

Royal Contract 361

Chapter 361 - Office Friendship

It was already late, and she was still in her office. She had been working as a machine since she got back. She needed a distraction, and her piles of papers were what she needed in the meantime.

She avoided confrontation as much as possible unless it had something to do with the law. However, when it was personal, she hated being in a fight.

"Hey, Dani. You are still here." He acted surprised to see her, but in truth, he had been observing her office since he stepped on her floor.

He had a meeting that just recently concluded just on the other side of her office. It had a slight view of her office.

"Hi, Gerald. What are you doing here?" Dani asked, curious of his presence.

"I just finished a meeting in the other room. I noticed that your light is still on. Are you up for a deadline? Maybe I can be of assistance." He offered, but not wanting to sound too eager. "That is if you need any help."

"No need. I just finished it. I am just going to clear this up. Then, I am on my way home." She did not know why she wanted to drown herself in her work when some of what she did were not even due until a few days.

Maybe subconsciously, she was waiting for Alex to pick her up. She would like to apologize for their misunderstanding to be over. She believed she had overreacted to the situation. He was trying to help.

"Dani, are you ok? You seem to be in deep thought." He could sense that something was weighing heavily on her. He wondered if it had to do with her fiancé.

"What?" Her mind was thinking of what she should do to remedy the situation. She had forgotten that she still had company.

"It doesn't matter." He knew that she would not answer him anyway, even if he tried to pry to her affairs. "Anyway, maybe you would like to grab some dinner," Gerald asked casually, acting chill and relaxed around her.

It was late, but she might be hungry. Gerald did not see Alex around, concluding that she might be driving herself home. He could see that it was his opportunity to be alone with her.

"I'm sorry, maybe next time. I am tired and only want to go home." She sweetly declined his offer, finding his friendliness comforting.

She had barely eaten anything earlier. Jacky did bring her some food, but her appetite deserted her. She ended up throwing most of her meal into the trash.

"That's fine. Can I at least walk you to your car?" He offered, wanting to keep the time with her a little bit longer.

"Sure." She did not mind, thinking that he was probably on his way home too.

She would rather have some company on the dimmed hallway and elevator, remembering her previous experience on this floor. Although the likelihood that it would happen again was slim, she preferred not to relive that again.

He waited for her at the door until she had fixed her things. She moved towards the door and walked alongside him in the hallway to the elevators. She felt more at ease with someone she knew beside her.

"You know that I can be more than your boss." He stated when the doors closed on them. "I can also be your friend." He added, hoping that she would reconsider telling him what was bothering her.

He did notice that her concentration was elsewhere as her eyes kept going blank. He rarely saw her like this unless she was deeply in thought of a case.

He was sure it could be something else. It was far from what was swirling in Dani's mind. There was a look in her expression that was different from what he usually saw in her.

"Oh!" She was surprised by his statement. She was not expecting that from him. She was almost panicky when she heard what he said first before realizing that he meant something else.

She would never consider going out with her boss, even if she was not in a relationship right now. It was one of the conditions she had set for herself. An ethical dilemma that she did not want to include in her already messy life.

She did feel a bit uncomfortable at first being confined in the small space they were in tonight. However, she felt a bit of relief after Gerald rephrased his words.

"I did not mean to scare you off. I believed I have to work on my people skills." He made a joke of the situation, not wanting her to feel awkward around him.

But he did it on purpose, checking out her reaction to his revelation. But he quickly retracted, seeing the way she retreated, and almost ran away from him.

"No, you did not. I just misinterpreted your statement. I jumped to a conclusion which I should not." She felt slightly embarrassed by her behavior.

She did not want the complication of his boss by putting romantic nonsense in their working relationship. Although, she was doubtful because she had so much respect for the man.

She believed that he would not jeopardize his long-standing career and reputation for a romantic office romance, especially when everyone knew that she was already getting married.

"Then, can we start over again?" He attempted to salvage the rest of their few minutes left. "It would be better for our working relationship if we can at least be friends."

He did not want to push his luck as he smiled at him and nodded. It would seem that Dani agreed to his terms. "Do we have a deal?" He wanted a confirmation, not by just her action but with words.

"I think there is nothing wrong with it. Besides, we will probably be working on a lot more cases together." She finally accepted his suggestion.. After all, she did not see a problem with an office friendship.

Chapter 362 - Equal Rights

Something woke her up, but she could barely fathom what it was. When she tried to open her eyes, she barely saw anything as shadows surrounded her vision.

She closed her eyes again, thinking it was still too early to get out of bed. Besides, she was positive she was having a good dream as a smile crept into her lips. She quickly returned to sleep, hoping she could return to her beautiful dream.

"Hey! Wake up." A slightly familiar voice spoke up, but she could not remember who it was. But she swore she had heard it before.

"Aaahhh! Go away." She shoed whoever was the one disturbing her sleep. She could not lose the dream she was having, especially when it was already in its climax.

Her eyes, this time, refused to open as her body cuddled deeper under the warm covers. She enjoyed the softness of the bed and fluffiness of the pillows to give it up until she succumbed again in deep slumber.

After another couple of hours, her consciousness started stirring again. When she tried to open her eyes, she hardly saw anything else except the bright light that came from the other direction.

She quickly turned away from it and waited till her eyes adjusted to the morning sun. Then, she stretched her body to remove the aches and pains she felt in her muscles and joints.

"Ooohhh!" She could feel a headache starting at the base of her neck and crawling up to her temples.

That was what she got for drinking too much. She chastised herself as she slowly tried to remember what happened last night. When would she learn to control her liquor consumption?

She might be a strong drinker but not that strong either. She still had a considerable limit that she had to stop. Or else, she would keep ending up like this every time.

"Shit!" She suddenly shouted as she abruptly sat on the bed, which worsened the pain she was feeling. But her mind started to rehash last night's event, slowly recalling going to the club with Nick, dancing, and drinking.

It was not that bad, she thought at first. But when her mind reminded her of the rest of what happened, she began to panic. She could see in her memory how the brawl started and the way she had run away from the club, trying to find her chance to escape.

