

## **Royal Contract 411**

### **Chapter 411 - Living Proof Of Miracles**

Alex rushed to the hospital as soon as Ben called him. He left the meeting with a big-time client when he received the call about the accident.

He did not care about losing the project. What he cared about was making sure that Dani was safe. She would always be his priority.

"How is she?" He immediately asked Ben as soon as he saw him in the lobby. But Ben did not have the details since the hospital would only release patient information to family members.

He quickly moved towards the information desk, demanding to see and know the condition of his fiancée. Then, one of the doctors recognized him and assisted him with the information.

He even accompanied her towards the floor and the room she occupied while waiting for her test results. The doctor explained to Alex what she had gone through due to the accident.

He had nothing to fear because the doctors were doing their best for her quick recovery. They would know more of her condition once the doctor handling her case had the results.

"Ben, I need you to tell the police what you saw during the accident." He ordered Ben, who had followed closely behind him.

Then, he instructed another of his men to keep watch by the door.

"Thanks, Doc," Alex said to the doctor, leaving him behind in the hallway as he walked straight into her room.

He found her laying down on the bed, immobile and fast asleep. With the bandages and bruises covering her body, she looked very fragile in her condition.

It was a state that he was not used to seeing her in. She was usually energetic and capable of handling herself. But in her weakened form, she looked helpless and defenseless.

"Dani." He called to her in a gentle voice, hoping that she would respond to him. But, she did not move or even twitch.

He sat down on the available chair beside her bed and pulled it towards her so he could be closer. He held her hand in his and planted a kiss on her palm.

He did not want to wake her up, but at the same time, he wanted to see her beautiful eyes staring back at him. He wanted to hear her voice, telling him, reassuring him that she was going to be ok.

A soft knock on the door made him look up from his position. He was not worried for their safety since he had two of his best men guarding the outside door. Then several of his men scattered around the hospital premises.

"Mr. Princeton, or should I address you as Prince." A man with a particular maturity on his age approached him with a friendly smile. "I am Dr. Eddie Dewey, Chief of Surgery. I will be handling the case of your fiancée together with my most reliable doctors."

The man introduced himself and the other medical staff, who had been treating Dani. He had heard about this controversial patient and decided to keep it under control.

It would be a matter of time before the media found out about the accident. Then, they would be running a complete madhouse outside the building and in their lobbies.

"Alex is fine." He informed the surgeon, a bit concerned about his presence in her room. "How is she?" He asked impatiently, not particularly in the mood for any idle chitchats.

"She had sustained quite a lot of minor injuries. But we are still observing her head concussion. The CT scan showed no detectable injuries or abnormalities in her brain." The doctor told him.

"That is good to hear." He released a sigh of relief when he heard the doctor's diagnosis. "When will she wake up? What about her recovery?" He had millions of questions, but he was still afraid to ask them all.

He had been worried since he heard about her accident. Various worse scenarios had played in his mind on his way to the hospital.

He heard about the carnage of cars that piled up on the street on the news as he was driving. He had conjured the image of Dani with bandages all over her body, broken bones, and an unrecognizable face covered in blood.

"We still want to perform an MRI. It is only for precautionary measure, Alex." The doctor moved towards her bed to check on her vital signs and looked at her charts.

"Is there something else that you are not telling me?" Alex could sense that the doctor was still weighing his options.

He was trying to be cautious in what he had to say, which only alarmed him more. He would not be acting in that manner if there was nothing wrong with his fiancée.

"Can we discuss this outside?" The doctor invited Alex outside of her room to discuss their initial findings a little bit further. "You see, we did not see any significant injury in her head to cause any permanent damage to her brain function. But, we will need a few more days to observe her behavior once she returns to her consciousness." Dr. Dewey explained more about her current condition.

They did observe earlier her disorientation from the head trauma. Although it should not cause alarm, they still would like to be thorough.

Their patient was no ordinary personality after all. She was the daughter of one of their most generous contributors in the hospital and the future wife of the head of the biggest company in the state.

Such high-profile patients needed extra attention, whether they liked it or not. They had to make sure that they only provided high-quality care to them.

"What do you mean by behavior? And when will she regain her consciousness?" He wished he could be more patient, but as of now, it was one of his best qualities that were quickly wearing thin.

"It could be anytime now or later. Be patient. Daniella is trying to recover, and sleep is one of her best allies as of now." The doctor informed him.

He wished there was more that they could do, but he was just a doctor, not a miracle worker.. But he still considered what happened to his patient as living proof of miracles still happening.

### **Chapter 412 - The Judge And Executioner**

Police gathered in the lobby, preventing the media, especially the paparazzi, from entering the premises. The detectives were on their way to the victims to investigate the accident.

The Director of the hospital could see the growing chaos outside their doors. He finally decided to have a short press conference to appease the mass media for answers.

Jacky went through several photographers and media personalities, crowding the front of the lobby to get the latest scoop. Luckily, nobody recognized her. Otherwise, she would find herself buried in the mob of reporters.

She had rushed to reach the hospital when she learned of the accident. She was worried for her friend, not knowing her actual condition.

"How is she?" She quickly asked, finding Alex sitting by her side. She could see the worry lines on his face, but he remained calm as he looked at the newcomer.

