

Royal Contract 291

Chapter 291 - A Strange Woman

"You hardly know me," Troy said, slightly shocked with her proposal. She was not expecting she would suggest that to a stranger. "I don't even know your name. Besides, I can be a serial killer for all you know."

He looked at the woman sitting across from him on the couch, wondering what was going through her mind. He pondered if she was serious about running away from his father.

Then, again what about him. Was he even considering taking this girl with him? What about marriage? He believed he had gone insane because he was still contemplating it.

"Well, my name is Tyra Richards, so if you give me your name, then maybe we would not be strangers anymore." She stated without hesitation. Then, she moved a bit closer to him, shifting to face him. "Well, are you?"

She waited for his response to her queries, still amazed at her boldness. She was used to fighting for her place in this world. Being in the fashion industry was not a forgiving profession.

If her mother was only alive, she might not be in this situation now. But her mother died. She found herself stuck in the care of a father who only thought of his interest.

"Am I what?" His mind was still swirling with the idea and did not catch most of what she said.

"Are you a serial killer?" She repeated to him, snapping her fingers at him. "Would you focus and listen? I am Tyra, and you are?" She was becoming impatient because any time her father might look for her.

"I'm Troy, and no. I am not a serial killer." He finally answered her. "Tyra Richards, why does that name sound familiar?" He voiced out his curiosity once the name registered in his brain.

He had heard her name before, but he could not identify where he had. He searched his memory bank if he had met her somewhere. But he could swear now was the first time he saw her.

"Then, all we need to do, Troy, is to share some information, and then, if we think we can pull this fake marriage, then we are good to go." Tyra felt that it was that easy.

"But your proposal is insane. Why don't you just run away from your father?" Troy suggested, still finding her whole idea ridiculous.

"Because he would not stop forcing me to marry someone. I know that one way or another, he would be able to convince me to agree with him." She pointed out.

She now realized how naive she was not to see through to what his father was doing all this time. He manipulated her to think that it was all her idea to break up with Alex and go out with Edward.

He played her like a puppet, and she danced and acted according to the strings he used to control her. But she was afraid that he still had that hold on her until she found a way to break away.

"Still, asking the first person you see to marry you is not the solution." He stated, disbelieving the persistence of this girl.

"Should I wait for my father to find the man out there that I should marry tomorrow? I don't think he would be better than you. He would still be a stranger who would have a hold on me." She rationalized to him.

"Unlike if I find a man who would be willing to marry me with a price and a deal. Then, I can dictate my terms. I am the one in control of my situation and fate." She added.

It did sound so simple to her ears when she explained it to him. The idea was becoming more convincing as the minutes passed. She believed it was perfect for her plan to escape the clutches of her father.

"I don't know." Troy still was skeptical about her plans, knowing nothing about her background. But he still was puzzled with himself since he was still entertaining her crazy idea.

She was indeed beautiful, so he could not ignore that, but he was surrounded by many beautiful women every night. He should be immune to that.

"Think about it. After a time, we can divorce. And then, problem-solve." She told him. "You will be richer, and I will have my freedom."

For years she had tried to stay away from her father. But her guilt of what happened in the past always pulled her back to him. She felt obligated to listen to him and agree with his suggestions.

"What makes you think that I will want your money?" He raised his eyebrows at her, curious to what she would say to that.

"I guess I always assumed that all want money even if they already have them. Money was money, no matter how I look at it. Everybody wants it." She told him what she thought.

Then, some form of sound penetrated her ears, disrupting their conversation. Something loud came from behind the closed door. Both of them turned to the door with inquiries on their faces.

"What do you think was happening outside?" Tyra voiced out her curiosity with the noise that came from outside.

In every minute that passed, there was applause, a lot of applause, then discussions that seemed to intensify. She could not help but wonder what was causing the raucous outside.

"I have no idea," Troy responded to her while straining his ears near the door, analyzing the possibilities.

He moved closer to the door, leaving Tyra by the couch, and peeked outside. From his position, all he could discern from the situation was the mixed reaction of the crowd.

He recognized some people on the stage, but the sound was blurry, and the words were unrecognizable. He was not surprised though, it was a party, and things were always bound to happen.

"Maybe we should check it out." She offered as she stood and walked towards Troy's side.

They quickly walked towards the crowd and listened to the announcements, shocked to see the people standing on the stage. They stood among the crowd listening, figuring if it had any relevance to them.

Eventually, all the commotion died down, and everything seemed to go back to normal. But Troy noticed two figures walked to the side and argued. He recognized the girl anywhere, even if he did not see her face.

But when he finally saw Cassie clinging to Nick, he could only think of one thing he wanted to do. "What about going out first? Let us get to know each other." He suggested as he turned away from the scene and focused his attention on Tyra.

Marriage was such a big step. Besides, Tyra still might change her mind when the alcohol in her brain wore off. Or, better yet, if her anger with her father subsided.

"Like a date?" She questioned, looking at him funnily. "I just asked you to marry me, and you answer me with a date. Now, I think something is wrong with you."

"Well, here is my card. Call me if you decide to go out with me." He told her. "Now, I have to go. You have until morning. Then I will be out of here." He smiled at her. "It was nice meeting you."

Now, it was up to her if she could change his mind and postpone moving by morning. His bags were packed. He was going with or without her. This time, he was not referring to Cassie.

He did not want to make any haste decisions and end up in another disastrous relationship with a strange woman, even if it was just a fake marriage.

Chapter 292 - For Better And For Worse

"Congratulations, Alexander, on a great fundraising event." An old gentleman that he recently met greeted him before walking away towards the exit.

Most of the guests had almost left. The party was a success. The donations exceeded all expectations. What more could Alex ask for tonight? Well, there was one more thing he wished to do before he concluded the evening.

With his family, her family, and friends left in the ballroom, he knew it was time to proceed with the last part of the program. Initially, he thought of doing it during the ceremonies.

But after Edward and Nick's stunt, he decided that it was not the right time. He had to postpone it another time. Then, he realized that tonight was the right time while everyone important in their life was still present.

"Are we all set?" He asked Marcus who was talking to the organizer.

It was the last one in his program before everybody left and packed up for the night. He had never done this in his life, so it was understandable to feel a bit anxious about it.

He left Dani with their family and moved towards the back of the ballroom to finalize his last mission for the night. He was glad that he put Marcus in charge. So far, all night had run more or less smoothly.

"Yes, and everybody is already gathered at the center, just waiting for your signal," Marcus informed him as he finalized the instructions to the organizers.

"Thanks, man. You are a great help." Alex clapped his friend on the shoulder, preparing himself mentally for what he had to do next. It was now or never.

