

Royal Contract 281

Chapter 281 - Death Was Just In The Corner

"Hey! Can I cut in? I do wish to dance with my daughter." A booming voice interrupted Alex's trance, and he suddenly realized that they were kissing in the middle of the dance floor.

He slowly pulled away, keeping a smile on his face as he continued to gaze at Dani, who was still slightly dazed by their stunt. She was still under the spell of that kiss they recently shared.

"Of course, Ethan," Alex replied, not showing any embarrassment at all. Why would he when he was only expressing how much he wanted her in his life?

It finally snapped Dani to the present and made her realize what was happening. She looked at her father with her cherry tomato cheeks, feeling like she wanted to hide from his gaze.

Not that she was ashamed to be caught kissing Alex. She was just not used to being too showy of her emotions when she became a lawyer. Unlike when she was young and stupid, she had changed.

It was the exact reason some had labeled her as the ice queen, a tigress, and other words relating to a woman who did not like to be emotional.

"You look so lovely, Dani." Her Dad uttered, especially with the blush on her face. He suddenly remembered her little princess, who would sit on his lap and enjoy telling him what she did all day.

Even if there was a way to turn back time, he knew that he would not change anything. All that happened in their past, whether good or bad, had led them into this moment.

It was the most special day in his daughter's life. He could see the happiness that was radiating in her eyes. It was spilling in her smile even though she was trying to control it.

"You don't look bad at all." Dani retorted to her father, who seemed to be doing much better, in comparison, to the last time she visited him. "Are you sure you feel better?" She asked, still a bit concerned.

She believed that her father should have sat this one out and rested instead in the safety of their home. He should not be forcing himself to be part of this stressful celebration.

"I know you are worried about me. You don't have to because everything is under control. You see me. I am not worried at all." He assured her as they continued to dance to the slow music humming in the background.

The last thing he wanted was to see his wife and daughter suffering because of him. He was not afraid if he had to die any time soon. He already had made arrangements for his family.

"You can't blame Mom and me. We love you so much, Dad. We don't want to lose you." It had been a while since they had such a heartfelt conversation.

She carefully watched his expression and his body movements. She checked for any telltale sign that he was feeling tired or uncomfortable.

His hold in her hand was still firm, and his stride to the dance floor was in tune with the beat. He seemed very healthy and energetic when you looked at him physically.

But she knew better because she had lived with him most of her life. In his eyes laid the truth of what he truly felt. Once she looked into them, she had seen what he did not want them to see.

"Well, you won't." He swung her to the music as if he never felt so much better. Like there was nothing amiss with their situation. "I will be here till the day that you give me my grandchildren." It was supposed to be the plan.

Hopefully, all his effort to fund the medical world would pay off, and he would survive the surgery that would save his life. If not, he was bound to leave this world for good.

He shook his thoughts away from his fears. He might be one of the most influential people in this room, but he did not reach this point without giving fear its due respect.

Without acknowledging the most he was afraid of, he would not have built the courage to overcome it. Fear and courage must always come hand in hand, or it would be just a waste of time.

"I'm happy that you finally reconsider having the surgery." She hugged him, not caring anymore if they stopped moving.

She had no reassurance that the surgery would be successful. No matter how many statistics told them that her father would turn out alive at the end of it. There was still that tiny percentage that said otherwise.

It could be the last time they had a father and daughter dance like this, and she wanted to savor every minute of being in his arms. She already had wasted so much time. She could not regret this moment too.

"Hey, I am not dying. I promise you." Ethan whispered in her ear as he buried his chin on her hair. He pulled her closer, comforting her. "I will fight death no matter what. For you and your mother."

He felt her sob, but she was trying to control it. Not wanting to show the people that surround them how much all of this was affecting her. She always had been strong-willed, and she would continue to do so for him.

"I know, Dad. I am sorry for hating you all those times. For staying away from you. For thinking of the worst." She finally looked up from her current position to look into his eyes.

She was not going to cry because there was no need for it. Her father was still here, fighting with her and her mother. She would show him that she could still trust him. But most of all, she loved him so much.

"Shall we go to your mother? She could not wait to see you." Ethan finally said as he smiled at her like nothing went wrong in their relationship.

It was the only time she realized that the song had already ended, and the people around them were either leaving the dance floor or waiting for the next one.

"Let us go. I am also excited to see Mom." She responded to her father moving with him away from the dance floor.

She did not care if people saw their exchange or what they thought of it. What mattered to her right now was the reconciliation she had with her father.

"She would love the dress you are wearing." He told her, guiding her to where he left his wife talking with Alex's parents. If not mistaken, Alex would probably have joined them. He had vanished from his sight earlier.

"I'm sure Mom was the one who chose your outfit. You look very handsome and dashing, Dad." She complimented the impeccable three-piece suit that his father was wearing tonight.

"You know your mother never approved of my taste." Her father complained.

"Because you have the worse one. I wonder how you managed to win Mom's heart." She jokingly said, which made them both laugh.

"Well, it is a secret that she would never allow me to tell." Ethan placed his fingers on his lips and sealed it.

He might be laughing with Dani, but his mind was also wandering somewhere else. It broke his heart to think that it would hurt her tremendously if something happened to him. He was afraid that death was just in the corner, waiting for him.

Chapter 282 - Save The Day

Alex left Dani and Ethan on the dance floor to check on something first. But before he did, he watched the two and found the scene in front of him, one of the best highlights of the night.

He was satisfied to witness the reconciliation of Dani with the man he first loved. He figured that this night would never be complete if guilt still gripped her heart due to the misunderstanding between her and her father.

"Alona, are all the remaining programs set for the night? Do you still foresee any more issues?" Alex asked his secretary, who was coordinating with the organizers.

He wanted everything to run smoothly from here on to the end of the event. He knew that they might not be able to tackle some unknown variables that might arise but, at least, minimize its impact.

"The fundraising is progressing successfully." According to Alona's report. "They almost exceeded the expected target of donations." She continued to explain to him, and the night was still young..

"That's good. Notify me immediately if any problems occur." He gave his final instructions before dismissing her.

Although the team designed the projection conservatively, they still believed it would exceed expectations by a margin. It would be enough to help all the charitable institutions selected to benefit tonight.

Dani suggested sharing some of the portions of the funds raised tonight with some reputable foundations. It was one thing he loved about her. She always looked at the bigger picture and not just her point of view.

He walked back to the party when things seemed to be running smoothly. This event did not need his supervision, but he wanted this night to be perfect or at least according to his plans.

"Are you all enjoying the night?" Alex moved to the location of his parents and found Dani's mom with them.

Laura and his mother had become fast friends since they first met. Learning that they had so much in common had made them inseparable. It was like they were long-lost sisters.

"Yes, we are. For a first-timer, you are doing a great job so far." Katherine answered him, pointing to the triumphant party around her.