"She is still sleeping, but the doctors are hopeful that she will gain full recovery." He stood from his seat and offered it to her.

Although he had stepped a foot away from her, his eyes never left her face. It was as if he longed for her to open her eyes for him. It felt like he was afraid that he would miss it if she suddenly did.

"Why don't you eat first while I sit here with her." Jacky offered, seeing that he looked a bit different.

He did not seem ok to her. He looked like a man who had lost control. He was a man who seemed lost. Something that he had not seen from him before.

"I am not hungry, but I need to do something," Alex said as he finally let go of her hands. "Don't leave her side. Call me if she suddenly wakes up." He instructed before reluctantly leaving her side.

He walked out of the room, leaving instructions to his men never to let their guards down. He had to find out what caused the accident. He had to get to the bottom of the truth.

If he could not help her wake up or get better soon, the least he could do was find out if someone had tried to hurt her intentionally. If he ever learned that it was the case, he would make them pay.

"Ben, what is going on?" He asked when he met him at one of the waiting areas in the hospital. "Have you spoken to the police?"

He could see a detective questioning the other occupants of the room. Some of them incurred some minor injuries in the accident, while the rest were family members, waiting for the results of their loved ones, just like him.

"Yes, Sir. I already informed them of what I had witnessed." Ben moved closer to him.

He did tell the detective everything that he saw. But he did not include his assessment. He believed that he should reserve those for his investigation.

"I think we need a quieter place where we can talk. Are you done here?" Alex pointed to the detective. He could still see him going through the other witnesses, questioning all of them of what they saw.

They moved out of the room when Ben acknowledged that he had no more business to be in that room. He found an empty hallway where nobody could eavesdrop on their conversation.

Ben narrated to his boss what he witnessed while he followed her car. He did notice that she sped up her car, but in his opinion, it was not fast enough to cause her to lose control.

He still saw her drive the car smoothly along with the traffic, stopping when necessary. He could see that she had control of her situation, so it could not be her fault or due to carelessness.

"I did see the other car, slightly swerved to her other side as if the driver was forcing her to move to change lane. It was like the other two cars were boxing her." Ben recalled the scene in his mind.

At first, he did not notice anything unusual as he followed her. It was natural for other cars to overtake the other, to avoid traffic. But after the accident, he began to think that it was not just a coincidence.

"I want you to find every available evidence to find the culprit. Whoever is responsible for hurting her has to pay." Alex said as he clenched his fist with anger.

He could already think of several possible suspects capable of such dirty works. But he could not barge into their lair without ammunition. He would lose without a fighting chance.

"Don't worry, Sir. I will never stop until I have enough to prove whoever ordered to hurt Ms. Dani. I will not stop until we can make them pay." Ben said, determined to uncover the truth.

As he said earlier, he would risk his life for this couple who had only shown him kindness, treating him like family and providing him with a home.

"That is all I need to hear." He dismissed Ben and walked back to her room, still thinking of his discovery.

Someone wanted to hurt her, even possibly kill her, to get to him. He had to find out who it was before he succeeded in doing what he failed to do on his first try.

"Did she open her eyes?" He stepped inside the room, with his eyes focused on her. He wanted to make sure that he did not miss anything. It had been hours since the accident. He was a bit impatient and anxious at the same time.

"Not yet. I am sorry." Jacky replied with worry in her eyes. "Maybe in a bit, she might finally wake up." She added, hopeful that her friend would get well soon.

"I hope so too." He moved towards the other side of the bed. He sat on the edge of the bed as he played with the tendrils of her hair, willing her eyes to look at him.

His mind was still in turmoil. He knew that Dani was the only one who could calm him down. Since he had met her, his emotions had been in constant chaos, but with her simple touch, hearing her voice, and seeing her eyes, everything just fell back into place.

He did not believe in taking things into his own hands. But when it came to Dani, he would hunt whoever did this to her. He would be the judge and executioner.

## Chapter 413 - Awful Danger

A few hours earlier, Jacky had waited for her friend at the restaurant with the rest of their friends. She was beginning to get frantic when she was late again for their lunch date.

Dani promised she would come on time. But yet again, she was nowhere to be found, and the clock was ticking. Jacky had no choice but to entertain their friends while they all waited.

When she asked about her whereabouts, she was vaged. She even accused her of going back to the office to work instead of prioritizing her schedule with them.

She could hear her voice ringing her head with their last conversation before the tragic accident.

"Promise." That was the last word she heard from her before she hung up on her.

She suddenly felt guilty, blaming herself for what happened to her friend. If she did not keep nagging at her that she was late, and then her friend would not have hurried and had an accident.

She could not imagine the trauma her friend went through after experiencing such a horrific incident. Looking at her, with her eyes still closed, she could only feel horrible.

"I am so sorry, Dani," Jacky said while her friend was lying on the bed unconscious. "If I did not keep nagging you, you will not be in this condition."

She touched her face gently, avoiding the bruise that covered her face. She wished it was her that was in her place. "Please, forgive me, Dani. It is all my fault. I am the reason why you are lying on that bed."

A tear dropped from her eyes, but she quickly wiped them away. It was not the time to cry. There was no reason for it. She was here to support her friend when she became conscious again.