He walked towards the stage and took the mike from the host of the show. It was time to address his remaining guests and expressed his appreciation for their presence at this event.

"I wish to thank all of you for supporting this event." He spoke up until his voice reverberated around the room. He waited until all their attention was on him before he decided to continue.

He stood alone on the stage as everyone stepped in front of him, even Dani, looking at him with a smile on her face. She was beautiful no matter how he looked at her.

"You are all instrumental in making this night for me and Dani special." Alex continued saying to the remaining crowd in the ballroom. "It will not be a success if not for your help."

He continued to thank everyone in the crowd, including their parents and friends. He even saw Edward, who was about to walk out. It would seem that Nick and Cassie had left already.

The crowd started cheering for him and his accomplishment for tonight, congratulating him for his success. He signaled for the music to play in the background, and the entire ballroom echoed with a soft melody.

"We still have a few minutes to enjoy the night, so I encourage everyone to take a partner and dance with us. Dani, would you like to join me on the stage?" He waved to her to join him.

Their family and friends started taking their partners and began to swing to the rhythm. Everyone was having a great time as they took the opportunity to enjoy the remaining of the night.

"What is this?" Dani smiled at him, curious about the weird way he was acting.

She could see that something was bothering him. She had noticed it all night, but she only attributed it to the stress of the event. However, she sensed that since the event was over, he seemed to be on edge still.

"Did you enjoy this night?" He asked as he held her in his arms, swaying her gently in the soft music.

He would always find everything they do as something special, even the small things like watching a movie or lying on the bed with a book in their hands. What was important was that he had Dani beside him at all times.

"Of course. You worked so hard to make this happened, and I would always be grateful to you for it." She tiptoed on her toes and planted a soft kiss on his lips.

"But there is one more thing that I wish to accomplish before we go and call this a night." He inserted his hand on his pant's pocket, making sure that it was still securely inside.

He knelt on one knee in front of Dani and took her hand in his. "What are you doing?" She was perplexed by his action. It took her a few minutes to process the situation.

Many things already happened tonight, and another one seemed to be too much. But Dani waited until he said what he came to do. However, she already had an idea of what he was thinking.

But was she ready for it? Well, yes. She had been waiting for him to talk about the marriage, but a proposal was not what she had in mind. Is that what was about to happen?

"I wanted to do this for weeks, but things always were not the right timing. But now, I am not taking any chances. I want to do what was right from the very start." He started explaining his action.

"What do you mean?" She had to strain her ears to hear his words and not just speculate about them.

She felt like the entire scenario was surreal, and she was in a dream and was about to wake up. She had to blink her eyes several times to make sure that she was wide awake.

"I meant I want to ask you in front of our family and friends if you will take me as your husband." He finally uttered the words that had been in the tip of his tongue for so long. "Please marry me."

This time, he wanted to do it right. Replace the mediocre story of their marriage proposal. He felt he was ready to marry Dani.

Not because he wanted the throne, but because he wanted her to be with him forever, for better and for worse.

Chapter 293 - Only Proposal

He took her hand in his and held it firmly in front of him. On the other hand, he took out the ring that her grandmother had worn on her engagement day. It was a family heirloom that passed down through generations.

He had promised his Nanna that he would only give this ring to the person who held his heart. It was not just a ring but a symbol of love that would last as long as eternity.

"Please marry me?" She heard him, as well as the whole crowd watching them.

She had waited for this moment ever since he said he loved her. She had looked forward to them talking about marriage, but she did not expect he would go to all this trouble.

She was speechless as she watched him down on his knees. She never thought that he would propose in front of their families and friends.

"I love you so much. I want to declare that in front of all the people that mattered to us." He continued when she remained quiet. He had never felt this nervous before, afraid that she might reject his offer.

He would do anything to make her happy and would give the world to her if that was what it would take. But for now, he knew that declaring his love for her to their parents was the first step.

He was calling off the contract but replacing it with something real, a marriage that would bind them for eternity. He was going to prove that a life with her was all he needed.

"I..." She started to say with trembling lips, unable to continue.

She suddenly felt a tear came down from her cheeks, not because she was unhappy by his action. It was the opposite as she felt overjoyed. She quickly wiped the tear away, not wanting to cry on such a great day.

She had dreamt of this day, wished that someone would truly love her for who she was and not her background. Now, the prince of her dreams knelt before her, declaring his love for her.

"Please put us all out of misery and answer the man." She heard the voice of her father shouting amongst the remaining crowd.

It was only then that she realized that the music had stopped, and all eyes were focused on the two of them as they stood in the center of the stage.

She looked at the expectant eyes of the crowd. She had no idea what was going through their mind. As far as they knew, Alex had already proposed to her from the lie they fed them.

"I love you too." She finally focused on the eyes that never left hers. She could read them clearly as he bared his soul to her. She held his cheek with her hand. "And, of course, I will marry you."

"Thank you for making me the happiest man alive." He knew that it all sounded so cheesy, but as of now, he was willing to do anything to make sure that she understood how much she meant to him.

He quickly took the ring and replaced the other one that he bought for the show. At this point, the charade was over, and it was time for the real deal.

She could hear everyone cheering for them, but her heart was drumming too loudly for them to matter. She could only focus on the ring on her finger and the man now standing in front of her.

"You also made me so happy." She whispered to him, not wanting their spectator to hear her words. "You outdid yourself with this one. Now, how can I ever top this one?" She teased him.

She never liked it when he did all the surprises. It was not fair in their relationship if he was the only one making an effort. So, once in a while, she also threw in some of her tricks to return the favor.

"By marrying me." It was the only answer she got from him before she enveloped her in his arms.

She felt his lips moved softly on hers, waiting for her to grant him access. When she finally opened wide, she finally had lost control. She allowed him to dominate the kiss and do whatever he wanted.

But unfortunately, they were not alone as people started shouting around them. She suddenly realized that they had to stop before they did more than kissing in front of their parents.

"Ok. You two. Maybe you should wait for the honeymoon before making us some grandchildren." Ethan voiced out his opinion.

"But I don't mind having some little ones running around as soon as possible." Katherine also expressed her wish for a grandchild.

"Would you two stop? Let us focus first on the wedding. We still have to set a specific date." Laura stated with excitement, seeing how happy her daughter was with Alex's surprise.

She felt her daughter was lucky to have a man like Alex. How many men would go through the trouble of proposing twice so that her family could witness it?

It was an experience that would forever remain in her memories and something that she would tell her children and grandchildren. She could only wish her daughter and Alex many more of this unforgettable life-changing experience.

Jacky and Lance finally joined them on the stage and congratulated them. "Let me see." Jacky scrutinized the ring and looked at it with awe. "It is so beautiful. It is so perfect for you."