It was the first time she had seen her son in action, and she believed he had outdone himself. She could not be prouder of her son and his achievements.

"Laura, you look lovely tonight." He greeted, turning his attention to her.

He could see so much resemblance in Dani and her features. Like her daughter, Laura was also an epitome of beauty and elegance. They might not be royalty, but they did exude class and glamour.

"Maybe we should hire you to organize your wedding," Laura interjected with a slight chuckle.

She could not help but tease him a bit. She could see the tension on his shoulders as he stood straight beside her. If she was in his situation, she might also be on her nerves ending by now.

"Well, I am not surprised since Alex had always been great at whatever he sets his mind to, but this is exceptional." His mom praised his work, amazed at what he had done in such a short time.

"Thank you, beautiful ladies. But you also have to give credit to your husbands. They did invest in this celebration." He knew if not for them, it would have been difficult for him to pull this through.

It was not an impossible task, but it would have been more difficult. But with Fred's support and Ethan's backing to his plans, he had lesser hurdles to overcome.

"Ok. Fine. You are also great." Katherine kidded her husband, who smiled proudly and bowed at his wife as he took the credit.

"Of course, we men can always do better than you women if we put our minds to it." Fred boastfully muttered to them.

"Do you have what I asked you to bring?" He whispered to his mother as he leaned closer to her.

His plans were not a secret among them. In truth, both their parents were involved in the planning of this event. But he did not want passersby to hear their conversation.

He did not want anyone to ruin his surprise. Not when his nerves were starting to go haywire.

He would fight endless hours in a boardroom and never be this agitated. As of now, he felt like his heart was about to explode out of his chest from his excitement.

"Of course, I do." His mom responded with eagerness in her tone. His Dad and Laura seemed to share the same sentiment as they waited for Katherine to give Alex what he was asking for, but.

"What's wrong?" Ethan asked when he saw his wife's face dropped as if there was a problem.

He quickly stepped closer to her and checked if there was something he could do to help. From her expression, he could already tell that something was brewing.

"It is not in here." She pointed in her bag as she kept searching for whatever the object was.

The panic looked on her face, and her eyes indicated that she was dead serious. She could not find it. It had gone from her possession.

"Are you sure? You even showed it to me earlier before we left the room." Frederick said, showing signs of concern on his face.

"Mom, try to look again." Alex was anxious now because he needed that in his plan for tonight. "Check every pocket." He insisted.

His mom could not lose it. That object was essential in his plans tonight.

"Don't you see that my bag is too small to have many pockets?" Katherine pointed out, exasperated with her son's suggestion.

"Fine. But is there any chance that you just forgot it in your room?" He was willing to go and get it if that was the case.

He had to find a solution to this dilemma before Dani returned from the dance. Then, his mom started smiling as if there was something silly about the situation.

"Mom, is there something wrong?" Alex questioned his mother, a bit confused by her reaction.

He could not understand why his mom suddenly changed her demeanor. As if she had single-handedly found a solution to their problem.

"Well, you should look at yourself in the mirror. You are about to have a heart attack, judging from the look on your face." His mom said, walking over in front of him and held his face in both of her hands.

"Breathe. Relax." His mom instructed. "I am so happy to see that you are so in love with Dani. We all are. I'm sorry if I wanted to see how much." Katherine uttered in her melodic voice.

She stretched her hand to her husband, and Fred pulled out the object she had her husband kept for her in his pockets. She took Alex's hand and placed the item on his palm.

"It would seem that I am still a good actress." She stated to Alex, who made a huge sigh of relief upon seeing the thing his mom handed to him.

"Mom, thanks so much for everything. You too, Dad." He quickly placed the item inside his pocket. He turned around to look at Laura, who witnessed their exchange. "I am glad that you are also here for Dani."

"We are also here for you. Seeing Dani's happiness is all we ever dream of, and now that you are here to fulfill that, we can't ask for more." Laura pulled him closer and hugged her future son-in-law.

"You already have my daughter. Now, you are also taking my wife." Ethan jokingly said, seeing Alex in the arms of his wife.

Laura quickly let go of Alex, happy to see her husband on her best behavior. Well, that was good enough in her book. Besides, she knew that Ethan was starting to see Alex as a son, his son.

"Dad, you and your corny jokes." Dani stood beside her man, pulled him to a quick kiss. "Is everything alright?" She whispered privately in his ears.

She noticed when she and her father was walking towards them that he was slightly anxious about something. Until his mom and her mom calmed him down. Whatever it was they did or said, he felt relieved.

"Some issues in the program." He answered her, more of lied to her. But in a way, he felt that it was true since it was indeed part of his program. "But no need to worry, these two beautiful ladies managed to save the day."

Chapter 283 - Unravel The Truth

"What do you think of that woman?" Jacky asked him as she drank her fourth champagne for the night, pointing to a stunning woman in her black gown, laughing at whatever the man beside her was saying.

She had been entertaining Lance with her personally invented game of CSI, Character Sensory Investigation. He had to guess the personality of a target of her choosing using only his five senses.

He could use all or any of his senses to assess the person. Even predict what action she would do next if he felt confident enough with his ability to read people.

"Oh, let me see." He followed the line of her fingers and found a beautiful woman at the other end.

He could see that she looked elegant and stood confidently in her gown. Her figure indicated that she frequented a gym and followed a regular regimen. Not an athlete since her muscles were not firm enough.

The way she controlled her laugh told him that she attended a boarding school. They were usually refined and had to act according to a certain standard. Her parents raised her well to fit in with society.

"So?" She nagged at him, impatiently waiting for his observation. "What do you think?" She continued, trying to catch his attention as he kept staring at the women.

Suddenly she felt a pang of jealousy from the way he was scrutinizing the girl. A thought occurred in her mind. What if he found that girl a more suitable date for him?

Jacky turned her attention to the woman. She did not recognize her. But from her point of view, the woman could easily pass as a member of the royal family. If not, she would bet that she belonged to the upper class.

"Well, she could be a model, an actress, or someone in the fashion scene." He expressed his partial assessment. "Or maybe a daughter of a wealthy businessman." He added.

Well, in truth, he had not much experienced in reading women in general. The only women he had scrutinized in his entire life had been the handful he had a relationship with, including his mother and the woman next to him.

He glanced again in the direction of the woman before saying his final thoughts. "I think..." But he never finished the sentence when she interrupted him.

"You know what I think." She slightly snapped at him, unable to control her emotion. She was not mad at him but more to herself because she was starting to act irrationally.

She was through with this game. Not the game they were currently playing but the one that Lance started. She was doing well, as she tried to forget about him.

Then, he walked back into her life, acting like he belonged as he weaved his way back into her heart. Then, here she was waiting and hoping that something good would come out of this.