Then, eventually settling in hiding in the ditch behind a bush until the coast was clear. She remembered failing to secure a vehicle that she could use to escape.

"What happened?" She tapped on her forehead, trying to recall the rest of the story.

But, she did not remember what happened after that. She turned her head in every direction of the room and touched the white sheet that covered her body. She wondered where she was.

She was definite that it was not her apartment. "Did Nick catch me?" She questioned herself. Then, a more alarming thought went through her mind causing a chill to course through her body. "Am I dead?"

Is this heaven?" She mumbled aloud. "But this could not be heaven." She continued, studying every detail of the place.

She was sure that she could not be in heaven after all the evil things she had done in her life. She did not deserve a reward for being a selfish bitch.

But if this was hell, maybe it was not that bad at all. But then again, she was not sure if she still had not seen the worse yet. It could be calm between the storm. Later on, she would feel its full wrath.

"No, this is not heaven nor hell. It is just my rented apartment." The slowly becoming familiar voice spoke again. "You are not yet dead, and I am not an angel or a demon." He jokingly said as if he was trying to lighten up the mood.

"I'm glad that you are finally awake. I was beginning to worry since it is already past lunchtime." He added when she failed to respond to his banter.

He had been checking on her since this morning, but she would not wake up. He was worried that she might have been traumatized by what happened last night. He still did not know the entire story of why she had run away and almost endangered herself.

He could tell it had something to do with his brother. Nick was furious when he learned that she was gone from the club.

He did not notice that she left when the fight ensued.

The fight he started caused a lot of chaos. The bouncer and the other securities had to restrain him from leaving.

It appeared that the man he had beat up was a son of a powerful and wealthy man. It was not easy to bail him out of the situation. It took time to settle the incident. By the time they had finished, this woman was gone.

"Who are you?" She finally spoke up, looking at the man who was still standing by the door. Then, she rubbed her eyes to remove the cobwebs that prevented her from a clear view. Then, she finally saw his face.

She remembered him from last night. He was talking with Nick. Then, he joined her in the bar and had a couple of drinks. What was he doing here? Did Nick discover her hiding place last night? Was she once again a prisoner in this house? More questions plagued her mind as she looked at the man who was now moving in her direction.

"I'm Jacob." He introduced himself. "I found you on the ditch unconscious. I could not leave you there because you might suffer hypothermia, and you also had several bruises that needed treatment." He pointed to her arms and legs that were starting to form some discolorations.

He could see the panic look in her eyes as if she was about to run. She was scared, but she was trying to hide it under her passive stare and a brave face. He had seen this look from many of his patients when they could not decide if they wanted the operation.

"I am Nick's secret bastard brother." He did not know why he felt the need to explain to her who he was. Maybe it was to make her feel comfortable around him, to make her trust him by telling her more about himself.

But he realized his mistake when she suddenly scrambled out of bed and was about to make her escape. It was clear that she was running away from his brother. He was suddenly more curious about her reason.

"Please, just let me go. Tell your brother that I got away." She pleaded when he did not move away from the door.

She just confirmed that Nick had found her, and she was once again at his mercy. But this time, she was sure that he would not allow her to fool him again. She would pay for what she had done, and it would probably cause her life if she could not convince this man to let her go.

"Wait. Not so fast. I assure you that I am not acting on behalf of my brother. I only brought you here because I don't want any harm to befall you." He tried to convince her. He knew she was not in the condition to leave, not just yet.

"Let me treat your bruises and maybe eat something. Then, you are free to go." He assured her, raising his hands to indicate that he was harmless and did not plan to hurt her.

He could see that she was not easily convinced, and her wary look warned him that he should not do any dirty tricks. But he was not like his brother.

He treated all women equally, the way he would treat his mom.. He believed that everyone should have equal rights, whether women or men.

Chapter 363 - Love Guru

She woke up in her bed alone. She felt the other side of the bed and found it empty. It had been a while since she slept on a bed without Alex at her side. She missed him and regretted letting her stubbornness get the best of her.

Last night, she decided to go straight to her apartment instead of going to Alex's place. She did not feel like confronting him, feeling confused with the situation. It was their first misunderstanding. She could not even figure out if she could consider that a fight.

"Aaahhh." Feeling so frustrated with herself. It was still very early, but she could not sleep anymore. She walked out of her room and prepared some coffee.

As she stared at the steam coming from the hot brewed, her mind kept going back to past events. She accused Alex of meddling with her life, just like what her father did.

But if she would review their relationship. Alex was only concerned for her safety because he cared too much and loved her. In all honesty, she was starting to understand what her father also did for her.

"I'm so stupid." She mumbled to herself as she realized that she had overreacted. She should not have said those things to Alex when all he was thinking about was her safety.

She finally accepted that Alex was right. Anything could happen to her if she did not escape Nick. Nick was far cunning and tricky. He could have easily maneuvered her moves and caught her.

The thought that she would be at his mercy was made the hair in her nape crawl. She could not imagine what he would do to her if he had her cornered in his office.

"Why are you up so early?" Jacky came out of her room, still rubbing her eyes as she adjusted them to the bright light of the room. "Wait, why are you home?"

She was unsure if she was dreaming, but clearly, she could see her friend in front of her. She did not even notice that she came home last night. But in fairness, she went to bed early.

She had not been home for a while. When she did come home, she usually informed her. She could only surmise that something might be wrong. Could it be trouble in paradise?

"I could not sleep, and I finished very late last night. I did not want to disturb Alex by coming to his apartment. I decided to crash here instead." She made up some lame excuse hoping that Jacky would buy her story.

Although, it had never been an issue with them if one or the other came home late before. She had another reason. She did not know how to confront Alex from the way she acted.

Alex, not showing up in her office or calling her the rest of the afternoon, proved that he was also affected by their argument. She did not know what to say to him. Would sorry be enough to fix this?

"Are you sure there is nothing wrong between you and Alex?" She could not help but ask, seeing the shadows in her friend's eyes. She could see that Dani had been troubled with something.