She was genuinely happy for her friend. She had her doubts about Alex at the start, with her judgment clouded by what Marcus did. But

that quickly changed when Alex proved time and time again that he was different.

"Congratulations, Alex and Dani. You certainly deserve to be happy." Lance expressed his support for his cousin's plans.

A minute later, a few more of their friends also joined them on stage. They also started congratulating them, which was a bit redundant since they were already getting married.. But the couple still accepted it, knowing that officially, this was the only proposal they ever made.

Chapter 294 - Long Goodbyes

She was pacing her room, trying to think if she should call him or not. The alcohol she had consumed all night was finally wearing off. But the memory of what happened in the ballroom remained quite clearly in her mind.

She held in her hand his number if she decided to push through with her plans. But he was right. She should check his background first before she jumped into this crazy idea of hers.

"Call him." Tyra encouraged herself as she held the phone in her hand. What could go wrong with a date? Many, in truth.

First, she might discover that she and that strange man would never work. He might look good on the outside, but his attitude was rotten on the inside.

While she paced in her room, contemplating whether to make a deal with him. Another situation was happening in the other building not far from hers.

He waited for her to come home, standing in the lobby, making sure no one would notice him in the corner. It was late, he was tired from the long night, but he wanted to end this right now.

When she finally arrived alone, he followed her to her room and knocked on her door, knowing that she would be on her own. He did not want to cause trouble for her, but he did not want to be part of this game she was playing.

"I'm sorry if I can't come and talk to you at the party." She started explaining to him how she could not blow her cover in front of Nick.

She kept talking but failed to mention his threat to leave her.

It was as if she had forgotten all about it, and all she could care about was her situation.

"Stop it! Cassie." He shouted, tired of listening to her shit. He came here to end it with her but see if there was still room for him to salvage their relationship.

But hearing her talked about herself and her plans, as she disregarded his wishes, only strengthened his resolve to end his relationship with her.

"What?" She asked, confused with his reaction. Then, it finally clicked in her brain his previous threat.

"I told you that I am not doing this with you anymore. I'm sorry, but I decided to end this. I don't think we have any future together." He spoke to her gently, hoping this time she would finally understand that he was serious.

"You can't be serious. But you love me, and I love you. You promise that you will stand by my side no matter what." She could not believe what she was hearing from him.

She understood him the first time he threatened her about leaving. It was not the first time, but she always lured him to stay and help her out. She believed that she could still talk him out of leaving her.

"I am dead serious, Cassie. I can't do this anymore. I think we have reached the point that we are living in two separate ways. I still love you but not enough to support this craziness." He pointed to her and her slutty outfit.

There was no way he could continue a relationship with her. Her wished to avenge what happened to her family changed her so much. He just realized that he was in love with the idea of her, but the girl he loved was long gone.

"Does Dani had anything to do with this? Did you also fall to her charms?" She questioned him as she started to study him.

There must be an explanation for his sudden change of heart. He would not simply fall out of love for her if there was no other woman in his life.

"She had nothing to do with this." He told her as he moved towards the window and looked outside.

He did not need to drag Dani's name in this situation, but in truth, she had everything to do with his realization. She was perfect in every way. It was just a bad break that she was already in love with someone else.

"So, she also managed to twist you in her little fingers," Cassie spoke with so much contempt in her voice that she wanted to strangle the woman that continued to ruin her life.

"She had nothing to do with this. It is my decision. I am leaving you because you are not the same girl I loved before." He tried to appeal to the girl he once knew.

But all he could see now was someone he barely recognized. Cassie was only a shadow of the woman he once loved. Her face was the same, or more of improved compared to before. Her body was something that would always make men had a second look.

But in her place was the manipulative woman who could only see through her anger. She could not even see reason anymore. Maybe she was already too involved with what Nick had implanted in her mind that she had forgotten that there was more to life than revenge.

"She had poisoned your mind against me." She started crying, knowing that it had worked on him before.

It usually made him rethink his decision and eventually softened up to her. She had to pull all the stunts because she could not give up her plans. She was so close, but she did not want to lose him too.

"I'm sorry, but my decision is final. There is nothing else you can do to change my mind. I only came here to tell you in person. I am leaving, and I am not coming back." He went straight to the point.

He could not keep dragging their situation when he already knew there was no more point in it.

"Please, tell me that you are only making a point. That you are not going through with this." She hugged him from behind.

But from his calm demeanor, she already knew that she had her answer. This time, she had lost him.

"I have to go. I only wish you the best of luck." He finally pulled away from her.

He left her by the window and walked straight to the door without looking back. He could not look at her and gave her hope.. He also did not see the point of long goodbyes.

Chapter 295 - Only Talk

"You know you don't have to bring me home. I could have just grabbed a taxi." Jacky said to him at the back of the black limousine that was taking her home.

She decided that it was time to leave the happy couple for their new adventure. She said her goodbyes but did not expect that Lance would come along with her.

He insisted on taking her home, even though she refused to accept his offer. She did not want to waste any more of his time. The ball was over, and her time was up. She should slip away before the clock turned twelve.

"You know I can't do that, Jacky. I will make sure that I return you to your home safely." Lance, who was sitting close beside her, turned to her and took her hands in his.

He could sense that she was ready to bolt again, unsure if it had something to do with him or something else. He did notice Marcus occasionally looking at her.

He was not sure if she even noticed him, but he did. He could not help but wondered if Marcus was still interested in her. Judging from his observation, he might still be. Who would not be? Jacky was a great catch.

"Ok. Fine. Thanks, I guess." She always fell into silence whenever she felt cornered in an awkward situation with him.

Until now, she felt confused about what their situation was. She did love the kiss she shared with this magnificent prince. It had been the highlight of her night.

But what would come after that? Are they now dating, or was it a one-time thing? She had no idea if she should ask him outright about it or just waited it out.

"It is the least I can do." He told her, still holding on to her hands. He could feel that it was slightly shaking in his touch.

He figured that her edginess had something to do with him. He was not exactly forthcoming about how he planned to proceed with their relationship.

There were several things he wanted to discuss with her. But he had no intention in doing that at the ball and certainly not inside this car. The privacy of her apartment seemed ideal if she was going to invite him inside.

She looked at their entwined hands, wondering if it should mean anything. Lance did kiss her and said a bunch of stuff, but where was this leading them. "You know what? Stop being honorable for once."

She felt like a child throwing a tantrum, but she did not care because she had enough of waiting for him to make a move, or if ever he would.

It was either he figured out what he wanted or just moved on. Jacky could not wait for him until he realized that she was just a toy he enjoyed playing with until it was his time to face reality.