A few minutes later, Alex returned to the room, hopeful that she was finally awake. But he was a bit alarmed that she remained sleeping.

"I'm sorry about all this. I think this is all my fault." She finally confessed, still feeling that she was to blame.

She looked up from where she was sitting and stared into his face across from her. She was afraid that she might have caused more harm than good with her plans.

Now, Jacky was afraid that she had ruined their wedding as she looked at her helpless friend and the man she was about to marry.

"No, you should never blame yourself." Alex turned his attention to his fiance's best friend, surprised by her statement. He did not believe that Jacky had anything to do with the accident.

He debated telling her about the recent development. Besides, it was still mere speculation, having no sufficient and concrete proof yet.

But before he could dwell more on the matter, he noticed that Dani stirred a little in her sleep. He diverted his attention back to his fiance, setting aside Jacky's concern for a later discussion.

"Dani," Alex tried to call to her, but she only mumbled incoherently, scrunching her eyes together as if she found it hard to open them.

He was glad that she was finally regaining consciousness but wary that something still might be wrong with her. The doctor still had to declare that she was clear from danger, although she was not in a critical condition.

"Dani," Jacky also repeated her name, happy to see that her friend was starting to wake up.

All she wanted was for Dani to recover immediately and for everything to get back to normal. She wished that this incident would not hinder the wedding of her friend.

"Dani, baby. Please wake up." Alex lowered his body until he was leaning down close to her face.

He wanted to be the first she would see when she opened her eyes. He wished for her to remember that she was never alone. He would never leave her side.

"Dani," Jacky whispered, but it was almost inaudible as she gave space for Alex to take care of her friend.

Jacky stood from her chair and stepped back a few steps. She did not want to ruin the moment that the two were having. Jacky had done enough problem. She did not want to cause more.

"Hi, baby!" Alex whispered gently in front of her, not wanting to spook her from her long sleep.

He could see that her eyelids were moving, her lips parted, but she was still struggling to wake up. Her breath was a bit labor, but nothing that should alarm them.

The doctors had already removed the machines attached to her earlier, allowing her to move freely. Except for the IV tube inserted in her skin, she looked like she merely woke from her sleep.

"Hi!" She spoke up in a croaky voice. She barely made a sound, so she cleared her throat, finding it very dry again. In another attempt to greet him, she voiced out his name. "Alex."

She recognized his voice even if she could barely open her eyes.

Her sight was still foggy, either from the accident or maybe the medications. But she did see a shadow of a face in her vision.

"Yes, I am here, Dani." He said softly to her as he held her hand for support. "Please let me see your eyes." He encouraged her to force them open wider.

A few seconds later, she slowly opened them. She blinked them twice, clearing the clouds that obscure her view. She finally saw the handsome face of the man she was going to marry, sighing a deep breath as she felt relieved.

She stared into his eyes, reading the depths of his soul. From there, she would know the truth of what she saw in her visions. In their reflections, she could see the genuine love he shared with her.

"You're here." She wet her lips as if the effort of saying those words were drying her mouth.

Flashbacks of her dream started playing inside her mind, confusing her with illusions and reality. But when she stared into those beautiful eyes, she knew which one she would choose to be the real one.

"Yes, I will always be here." He sat down on the edge of her bed and lowered his head until his lips barely touched hers.

He focused his eyes on hers, hoping to see that she was more than ok. But he had no powers to heal her from her injuries. All he could do was stay by her side and help her recover sooner.

"They said that I had a car accident." She remembered what the doctor said, but the earlier event was still fuzzy in her brain.

She could remember bits and pieces of the first thing she did this morning, but her mind remained blank about the accident.

She did remember her dream, the one that had Nick in the main scene. But this time, she concluded that it was just a dream, more of a nightmare.

She had no idea why she still kept conjuring his image in her brain despite dismissing him in her life. She searched her brain for a possible answer, but it eluded her.

"Yes, you were. But don't worry, you are now safely in the hospital, getting treatment for your minor injuries." He did not want her to worry unnecessarily.

So far, the doctors had not seen anything seriously wrong with her. About the other matter, he kept it to himself for the moment.

There was no reason for him to tell her that she might be in awful danger.

#### **Chapter 414 - Early Birds, Catching The Worms**

"I am fine. You know I need to go back to my job." She debated with Alex as he tried to stop her from getting ready for work.

He pulled her back to the bed when she attempted to walk away, pinning her between him and the soft mattress. He did not think that it was a good idea.

He was already ready for work himself. He only returned to the bedroom to check on Dani and say goodbye. But she surprised him when he caught her talking to Jacky about going to work.

"But the doctors said that you need rest." He removed the hair that slightly covered her face when she landed on the covers unceremoniously. "Why don't you just go back to sleep next to me? Then, maybe we can think of something to do."

He decided at that moment to stay in bed with her. He could call his secretary and cancel all his appointments for the day. He realized that she might be bored, stuck in his apartment all day.

"I think I had enough of resting." She pushed on his chest, creating space between them. Then, she grabbed his face between her palms. "Besides, you have important clients to meet today."

She tapped on his cheeks before letting him go, slipping away from his hold. She crawled her way out of the bed and strode towards the bathroom.

She had already lost so much time from her recovery that she barely had done anything with her cases. But David and Evan already assured her that they had taken care of them.