"What?" Lance was suddenly curious about her sudden change of mood. "What did I do?" He moved closer to her and stared into her eyes.

He searched his brain if he had something wrong or said a word that might have offended her. But his mind turned out blank. He could not come up with an explanation for her current state.

"Nothing." She quickly backed away, looking away from him, finding her behavior unwarranted. She had no right to feel that way since he did not promise her anything from the very start.

"No. I don't buy that." He used his hand to gently forced her to look at him. "Jacky, something happened. But I am not a mind reader. I can't tell what you are thinking." He pushed the hair that blocked her eyes away from her face, wanting to see what she might be thinking.

"I said it was nothing. I just remembered something. But if you'll excuse me, I need to leave." She stood up from the table they were occupying. But before she could go far, he stopped her.

He stood up from his seat and held her arm, preventing her from running away. "What are you doing? Why are you running away?" He whispered as he stepped closer to her.

"I'm not running. I am facing the truth." The words escaped her lips before she could stop them.

"What truth?" He asked, not having any idea of what was going through in that head of hers, but he had a feeling that it had something to do with him. "Please do enlighten me." He stood over her, but she still hid her face from him.

"I am just fooling myself that you like me." She finally admitted as she looked up at his face and stared into his eyes. But she gave up, unable to hold his gaze. It was like it was boring to her soul and digging into her secrets.

She quickly looked away, afraid of what he might find. She was already feeling embarrassed by her actions. There was no need to add to her frustration.

"What if I do?" He asked, not letting go of her. When she failed to respond, he moved closer and enveloped her in his arms. As if they were also dancing with the slow beat that echoed in the room.

"What will you do if I like you?" Lance asked again, whispering it through her hair as he nuzzled his face closer to her, burying her face into his body from the way their body intertwined.

She knew she should have run. She should have shoved Lance away in the first chance she got. Instead, she rested her cheeks on his chest, hearing the fast beating of his heartbeat. It sounded like it matched the way she felt.

"Do you?" She eventually asked, knowing she was not moving away anytime soon from the way he was holding her firmly in his arms.

She could feel her hands shaking. It would be a miracle if Lance did not feel it too. But her biggest fear was how she would respond to his answer. That was if he said no and most especially if it was yes.

"No." He answered her, sensing her reaction to what he said. He could not read her face since she was still hiding it from him, but he could feel her body language.

"Oh!" The disappointment in her reply was very evident in her tone. "That is good." She slightly stuttered. "Because..." Her mind was blank, unable to form a coherent sentence as a response to him.

He quickly moved his right hand and placed it on her chin, forcing her face to look up to him. "No, I don't like you." He repeated his answer earlier.

"You already said that." She answered defiantly, not wanting to feel humiliated anymore.

But before she could add to her response, he lowered his face to her and attacked her lips with a kiss that was full of passion. A longing that he had been yearning for since he had a taste of her lips earlier.

He pulled away for a bit, trying to stare at her dazed eyes. "I think I really... really... really... like you." He enunciated every word, making sure that she understood it.

When she only nodded, unable to form any words, let alone a sentence, he resorted to kissing her again to get his answers to his unspoken question.

The kiss earlier affected him, and he guaranteed that she felt it too.. He only wanted to unravel the truth behind that kiss.

Chapter 284 - Not That Young, But Not Old Either

"John, we are so glad that you are here. We were talking about you just now." A group of his comrades stopped him on his tracks and greeted him.

"Dad, would you mind if I look for my friends?" Tyra asked, needing to get away from her father's company.

They had been here for an hour, and it felt like he was trying hard to find her a date. It was a bit humiliating, and she did not need it. She was more than capable of finding herself the man for her.

She was in no hurry. She wanted to heal her heart first, and once she was whole again, she knew that love would find a way. It would come unexpectedly, and happiness would follow.

"Go ahead. Have fun." John said to his daughter, letting go of her arm. "Find me when you want to go home." He added, but they both knew that they would only leave when he said so.

He knew he was desperate to find a husband for his daughter. But not just anyone, the man needed to be wealthy enough to help him with his company.

He knew he had to give up Alex because he did not have much ammunition to force him to take his daughter back. But he could still use his connection with him to find a suitable man for his daughter.

"Thanks, Dad." She quickly moved away before her father's mind changed.

The last thing she wanted was to stand beside her father and talk about her achievements in life. It was as if she was auditioning for a part in a movie. What role? An arranged wife for their sons.

She had no plan to be another part of his business dealings. She loved her father. But she would not tolerate his plans this time. It was clear to her now how manipulative her father had become.

"Of course, Alex would never forget our long-standing relationship. He would want me and Tyra to be here." He pointed out to the men as soon as Tyra was out of earshot, still using her daughter's old association with the host of the night.

He knew what these men were talking about, and it had nothing to do with his association with Alex. Blind rumors were now circulating about some companies that were about to go under soon.

If he was not careful, they might suspect that his company was on that list. But from the way they were whispering earlier, they might already know about it.

"Well, it was just a shame that Alex is marrying someone else." One of the men stated. "I always thought that your daughter would marry the prince." Another of the men added.

"I also thought so, but we could not force what the heart wants." He answered them, excusing her daughter's wish to break it off with him. Although he left off the part that she now regretted her action dearly.

However, something caught his eye. He did see a young gentleman showing some interest in his daughter. His eyes continued to follow his daughter until she was out of sight.

This night might not be a lost cause after all for him. He recognized the man as the son of the oil tycoon in the south-central region. Maybe it was time that he introduced himself to this young man.

On the other side of the ballroom, Tyra walked with no particular direction. Her only goal was to escape her father and be alone. She loved parties. Who did not? But not this one.

"Hi, Tyra. Join us." A group of people she knew called to her, but she declined them, making her excuses. She continued to walk on until she reached the end of the room.

She did not want to bump into Edward. But most of all, the last people she wanted to see were the happy couple. She was not up for another heartbreak of seeing them blissful together.

It did not mean that she had any plans of tearing them apart. She just wanted to be left alone in her agony. She did not need a knife to cut into her heart again and again.

After asking the people in charge for a place where she could be alone, they ushered her to a room on the other side of the big hall. It was a lounge room for guests who needed some time to rest.

"Miss, will you need something more?" The man in the black and white uniform asked her. When she said no, he immediately left her by the door.

She slowly walked into the room and found the couch empty. It was a spacious room, with a few couches around and decorations to brighten the place.

But she was not interested in any of it. All she wanted was to be away from the prying eyes of all those people. She wanted the silence that would drown the buzz that kept penetrating her mind.

"I should not have come." She mumbled to herself as grief crept into her mind. She buried her face in the palms of her hands, trying to erase the memories that were breaking her heart.

Being in this building, in the same place as Alex, only brought back memories of the good times they shared. And the betrayal she had done. Finally, the pain of what she had lost.