"What do you mean?" He was slightly bewildered by her sudden outburst.

Although, he might have an idea why she suddenly had the urge to vent her frustration at him. He was also feeling the same difficulty as her with their current relationship.

He wished there was a simple explanation that could magically make things right. But in his world, things were always a bit more complicated.

"You are giving me so many mixed signals. I was ok with you putting me in the friend zone. I had accepted it because that exactly is where I belong." She pulled her hands away from him with a bit of force.

She did feel a slight resistance from him before he finally let her fingers slid out of his. She could not afford more distraction from her objective, and his hands and the warmth it emitted in hers were preventing her from being rational.

"Then, why did you have to kiss me when we both know that it will only lead us to nowhere. It was a big mistake that I allowed you to take me home tonight. I should have taken a cab." She continued with her litany.

While Lance maintained his silence, allowing Jacky to release all her pent-up emotions. At least now, he saw what she thought of their relationship. More or less, her view of it.

Yes, he had played it safe with her in mind. He did not want to make any haste decision that could only hurt her in the end. But before making any move, he felt obligated to lay to her all his cards.

"Actually. Stop this car. I want to get out." She tapped on the partition window that separated them from the driver. "Stop the car because I am getting out."

"Jacky, would you at least hear me out. Give me a chance to explain my side. As you said, we are friends. Should you at least invite me to your apartment so we can talk about this?" Lance appealed to her.

The glass partition opened up, and the driver looked at the rearview mirror at his passenger. "Should I stop, Sir?" The chauffeur asked.

"Stop the car on the sidewalk." He instructed, honoring the wish of Jacky.

The partition closed again, and slowly the car changed direction until it made a gradual stop. He only looked at her but did not say any more.

When the chauffeur opened the door, Lance stopped Jacky from moving from her place. "Take the car. I will feel much better knowing that you got home safely."

He quickly stepped out of the car and closed the door behind him. He instructed the chauffeur to bring Jacky safely home. He would take a cab back to his apartment.

But the car did not move from its position. For a minute, it remained parked on the same spot. Lance wondered if there was something wrong.

Then, the door opened, but no one came out. Lance was confused about what it meant, but he was not about to aggravate the situation by assuming things.

"Come back inside. We can share a ride back to my apartment. Then, we can talk." She hanged her head slightly outside the door, shouting at him. "Only talk."

Chapter 296 - Show Of Affection

Back in the ballroom, the remaining guests were leaving, including the newly engaged couple. Remaining in the hallway were the organizers and the staff, cleaning and packing up the place.

Alex guided Dani to their waiting car, both tired but ecstatic of the success of the night. He pulled her close to him, wanting to give her comfort by placing her in his embrace.

"I still don't get it. Why did you feel the need to propose?" She finally voiced out after a very long silence inside the car.

She stared at the beautiful ring in her hand. For him to give her something that belonged to his Nanna was an honor. She knew how much he loved and respected his Nanna's wishes.

The ring could only symbolize his eternal love for her. She suddenly felt a slight pressure from the way things were moving. She believed it would have been better if they had talked about marriage first.

Not that she was complaining that he finally wanted to marry her. Only a crazy woman would not want to be his wife. But the execution of marriage could have been done better.

"I love you so much. I want to give you everything I can to make you happy. I know materials things will never suffice, but I hoped that my grand gesture would be good enough." Alex explained to her.

He already guessed that not everything he did guarantee that she would agree with him. But he was always counting on the fact that he could always reason out with her, and she would be open-minded about it.

"But they already knew that we are already engaged." She rationalized with him. Did their family suspected anything about his sudden wish to propose again?

There was no need for another proposal. If it was just for show, then Dani felt it was unnecessary. Everybody already believed that they were getting married.

"I told them that our first proposal was a hasty decision, and I was not even able to give you a proper ring that you deserve." He held her hand and looked at the new ring on her finger.

It did fit her as if it belonged only to her. Alex could suddenly hear his Nanna talking about the girl destined to be his wife. He listened to her every tale, enjoyed every happy ending of a love affair.

But he still had a few doubts back then about meeting his soulmate. The only woman that he would love and share the rest of his life with, but now, Dani had proved him wrong to doubt his Nanna.

"Don't get me wrong. I love the ring. It is beautiful, and your Nanna must have loved it so much. But why are you giving it to me?" She needed some assurance that they were speaking the same language.

A slight miscommunication might lead to something else. This night had been one roller coaster of emotions for her. Still, many questions lingered in her mind about the way things turned out.

But she was too tired to process them all, so she wished to prioritize them in the order of most relevant. As of now, the proposal and the wedding seemed to be at the forefront of her mind.

"Really?" He looked at her as if she was wearing a dunce hat. Well, from the way things were going, she might as well be. "Ok. For someone who had been the most intelligent in their class."

He paused and held her hand with his ring, kissing every single finger until he reached the ring finger. "You are very slow in picking up my intentions."

"I'm sorry, but I don't want to assume anything. We never talk about going through with the wedding. I know you love me, and I love you, but we still barely knew each other." She moved her hands and held his face in them.

"I will marry you anytime and anywhere if that is what you want because my heart only wants you." She moved closer to him, shifting in her position until her face was in line with his.

"It is why I proposed again to you tonight because I am dissolving our agreement. I want to offer another contract. The one that involved a lifetime together of love and respect." Alex voiced out as her face lowered inches away from his.

"Then, I formally accept it." She smiled happily at him, finally understanding what the fuzz was all about.

He made all this effort to show her how much he loved her. His intention all along had always been to marry her. Finally, her dreams were coming true all because she met a great man by accident.

That fateful night, she thought that her chance encounter with the stranger would remain a distant reality. An event in her life that would remain trapped in her dreams.

"Let just make sure that it is in the record that it was you who made the first move." He teased Dani once more before diving into her lips, taking what he believed was his.

He always felt that he should not pursue to look for her because it might only cause trouble. But fate seemed to think differently as their paths intertwined in some twisted fate.

But he never regretted one bit his decision to seek her help because he could feel it in his heart that she was the only one who could fit the role.

"I admit I made the first move, but it was you who pursued me." She finally retaliated when she finally had the chance to catch her breath.

"Fine. Can we call it a truce?" He stared at her face and through her eyes, loving what he saw in them. "Let us agree that love brought us together."

"Well, I guess I can compromise with that." She pulled him again in another kiss, but it was abruptly interrupted when the car stopped in his building. "Shall we continue the discussion upstairs?"

He suddenly stopped her in the lobby and abruptly pulled her in his arms to give her a solid, very thorough kiss.. Then, he carried her in his arms, bridal style, toward the elevators, continuing with his sudden show of affection.