Nevertheless, she would like to see their progress before she finally uses her indefinite leave of absence. After this, she would be devoting her time to their wedding.

"David already said that they had taken care of all your cases. There is no need for you to report to work." Alex tried to reason with her, shouting over her shoulder before she vanished behind the door. Although he could already guess that he would not win.

She was always as stubborn as her father. Something that he had learned the hard way, but despite that, he did not regret any of it. He loved her together with her unique and adorable personality.

"Would it make you feel better if you will accompany me?" She offered, seeing that he was worried about her. She peeked on the side of the doorjamb and asked him. "I promise, I will not take long."

She had learned that to get her way. She had to compromise with him. She could not always force what she wanted on him without having some form of arrangement.

It was the only fair way to handle their relationship if she wished to have it for a long time. It had to be a give and take, with open communication. Knowing when to fight and accept defeat.

"Well, I would prefer if you would stay here. But since I can not stop you, and then, I guess I have no choice but to accompany you." Alex spoke up with a defeated sigh. He could only look at her with amazement at her dedication to the people who depended on her.

He knew after the accident and discovering that there was a possibility that someone attempted to harm her. He could not let her alone, to fend for herself, not when he could do to protect her.

"Thanks, babe." She blew him a kiss before running back to the bathroom to fix herself.

After the quick hot shower, she grabbed her towel and faced the mirror. She could hardly see herself from the fog that the steam caused. She held out her hands and wiped the mirror with her palm, clearing the moisture away.

She stared at her face on her reflection, seeing the still visible scar from her recent accident. She ran her finger on the side of her temple, feeling the mark that remained a reminder of the gruesome incident.

She did remember what happened to her eventually. It took her a few days to piece up the puzzle of her jumbled memories. But she did fix the details and put the correct timeline of her story.

"Are you done in there? Or maybe you need my help." Alex shouted as he leaned on the pillow, waiting for her to come out of the bathroom.

He did not mind having a shower again with her. Actually, the idea was starting to build momentum in his mind. He had held himself back due to her injuries, giving her time to heal and recover.

"No need. I am already on my way out." She yelled back, making a final inspection of herself before turning away from the mirror and tightening the tie of her robe.

She was just glad that her injuries were only minor. The doctors did not see anything else to cause alarm in her examination. Her tests all came up clear.

In a few days, the doctor sent her home to recover in the comfort of her room and bed under strict rule that Alex would be taking care of her, and she had to follow him to a tee.

"That is a bit disappointing. I was kind of looking forward to seeing you naked under the shower." Alex muttered under her breath, clearly sorry for the missed opportunity.

He watched her move out from one room to the other as he shifted to a sitting position on the edge of the bed. He observed her movement, assessing if she was truly ready to face the world again.

"Stop it." She admonished her fiancé for making fun of her. "Anyway, I'll just get dressed." She gave him a disapproving look to make him cease his taunting.

She quickly walked to their shared closet and chose a decent, comfortable suit for work. Even though her visit would be unofficial, she still would like to look professional.

"Take your time." He told her, standing up in front of the mirror and fixing his clothes.

She already informed Jacky that she would be coming in today. She was already late, even though she was not on the clock.. She always believed in early birds, catching the worms.

#### **Chapter 415 - Second Chance**

"What happened to your plan?" The man sitting in the barely lit office behind the massive oak table asked as he smoked his cigarette.

There was no trace of emotion in his voice. He was neither thrilled nor disappointed. He remained calm despite the rage building up inside him.

The thick puff of white haze lingered in the air, creating an eerie atmosphere in the darkened room. Indistinct noises came from a distance, but the room remained still as nothing moved except the two of them.

His face remained obscured from view from the visitor who entered his private space. The only sound that resounded on the walls was his erratic heart beating and uneven breathing. It was clear his fury was slightly getting to him.

"I know this incident had created a minor setback, but my men are already working on a new plan." The unknown man would not let this influential man intimidate him. He would remain in control of his emotion despite the circumstance.

He had worked for far more dangerous men than him before, but he had never cowered in fear to them. Something happened that went beyond his control, but it did not mean that he had already failed in his mission.

He stood on the other side of the desk, watched, and waited in silence for his reaction. He could anticipate two responses from him. One would be a sly remark. Then, another chance to redeem himself.

Otherwise, it would be a more bloody comeback, where death would be the only option, either him or the man behind the desk. He would prefer the first one because he wanted to get paid.

"I have no use for your head as much as I want to have it in a silver platter. But can I still trust you to accomplish to finish the job that you promise?" The man hiding in the shadows declared with a bit of sarcasm in his voice.

He was not laughing at his joke, but he would like to see the humor in this situation. He was not ready to accept defeat. He wanted a solution to this oversight.

He chose this man to do this job because they said he was the best. He wondered if gambling with him would be the better bet. But finding another one would surely be riskier.

"Talking to me instead of blowing my brains out means that you already made the decision. You still believe that I am a better choice to do this job." The man kept his ground, not showing a visible sign of fear.

But only a fool believed that he was invincible. Only a stupid man did not fear anything, especially death. He was neither one of those.

He had accepted that he was only human, mortal, and capable of making many mistakes. He feared many things in life, but the only difference. He never allowed them to cripple him.