"It was a mistake to be here." She told herself as she continued to cover her face, sitting on the long couch, unaware that another person had beat her to the idea.

He stood on the far end of the room, standing at the large windows, staring far outside in the darkness of the night, trying to forget why he was also here.

The man clung to his glass in a vise grip. If it had been some cheap kind, it would have shattered at the force he had applied on it. Finally, he slightly loosened his hold on the glass, feeling the pressure on his knuckles.

"I should not have come." The same thought was going through his mind as he regretted setting foot on this occasion.

He should have waited for her at his home as he initially planned. He should not have come here to see her. To convince her to let go of her plans and just run away with him.

Now, he could not erase the memories implanted in his head by what he witnessed earlier in the ballroom. He could not stop watching her. He could not turn away from the scene that was playing in front of him.

"I should have left." He kept telling himself. He drank the remaining content of his drink and was about to get more when he noticed the girl crying on the couch.

He walked towards her and tapped her on the shoulder, gently not wanting to frighten her. "Are you ok?" He quickly removed his hand, seeing she recoiled in his touch.

He could not see her face since she buried it in her hands, but he could tell that she was still young by her stance and her built. Maybe not that young, but not old either.

Chapter 285 - The Highest Bidder

"Yeah, I am." She quickly wiped the few tears that dropped from her eyes, suddenly aware that she was not alone anymore in the room. "Did you just come in?" She asked as she reached for the white handkerchief he handed her.

She did not hear the door open. Was she too lost in her thoughts that she did not notice her surrounding? She wiped her tears and held on to the cloth until she was sure that there were no more tears left in her eyes.

"No, I was here first. But I believe I did not notice you come in. I was standing on that far corner." He pointed to the spot he had left.

It would seem that he was not alone in wallowing their sorrows and hiding in this room for comfort. He stared at that beautiful face and wondered who would think of hurting another person.

Well, he could already think of several people. He almost had been a part of it, but he was through with all of it. He could not stoop to such low and hurt someone because the person he loved wanted him to.

"Oh. I did not look in that direction." She hardly looked at anything at all when she entered the room.

"Well, I can leave if you need the room." She offered since he was the first one to use it.

"No, that is not necessary." He stopped her from getting up from her seat. "The entire room is big enough for the two of us. If you want to be alone, I can go back to my previous position."

"I'm sorry. You are right. The room is big enough for both of us. You are welcome to stay wherever you wish." She waved her hands to the room. "Please don't let my presence disturb you." She added.

She moved to the other side of the couch, giving him space to sit on, despite the many other available seats around the room. She felt that it was not her house. Anybody could come in and join them.

"Ok. Then let me replenish my drink." He walked to the minibar in the middle of the room. "Would you like one? Anyway, I think you need one." He did not wait for her reply as he prepared her another drink.

He walked back to her side and handed her the glass. "Drink it. It will help." He suggested, seeing that whatever happened to her earlier still affected her deeply.

"Thanks." Although she did not initially plan to drink, she took a sip of the drink, hoping that it would help.

After a few sipped, she looked up and found the man still standing on the other side of the couch, just watching her. It was not in a creepy way, but more of curiosity.

"Aren't you going to sit down?" She asked as she lowered the glass of her drink on her lap and stared at the brown liquid instead.

"Only if you like my company. We can talk. Not necessarily why you are crying or why I am sulking. But anything else that can help us get through with this night."

He thought that it was better than to constantly thought of the woman that was breaking his heart. He knew if he kept drinking his pain away, he might break down and do something stupid.

It sickened him to see her clinging to that despicable man. Why did she have to lower herself in such a way? For revenge. He could not accept it anymore. Her reason was not good enough.

"Fine. Your idea seems better than mine." She finally answered him after a few seconds of thinking about his suggestion.

It seemed better than her crying her eyes out. Besides, talking to this stranger would seem better than thinking of a past she could not get back. Better find a way to move on to the future.

He finally sat down on the opposite side of the couch, cradling in his hand his drink. "So, are you a friend of the bride or the groom?" He felt that he should put some humor into their situation.

Well, Alex and Dani were practically getting married. He better started getting used to it, even if he learned to like Dani. There was a point that he wanted her to be his.

But seeing how in love she was with Alex. He knew he never had a chance. He had to let go of that idea before he had fallen too deep. Now, he wanted to salvage his love for the first person he ever loved. But.

"The groom." She answered with a forced smile. She did not cry again, but the pain was quite evident in her eyes. "What about you?" She turned to him and stared at him.

She wanted a distraction and was freely giving her one. The man seemed interesting to talk to, so she would indulge this whim. He had not introduced himself, so she chose not to divulge hers too.

"The bride." He answered her. "She is a dear friend." He told her honestly. Because as Dani always pointed out, they were just friends.

Besides, he came here to fulfill the love that he promised to keep. At the same time, to say goodbye to Dani. It was killing two birds with one stone.

But now, he was not so sure if he still wanted to kill the other bird. He wondered if he was having some second thoughts about his feelings.

"I am hiding not because of the groom but because of my father." She laughed because it was so stupid. "He wanted to marry me off to the first man that would take me."

She did not know why he told him that, but it felt good to take that off her chest. It was like she pulled a thorn out of her wound, and the blood finally bled out and relieved the pressure.

"I am here too, not because of the bride. I could not stand to watch as the woman that I loved destroyed her life." He admitted to her but with a defeated look.

He knew it was a mistake to see her when she was with him. Now, he could not erase the memory of the two of them. He knew she saw him watching her, but she did not stop. She continued with her charade. It was just too much for him.

He knew now that he could not turn back. He could not accept the woman that he loved back in his life. What happened tonight destroyed everything in their relationship?

He refilled their drinks and started talking more about their failed relationship. They started sharing things that hurt them the most. Their alone time became a therapy session as both wanted to heal from the pain.

"I want to run away." She finally said. "I want to start over where I am far away from all of this." She was a bit tipsy, but she was not drunk.

She knew what she was saying, but the difference was this time. She had more courage to say it out loud. She did not care anymore about what her father would say.

She always came, running back to her father whenever he needed her. But this time, she wanted to be selfish and think of herself. She had to stop thinking that it was her obligation to take care of him.

"That is what I plan to do. After tonight, I am leaving. I am taking my life away from here. But it would seem that I am leaving alone." He stated, finally making up his decision.

"Take me with you." She did not know where that came from, but an idea was quickly forming in her mind. "I want to run away with you. I will pay you, of course. But I will ask you to do something for me."

She was still wealthy from her modeling career. In addition to that, she also had a trust fund that her mother left her. But it was something that his father had no idea about, and she planned to keep it that way.

"What is it?" Not that he was interested in running away with her or her money. It all sounded like fun that he liked the idea. Or was he starting to get drunk? He could not tell as he waited for her to answer.