Chapter 297 - Bottom Of The Food Chain

Waking up in his arms this early morning was not an extraordinary event in their morning routine. It never got old or tiring. The only difference from the previous times, she was now his fiancé.

She had assumed that if her relationship with him continued to work out, she would eventually marry him. But she always thought that it would take time before that would happen and not just in a matter of months.

"What are you thinking?" He partially opened one eye while struggling with the other as he stared at her face.

The sun had not fully set, so it was not that bright in the room yet. But he could see her beautiful eyes studying him. He would have done the same thing if he wakened up before her.

From his limited observation, he could see that she was deep in thought about something. Two topics led the charts. One, their engagement. Two, her father's operation.

"Many." She answered him, running her fingertip on the bridge of his nose and down to its tip.

She loved the structure of his face, from the way all its parts were proportioned, forming his handsome feature. It was the very first thing that attracted her to him.

Yes, she admitted it. She first looked at Alex's physique before liking his character. But she knew that she would not fall for him if he had a rotten personality, just like Nick. She was not that shallow. She also learned from experience.

"Want to talk about it?" He shifted in his position until they were both comfortably sitting and leaning on the headboard of the bed.

He always felt that communication was the key to the success of a relationship. It was the recipe that their parents kept bragging about, but he was also a firm believer in it.

"Maybe later." She kissed him in the nose before sliding out of bed and out of his grip. "I'm hungry. I'll make us some toast and fried eggs."

She smiled at him reassuringly, indicating that she appreciated his understanding. Then, she wore her robe and proceeded outside their room toward the kitchen.

"Fine." He answered, not stopping her. He knew when he should push her and the time to give her some space. "I'll make the coffee."

He followed her outside the room and found her in the kitchen preparing their breakfast. He quickly set up the coffeemaker and sat down on the stool.

"Why did you accept my father's offer to run his company?" She asked, sitting down beside him at the counter.

She stared at her plate, letting her mind in tune with his answer. It was one of the questions that still lingered in her mind since she heard about them last night.

"Because your father needed help, and I know I am the only one he could trust right now." He told her the truth in the way he saw it.

But in reality, Ethan was not that convinced to give him the company at first. The only way he had agreed to this arrangement was through several conditions and compromise.

Many people might see it differently. But in his conscience, he knew why he offered his help. He was only doing all this for Dani. He might want a company like Ethan's, but he desired something he built himself.

"What about you? Do you know the pressure you are putting on yourself for taking his position?" She could not help but worry that he might not be aware of the enormous responsibility he was putting on his shoulder.

She loved her father, and she was glad that he had finally relinquished his control on his company. But she was not expecting the price of the fulfillment of her wish.

At the other end of the bargain, another important person in her life was replacing him. She should remember to be careful of what one wished for because it just might get granted.

"Please, stop worrying about me. I can handle every obstacle that will come my way as long as you promise to stay by my side." He told her, slightly alleviating her worries.

He knew it would take time before things would settle into a comfortable pace for the two of them. There will be tons of changes and adjustments to be done with their current condition.

However, he firmly affirmed that by supporting each other. They could both make it work without too much of a hitch. It might not run as smoothly as he would wish, but it worked out just fine.

"Ok. Just don't forget to ask for help if it becomes too much." She finally yielded to his wishes but trusting that he would not leave her out of the problems. "Please do not shut me out."

She had seen some of the times that her father tried to keep the problems from her mom. It only ended up blowing on their faces, leaving her mother clueless about what to do.

She did not want to find herself in the same kind of situation. For the success of their marriage, she felt the need to be clear about this rule between them.

"Yes, of course," Alex pulled her hands, checking the ring on her finger. "I will always consider what is best for us, Mrs. Daniella Princeton." He kissed her knuckles to seal the deal.

He knew it would take more than that to convince her, but for now, it should be enough. He would have to find a way not to reach the point that he would need her help.

"Who said that I will be changing my name into yours?" Although she did not mind which name she carried, she felt the need to rattle him a bit and check his reaction.

"Oh. I assume that you will want my name. If you want to keep your name, I also don't mind. I'm sorry for preempting your decision." He quickly retracted his earlier statement, looking worried that he might have upset her.

He learned that there were still a million little things about each other that they still had to discover. He barely scratched the surface and vice versa.

"Don't worry. I was messing with you. It will be my honor to have your name. But if you want to change yours to mine, I have no qualms with that too." She jokingly said to him, giving him an adorable smile.

"I think I'll pass." He returned a boyish grin as he respectfully declined her offer. "Now, can we think of what should occupy our time today and stop thinking of the problems of tomorrow?"

These last few weeks loaded up with stress almost tore them into pieces. And the following months would be no different. But for the few times that they had each other, he could only devise a way to maximize it to their advantage.

He would like to guarantee that they would devote it to the enhancement of their relationship. No work and problems should stand in the way, just pure fun.

"Ok, any suggestion on how we should do that? But please, nothing involving going out. I am still too tired to venture outside this apartment." Dani pleaded, still feeling the fatigue in her muscles.

If all those people, thinking that attending parties was all glory and glamour, they should rethink their perspective. They had no idea of the sacrifice that women especially had to go through to appear elegant all night.

Just remembering the torture that her feet had to endure, standing, dancing, and moving all around with the heels she had on was already a good amount of pain.

"Well, I can think of one already, and we did not need to leave our room." He pulled her into his lap and turned her until she faced him. "Would that do?"

"Tempting, but I think I need some variety. I'm sure you can come up with more entertaining things." She pulled her hair to the side of her ears as she looked at him. "But your first suggestion is definitely on the top of the list."

Her personality had become dull during her adult life. But when he came, he suddenly turned her perspective into something fun. She liked it when he started being playful. It changed the atmosphere around them.

"Well, we can start with the first one if you want." He wiggled his eyebrows at her, tempting her. "Then, I'm sure I can think of something more once inspired."

He loved it when they kept teasing each other, building up the intensity in their desire. It was like foreplay but not by touching but with words. It was amazing.

"But before that, I cook, you wash." She pulled herself away from him, leaving him on his seat. "I'll be on the balcony when you are through."

She gave him a seductive smile before sashaying her way out of the kitchen. It implied that he better hurry up with the dishes before she changed her mind. But they both know that she would not.

"Fair enough." He ran after her before she could get too far. "But I need some incentive first." He grabbed her head and tilted it until he had claimed her lips.

He ravaged her lips until it was swollen enough for her to remember to anticipate what else was to come. It was a promise of something more.

"Now, run before I change my mind." He never allowed her to speak as he slightly spanked her, making her moved in the direction of the other room.