Well, Jacky hoped that she was wrong with her speculations. She was rooting for the two to have a beautiful love affair, the happy ever after sort of story that she only saw in fairytale books.

She was in a way wishing that the relationship of the two would change her view of love, that it did exist. It would have been her proof that it was not just an illusion and a lie.

"Why do you always have to be so inquisitive?" She asked her friend who sat down beside her, carrying her cup of coffee.

It would seem Jacky had no plan to go back to bed soon, leaving her with no choice but to tell her the truth. She knew she could never lie to her.

"Because I care." Jacky sipped slowly on her hot coffee, careful not to burn her lips. She knew she would need something powerful to wake her up. Remember, she was not a morning person.

She wanted to be there for her friend, to listen to whatever was going through her mind. Based on her expression, this had nothing to do with work but more to do with love. Despite her desperation to believe in everlasting love, she had to face the truth.

She could not live in fairyland, knowing that the reality was, it did not exist. Her friend had a dilemma, and she should be there to help her out, even if it would ruin her idea of a perfect couple.

"Now, tell me all about it and make it count. I am not giving up on sleep to hear a crappy story." Jacky encouraged her friend to speak up. "And don't you dare keep a detail out."

She was only lightening up the mood. Seeing her friend's smile was what she was going after. She wanted to think that whatever her problem was would still have a reasonable solution.

"I think we had our first argument, and I don't know how I should handle it." She admitted to her friend.

She discerned that maybe talking about it with her friend might clear her mind. Maybe Jacky could shed some light and share some wisdom that she could use to help her out with her predicament.

She related her situation to her friend, leaving nothing out. It was like they were back when they first became friends. Sharing almost everything about each other had strengthened their bond as friends.

"And what made you think that I would know the answer to that?" She looked at her incredulously. She believed her friend had gone insane for asking her about a love situation.

She did say that she would help but loved had failed her several times. She would not know what to do with her dilemma. Giving her advice might only worsen her situation rather than solve it.

"Well, you had been in several relationships. Maybe in some way, you might have a better insight into my current predicament.

"Not having many failed relationships meant I can be an expert in affairs of the heart." She corrected her. "But I can certainly try. Come on, tell me everything."

She might know a few things about heartache, but that did not equate to becoming a love guru.

Chapter 364 - Love Advice

In another part of the city, back in his apartment. He had been wide awake even before the break of dawn, laying on his bed, unmoving. With his eyes wide open, he replayed the scene he saw last night.

He had avoided calling her after she left, thinking she might need her space to calm down. He did not want to push her buttons and make the situation worse.

At last, he decided to pick her up that night, learning that she was still in the office. But then again, he stopped in his tracks, seeing her walk out of the elevator with a guy.

"That was so stupid." He regretted not confronting Dani with what he saw. He should have walked towards her, declaring his presence. Then, he would have known that nothing was going on with her and his boss.

Instead, he sneaked up like a creep on the sideline, observing Dani walk towards her car with Gerald escorting her. He remained in the shadows, just watching.

What was he trying to prove? He asked himself as he stared at his white ceiling, unable to return to sleep. He could never believe that Dani was capable of cheating on him, especially with a guy like Gerald.

Although he would admit that Gerald seemed to be a decent guy, he did have an impressive portfolio. He would know because he already had him investigated when he offered Dani the job.

His excuse for the background check, he had to protect Dani from those who might want to take advantage of her. He was her responsibility not only because her father asked him to but because he did not want any harm to come her way.

"What are you thinking?" He mumbled to himself, hating that he doubted Dani even for a bit just because he saw her with another guy.

He did not even lay a finger on her as he said goodbye to her before she drove off. Her boss quickly turned away and headed to his car without looking back.

He believed that Dani would never fall for a man like him. She would never look at another man the way she looked at him. She would never let anything hurt their relationship.

The way he was acting was more of a threat to their relationship, remembering the mixed anger and disappointment he read in her eyes before she left him yesterday.

"Aaahhh!" He also felt frustrated and angry with himself, considering that the problem was on his part.

He should be confident with their relationship, so he should not be acting like a jealous prick, thinking of the worse thing that a man and woman could do behind his back. Dani was not Tyra, and she would never betray him like that.

And another thing, he should start accepting that she was a capable woman, able to defend herself. He should stop acting like the prince charming that would always be to the rescue.

She was correct that he would never be able to protect her all the time. He should learn to trust her and respect her wishes once in a while. This time, he was willing to compromise to make this relationship work.

"Get yourself together." He thought aloud as he stood from the bed, giving up on returning to a peaceful slumber.

He walked outside his room and checked on his phone that he left on the kitchen counter. He dropped it on the top marble while fuming last night when he read her text that she was not coming home.

He should have acted like an educated man and checked on his facts before jumping to a conclusion. Now, he could only blame himself for her reaction.

"Hey, sorry for waking you up." He said to the other man on the line, hearing him grumbling, not happy with the early morning call.

He suddenly realized that he should be thankful that he did not confront Dani and Gerald last night. Or else, he might have said something stupid and messed up his entire relationship with Dani.

He should learn to think things through when it had something to do with Dani. He usually acted in impulsive behavior that sometimes led him to unfavorable results.

"What now? Unless there is a fire in your house or someone shot you. You are not allowed to call me at this hour." He grumpily whined on his phone, seeing who the caller was.

He had been working hard lately with all the projects Alex was dealing with he barely had enough sleep. Also, he had been having some restless sleep, for some reason not relating to work.

He turned his light on and checked the time. But he was sure that it was still too early since the view outside was still very dark. He patiently waited and listened to the silence on the other side.

"I'm sorry, Marcus, but I do need your help." He cleared his throat, not wanting to sound quite troubled.

He was not the kind of man who would talk to his friend about his relationship problems. But, lately, he had been making many mistakes in the way he was handling his relationship with Dani.

He figured that maybe talking to someone might help him figure out how to handle it better. But he could only think of one friend at the moment who would be at his beck and call.