He was starting to find this woman more intriguing compared to the crying lady earlier. He wondered what idea was running through her mind. Would he like it?

"I want you to marry me." That should put a stop to his father's plan to marry her to some guy. At least in this scenario, she was in control.

But was she really in control when she hardly knew the man? Yet she was proposing to him to get married. She was drunker than she thought as she started laughing.

"That was one hell of a proposal." It took him a minute before he could respond to her statement, or was that a question? He could not tell.

He started laughing at the idea too. "Are you serious?" He found it hilarious since he did not even know her name. Why would he marry a stranger and run along with her plan?

"Yes, I think I am." She answered back, not even blinking this time. She was dead serious about her plan.

At the moment, all she could think about was the perfect solution to her problem.. The only thing that could make her father stopped from auctioning her to the highest bidder.

Chapter 286 - The Big Fuzz

"Mom, Laura. I hope you don't mind if I borrow Dani for a few minutes." Alex interrupted the discussion about some latest fashion that was on the trend today.

He could see her struggle to keep up with the two, too polite to excuse herself from the ongoing argument. But he could see right through her facade. She was dying of boredom and needed some rescuing.

He knew that it was time that her knight came out of hiding and saved her from her current situation. His instinct told him that she would appreciate it if he meddled with her affair at this point.

"Sure, go ahead. Have fun with the two of you. Enjoy the night," Laura encouraged her daughter to go with Alex.

She would forever be thankful that Alex became a part of Dani's life. They were so perfect together. She could already see them in their wedding clothes, about to march the aisle.

If only they could move it earlier because she could not wait for them to be married. And, of course, they could not wait for their grandchildren.

"Thanks," Alex said, whisking Dani away from them and towards the end of the ballroom.

"Look at the two of them," Katherine whispered to her friend. She watched his son holding Dani as if she was the most precious thing in the world. "I only wish them happiness, like what we have."

"Yes, I can't wait to see Dani's face later when Alex presents his final gift tonight." Laura giggled at the thought.

When she first heard of Alex's plan, she was ecstatic about it. But she was also slightly confused. But Alex managed to explain to her that he just wanted it to be perfect.

"Me, too." Katherine was so proud of the son she raised. He had grown up to be a fine man.

Dani was lucky to have him, but she believed that his son was fortunate to have met a girl like her. She could never find a flaw in Dani. She checked every box that his son would need in a life partner.

Alex, on the other hand, ushered Dani into an open door. He had reserved this lounge room only for the two of them. He knew that he would require a space where they could escape during the event.

"Thanks for rescuing me out there." She sighed in relief as she walked forward to the couch and dropped dead on the soft cushion. She did not care anymore if she looked like a sack of potato.

She was exhausted after dancing and standing for a long time. She could feel her feet were about to declare a protest. Not to mention her entire body and her muscles that were starting to complain.

"I can see that you needed a few minutes of break." He stood beside her on the couch and leaned forward to her.

He started massaging her neck and shoulders, trying to relieve the stiffness of her muscles. He wanted her to relax and to enjoy what was about to happen next.

"How come you know what I always need? As if you can always read my mind." She questioned him while she closed her eyes.

His hands worked their magic on her skin. His fingers penetrated every sinewy muscle on her body, untangling the stress and releasing the pressure the night had created.

She felt like she was in heaven as he continued to work on the tightness of her body. However, another form of tension was building inside of her, another need that wanted attention.

"Because you always tell me with your action or through your expression what you want from me." He whispered through her ear, tickling her with the vibration of his voice, making her shiver in delight.

"Come here." She looked up to him and stared at his face. "Sit beside me." She tapped the space beside her, wanting only to feel his arms around

"What's going through your mind?" He asked, moving around the couch, and sitting beside her.

She held his hands and stared at his eyes. All she could see was the love that was circling in its orbs. She was sure that the same emotion was reflecting in hers.

"Thanks so much for doing all of this for me. I see all your effort to make this perfect." She held his face in her hands as she felt a tear dropped down on her cheeks.

"Why are you crying?" He asked, wiping the tear with the palm of his thumb. He never liked seeing her cry. "Did I do something wrong?" Alarmed that he might make a mistake.

"No, you did the exact opposite. You made everything so beautiful. All because you want to make me happy. I feel so blessed to have you." Dani confessed, smiling despite the tear on her face.

"It is nothing compared to what you have brought to my life. You have changed me in so many ways." If not for her, he would still be in his quest for the meaning of his life.

"Well, I hope that we are not keeping score." She suddenly teased him, laughing in between her tears of joy.

"I'm positive that I am leading the scoreboard." He responded with a chuckle as he enveloped her in an embrace.

He liked it more when she was beaming with happiness. He would keep telling her all his bad jokes that he could come up with if that would bring a smile to her face.

"But seriously, enough of this crying." She grabbed the white hanky that he produced from his pocket and dabbed it on her face. Careful not to ruin further her makeup.

She still had to face the crowd outside later. She did not want to look like a monster with her face smudged with the different colors on her face.

"I want to tell you something." "I have something to tell you." Both of them simultaneously said to one another, which both of them ended up laughing.

"Jinx." They both said again.

"Double jinx." This time, it was too much of a coincidence.

"Anyway, you go first," Dani said because she could sense that what he was about to say was very important.

Although she believed what she was supposed to say was equally important, he should tell his opinion first. But before any of the two of them could utter a word, a knock on the door interrupted them.

"Excuse me, Sir, to disturb you, but you are requested to come outside." His secretary said. From the expression on her face, there was some urgency in it.

"I think we should go and check it out," Dani said, seeing that it might be a problem that they needed to handle.

Occasions this big always ended up with a problem or two, even if it was almost at its end. But at least, the entire program was soon ending, and the situation did not happen at the very beginning.

That would have been a nightmare for the organizers and Alex. At least, this one would surely be easy to fix. "What's going on?" She heard Alex asked Alona.

Alona hardly said anything yet when she saw the problem standing on the stage. She could hear a familiar voice was speaking on the microphone, broadcasting his message to the guests who cared to listen.

She saw Edward together with Nick as they neared the stage.. As the speech became more audible, she understood now what might be the big fuzz as whispers circulated among the crowd.

Chapter 287 - The Next King

"What are those two up to?" Dani asked, seeing her mortal enemy together with Alex's cousin on the stage.

She did not know about Edward, but if Nick was in the picture. She guaranteed it could only mean bad news. Since she discovered what Nick was capable of doing, she had learned never to trust him.

"I have no idea, but I can bet it is not good." Alex eyed them, watching and listening attentively to what Edward was saying.

So far, Edward had not done anything ruining. He introduced Alex as his cousin and talked about Alex's youth and his many accomplishments. It sounded like he was boosting Alex's character to the crowd.

But Alex knew better to believe it that easily. He was waiting for the next shoe to drop. Based on experience, that was usually the case. Edward would play nice, and then he would surprise him with a bomb.