He suddenly wondered why he would want more when this moment seemed to be the life he ever wanted. Then his mind reminded him that nothing stayed the same.. If he stopped fighting, he would end up at the bottom of the food chain.

Chapter 298 - Higher Power

The first couple of days of the new week had been hellish for the lovely couple. They had been expecting it, but still, it did not prepare them for all the eventualities.

"Are you sure that you don't want me to stay with you?" Alex turned to her side on the passenger seat as they cruised in the busy street on their way to the hospital. "You know I will drop everything if you need me."

He had offered to wait with her in the hospital while her father had his operation, but she refused. She insisted that she and her mother would be just fine.

"You know how much I want you by my side all the time, especially in moments like this. But as you told me before, you accepted the position my father gave you because you wanted to help him." Dani reminded him.

As much as she wanted him at her side, she already that she could not monopolize his time with all the other responsibilities already riding on his shoulders.

"Your Dad could have chosen a different date to set up the board meeting, but he had chosen today during his scheduled surgery." Alex shook his head as if he still could not figure out how Ethan's mind works.

Although he could see the urgency and the necessity of it, a day would not have mattered. But canceling his first board meeting would not sit well with the board and the entire stockholders.

He could not ruin his first impression by making the first wrong move as the new head. He could not disappoint Ethan and Dani by messing it up on his first day on the job.

"Exactly why I told you to reconsider your decision." She tapped him in his arms as he steered the car. She was not mocking her, more on being sympathetic in his plight.

She warned him, but he did not listen. Now, he was in a situation that might or not be under his control. She just hoped that he learned to adjust to the new position fast.

"Noted, but I'm sure you are still very proud of me for being the knight that is helping your father." He glanced at her quickly, grazing her with his boyish smile while he continued to drive to their destination.

Once at the hospital, Alex could only make a quick visit to Ethan and Laura but could not stay for more since he had a meeting in an hour.

"Don't worry about anything, Ethan. Just concentrate on making yourself better."

Alex wanted to assure Ethan that everything would work out just fine. His company was in good hands in his administration, hoping that he would not think he made a wrong decision in giving his company to him.

"Of course. I am not dying yet. You can count on me, checking on your every decision once I recover from this." Ethan said, which earned him a sharp glare from Laura.

He was not about to surrender to death without a fight. It was the reason he agreed with Alex's idea. Now, he would beat this and recover as soon as possible.

"Stop thinking about that damn company and concentrate on getting better." Laura admonished Ethan, including Alex, for bringing it up.

She loved Alex, and she could not wait for her daughter to marry him and for him to be an official part of their family. But it still did not excuse him from her wrath if he crossed the line with her.

"I'm sorry, Laura. I did not mean to bring it up." He smiled at the mother of his future bride. He was glad that he was marrying a great woman but also a good family.

He made his way to Ethan's bedside and tapped him on the shoulder. "I guess I better leave."

"Yes, you should. Don't make the board wait for you." Ethan reminded him, still using a firm voice on him.

He could not show any weakness even in a time like this. He needed Alex to believe that he was still in charge despite the situation. But once he recovered from this, he would make sure to supervise him until he was ready to take his position.

Dani escorted Alex out of the room and into the elevator. She knew he was still worried about leaving her, but she wished to reassure him that she could manage to survive the few hours of the torturous wait while her father was in surgery.

"I can still stay. Last chance." He insisted as they waited for the doors of the lift to open.

He placed his hands on her shoulders and stared into her eyes, studying her condition. But all he saw was the strength of her conviction to go through this without him.

"No. Mom and I will do just fine. Go and make those board members fall in love with your charms." She teased him as she locked her fingers around his neck and kissed him.

But the ding of the elevator broke their kiss, leaving them to say their final goodbyes before Alex rode the box that took him away. Now, she was alone in the corridor staring at the closed door.

Slowly, the reality of what was about to happen was sinking in, and a little bit of fear crept in, but she knew she had to push through. It was not the time to show her weakness, not in front of her mom.

"Stop thinking about Alex and your company. I am sure that Alex will do his best to take care of it for your daughter." Dani heard her mom say to her father while she stood by the door.

She was glad to hear that her parents trusted Alex enough to consider him in the position. Sometimes she did feel guilty for declining to take her place as her father's heir, but she knew it was not for her.

"Ok. I promise I will only concentrate on getting better." She finally heard her father assure her mom. That was good enough for him.

She walked into the room only to find that her mom was kissing her dad passionately. Although this would not be the first time she should catch them in this position, it did not make it less awkward.

She decided to knock on the door to alert them of her presence, which stopped them from their activity. Although she would love them to continue, she already saw the doctor in charge of his surgery on the way to the room.

"Are you ready, Dad?" She moved close to his bed and started caressing his hair while her mom stood on the other side, watching them.

She knew how happy her mom was to witness this scene. After the years of separation and misunderstanding, Laura finally saw their reunion as father and daughter.

It was a familiar scene in their house when she was growing up. But now, she planned to continue doing it after his recovery. She firmly believed that he would pull through this.

"Now that you are here. Nothing frightens me anymore." Ethan said. Although, he kept saying that he would fight the call of death. He was not naive that there was a possibility that he might lose.

He was not afraid of dying because he had accomplished so much compared to an average human being. The only thing that frightened him was leaving his family without a man who would care for them.

But Alex had proven many times that he could rely on him. He was now putting his faith in him that he would deliver on his promise. It was the only choice he had, and he believed it was worth taking a risk.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, Ethan, but I think it is time." The doctor that would operate on him interrupted them when he walked inside the room.

A family friend, one of the best doctors in the city, was the only doctor he would trust to touch him. The doctor, together with his team of doctors and other staff, discussed the operation in detail.

"Then, let us proceed. I don't want to stay a minute longer in this hospital and this bed if it is not necessary." Ethan agreed with the doctor, making Laura and Dani nod with him.

The sooner the operation took place, the earlier he would recover. But the reality was, recovery would take some time to heal. His willingness to get better would determine his rehabilitation time.

"You got this, Dad." Dani kissed her father to show him her support.

She would camp outside the operating if allowed. But that would not help. All she and her mom could do was stay in the waiting room with the rest of the family undergoing the same situation.

"Well, if in case things did not work out the way we planned, make sure to take care of your mom," Ethan whispered in her ears, not wanting Laura to hear his last words.

"I will, Dad. But please fight for us." Dani also whispered in his ears.

She was not fooling herself by denying the truth that his father was going through a fifty-fifty situation. One of his feet was already outside the door once he entered the operating room.

He could only nod as he turned his attention to his loving wife, who was keeping it together as bravely as she possibly could in front of him.

He could not be prouder of the two girls that had manipulated his life into their tiny, little hands. If there was someone who had brought him to his knees, it was his wife and his daughter.