He had prepared to fight the inevitable, prolonging his life as much as he could by challenging everything that stood his way. He had reached the peak of his success, not because he was brave. Quite the contrary, he had survived to live this long in his line of work because of his fears.

"You are quite a confident man. Something I admire about you." This time, the unknown man laughed and clapped his hands.

He found the other man amusing, not expecting such an answer. He was already ready to order his man to shoot him if he so much made the wrong move. But funnily, he was a quick wit.

"I will take that as a compliment." The man for hire said with a forced smile. He did not see it as praise but rather an insult to him. "I am only here to finish the job so I can get my payment."

He was not here for a fucking medal. Although he would like absolution for his failure. He would take another chance to redeem himself because his reputation was everything to him.

He eased his hands away from his hidden weapon, knowing that he would not be using it tonight. There was no need to prolong this meeting. He already knew what to do next.

"Then, I would not stand in your way. But I expect results next time we meet again." His voice had a hint of a warning.

Next time, he would not be as forgiving. He did not like to tolerate losing. He never usually gave second chances. He believed failing the first time meant not being cut for the job.

But he did make several exceptions for those who were exceptional. He thought that it would be a thrill to see them succeed. Besides, the fewer people were involved, the less mess he had to clean up.

His reputation and position in high society could not be tainted with dirt and blood in his hands. Once people learned of his illegal activities, it would ruin him and his chances for a higher power.

"I assure you this time that I will not fail. You will have what you wanted in the palm of your hands." He never promised something that he could not deliver.

He had always meticulously planned his strategies, making an almost perfect execution that led to favorable results. He tried to see all the possible angles, leading to lesser mistakes.

His last quest was purely bad luck. Fate was acting up against him when it sided on the other team. But this time, he was not taking anything out of consideration.

"Then, I guess we have nothing more to discuss." He finally pressed the burning ember in the ashtray on the top of his desk, killing what remained of its fire.

Then, he puffed out of his mouth the last smoke he inhaled in his lungs, giving him the satisfaction of releasing the tension out of his body.

He watched the man leave the room, thinking if he had done enough. Should he trust one man who already failed him once? He turned around in the darkness and gazed at the moon outside.

She survived.

He guessed that was all that mattered as his mind strategized for another plan. He realized he was also given another chance to right his mistake. Not everyone got a second chance.

#### **Chapter 416 - Bloody Lunatic**

"I'm sorry to disturb you. I did not mean to be a bother. But, I need your help." She hesitated to contact him, but she could not think of anybody else to call regarding her situation.

She initially thought of Alex, but she heard about the accident. She figured that he already had a lot on his plate. She did not want to add up to his problem.

"You know you can call me anytime, Cassie. I am your friend." He told her. "Anyway, what seems to be the problem." He could sense that something was wrong, but she was reluctant to share it with him.

Since she moved out of his apartment, this would be the first time that she contacted him. He also avoided calling her, abiding by her wishes not to be bothered in the meantime.

He wondered what changed her mind and why she called him instead of Alex. But he did hear on the news about Dani's accident. Maybe Alex was still busy taking care of Dani to deal with her.

"Jacob, can you come by my place quickly?" She asked him, adding the last word in a whisper. She did not want to sound demanding, but there was some form of urgency in her condition.

"What is wrong, Cassie?" He could detect a sign of distress in her voice as he listened to her trembling breathe. He already knew that something was amiss.

He would have run to her rescue, but he had no idea where she lived. He thought that was for the better. If his brother asked him again about Cassie, he did not have to lie about her whereabouts.

Now, he regretted agreeing to such nonsense when all he thought about was her safety. He had been bothered by his guilt since she left, thinking that he abandoned her at the time she needed a friend.

"I'll send you the address. Just get here." She uttered, trying not to sound desperate. But in truth, she was.

She started typing the location of where she was staying. With the help of Alex, she was able to find a decent apartment where she would hide until the situation cleared.

Alex offered to send her to a faraway place where Nick would not find her, but she refused to run away from her troubles. She would not cower in the likes of Nick.

She would make sure to see this through until she cleared her name and put Nick in his place. Hopefully, somewhere he could not hurt her anymore, behind bars where criminals like him belong.

"I got the address." He quickly took note of the location, which was not that far from his place. Luckily, he was not on duty today. He had time to help out a friend.

"Thanks." She voiced out, whizzing in pain. This time, she could not control her speech as it sounded like a broken sentence. "Bring some bandages and pain medication."

Her desperation finally showed in her distress call. But before she could tell Jacob more, her phone died down. All she could do now was wait for him to show up.

"Cassie, what is going on?" He questioned with a bit of concern. But the call remained silent, and the call ended. He tried to call the number again, but it was not responding.

His mind ran into many different scenarios as he rushed to her rescue. It all ended up in the worse possible outcome. He checked the address she gave him and drove speedily into her apartment.

He arrived at her apartment in a top time of fifteen minutes. Considering the traffic, he drove faster than his usual speed limit. He would have been faster, but reason still overtook his decision-making.

He rushed into the apartment she gave him, not waiting for the elevator anymore. He used the stairs, taking two to three steps until he reached the fourth floor.