"Is there something wrong with the merger?" He was suddenly awake, hearing the frustration in his voice.

He could not think of anything else that might be troubling him except their recent project. That was unless there was another situation that arose that he was not aware of yet.

As far as he knew, all was doing fine when he left the office earlier. Did something happen? But he doubted it since someone would surely call him to inform him of the matter.

"No, this had nothing to do with the company." He quickly stated, then he slightly hesitated before continuing. "I think I messed up with Dani."

He was not exactly sure how to phrase his situation to Marcus. They did not discuss relationships and love affairs with one another except on rare occasions. And it had nothing to do with deep feelings.

Besides, Marcus did not do a serious relationship. He avoided love like it was a disease. How could he be able to understand his situation when he had not been in one.

"Oh!" Well, Marcus, slightly taken aback, shook his head, thinking if he heard him right.

It was not exactly what he was expecting to hear from his friend. He was so sure that it had something to do with a problem in the company.

But him asking him for help in relationship matters was a bit out of the ordinary. He was not exactly equipped with situations that concerned the heart.

As his records would show, he was good at wrecking relationships and not mending them. Alex might end up just like him if he kept seeking his help, loveless.

Thus, in conclusion, Alex should not be asking him for any love advice if he ever wanted to fix her relationship with Dani.

Chapter 365 - Run Away From A Foster Home

After having a short heart-to-heart talk with Jacky, she decided that going back to sleep was already out of the question. Finally, she opted to run instead to clear her mind.

Moping around her apartment would not do her any good. Jacky might not have a successful relationship yet, but she did give sound advice. Her friend told her to put herself in Alex's shoes.

"What will I do without you, Jacky?" She asked herself in front of the mirror as she readied herself for her run.

She might be the more intelligent one in terms of academics. But when it was about life, she could always depend on Jacky for support and a good pep talk.

As she exited her apartment, she noticed the door of their friendly neighbor was wide open. She wondered if he was on his way out for a run. She could surely use some company.

"Troy, anybody home." She shouted by the door, noticing some sealed boxes scattered in the living room.

Was he moving out? She thought to herself as she inspected the boxes near the doorway. It had his name on it and a storage unit address. She recognized it because she did use it before.

"Troy?" She repeated louder this time when he did not respond. She could not see anybody around but could hear a commotion in the room.

Finally, a burly man came out in one of the rooms, wearing an overall, which seemed to be a uniform for a moving company. Seeing it, she realized that Troy was indeed moving.

"Yes, Miss. Can I help you with something?" The man approached her, looking at her as if her presence was delaying them with their schedule.

"I was only looking for my friend, Troy. But I appear to be too late." She said to the man, with a bit of disappointment. She did not even know he was leaving and was not even able to say goodbye.

"Well, he already left. But if you don't have any other business, I am sorry, but I have to ask you to leave. We have a tight schedule, and we can't afford a delay." The man looked apologetic, understanding her situation. But they were paid in an hour, and every minute counts.

"Thanks. I will be leaving now." She walked away from the door, leaving the man back to his responsibility.

She realized she had been too busy with her job, the wedding, and the other things that preoccupied her mind. She did not even notice that one of her friends had left.

"It has been a while since I last saw you run, Miss Dani." Jack greeted her as he quickly opened the door for her.

"Yes. It is nice to be able to do it again." She responded with a sweet smile. She always enjoyed the friendly smile on his face when he opened doors for the tenants and guests.

"Have a good run, Miss. And stay safe." Jack said, reminding her of the incident she had where she had a sprained ankle. She winked at him before running off.

This time, she would not have someone to help her if that ever happened again. Troy would not be around to rescue her from falling down the pavement or help her back to her apartment.

She was barely away from her apartment, and she was missing him already. She admitted that he had become a big part of her life in the few months she had known the man.

"It had been good while it lasted." She mumbled to herself, continuing to her path. There was nothing she could do but go on.

She eventually made her way to her usual route, suddenly finding it strange to run alone again. She would not be jogging with her running buddy anymore.

She would surely miss him, even if he had been a part of her life for just a short while. It had been entertaining to have someone accompanying her on her runs, especially when he could keep up with her pace.

Alex did swear to jog with her, but it remained a promise until now. The only run she had been doing with him was through a treadmill inside his private gym in his apartment.

Although it did the same trick, physically, she still longed for a different atmosphere. She loved feeling the cool breeze on her face. She enjoyed the chatters and laughter of the people she passed by.

It was never the same, she thought, but instantaneously, she felt a sharp pain in her right shoulders and arms as she slightly swirled to her side. Fortunately, she was able to keep her balance, not falling this time on the solid pavement.

"Ouch" and "Aaahhh." And other grunts reverberated around her. She was sure she was making some of it, but the other party sounded much worse.

She quickly recovered from the pain and turned her attention to the offending party. But when she saw a young boy, probably barely in his teens, down on the ground, twisting in pain.

She knew she had to help him. However, she did not have a phone to call for help. Luckily, she spotted Ben not that far away from her. She quickly asked for help to bring the boy to the nearby hospital.

"Should I inform Sir Alex about this incident?" Ben asked, sensing that his last report caused some form of problem with the couple.

He did blame himself for it, but it was his obligation to keep her safe. But if the same scenario would arise, he would probably do the same thing, despite the consequence.

"If you think this situation is worth reporting, then do so." She was leaving it to him. She did not want to blame the man for doing his job, but sometimes, the one telling them what to do was overdoing it.

"What is your name? We have to bring you to the hospital. Where are your parents?" But judging from the slightly dirty, old clothes he was wearing, he might be wandering in the streets alone.

It would not be the first time she had seen kids like him around this part.. Some of them might have run away from a foster home, just like Jacky did.

Chapter 366 - Without A Life

He was on his way to the office when he decided to turn around and head to her apartment. It was still early, and he still had time to check on her. This time, he did not call Ben for details.

He would like to be just a regular boyfriend who would like to apologize or even grovel on her feet for forgiveness for his overbearing behavior.