But now, he was kneeling to a higher power, hoping that he would grant him another chance.

Chapter 299 - Good Or Bad

"I assure you that under my administration, I will bring this company to the future," Alex concluded his introduction and his mini-presentation of his plans for the company.

It had been a struggle for Ethan to convince the board to give him a chance to prove himself as their new leader. He could not mess it up in the first few hours that he had stepped into the position.

He had to find a way to make sure that his next moves would catch the attention of the board and its investors. He was not here to impress them but make them believe that a successful company could still soar to newer heights.

"Ethan seemed to have high regards for your capability to run this company." One of the board members said as he observed their young new leader. "Are you sure you are ready for the responsibility?"

They had seen his profile. Alex's achievements were impressive compared to most. But his experience was still lacking to fully make him credible to run a company with this magnitude.

But they were not discrediting him just yet. As they promised Ethan, they would give him the chance to prove himself. Maybe Ethan saw something in him that they had yet to see.

"I'm sure he would not have entrusted his company in my hands if I am not," Alex answered with confidence.

He would not show them any sign of doubt or weakness that would question what he already had worked hard to achieve. He never reached his position in this industry by just sitting around.

But he could not blame the board for being a bit skeptical with his take over. He would guess that a few of them were also aiming for the position that he now held.

Maybe someone else was also qualified for the position. But Alex would prove to them that Ethan did not make the mistake of choosing him.

"We hope you don't expect us to follow you blindly. But we are going to give you a chance. But prepare yourself for major scrutiny because we are not running some crappy company." Another member of the board replied.

Ethan choosing him had been a surprise to all of them, but he could somehow see the logic behind it. He was going to be his son-in-law, after all.

But he believed that Ethan did not choose him just because of that. Ethan probably saw something extraordinary about him, and he could not wait to discover that too.

"Of course, I don't expect less from all of you. But I will need all your cooperation." Alex expressed his request for the support of the people inside the room.

Most of the board and employees were loyal to Ethan. They had trusted Ethan with their livelihood and future because of what Ethan had done for them.

It was time that he made them feel that they could also trust him. It was the only way for him to succeed with his plans. Luckily, he also had Marcus at his side, supporting him.

"Then, I guess all we can say is that welcome to the company." Another of the board congratulated him and wished him luck with his new position.

He knew that luck would not be enough with the new load he placed on his shoulder. Time and effort were some of the things he would need to achieve his goal.

Finally, his first official board meeting was over. As far as he had observed, it had been a success. The board seemed satisfied for now with his initial plans. But he knew he had to do better next time.

"You did great, Alex," Marcus told him as they sat down in his new office.

He knew this was a big step up from his previous office, and the work probably had tripled in its quantity. Judging from his friend's determination, it would not be easy, but he would manage ok.

"It is just the first day." Alex rubbed the back of his neck as he sat on his new chair.

He was not under the impression that he could handle this new job in just a snap of his finger. He would need to devote his time and effort to learn all the tricks of the trade to get used to the intricacy of this job.

"But I am sure that you have this in the bag," Marcus announced to his friend, confident with his ability to run this company. "But I guess I have to leave you now."

He also had a new set of responsibilities that he had to learn in an instant. It was part of his job as his second in command and best friend. That was to support him in his decisions.

It had been a long morning. After Marcus left him alone in his office, there was only one thing he wanted to do next. He quickly took out his phone and dialed a number.

"Hey! How are you doing?" He quickly asked as soon as someone answered the call.

She was the only one who could make the tension and the tiredness go away. As soon as her voice came to the line, Alex knew that all would be fine. Her voice was enough to calm his nerves.

"I'm good," Dani answered him on the other line as they sat at the waiting area in the hospital with her mom.

"How is your Dad?" He asked, knowing that Ethan was probably still inside the operating table.

He could only imagine what Dani and Laura were going through while they waited for any news. He would have stayed with them, but Dani was right. He had his responsibility.

"We still have no news," Dani had to move away from her mom so that she and Alex could converse without worrying her mom furthermore.

She did not like her mother to hear words that she might not want to hear and made her worry more. The last thing she needed was a mother who would start panicking.

"Do you need me there?" He already knew the answer that he would get, but he still wanted to ask.

"I wish, but no." She whispered, suddenly missing him at her side. It would have been nice if he sat by her side. Everything would have seemed so much better.

"If you change your mind. You know I am just a phone call away." He still offered just in case she would change her mind.

"What about you? How was your first meeting?" She decided to change the topic away from her dad.

Besides, she was also interested to know how he dealt with the stuffy black coat men that his father worked with every day almost all his life.

"It was what I expected it to be. But don't worry. I think I manage to convince the board that I am loveable and charming." He assured her, not wanting her to worry about anything else.

She already had her mind going around in

"Really? Are you saying that they fell for your charms?" Somehow, he had managed to make her lips smile.

She could not help but smile at his lame attempt to make a joke. As she kept telling him, he badly needed to learn how to make his jokes funny. Still, he managed to make her smile which was good enough.

"Are you laughing at me? Don't say you don't believe me?" Alex kept teasing her, which he was glad was working.

Even if he could not see her, knowing that she was smiling was good enough for him. He had accomplished what he had set to do even if he could not be by her side at the moment.

"Anyway, I have to go. I think a doctor is about to talk to us. I'll call you if there is any news." Dani informed him as she saw the doctor approach her mom.

"Ok. Don't forget to call me." He reminded her since he also had to go and start his first day on the job.

When she finally hung up, he was left staring at his phone, wondering what the doctor was telling Dani and Laura about Ethan's condition. He could only pray that it was good news.

He did not want the two of them to be alone in case it did not go well. But he had faith in the best doctors handling Ethan's surgery and the resiliency of Ethan in fighting this situation. Ethan would survive this despite the odds.

"Vincent, can you come in for a second." He called for Ethan's trusted assistant. "Please, bring Alona with you."

As of now, he would need all the help he could get. He would have to catch up with all the files, contracts, and other negotiations that the company was currently processing.

"Sir, what do you want us to do?" Vincent asked, glad that Alex chose to keep him on his payroll. He had served Ethan loyally, and he was happy that it did pay off when Ethan recommended him to Alex.

He knew that a good recommendation from Ethan would surely land him in another good company. But he had loved his job in this company. He knew his responsibility at the back of his mind, even with eyes closed.

He knew that he would be a valuable asset to Alex if he continued to take on his services. He was thankful that Alex chose to keep him, together with Alona.

"I need you to work with Alona on fixing my schedules. Prioritize which one I had to handle first." He instructed, knowing that he had to be efficient with his time.

