plans, but thankfully, her father did not share their plans with her.

"Still, you did not have to talk to him, but you still did." She was ecstatic, glad that her father was going to take his surgery. He was giving them a chance to have him for a long time.

But she could not help the feeling that something was still bothering her father when she talked to him. It was in the edge of his voice. She had lived with the man most of her life.

She sometimes could read the man. She could sense when her father was hiding something from her, especially when his guard was down. But he was exceptionally vulnerable today.

## **Chapter 269 - The Law Of Attraction**

"Are you sure that I look, ok?" Jacky twirled one more time in the mirror and checked the gown she was wearing for the night.

She had been in many ballgowns before, worn many fancy trinkets because of Dani. But today, she suddenly felt uncomfortable in her new, expensive dress.

She felt like she was a fake. She was once again living a lie, associating herself with not her kind. But where did she even belong to when all she ever had was Dani and Andy?

"I am certain that eyes will be following you around, and a particular someone will have a hard time keeping his hands off of you." Dani teased her friend.

She reassured her for the hundredth time that she looked gorgeous. Her friend had always been stunning inside and out. But her past always hindered her from pursuing more than she deserved.

But dating a prince in the public eye made her nervous. There was no doubt that she would catch the attention of the press once she walked into the ballroom with Lance at her side.

"We are not dating perse, so don't get any ideas. I think Lance likes me but not enough to have a romantic relationship." Jacky retorted with a sigh.

"I don't believe that. I..." Dani was saying, but Jacky stopped her.

She felt that her friend was too hard again on herself. After what Marcus did, she never had been the same again. Her confidence in finding the right man for her had become a distant dream.

"He is only going with me tonight because he was too gentlemanly to decline my invitation." Jacky deduced from her situation.

Yes, Lance had shown up and asked her for dinner. He spent some time with her to watch a movie the other night. But nothing else happened.

As if liked before, he had categorized their relationship in the friend zone. After the movie was over, he kissed her on the top of her head, said his goodnight, and left.

"Jacky, I wish that you will see your true worth. You are more than half of the people attending this ceremony, even when combined. Your heart is so pure. It is hard not to love you." Dani expressed to her friend what she always thought of her.

Dani took her hand and pulled her into her embrace. She could not help the tears that dropped on her cheeks as she tried to show Jacky how she meant to her. What it was like to have her in her life.

She only wished that her words would finally get through to her. She wanted to find her friend again amidst the pain she was feeling. Jacky deserved more than she was asking for in this life.

"You are not just saying all that because I am your friend, and you want me to feel better." Jacky also found herself on a roller coaster of emotion when Dani uttered those heartfelt words.

She slightly pulled away and stared at her friend's teary eyes. She could never doubt Dani when she looked at her with those soulful eyes. Dani might be a lawyer, but lying was never her strong suit.

"You know I will never lie to you." Dani wiped the tears that escaped Jacky's eyes, while Jacky did the same to her. "Now, I ruined our makeups." She stated, laughing at their silliness.

"Well, we both did, mostly it was my fault for being so melodramatic," Jacky muttered as she took a deep breath, fanning her eyes with her hands to stop the tears from flowing again.

She quickly grabbed a tissue on the table and dabbed their faces with it. "Now, blow," Jacky instructed, putting a fresh one on Dani's face, right below her nose.

Dani immediately complied like a tiny child, which only made them laugh a little more. "That certainly reminded me of Mom," Dani stated in between their chuckles.

"Speaking of Mom, are they coming to the event?" Jacky asked since rumors said they were. But with her father's condition, she wondered if that was advisable.

They had been like the closest Dad and Mom figures that she had. She loved them as her family as well. She would never dream of any harm befalling the two of them.

"Yes, they are. You know Dad will never allow anyone to stop him from attending. Anyway, Mom only agreed with a few conditions and because he finally agreed to have the operation next week." Dani explained to her friend.

It was the only way to appease her dad. At least, her dad was going to undergo surgery, the most important thing right now. Her Mom finally conceded to an hour of their presence as support for Alex and her charity event.

"I guess that is fair. I hope that nothing will ruin this night for Alex and you. I also heard that Nick received an invitation. Did you know that?" Jacky said concernedly, knowing how Dani hated being in the same room with that vile man.

"Where did you hear that?" Dani asked, shocked to hear that Nick would be there.

Nick, coming to the party, meant Alex knew about it since he oversaw all invitations. Then, why did he failed to mention that to her when he knew exactly how she felt about him.

"Well, you know, the secretary of, but whatever. Let us say I heard it from a friend." Jacky stopped explaining since it was a long story. "Anyway, that was the word in the street."

As her assistant, she had formed a network between several of the staff in the office and their associated companies through other assistants and subordinate staff.

It was the easiest way to get information through the grapevine. But she also filtered most of what she learned. Sometimes many still leaked fake news and were not newsworthy.

"And how reliable is your friend?" Dani asked, but she knew that Jacky usually verified her news from more than one source, to be precise.

"Very." Jacky mouthed as she applied fresh lipstick and dabbed some more makeup on her face, fixing the damage they had done earlier.

"Then, I never heard of it before," Dani confessed, suddenly uneasy with the situation.

It made her think of her current situation. She was sure that Alex did not intend to keep that from her. It probably just slipped his mind with all the things happening lately.

She quickly dismissed her negative thoughts. She believed that Alex had good reasons for doing what he did. But she would not allow Nick's presence to ruin this night for them.