He promised that he would ask for a compromise. He would listen to Dani's suggestions and consider a possible middle point to agree upon until they resolved their problem.

"Hey, Jacky." He greeted after a long time of knocking and buzzing on her door. He already figured that Dani might not be home, but he persisted, hoping that Jacky might know where she was.

He could assume that she was out on a jog or might have gone to the office early. But it was better to ask before he started searching the street of the park or her office.

The only downside, he had to face the wrath of Jacky. But he did not mind that. He could tolerate Jacky's rants as long as she could supply him with the information he needed to find Dani.

"What is your problem, Alex?" Jacky greeted him with a scowl on her face. Even if he was the president of the country, he had no right to disturb her sleep. "One buzz should be enough to tell you that you are not welcome."

She was more grumpy than usual since of her early rendezvous with her friend. Dani needed some company, and she was glad she was there for her.

But she had to make up for her lost time, so she planned to sleep at the last minute before going to work. Now, this man had ruined it for her. She had to put him in his place.

"I'm sorry, Jacky. But I am looking for Dani. Is she here?" He asked her as he stood outside the hallway, looking inside. He was hoping that he would see a glimpse of her. Maybe she was hiding from him, still not ready to confront him.

"Isn't it obvious? She is not here." She looked at him incredulously. "Why are you looking for her this early?" She asked, still clueless of his early visit.

Although it was not unusual for this scenario, still the two of them were practically living together. Dani should be home with him. Why was he looking for her?

"Because..." It took him a few seconds before he could continue with his answer. Unsure if he should tell her the truth or make up some story.

Then, it clicked in her sleepy mind the earlier talk she had with her friend. "Oh, I know why." She sheepishly replied to him. "Are you here to apologize and beg on your knees?"

She finally remembered that Dani went home last night because they had some argument. She was still recalling everything because she was a bit slow in the morning.

"I will tell you if you will invite me inside." He told her, seeing that the movers from the other apartment were about to pass by.

He did not want to be on the way when they carried those large boxes in the hallway. At the same time, he did not want their conversation overheard by their neighbors. He would prefer to talk about their lives in private.

"Why not?" She opened the door wider and walked back to the living room. "As if I can still go back to sleep anyway." She rumbled on.

It was almost time to wake up anyway and prepare for work. Besides, Jacky was curious about what Alex had to say. It was rare that she was able to talk to him alone.

"As I said, I am sorry. But I must talk to Dani." Alex explained to her, hoping that she would understand his predicament. He sensed from her earlier statement that Dani had already shared their problems with her.

He did not mind since he also did the same earlier with Marcus. In the past, he did not see why girls had to share everything with their best friends.

But after his conversation with Marcus, he was enlightened. Although, they only talked about emotional stuff and nothing beyond personal, like his sexual relationship with Dani.

He still could not kiss and tell. Those were secrets that should remain between him and his partner. He had too much respect for Dani and all the women he had relations with to share such information.

"Well, she is not here. I think I heard that she was going for a run." She remembered hearing her shout earlier by her door before she fell back to sleep.

She looked at the clock and began to wonder. It was already late. Usually, her friend should be back at the apartment at this time to prepare for work. She could not help but worry, thinking what could be keeping her.

He had seen her face change when she gazed at the clock. Her expression was passive at first until it turned into concern. He began to wonder if there was something wrong that she was not telling him.

"What time is she due to return?" He asked, thinking that she should be back here to ready for work. He was doubtful that she would go straight to work after a morning run.

But the look on her face made him realize that his assumption was correct. It was unusual for Dani to be late to return unless something happened to her. He hoped he was mistaken.

"She should be here by now." She responded to his question, still trying to be calm. She wanted to believe that there was a reasonable explanation for why she was late.

She looked at the closed door, willing it to open and reveal her friend, safe and sound. But the seconds ticked by, the door remained close and silent.

"Then, what is taking her so long?" He thought aloud. "Wait. I will call, Ben." He instructed Jacky, who only nodded in agreement.

Ben should have reported it by now if there was an incident. He trusted his men to do their job proficiently, but what if Ben was also hurt or injured as his mind nagged at him.

Well, he should not panic until he acquired a clearer view of the situation. There was no sense in making a big deal out of nothing. He should not be making up scenarios in his head. It would only mess up with his head.

The phone kept ringing, but he was not answering his phone. He checked the number he dialed, and the screen confirmed he had the right one. He tried again, but the same thing, his call went straight to voice mail.

"What happened?" Jacky asked, finally concern showing on her face. She could see that he failed to contact the bodyguard assigned to Dani.

He signaled her to wait as he tried another number. He decided to try to call Dani instead. But as expected, they heard the ringer of her phone inside her room.

He thought maybe this time, she decided to take her phone with her as he usually suggested. But as stubborn as she was, she insisted that she did not need a distraction in her short run.

"Why are you calling her phone?" Jacky asked him, a bit frustrated with the situation. "You know that she doesn't like to bring it with her." She had to remind him.

"I asked her to bring it with her, but apparently, she still ignored my wishes." He took his phone out again and dialed his other team. "I want you to check on Ben's location. I can't seem to contact him."

That should do the trick, he hoped. But the question remained. Where are Dani and Ben? What happened to them? He suddenly regretted agreeing to Dani to cut down her security to one.

He should have been firmer in his stand that she needed someone to protect her all the time. His earlier resolve to compromise and let her have her way had suddenly turned to dust.

"Do everything you can to find her?" Jacky said, slightly shaken from the knowledge that her friend was now confirmed missing.

She should not have left her in the kitchen to go to sleep. She should have stayed and kept her accompanied. If she did, she would still probably slumped on the kitchen counter, listening to her stupid advice and not missing out there.

She suddenly blamed herself if her friend had another accident. Worse, if someone took her against her wishes.. Even worse, lying on a ditch somewhere, without a life.

Chapter 367 - Easy Way Out

She wanted to rush the boy to the hospital, feeling herself to blame for not looking at where she was going. But the young lad stopped her, declining the offered help.