He wanted to finish early today. He still wanted to visit the hospital and check on Dani and her family before the day was through.. He had to be by her side whether the news was good or bad.

Chapter 300 - Great Traits

"Your Highness, Prince Edward has already arrived. Will you like to see him now?" One of the royal guards informed their King upon learning of the arrival of the Prince in the palace.

"Yes, send him in my here right away." The King instructed, barely able to control his anger.

When the King heard what happened during the fundraising event, he immediately requested his son back home. He could not risk for his son to make a further mess with his situation.

The Council was clear of the condition that they set during their last meeting. After the incident, the Council already expressed their concern about the blatant disrespect of the Prince to their stipulation.

As their King, he agreed with what the Council members thought of his son's actions. But as a father, he would like to understand his son and help salvage his son's reputation.

"Father." Edward walked into the King's private study with a proud smirk on his face, oblivious of his father's ire. "Why did you send for me? Anyway, I wish to discuss with you the recent dealings I..."

But he was not able to finish his statement when he noticed his father's expression. It was clear that he was not pleased with his presence and with his news.

He came home with high hopes that his father would be satisfied with his accomplishment while he was away. He was not expecting the cold welcome and the anger that was evident in his eyes.

"I told you to follow what the Council had instructed. Why did you have to disregard their wishes and go against Alex?" King Edward shouted, unable to contain his frustration.

As King, he had to be able to control his emotion at all times. Uncontrolled anger could result in irrational decisions that might only cause more trouble than resolve a situation.

However, his son's recent activity had only brought embarrassment to the crown. It might also have caused him the chance to sit on the throne.

"But don't you see that Alex was only setting me up to fail in front of the Council. He had all this planned out." The young Edward stated in a higher tone, not usually used to a king.

But as the son of the King, he did get away with it. His father could not use his power against him, his only heir. His father could threaten to disown him, but he had yet to act on it.

"He already declined the throne several times, giving way for you to take my place. All you had to do was prove to the Council that you are ready." King Edward explained once again his situation.

He already saw that Alex was not a threat when his brother, Fred, assured him that Alex had no desire to be King. He was puzzled why his son still insisted otherwise.

"But that was not what I discovered when I was working under him. He did not only want money and power, and not only this empire. He wanted all." Edward asserted to his father.

He started pulling out some documents from his bag and handed them to his father, showing that Alex had some internal motives to ruin the kingdom once he took over.

He showed that Alex was only using his charm to fool the Council and even the King, to make them believe he had the best intention for the kingdom.

"Where did you get all this information?" King Edward skimmed through the file. It was not conclusive, but if it was true, then it had some merits that required some investigation.

Although he would not consider them as the truth until thoroughly checked. He wanted very much to believe his son and the evidence he was presenting. He wished to give him the benefit of the doubt.

But experience had made him wary of putting too much faith in him. As a father, he would give his eternal love and support to his son. But as the King of the entire kingdom, he was still bound by right and wrong.

"I stumbled on them while he had me working on some of his businesses." He explained to his father how he acquired the information.

Although most of them were fabricated papers and stories produced by him with the help of Nick, he knew that with proper acting and the backup of the King, he could make it work.

Some of the facts were true but were taken out of context to make it appear like he wanted to sabotage the Empire and him as their new King.

"I still need to have this investigated. But you should have consulted first with me before you decide to make a business merger with another company." The King still reprimanded the Prince since he had put the Empire in a tight position.

Although he had authorized his son to handle some of the transactions for their business, he did not expect his son would sign a contract of this magnitude.

He could not simply pull out of the agreement because that would put his son in another more disgrace, but he also feared what he might have put them through.

"All I ask is that you check it out. Because the last thing I want is to put our people in the hands of someone who did not give a damn." Edward placed his right hand to his heart, showing his father his concern.

From the expression of his father, he knew that he had him convinced of his plans. The only left now was to work on the Council. He had to find a way to make them believe in him. He would never trust Alex to do that, not now and ever.

On the other side of the kingdom, the Council also had their private meeting without informing the King. The Council of Elders, headed by the Duke, felt the need to discuss their disappointment again with the Prince.

"What do you suggest with do with Prince Edward's current action?" Count Wellington voiced out his concern with the new situation they were facing.

He had enough of Edward's stupid stunts. He could not continue to put their faith in his hands, not after putting the royal family back in shame.

"I think we should launch a full investigation of the situation. We also need to take Prince Edward's opinion on the matter. Get his reason for doing what he did." The duke informed everyone present in the meeting.

He knew that there was a very likelihood that Edward would only be feeding them with more lies, but it was their obligation to hear everyone's side before making any decision.

But they could not blindly follow the King's wishes to put his son as the next heir if he did not truly deserve the position. But from the way things were going, he could not see any other choice but to pick Alex.

"Of course, we have to follow the protocol. In my opinion, though, I believe that we will only come up with the same conclusion." One of the Lords agreed with Duke Fred, but he also had the same questions running in his mind, just like the count.

"However, one of my concerns was the new responsibility that Prince Alexander also took as the head of the Hamilton Multibillion Corporation." Count Edinburgh reminded everyone.

He could see by handling such an enormous company in another country. Prince Alexander would not have their empire as his priority. After all, he had always been adamant about declining the throne.

"I'm sure if the throne finally calls for his time to serve the crown, Prince Alexander would have no choice but to heed the call." Another count stated with confidence while looking at the duke for confirmation.

While the duke remained in his silence, knowing the bind that his son was about to face. He wished there was something more he could do to help him. As of now, he had to figure out first how to deal with Edward.

Edward involving the finances of the Empire with the likes of Nick was not such a good prospect. After learning from Alex what Nick had done with Dani and her family. He knew that the name alone was never good news.

Now, put Edward together with Nick, and they had a problem on their hands. Maybe this time, they could expect the downfall of their kingdom if they could not do something to stop it.

"Let us first of all deal with Edward's situation and continue our discussion after we had enough evidence on our hands." Duke Frederick reminded his colleagues that they could not judge the Prince without due process.

They still have to consider that he was still the son of their King. At least, he deserved their respect and loyalty. He was still his nephew, his blood. He could not just turn his back on him.

He felt he needed more of his guidance since he was on the wrong path. Alex also felt the same way, one of the reasons he had agreed to help.

"We will let you lead this investigation. We trust that you will know what to do with this case. But if you will need any help, inform us, and we will help in any way we can." The other members all agreed to the setup.

The Council of Elders always had loyalty to the Duke as their leader since he took over the Council's head. He had proven time and time again that his integrity was unparalleled.

Duke Frederick always had the making of a true king.. The Council Members also believed that his son, Prince Alexander, also had identical great traits as his father.