"Cassie." He knocked on her door. But when no one answered, he tried to bang harder on the wooden surface, repeating her name.

He still tried to catch his breath as he waited for her to answer. Luckily, he only had to climb four floors. But still, those were high and stiff floors.

"Cassie." He shouted louder this time, a bit wary of her condition. From the way she first sounded, it did not seem too serious. But the way she ended the call, he was a bit scared for her.

Then, he wondered why there was no one guarding her door. He always thought that Alex would have someone watching her safety. But he did not see anyone, or nobody stopped him from reaching her door.

His anxiousness just tripled, realizing that something might have happened to her. Much worse than he initially had thought. He questioned if his brother had learned of her location and tried to hurt her or worse.

He started banging again on her door until he finally heard a movement. Something heavy must have dropped on the floor to cause such a smashing sound.

"Cassie, I am coming in." He knew he could not wait anymore for her to open the door. He feared that her life was in danger. He had to get to her immediately before it was too late.

Without considering his safety, he readied himself for the pain from what he was about to do. He positioned himself a few feet away from the door to create a distance.

Using his body, he smashed the side of his shoulder and arm against the wooden door. But before he made an impact, the door opened. He went straight inside the door, losing control, landing on the girl behind the door.

They both ended up on the floor, with him lying on top of her. If Cassie was not injured earlier, she would be now from the strong impact of their collision.

It took them a few minutes to realize what happened between the two of them as shock took over their consciousness. They both groaned in pain from the bumping of their bodies and falling to the hard floor.

"Are you alright?" He asked as he eventually recovered after being stunned by the incident.

He quickly pushed himself off her, giving her room to regain her composure. But he was more alarmed when he saw her bloody shirt, thinking that he might have caused it.

He knelt before her as he assessed her situation. He mentally kicked himself on the head for causing more harm than good. He came here to help her, not to make things worse.

"I'm ok. Don't worry." She finally answered when the recent event finally registered in her brain.

"Nothing broken, I think." She smiled at him, seeing the worry lines on his forehead.

She slowly moved her arms and then felt her toes, just to make sure that they were moving. Then, she slowly lifted her head and was satisfied when she did not feel any pain.

"I'm sorry about bumping into you." He did not know how to explain himself to her.

It suddenly appeared ridiculous even in his mind when he thought of what was going through his mind before the door opened.. He sounded like a bloody lunatic for thinking the worse scenario in his mind.

### **Chapter 417 - The Debts**

She arrived at the office with people looking at her funnily, treating her as if she was made of glass. She had an accident. It did not mean they should treat her like she would break any second.

"Hey, guys. Thanks for all your concern. But I am fine." She shouted for everyone to hear her message, including Alex.

She was glad when she and Alex were finally in the confine of the elevator on the way up to her office. She could not stand another stare of pity in their eyes.

It was an accident, and she survived. That was the end of that story. She just wanted to move on, but going back to her regular work was not an option anymore.

"Ok, Dani. I get the picture." Alex expressed, sporting a wide grin on his lips, wrapping his arms around her waist as he kissed her neck. He knew that Dani intentionally said that also for his benefit.

Maybe he could loosen up a bit when it came down to how he was handling her situation. He was afraid that he had overdone his smothering.

"I hope so. It feels like you became an overbearing mother hen who would not let me out of your sight." She taunted him but believed that he only had his good intentions.

She allowed him to turn her around and enveloped her in his arms. Their lips locked in a passionate battle of will, but both did not intend to win. In the end, they were equal.

"How long will it take you to finish here?" He asked as soon as they exited the lift that brought them to her floor.

She insisted that he attended his meeting first before he returned to pick her up. She promised to be done by then. She just wanted to check her cases before she finally took her very long vacation.

"Just enough till you return." She told him as they walked nearer her office.

She could already see Jacky, waiting for them at her desk, wearing a smile that could light up the place. She was glad that her friend was happy to see her and her fiance.

"Fine." He conceded before letting her go. "Jacky, I will leave you in charge while I am gone. Don't let her out of your sight." He instructed as he pulled Dani back in his arms for a goodbye kiss.

"You heard the boss," Jacky interjected, enjoying the fun exchange of the two lovers.

"You two will be the death of me," Dani complained this time after sealing the kiss.

She let go of him again, letting him walk away from her, back to the elevator. Watching the man that would not let his eyes off of her even for a single second left her finally to be alone.

Well, not exactly alone since Jacky would be there to watch her. But at least, she would not feel his watchful eyes inspecting everything she did.

"Remember Jacky. Watch her. Don't let her get away with anything." Alex ordered as if his words were a law that could not be broken.

Alex finally left the two of them to start with her work. Jacky had already arranged the materials that she would need. So far, with the rate she was moving, she would be finished early, even before he returned from his meeting.

"I am happy that you are doing well. You did give me a fright when you were in the hospital." Jacky stated as she grabbed the files that she had already reviewed and given a remark.

"I heard that you blame yourself for my accident. Please don't." Dani turned to her friend, assuring her that it was an unfortunate incident that nobody wanted.

"I guess you are right. I am just happy that you are ok now." But after that, she did not want to organize a party for her. She was afraid that next time, they might not be so lucky.

"Me, too," Dani agreed with Jacky, continuing to finish the rest of the papers in front of her.