"Don't worry. There is no need to go to the hospital." He persisted, waving his hand to signal no at her.

He sat on the solid ground, assessing his injury, feeling some pain in some parts of his body caused by the fall. But he believed he could still manage just fine.

Then, his head slowly swirled around, searching for something, but it was nowhere in sight. He was sure he had it in his hands before bumping into the woman, but it appeared to have disappeared.

"I'm sorry, but let me help you." She insisted, not wanting to leave the boy, still lying on the floor, unattended.

She stood up but did not move away. She stretched her hands to the boy, extending her help. Thankfully, he finally accepted, taking the hand she offered.

"I'm ok, Miss. It did not hurt that much." The boy answered her as he attempted to stand up. He pushed himself up with Dani trying to assist him, but he barely could put pressure on his foot.

He tried to put on a brave face, pretending that it was not worse than what it was, but the discomfort was just unbearable. He could not hide the pain as he tried to move.

"I don't think so. Let me help you." This time, she did not take no for an answer. She guided him to a nearby bench, not believing his act.

It looked like it was not that serious, but she still wanted to be sure that the boy would be ok. He might seem alright, but it could be something worse than she initially thought once diagnosed.

She could not stay complacent and leave the boy on his own, despite his request. She suddenly remembered what happened to her when she also suffered the same incident. It took her a week to heal and be able to get back to normal.

"Should I call for an ambulance?" Ben whispered near her, but she signaled for him to hold that thought.

She could sense that the boy would not appreciate seeing any form of authority around him. She still wanted to gain his trust by conversing with him to gain more information to assess the situation.

"Hey, don't be afraid. By the way, I am Dani, and this is Ben." She initiated, hoping that he would also supply his identity. "We only want to help you. What is your name?" She repeated.

Ben knelt on the ground in front of him while Dani stayed at his side. "I will only check on your ankle to see if you broke anything." Ben waited for his answer.

"I am Jeremy." The boy reluctantly said his name. "Are you a doctor?" He answered, still slightly hesitant to show him the injured foot.

He rarely trusted people to touch him after all the traumatic experienced he had with the different foster families he had to live with, unfortunately, in the last five years.

"No, but I have some training in handling emergency cases," Ben explained to him as he pointed to his foot.

"Ben knows what he is doing. Let him help you." Dani spoke to him, trying to convince him. Finally, unable to take the pain, the boy conceded.

He extended his affected foot to Ben and allowed him to look at it. After gently turning and mildly twisting the foot, Ben came to his conclusion.

"Well, it doesn't seem broken, but you have a terrible swelling. I think it would still be advisable to have it seen by a doctor." Ben recommended. "They will be able to prescribe you pain medications."

Without any supplies, there was nothing else Ben could do. He made a mental note to have a first aid kit in his car at all times. He would never know when he would need it.

"No hospital and no doctors." The boy felt panicky. "Miss, I know you wanted to help, but it is just a sprain. It will heal on its own." The boy insisted, refusing to get treated in the hospital.

He had never been in one, and from what he heard from his friends, it would not be a pleasant experience. He was afraid that the system would find him and return him to his foster parents.

It was not such a good idea, in his opinion. He ran away for a reason, and he had no plan of going back to that house and those despicable people who pretended to take care of him.

"Ok, Jeremy. What about your parents or guardian? Where are they?" She had been looking around, hoping that they would come and look for him. But nobody appeared to claim him.

"I came here alone. My parents do not know that I am here. If they find out, I am sure they will be furious." He fabricated a lie, thinking that would fool her.

"Then, you should let me give you a ride to your house. I doubt you can go home on your own with your current condition." She stated, not buying one bit of his alibi.

She could detect that he was lying through his teeth when she told him about his family. But she was not about to confront him about it just yet.

"So, maybe you can drop me near my place and let me walk home on my own. I don't want my parents to know that I sneak out." Jeremy kept his act as he thought of a way to get out of the woman's hair.

He blamed himself for not looking closely at where he was going when he grabbed the wallet of a man at the other side of the park. Now, he had himself injured and lost the wallet at the same time.

He was sure that the man was loaded. He had seen the bills inside when he paid for a refreshment. It would have been enough for a few weeks' supply.

"Ok. We can do that. But before I take you home, let me have your foot check first at the nearby hospital. Or else, we can call your parents right now.." She was not giving him an easy way out.

Chapter 368 - A Beautiful Crook

Having no choice, Jeremy agreed to go to the hospital. But he was thinking of a way to extricate himself from this situation. He did not want his name and his records to show up on the computer screen.

It would only create more problems for him, like before, when the police caught him just a month ago. The cop ran his fingerprints on the system and discovered that he had run away from his foster family, who had reported him missing.

"Does he have to go with us inside the hospital?" He questioned when they entered the premises.

If it was only that woman he bumped into, he could have easily slipped out of her sight. But with this giant man always at his heels, he doubted if he could even take five steps away from him.

The man looked strong and fast, just like a movie he had watched with his friends on the tv shop's display window. He feared for any man who had a beef with him.

"Unfortunately, yes. Don't worry about Ben. He is harmless." She tried to reassure the boy, guiding him to the emergency room.

As expected, seeing who she was, one of the doctors, which had become a friend, quickly moved in her direction. He did look around as if his eyes searched for someone else before settling them on her.

"Dani, what are you doing here? Are you hurt?" He could see that she was still in her jogging attire but did not seem to have any injury or whatsoever.

"No, not me, Sebastian. It is my nephew, Jeremy. We had a slight accident. He clumsily tripped on his ankles while we were jogging." Dani stated as she faced the doctor while the boy sat on the bed.

"But, I am..." The boy was about to contradict her statement, but she stopped him.

"Yes, my nephew, you are hurt, and you will get treated." She made sure that her glare should stop him from further arguing with her about her plan.

As if he understood her, he quickly closed and sealed his mouth as he listened to what she would say next. He was wary, at the same time, interested in finding out why she did that.