"What are we going to do?" Dani asked, hoping that those two dumb asses would not ruin the remainder of the night.

She would do anything to prevent those two from whatever they were planning because she could sense that they were there to cause trouble.

"Don't worry. I already expected this from Edward." He had suspected that his cousin would try to sabotage his company once he had a chance.

So, he had Marcus, David, and Evan, together with his trusted team, devised a way to safeguard his company from him. He had foreseen that he would find a way to ruin him.

Although, he was not expecting that he would form an ally with Nick. Fortunately, he learned about it before it was too late. It would have been a struggle for him to deal with those two if they caught him by surprise.

"But you don't know much about Nick. He is very cunning, and he doesn't play fair." She warned him, wanting him to be aware of his new enemy.

She remembered how her father treated Nick as if he was already was his son, only to find out that he was also betraying her father. She always wondered why her father trusted him that easily.

Her father was a hard man to please. He did not trust anyone that easily. But for some reason, when she introduced Nick into their lives, he accepted him with open arms, without too many questions.

"I am sure I can manage them just fine." He turned to her and placed a soft kiss on her lips, assuring her that he had this under control.

He did not want her to worry about this situation. He had already made a contingency plan, but she did not need to know the details of it.

He believed that it was better if he kept her away from his battle. It was also part of Ethan's condition that he had to honor. Besides, she already had too much on her plate to include this.

"Ok. But tell me if you will need any help," Dani still offered, knowing that two heads were better than one. She believed that she could contribute something to his situation.

"Now, my good friend here, Mr. Nickolas Travis, and I would like to support this event by giving one million dollars each to Ms. Daniella Hamilton. So, I encourage everyone here to do the same." Edward announced to the crowd.

Edward knew that Alex was out there in the crowd, silently observing his actions. He was probably fuming inside and panicking about what else he had planned.

But in truth, he was starting to love the game Alex was playing on this side of the world. He now understood why Alex was willing to give up the throne.

"I will," Alex answered her, but he had no plan to do that, not if he could help it.

He once again turned his attention on the stage, seeing the two shook their hands. He could see through their intentions, making a grand gesture, a show for the public eyes.

They just declared to the business community their alliance, strengthening Nick's hold on his position on the top of the leader board with the prince's backing.

"Please be careful," Dani placed her hand on his chest, feeling his steady heartbeat. It was a bit faster than usual, but he seemed not alarmed by the situation.

The crowd, entertained by the prince's charm, clapped their hands and cheered their noble actions. But all Dani saw was the hypocrisy of it all.

A commotion on the other side of the stage caught her attention. She had to strain her neck to see what was going on since she and Alex were still way at the back of the ballroom.

"What is my father doing?" She finally asked, seeing Ethan climbing the stage and facing their two adversaries. "I think we should go to him." She suggested, not liking her father's involvement in this.

If in any other situation, she would not worry for her dad. He could face anything as far as she could recall. But with his current delicate condition, she was afraid that a confrontation might only cause him unnecessary stress.

"Come on. Let us see what we can do to help." Alex guided her through the crowd, observing what was unfolding on the stage.

The last thing he wanted was a bump into their plans. He trusted that Ethan knew what he was doing, but it would still be better if they were at his side just for backup.

He heard the host of the show introduced their most respected leader in the business industry. The legend as they called him. But to most, the king of this city.

"It had been a lovely evening." Ethan started on another mike. He walked up close to Edward and Nick. "Thanks to these two good Samaritans for making such a generous donation."

He extended his hands to the two, which the two had no choice but to accept. They could not afford to make a scene that could ruin all their reputations in front of this community.

"We only did what was necessary," Nick answered Ethan without blinking an eye. He would show this aged man, Ethan, that he was not afraid of his presence.

"We should all follow the example of these two and share our blessings to those who were not as fortunate," Ethan announced to all their guests. "So, I will match their contribution." He winked to the crowd.

He heard the people roared in laughter and cheered with his action. He finally had everyone's attention which was what he wanted. Then, he saw Alex and Dani showed up from behind the crowd.

The couple made their way near the stage, which was what he wanted. He could see his wife with Fred and Katherine on the other side, waiting for his final announcement.

"Since I am already here standing in your presence. Let me take this opportunity to announce my plan to retire effective immediately. I am giving up my post as the CEO of all my companies." Ethan declared with a smile on his lips.

Edward and Nick were left paralyzed on their spot upon the announcement. Unable to believe that Ethan would eventually give up his company.

A louder uproar from the crowd ensued his announcement. Nobody expected that. Chatters and whispers echoed around the room as questions flew in the air.

At this point, the whole world was probably in shock by his unexpected decision. The news flew fast these days with the use of modern technology.

One question was evident in everyone's eyes as all wondered who would be taking his place. Who would be the next king?

Chapter 288 - The Legacy

"Why are you retiring?"

"Speculations said that you are sick. Are you dying?"

"Who is taking your place?"

Several more questions echoed in the large room, waiting for some answers. Ethan listened to them all and waited for the crowd to calm down and for the noise to die down.

His announcement would certainly create chaos in the industry if the questions in people's minds remained unanswered. He had to be careful with his words to appease the business community and prevent the collapse of his empire.

"Do you know anything about this?" Dani turned to Alex upon hearing her father's speech.

She was conflicted about how she should feel about it. She felt hurt that her father did not share this information with her, but what did she expect when she barely talked to him.

She looked at her mother, who was beaming with happiness. Her heart went to her mom, seeing the relief in her eyes. Her mom always wished that he would take it easy, but retiring was a gigantic leap.

"Yes, Ethan shared it with me during our meetings. But he made me promise not to tell you because he wanted it to be a grand surprise for you and your mom." Alex explained to her, hoping that she would not take it the wrong way that he kept it from her.

"Well, it was a bit shocking, and it did sting a bit that I was not informed about it, but I think I understand." Dani carefully analyzed her feelings about the situation.

But at the end of it all, she thought it was for the best. It would give her father time to take his surgery and recover. Live his life together with her mother for the rest of their lives.

"That is better. Try to understand what your father is going through. I am sure that this is not easy for him. To let go of the things he had worked hard all his life." He wanted Dani to see it the way he saw it.

He would have hesitated too, in the same way, Ethan did before he finally agreed to his suggestion. He would have fought tooth and nail to keep the company he had bled his entire life to build.

But like what he said to Ethan, there were things meant to end. Then, a new beginning awaiting to anyone who wished to try. Life did not end until the clock stopped ticking.

"I guess you are right." She voiced out her agreement. "How do you always know the right words to say?" She leaned her body into his, wanting the warmth and comfort that only he could provide.

It could not be easy for her father to come up with the decision. But in the end, she was proud of him for doing the right thing for himself and their family.