"Anyway, if that man ever does make, as much as, a fuss, I will personally punch him the nose." Jacky stood behind her and shook her shoulder as they both stared at the mirror in front of them.

She did look great in her gown, agreeing with Dani. She finally realized that she had to make up her mind if she wanted Lance or not. If she did, shouldn't she fight for him?

It was the twenty-first century. Women already had the right to get after what they wanted. The only time that she should give up on him should be when Lance finally turned her down.

A knock on the door meant it was time to leave. The night was young, and it was time to get his man. She braved herself to what she had to do, basing her claim on the law of attraction.

## **Chapter 270 - Bittersweet Revenge**

"Thanks for coming." She opened the door wide for him, missing the only person she loved in this world. "I miss you."

After their last fight, she knew it would be hard to convince him to see her again. But she had to try because losing him was not something she could accept.

"Cut to the chase, Cassie." He said, still standing outside her door, not taking the next step of entering her apartment. "I'm not here to make idle talks.."

He was serious about their last conversation. If Cassie did not stop with her revenge plans, he was through with her. He could not keep on playing as her puppet in her game.

He was starting to like the people that she wanted to hurt. He could not afford to be part of her revenge game. He knew that they did not deserve it. He realized that Cassie's assumption might be baseless.

"What do I need to do to get you back?" Cassie pleaded with him as she hugged him by the door. She knew she had to convince him not to leave her before it was too late for them.

"You already heard my condition. Leave with me and forget all about this life and your past. Let us start a family. Then, you will have all of me." He held her by her shoulders, pushing her away from him.

He loved her, but he would not keep helping her destroy her life by encouraging her with this insanity. Nick might have abetted this delusion, but he wanted to put a stop to it.

She remained silent as she thought of his condition. Since he left, she had been debating with what he wanted and her plans. Which did she want more?

She contemplated if she could live with herself, knowing that her vengeance was almost at her reach, and she walked away or losing him. But how could she measure when it was what she equally wished for her entire life.

"I guess that answered my question." He uttered in defeat, letting his hands dropped to his side. He gave her a last look and turned around.

"Please, give me one more night, just tonight. Then, I will run away with you. I will go with you wherever you desire to go." She shouted, running after him, stopping him from moving further away.

"Please, let us go inside. Let us talk about this. Give me one more chance." She rapidly pleaded with him, hoping that he would listen.

She held his hand. When he did not push her away, she slowly pulled him back to her apartment. She was thankful that she got through to him.

Once inside, he went straight to the couch without saying a word. He had nothing else to say, but Cassie did. So, he was waiting for her explanation. If he did not like what comes out of her mouth, then he was out of there.

"Ok, I heard what you want. I wish with all my heart to be with you forever. To live in a white picket fence with our future kids." She started pacing the floor in front of him.

She knew she had to choose her words wisely, or she was doomed to lose him forever. She looked at him, and he was dead serious about what he said.

"I know if I don't try this one last time to take down Ethan, then I will regret it all my life. I will never be happy with you if I cowardly run away from my fight." She continued.

Cassie could only make sense to herself, but she doubted he understood what she was going through. After this last night, she still failed with her plans, then at least, she knew that she had tried.

"So after tonight, whatever the outcome, by morning, you will willingly pack your things and moved away from here. We can start our family." He remained impassive, still skeptical with her promises.

But a portion of his heart beat faster, wanting to believe that what she was telling was true. It was giving him hope that they could still have a future together.

"Yes." She knelt in front of him, lowered her head on his lap. "Just give me this night, and then I am all yours." She uttered with her voice, begging for his reconsideration.

She felt his hands moved on the top of her head. Then, she felt his fingers ran down her hair until his hands settled on her shoulders. Slowly, he pulled her on her until she was staring again at his beautiful eyes.

"I hope you are telling the truth because once I learned that it is all a lie. Then, nothing you said will ever matter to me. I will forget that you ever been a part of my life." He promised in return.

He wanted to give her one more benefit of the doubt that she would honor her promise. That after tonight, she would be through with her past. They would start with their future together.

"I promise." She knew that she finally convinced him. Now, all she had to do was set her plans in action and hoped everything worked out the way she planned it.

She moved on top of him, happy that they were back together. She pushed her body against him until no more space separated them. Capturing his lips, she did what she did best. Make her man happy.

"I love you so much." He uttered in desperation.

He returned her kisses with equal passion, missing her in his arms too. All he wanted was her, to be with her and build a family. Was that too much to ask?

"I love you too," Cassie responded with the same desperation and intensity. "But I need to get to the ball." She slowly pulled away from him.

She stared into his eyes, and she could see the questions that clouded them. She could see the fear in his eyes that she might not follow through with their agreement.

"I guess I should be leaving too." He reluctantly muttered to her, knowing that it might be the last time he would be holding her in his arms.

If things did not work out for her tonight, finding herself failing on what she had to do. Would she truly walked out from her long-time obsession and be content with the life he planned to give her?

He was not too sure about that. But he was still going to give Cassie a chance to prove to him that he was more than enough for her. That after tonight, she could walk away with him, ready to build a family with him.

"I'll see you tomorrow." She wanted to hope that by tomorrow, things would be different.

She stood up from her position and waited for him to follow her. Then, once again, she tiptoed to him until she reached his lips, kissing him. A kiss, she wished he would remember.

She still felt that love would not be enough. Not until she found the peace that her heart and mind craved for all this time. The only solution she could think of would be in the success of her bittersweet revenge.