She turned back to the doctor and said. "Could you have Jeremy thoroughly check?" It was her first goal, to make sure that he was good. After that, she would try to know more about his story.

Dani could see that Sebastian was slightly confused when she introduced the young boy as a relative. Jeremy certainly did not look the part, especially with the clothes he was wearing.

Even Ben looked at her with raised eyes but remained silent, watching her next move. He was also curious about what her lady boss was planning.

"Can I have a word with you in private for a second?" Sebastian knew that something was going on between the kid and Dani. He knew he had to find out.

Although he trusted that Dani would not do anything illegal or unethical, he still had to know what she was thinking, bringing a homeless child to the hospital and pretending to be the aunt.

"I know what you are about to say. I? bumped into Jeremy earlier and caused his injury. I want to have him check before I try to question him about his history." Dani explained her plan to him, hoping that he would let this one slide and not cause too much fuzz.

"Ok. I hope you know what you are doing. I will handle the paperwork." He said, knowing that if caught, social service would be all over him.

"Don't worry. I only want to make sure that Jeremy will be fine until he recovers." It was her end goal.

She knew she could not just let him wondered on the streets with a sprained ankle. He would not survive a day, let alone a week. She had to find out how she could help him.

"Let me introduce you to the doctor who would be handling his care." Sebastian had no choice but to turn over the kid to the specialist.

If the kid was not a minor, he could treat him, but they had a protocol in the hospital that he had to follow. "Don't worry. He is cool." Sebastian whispered to Dani.

"Dani, this is Dr. Dawson. He is currently the attendee in the Paediatric division." He introduced the two and briefed the new attendee with the current case.

"Let me see. Is it ok to touch your food, young man?" The new doctor asked when he introduced himself to him.

"Sure." The boy said, a bit confident now. He knew that the kind lady was trying to help him and not have him arrested.

But he was still not expecting the sharp pain that shot from his ankle up through his legs. He had to bite his lips from shouting in pain. Although tears were already at the forefront of his eyes, he still prevented them from flowing.

Tears were for the weak ones. His foster father kept telling him as he whipped him with his belt when he cried. He never allowed his emotions to show, despite the pain he felt.

"I don't think we will need to have it x-ray. In my opinion, it is just a sprained ankle. A warm and cold compress would surely do the trick. But I can prescribe a weak pain reliever for the discomfort." The doctor finally made his diagnosis.

He looked at the boy and then turned to the aunt but could not see any resemblance, neither in features nor looks. He could have sworn that they were not related at all.

"You can come back here in a few days so we can check on it again, Jeremy." He recommended speaking directly to the boy but letting the aunt hear his instruction.

But, he doubted that she was in any form of illegal activity. But then again, many did look decent in the underworld business, just thinking of his brother and his associates.

She might be a leader of a mafia gang or the likes. Or maybe a partner of one, judging from the man standing behind them, acting as her bodyguard.. Nevertheless, if that was the case, she was indeed a beautiful crook.

Chapter 369 - Street Intuition

After confirming that Jeremy would be just fine, she sighed in relief. She still felt she was to blame for the incident anyway. So, it was her responsibility to take care of the boy.

"Thanks, Doctor Dawson. I will surely bring Jeremy back for a follow-up consultation." She promised, giving the doctor a delighted smile, glad that she could take the boy home.

If that story that the boy told her was even real, which she highly doubted. She would soon find out if he lied or not, that she promised.

She would get to the bottom of the truth and find a way to help him if her assumptions were correct. She could not let him stay on the street, not when she could help a helpless child like him.

"Just make sure to follow all my orders." He finally said, still finding it hard to believe that behind that innocent smile could be a criminal who was taking advantage of a child.

He did notice some old bruising on the boy's legs. He wondered if she was responsible for the mistreating of the child. Should he consider reporting this to the authority?

"Jacob, are you done checking on Jeremy?" Sebastian interrupted his thought.

He could see the questions in the other doctor's eyes. It would seem that he was curious about this case. As much as he wanted to limit the people involved in this case, he had no choice but to explain to him later what this situation was all about.

"Yeah, it was just a sprain." He confirmed what everyone had thought in the first place.

He suddenly considered if Sebastian was a part of this syndicate. Then, he shoved the idea away, finding his conspiracy theory unfounded unless he could find some proof.

"Good," Sebastian said to Jacob. Then, he turned to face her. "So, Dani, I think you are all good to go. I already charged the bill on your account."

Sebastian had made sure to clear all the details before letting them go. He did not want a messy paper trail that would indicate any wrongdoing on their part.

He did not want to have a problem and for Dani to have an issue. She was still a friend, despite what happened between him and Jacky.

"But..." Jacob tried to warn Sebastian about what he thought he had discovered, but Sebastian dismissed him, but with a promise to explain later.

He did not want to make a fuss during his first week on the job. He would have to play by the rules but also sensed the atmosphere around his co-workers.

He could not start his work in a new city and a new hospital as the odd man out. That would not make his life here easy, especially when Sebastian was well-loved by everyone.

"We will talk later," Sebastian said to the new doctor before moving to Dani's side.

"Fine," Jacob responded, not having a choice on the matter. He was still new, and Sebastian was the one in-charge in showing him the ropes in the hospital.

Still, he could not believe that all those scars came from random accidents. He wondered what the secrecy was all about. Who was that woman, and what was Sebastian's relationship with her?

He just had to find out as his curiosity had the best of him. He took the chart Sebastian had prepared for the boy and found some odd information on the boy's details. He looked at the name of the aunt and believed it was familiar.

"Who are you, Daniella Hamilton?" He uttered aloud. Luckily, no one was near enough to hear him. Then, the name finally clicked. She used to be associated with his brother. She was his brother's ex-fiance as the realization came.

"Do take care of those ankles." Sebastian reminded the boy as he patted him on the head.

Sebastian discharged the boy and led the trio out of the hospital exit, hoping that Dani knew what she was doing with that boy.

Dani might be thinking that she was helping him, but most of them did not want any help.