"Because of you. You always make me think of what is best for us." He whispered in her hair, resting his cheek on the side of her head. Then, he enveloped a portion of her body in his arm.

"Settle down, everyone." The host of the program shouted to catch everyone's attention. "Let us hear out Mr. Hamilton's explanation."

Slowly, the crowd quieted down as all waited for Ethan to continue with his message. His reassuring words were the only thing that could calm down the alarming bells that rang in the business community.

Almost all businesses in the city and a large number around the world had a connection with Ethan's company. His successor would play a crucial part in the future of his company, shareholders, and its joint ventures, among other things.

"Do you know who he had in his mind to take over?" Dani asked, suddenly concerned that her father had gone insane and decided to leave the company to her, despite her refusal.

But if it was not her, then who else would he have in mind? Who else would he trust with his company? She doubted he would choose the people who had served him all his life.

Her father trusted them, but not enough to give them the key to the kingdom. She was still busy contemplating all the possibilities when her thoughts were interrupted by her father's voice.

She looked up at Alex, but he did not answer her question as he continued to look at the man on the stage who was about to make his declaration.

It clicked in her mind at the same time that she heard her father's words. "I am naming Alexander Princeton Blackstone as the new CEO of my companies."

Another uproar broke into the ballroom as loud whispers circulated the crowd. The host repeatedly requested the guests into silence for Ethan to continue.

As soon as the place settled down once again, Ethan decided to resume. "But rest assured that I will still be acting as his advisor as long as he would need me at his side."

It had been a long week for him, dealing with meetings with Laura's supervision. He had to convince his board to take a chance on Alex as their new head.

There was some hesitation with his choice of a successor after his misjudgment with Nick, but fortunately, Alex's credentials and his word still spoke volumes. It had been enough for them to agree.

"Alex and Dani, my princess, would you like to join me on stage," Ethan spoke softly on the mike, his affection for his daughter evident in his voice as he said her name.

There was no way he could name her daughter as his replacement because the board would never be confident with her administration. Unlike Alex, he was born to lead and head a great company.

"Do you know anything about this?" Dani turned her head in his direction as they continued to walk towards the stage.

It was another news that just exploded in her face. She wondered if there was more Alex and her father were hiding from her. Those were two secrets that were very much should have involved her in the decision process, especially when it concerned Alex.

"Yes, it is another of his condition that I can't explain to you right now. But later, I will tell you about it." Alex assured her.

He knew that he could never keep a secret this big from her, so better give her some of the information, if not all. That would at least suffice her curiosity.

"Ok." She knew she had no other choice but to wait since they were in the middle of the event, and she did not want to make a scene.

"I think you all know Alexander Princeton." Ethan tapped Alex's shoulder as he reintroduced him in the crowd. "And my daughter." He proceeded as he kissed her on the cheek.

He could notice the approval in most of his friends in the business. Their nods were a sign that they had agreed with his choice. But there were still a few who had skepticism in their faces.

But he was not concerned about that. There was still time to change their minds. Ethan had a strong faith in Alex's capability. He already had proven himself to him, time and time again.

He did not doubt that Alex would bring his company to the next century. To continue to domineer the market in the world.. Alex guaranteed to continue the legacy he was leaving in this world.

Chapter 289 - Like A Sister

"We want to know more about the situation of the company." Another of his major stockholder asked in the crowd. Many more questions circulated in the air, but he refused to answer them anymore.

Now, everybody gathered in the ballroom, intrigued with the turn of events. Nobody expected the announcement of Ethan's retirement and his declaration of his new heir to his empire.

Was that the end of the surprise? Well, he doubted it. He might have started it, but it did not mean that he would end it. It was not his party anyway. He believed Alex still had something up his sleeves.

"I will hold my official press conference for the formal turnover of the company to Alex in a few days. I hope that all of you will continue to support my company under its new management." Ethan ended his speech with a big smile.

He was expecting that he would leave the stage after his big announcement with a heavy heart. But surprisingly, he felt the opposite.

He was glad and relax, knowing that his company and his daughter would be in great hands. He believed that Alex would do right with his daughter and his company would thrive in his administration.

"Well, the floor is yours, Alex." He hugged his future son-in-law, giving him his blessing to continue what he had started.

He could die a happy man any time soon. But if fate would still give him a chance to live longer, then he could finally fulfill another of his promise. He would grab it and savor every minute of it.

It was a word he had spoken in his youth, which was to devote his life to his loving wife and his future grandkids for the rest of his life. And to create more happy memories that he could share with his family.

"Thanks, Ethan, for giving me your trust. I know that it would not have been easy." Alex responded with a genuine smile. "I will make sure to devote my life to continuing your legacy."

He did not give empty promises. His honor was very significant to him. So, he had to prevent himself from deviating from his plans and make sure his priorities were straight.

"I know you will, but don't forget that you also have my daughter to take care of and not just my company." Ethan decided to remind him, not wanting him to follow his path.

He was obsessed with building this company that he almost lost his family. He was young and stupid, thinking the challenge of being on the top was the only thing that mattered.

Now, he realized that there was more to life than money and power. Luckily, he learned his lesson before it was too late for him. Now, he has a few days, or a week or more time for his family.

"Of course, Dani would always be my number one priority." Alex returned his attention to the woman beside him.

"Dad, I am happy that you decided to retire and focus on getting better. You don't know how much this means to me and especially Mom." Dani expressed her happiness with her father's decision to quit.

But she could not say the same thing with the other announcement he just made. She was not exactly happy with Alex taking over his company. It felt like he only passed the curse that almost destroyed their family.

"I did it for us. I want to live a long life to spend with you and your mother. But especially to my future grandkids. So, better hurry up with the wedding." Ethan teased the couple before kissing his daughter again and finally leaving them on the stage.

He knew now that his daughter was in good hands. Alex was a good man. A man he could trust with his life. He was ten times the man that he was, so there was nothing he would ask more.

He glanced at the other end of the stage. It would seem that Nick and Edward's plans did not payout since his announcement overshadowed theirs.

After what he did, nobody would remember their stunt. Now, they sulked on the side, unaware of what hit them. It would take time for the two of them to regroup, and by that time, Alex would be ready for them.

"Since we are all already gathered in here, I think it is time to make some more statements." He looked at Dani, still seeing the slight confusion in her eyes.

He could not blame her. What happened tonight had been one roller coaster ride. But the ride was not yet over as there was one more to come.

He faced his parents, who looked like they were also in full support of his plans. Then, he turned to Ethan and Laura, who gave him the thumbs-up signal.

"I have accepted Ethan's wish for me to take his place." He started and continued to assure everyone concerned that he would do his best to fit in Ethan's shoes.

But that was not his only plan. If he could tackle the challenge, he wished to surpass what Ethan had accomplished in his reign. Now that he had entered Ethan's world, he had to be careful not to lose track of his priorities.