Fortunately, David and Evan understood what she wanted with each case. There were only a few suggestions she left in her notes for them to use as resources.

"Are you done?" A voice by the door echoed in her room. She looked up, happy to see his face.

He was later than he had planned but still early according to their arranged time. He did not want to be away from Dani for far too long, but the meeting was far complicated than he thought.

"Yes," Dani uttered with a jolly smile.

She placed the files neatly back on the side of the table for Jacky to return to the partner's office. She was done with them for now. It would be up to the partners to continue what she had already started.

"Before we leave, I want to discuss something with you. Then, we will have a short meeting at David's office." Alex informed him as he sat down on the front chair, staring at her.

He looked serious as if he had some business that he needed to discuss with her. Gone was the playful smile on his lips. In its place was a solemn look with a slight hesitation in his eyes.

"What is it about?" She gazed at her fiancé with a puzzled look. She could not read if this was just his terrible sense of humor, playing tricks on her or if he did have something important to discuss with her.

"It had something to do with paying a debt owed. I want you to handle it for me." Alex voiced out his business that he wanted her to handle personally for him.

"Who's debt? Yours? To whom?" She began to ask a series of questions, but he did not answer right away.

He wanted her to listen carefully to his explanation before he would allow her to ask her questions.

It was a secret that he needed to reveal to her before they plunged into their vows. He did not want to start their new life together with something hanging over his head.

A secret had a way of revealing itself. Well, he would not allow what he was not intentionally hiding from her to become an issue in the future.

"The debts due to a bet that I ought to pay.." He clarified to her, hoping that she would understand and had an open mind.

### **Chapter 418 - Traumatic Experience**

He stared at her, assessing her for any kind of injuries. He scanned her from head to toe, checking for any signs of bleeding from wounds or broken bones.

The only indication that she was hurt was the tiny blood spots on her shirt. Still, Jacob could not locate the source of the bleeding.

"I am sorry, but I think this is all my fault." She quickly apologized for the misunderstanding, pointing to their situation. She moved into a sitting position, readying to stand up.

She believed that he rushed to her house thinking she was in danger. But it was all a miscommunication. She suddenly felt foolish for calling him for such a silly accident.

"What is going on, Cassie?" He asked, rubbing his hands and elbows, mildly bruised from its impact on the rugged floor. Luckily, the thick carpet had softened their landing. "I thought something terrible happened to you." Admitting his earlier fear.

He stood up first and offered his hand to her to help her up as well. She finally offered him to come inside, closing the door behind them.

He was confused with the way things turned out. He was expecting to see her covered in blood or something. Still, he was glad that she was ok.

"I am sorry if I misled you to believe that. It was not my intention." She started explaining, a bit mortified for causing too much trouble. "I panicked and called you." She kept saying in an agitated voice.

She walked with him further inside the apartment. It was a decent space. It was actually double the size of his apartment. Alex did not disappoint in choosing a suitable place for her.

"Hey, don't worry about it. I am sure that you have a valid reason for calling me." He could see that she regretted being a bother to him. He did not see it that way. He was glad that she called her. "Tell me what happened."

He let her lead her to the living room. Then, he accepted her offer to sit down with her. He wanted her to be comfortable while she told her story.

"Well, I was preparing a meal in the kitchen when suddenly the lights went off. I suddenly panicked." She narrated to him the earlier event that led them to this situation.

She remembered when the oven suddenly lost its power. Then, simultaneously, every appliance shut off, she began to think that someone else was inside the apartment.

She abruptly turned around and accidentally knocked down a glass on the tiled floor, shattering it to pieces. She grabbed her phone, considering whom to call.

"I first dialed Alex's number but reconsidered. I figured he already helped enough. Besides, he had too much going on with his life." Cassie further explained to him.

She searched the room and trained her ears to the other rooms, wondering if someone was out there. Her heart started hammering on her chest as she imagined another person about to enter the room to take her. But, there was only silence.

Her fear was unfounded.

There was no other person in the room. It was just her imagination playing tricks on her. But still, her body could not stop shaking from the horrific experience.

She blamed the movies that she watched all day for conjuring up images in her mind, making her a scary cat. She took a deep breath, trying to regain her composure.

Then. "I started picking up the shard pieces of the glass on the floor when a loud noise came from the hallway. I was not looking at the glass as it accidentally cut my fingers." She showed him the towel that was wrapped in her hand.

Eventually, she realized that it was just some noisy punks who lived at the end of the hallway, passing through. It was too late to stop what happened next as the glass cut through to three of her fingers, making a deep sliced.

"Will you let me look at it?" He did notice the piece of clothing that she was holding earlier. It was the only thing he found disturbing in her appearance.

He carefully took her hand in his and inspected the damage. Slowly, he unwrapped the rag out of her fingers, finding the fresh wound underneath it.

"I'm sorry if I called you. I know these are just some minor cuts that I should handle myself, but..." She could not finish the sentence as she felt the pain when he tried to move them.

But, it was not the pain that concerned her. In fact, she had a high pain tolerance. What scared her was the amount of blood that gushed out of her fingers, dripping on the floor.

She did not mind a prick or a drop of blood. But seeing the red liquid making a pool on the white marbles was a different story. To her mind, it had a making of a horror movie.