Some of those boys and girls carried too deep scars caused by the system. It was rare for some of them to recover, remembering Jacky's case. Unfortunately, most of them had become a lost cause.

"Ben, why don't you help Jeremy back to the car while I talk with the doctor." She instructed, staying behind for a few minutes to clarify some things with him.

"Are you sure you know what you are doing?" He asked directly this time. He could not let her do anything stupid unless she was sure that she had a good course of action in this matter.

"Not yet, but I know I can't abandon him, knowing somebody needs to help him and kids like him." She felt what Jacky had been struggling, all this time.

She knew she could not simply turn her back on this situation and find an easy way out. It was just not her style. Once she learned of the real issue, she could formulate a plan.

Well, at least a start on how she could help kids like him. It might take her years or even decades before she could resolve this issue, but it was a cause that she could support and fight for with everything she got.

"If you need me, give me a call. I am sure I can also find others who would be willing to help." Sebastian held her shoulders for support before saying goodbye and returning to his job.

She was about to walk back to the car when she saw him talking to the boy. She did not notice him arrive. How long had he been here? Was he already here when they came out of the hospital?

Questions still played in her mind as she approached them. Ben was already in the driver's seat. But when he saw her, he immediately came down to open the passenger seat.

"Hey, Miss Dani. Do you mind if I go along with the two of you in his apartment? He promised to show me some of his collection of video games before you drop me home." The boy said as she slid inside of the car.

He was wary at first when the man introduced himself as Dani's boyfriend. But when he started talking, he felt that he could trust a man like him.

It was a feeling that he had acquired while living on the street.. Call it street intuition.

Chapter 370 - To Demand An Apology Or Say Sorry

"Wow! Are all of this yours?" The boy shouted in awe upon seeing the various game consoles in the room.

He only had seen some of this on an electronic shop he hung out a few times. He had seen some kids play with it, but he had never touched one.

Although, he did remember playing with an old one back when he was still home with his actual parents. If he remembered correctly, his father bought him one on his birthday.

But that was a long time ago. It was just a fragment of memories that was starting to fade in time, Jeremy thought. Even the images of the faces of his parents were slowly slipping through his mind.

"Yes. Why don't you try this?" He showed him one of his favorites and played with him for a few minutes, showing him the rules.

Alex had collected them over the years, using them as a pastime during his college days. He still acquired updated versions and enjoyed playing once in a while.

But it had become almost negligible as his schedule got busier. And sometimes playing alone was not that exciting anymore. He and Marcus did use to compete in some of his games.

"This is great," Jeremy said excitedly, finding the experience extraordinary. The only game he had played since his parents died were toys he had dug from the trash.

Living in a foster home did not exactly equate to a home and a family. Although he had heard that some of the kids ended up in a good home, he had yet to experience it. He just had no such luck.

He would take advantage of this opportunity while it lasted. He was sure that at any moment, they would be sending him back to the system and would end up either in the same home or a different one.

However, he was not keeping his hope up. He was sure he would only land on the same fate. Then again, maybe he could escape before they could send him away.

"Do you mind if I leave you for a while? I need to talk to Dani. If you are hungry, there are snacks on the cabinets and sodas on the ref." He pointed to the other side of the room.

After showing Jeremy some of the things he could do in the room, he returned to the living room, where he would wait for Dani. He believed it was time for their long-overdue talk.

He had to clarify some matters about what happened yesterday. Before that, he had to make sure that Dani was ok. He had a scare earlier when he could not reach her and Ben.

"Hey!" Dani uttered as she walked back to the room, already changed into her work clothes.

She was already late, but she could not afford not to go to work today. But before she did, she had to think of what to do with Jeremy first.

"Hey!" He greeted back, feeling slightly awkward after their fight yesterday. "Are you sure you are ok?" Inspecting her physically, assuring himself that she was in one piece.

She might appear to have no bruises on the outside, but he could tell how sensitive she was about the child's condition. He could already tell that she was planning something for the boy.

"I was not hurt if that is what you are asking." She answered him, but she knew it was more than that. He was concerned with her whole wellbeing and not just the accident.

His question carried a lot of subjects. It was not just about the incident today but also about their miscommunication that was causing a slight rift in their relationship presently.

"I am glad." He was satisfied with that for now. The feeling of losing her did not sit well with him. He believed that he would not live without her in his world. "You scared me earlier." He finally admitted.

He sat down on the couch and cradled his face in his hands, releasing his anxiousness and frustration out of his system. It was a huge relief when he finally heard from Ben.

Ben apologized for not reporting the incident to him immediately. He did not deem it urgent since no harm happened to her in the accident. He prioritized assisting her in helping the boy.

Ben only realized that his phone was missing when they had already reached the hospital. He was about to call his boss, seeing that it was late. But it was not in his pocket. He must have dropped it in the park.

"I did not mean to scare anybody, especially you." She was surprised by his reaction. She was not expecting that.

She was not even aware that he was looking for her. Her attention was too focused on the boy that she momentarily forgot about her other problems.

"Well, you did. I was at your apartment earlier and when Jacky showed concern that you were not yet back." He started but paused a bit.

"Just for the record, Ben did not call me. I only called him because Jacky was afraid something happened to you." He continued, clarifying the situation, not wanting her to accuse him of meddling with her affairs.

He did not want that kind of misunderstanding again.

"Ok." She could not hide the tiny smile that crept on her lips. She realized that he was trying to control his boundaries for her.

She knew that as a prince and a possible future king, he was the type of man who was born and raised to be always in control. He trained to be the leader, who should always tell everyone what to do.

She liked that, in a way, he was bending his rules a little to accommodate her wishes. It was her assumption. She hoped that he would finally listen to reason and allow her to live her life the way she saw fit.

"By the way, why are you at my apartment this morning?" She sat down beside him but angled herself until she was facing him.

She was curious about his reason. Was he checking on her? Or did he have some other explanation? She suddenly could not wait for his answer.

She was curious if he was there to demand an apology or say sorry, but she hoped for the latter.