When he started building his company, the only priority he had was to be on top of the leader board. But things changed when Dani came to the picture.

"What are your intentions for the company?" A prominent gentleman in the oil industry asked him, shouting among the crowd.

"I think this is not the time for me to discuss my plans. But I assure you that I will be conducting a briefing as soon as can be arranged." He decided to follow the lead set by Ethan.

It was not the time and place for him to discuss what happened earlier. He only wished to address some issues and then moved on to his next plan for the night.

"Ms. Hamilton, what do you think of your father's actions? Is it ok with you that he passed the business that was supposed to be yours to your future husband?" It was a malicious question from a questionable woman, Cassie.

"You don't have to answer that if you don't want to," Alex whispered to her, but he would not stop her if she wanted to respond to her.

He already suspected that they would stoop to this low to ruin this night.

"I want to," Dani uttered to him. "If my father thinks that Alex was the better choice for the job, then there is no doubt that Alex will do a great job." She answered the question.

But before she turned her back to her old friend, she added a few more words to her. "I have complete faith in the man that is standing beside me. Can you say the same thing?"

After that, Dani saw her throwing daggers at her. Cassie was burning with rage, knowing she had once again outwitted her. Dani knew that her friend was intelligent.

She could not understand why Cassie was sticking with Nick. Why she allowed him to use her? Dani had been a good friend to her, but Cassie now treated her like she was her mortal enemy.

She had been the puzzle that still boggled her mind until now.. But it was a friendship that she would forever regret, not because Cassie hated her, but because there was a time, she loved her like a sister.

Chapter 290 - Miserable For Losing

The circus that Edward and Nick started eventually died down, and the regular program resumed, much to the relief of the organizers. The night was not yet over, and the event must go on.

Alex escorted Dani back to the party, seeing their friends converging in the center of the ballroom. Mingling with their friends, he then realized that Marcus was nowhere in sight.

"Congratulations, Alex. You never mentioned to us that you are going to inherit Hamilton's multibillion-dollar group of company." David clapped him in the back to show his support.

"I could not say it until Ethan announced it," Alex explained it to David, but he knew hundreds of questions were already swirling in his mind about this arrangement.

He could only bring one lawyer to the negotiation table because he did not want Ethan to think he was making a hostile takeover of his company. So, he only took Marcus as his second in command.

Ever since Marcus accepted Dani in his life, things between them had slowly returned to normal. Eventually, Alex informed him about his plans, and Marcus guided him to the legalities.

"Well, it was a real surprise. It was like you won a lottery," Evan expressed with excitement. "But I better shut up." He suddenly realized what he implied in front of Dani.

"Don't worry. It only looks like Alex had won a lottery, but it is worse than that." Dani assured Evan that she was not offended by his statement. "He also inherited the entire burden of running that place."

She wanted to put some enthusiasm in her voice, but it still ended up sounding like she just gave him a death sentence. But in truth, it was like Alex was about to sit in the electric chair and not a throne.

"You look stunning in that gown." Rosella complimented the dress she was wearing as she came closer to her side. At least that distracted her from her thoughts.

"You look lovely too, Rosella." She told her in a friendly tone. She was glad that David seemed to be finally settling with one girl. She did like David. She sensed that he was a good man.

"Just call me, Rose. Well, most of my friends do, except for David. He likes calling me by my name, Rosella." She offered, wanting her to consider her as a friend.

"Then, call me Dani too." She could feel that they would hit it off. She sensed that they had a few things that they had in common. They continued to talk while the men talked, on their side.

Jacky, on the other hand, excused herself from Lance's side and joined Dani and Rose. She had enough of the surprises. She wanted answers from her friend.

"But what about the Council?" Lance suddenly reminded his cousin about their arrangement with their family back home, pulling him away from the others.

He had sensed this was what Alex had been aiming for since he started his business in this country. But he could not help think of the faith of their kingdom in the hands of Edward.

After training in this country under his cousin, Lance counted on Alex to realize that Edward was not fit for the throne. Then, he would eventually decide that he should take his place as their king.

"I will deal with them when I visit them," Alex whispered to his cousin, remembering seeing his cousin with Jacky in his arms earlier.

He wondered what was happening with them. But he would deal with that another time. Besides, it was not his problem to meddle with in the first place. As of now, he already had his problems to solve.

At least his father agreed with his ideas. He supported what he wanted to do with his life. He believed that should be enough approval he needed to proceed with his plan.

"Yeah, I guess," Lance answered him, a bit disappointed with the turn of events.

But he could not blame Alex for wanting a different life. Everybody deserved to follow their heart's desire. Maybe he should follow his advice and follow what he believed he desired.

He looked at the woman in his arms earlier, which was the object of his affection. He did not want to think any more about the rules and the what-ifs. He would deal with it when the time came. For now, he would try to follow his heart.

"Have anybody seen Marcus?" Alex asked his friends, who seemed to be too busy to notice that he was not around.

"I think I saw him walking to the bar earlier," Evan said, recalling the earlier scene in his mind.

"Well, if you will excuse me for a few minutes, I need something from him." He informed Dani that he would be back and walked in the direction of the bar.

He was glad that their friends were all here to support them. But there was still one thing he had to do before the night was over, and he would need their friends to help him.

But now, he needed Marcus to set it up for him because he could not pull this off by himself. He wanted this night to be memorable for Dani. He did not wish the earlier event as the last thing she remembered about this night.

"Marcus, are you ready with the plan," Alex asked him, and he nodded with a smile.

"Of course, I am. I'm just waiting for your signal." Marcus told him.

He knew that he could not mess this up. It was seldom that Alex asked for personal favors, and it would be perfect.

The signal was when almost all the other guests had left. He wanted the final scene to be an intimate event, with only their families and friends would remain as their guests.

"Then, everything is set." He uttered with a shaky breath. He could feel that he was nervous, but there was no reason to be.

"Everything is all set, man. All we need is to wait for the people to leave." Marcus promised him that everything would work according to their plan.

Marcus never saw his friend in such a state. Alex could go toe to toe to the king and even probably to the President of their country but never be this agitated.

"Good. Why don't you join us? The group is having a blast." He offered, seeing that he was drinking alone in the bar.

He was still far from being drunk, but he was still concerned about him. He had a clear idea why he was acting this way. He believed that it had to do with Jacky being in the arms of Lance.

"No. I want to be alone for a while. You go ahead. I promise I will join later." Marcus said to his friend.

"Don't worry. I will make sure that all is perfect later." He added, noticing his friend's worry lines.

"Ok. But be sure to join us once the crowd starts leaving." He instructed Marcus, who only nodded but never looked his way again.

Marcus was just too proud to admit that he had made a mistake or too stupid to realize what he had lost.. But the bottom line was, he was miserable for losing the one valuable person in his life.