"I tried to call Alex again but found your name instead of his." She remembered putting his number in her phone's home screen for easy access. "I called you."

She remembered as fear gripped her when she saw all the blood. She grabbed the rag, but it still would not stop from flowing out of her flesh.

"I am glad that you did because these are deep wounds that would need stitching. It might have stopped bleeding as of now, but it will again if not treated properly." He examined the wound again.

It was not life-threatening, but it could get infected, which could cause a lot of health complications. He could already see a swelling on the other side, indicative that he should apply medications urgently.

"Thanks for coming." She still appreciated that he came when she called. She might be embarrassed by her action, but she was glad not to be alone.

"Anyway, I was wondering what happened to your phone." He did remember calling her back, but she was unreachable.

"The battery died down. Since I was not using it much, not having anyone to call, I totally forgot to charge it." She felt silly again for not even remembering to do some basic things.

"Another question if you don't mind answering. Why did it take you so long to answer the door?" It was the other reason he thought she was in a terrible state.

"I was in the bathroom in my room, trying to debate whether to clean the wound or not. Only the sound of the doorbell could be heard inside the room." But since the electricity in her apartment was out, she could not hear anyone from the inside.

Fortunately, she decided to leave the wound unattended and went out of her room to get herself a glass of water. That was when she heard the knocking on her door. Then, the rest was history.

"That all explained it." He concluded. "Shall we attend to your wounds?" He stood up from his seat and walked back to the front door, remembering dropping his bag when they both fell.

"Please, just be gentle." She begged him. "Besides a large amount of blood, the worse thing I feared the most is needles." She confided in him. Remembering the last time she had a shot. That was a decade ago.

She recalled almost not getting the injection as she struggled against the doctor administering it.. But it was a traumatic experience that she did not want to endure again.

### **Chapter 419 - Jump The Gun**

She was not expecting his answer. She was confused as to why she should handle such a case when he already had David and his team of lawyers to do his bidding.

Besides, she did not think of him to be a man who would owe anyone. He was not a gambler or a man who lacked anything. So, how was he in debt?

"Is this some kind of a joke?" She answered him, finding the entire thing hilarious.

She called Jacky to take care of the papers, then watched her leave her room. She stood up from her chair and grabbed her bag. She waited for him to follow her lead as he walked beside her.

She believed that Alex was making fun of her, giving her a bogus case. But she could not see any humor in his eyes. Suddenly, she felt the seriousness of the situation.

"I assure you this is not a joke unless you find it funny." Alex moved aside to give way to her as they exited her office.

He assisted her to the elevator that would lift them up to the upper floors. He led her to his friend's office to discuss further the debt he was talking about.

He trusted that she would understand about the game that he had played. It did not mean to cause harm, but only to assist him during the time.

"I do hope too." She finally uttered as he opened the door to David's office, ushering her inside.

Her boss looked like he was already expecting their arrival as he greeted them both. He offered them a seat on the side of his office, on his black leather couch.

"Then, let us find out." He did not want to keep his secret from her any longer.

He wanted everything he had kept from her to be out in the open. He did not want anything to hunt him in the future when she discovered that he kept something from her.

Whatever the outcome, he was ready to face it now instead of waiting for it in years to come. It would be easier to fix things if they would come from him than learning about it in another tongue.

"Please, join me," David said, knowing exactly why they were visiting him. "It is nice to see you well, Dani." He greeted her.

Alex already had informed him of his plan. He was unsure if that was a great idea, but he supported his friend. He also wanted what would be best in his situation.

"Why do I get the feeling that I will not like any of this?" She gave them a hesitant smile, looking from one man to the other. It was finally sinking on her the gravity of the situation.

She did not know if she would laugh or be anxious with the circumstances as the two looked at each other as if they were silently communicating.

"Well, it will be up to you on how you would like to look at it," David answered her first as he pulled out a file beside him.

He checked the folder's contents before pushing the file on the coffee table in front of him. He watched Dani as she once again looked at him, then Alex before picking up the file.

He watched her reaction as she opened the file and started reading. He could not read much yet in her facial expression. He turned his attention to his friend, who was also watching her like a hawk.

He could only speculate on what was going through both of their minds as every minute ticked by. As Dani read further in the contract, she could either find it laughable or something that might make her furious, betrayed even.

"What is this?" She finally asked, unsure if she should be flattered they had bet about her or be enraged for using her in such a game.

Her face was unreadable as confusion enveloped her at the moment. She had mixed emotions about her discovery. She would not expect something like this from men such as Alex and his friends.

"It was a silly game made by stupid friends who had too much time and money on their hands. I admit that I participated in the game, not thinking of your point of view." Alex admitted to her, not wanting to wash his hands from any faults.

He was as guilty as his friends for using their agreement in a bet. He should know better than to agree to such an arrangement. He should have listened to his instinct.

But he was as immature as them as he had realized now for playing a game involving her. Even if his intentions did not intend to hurt her.

"I agree with your assessment. No one should be treated in this manner whether the intent was not to make fun of the subject, in this case, me." She responded to his statement.

She was still assessing her feelings about the matter. Reading the contract and the conditions in it. She did find nothing too obnoxious about it.

If it had not been about her, she could have easily dismissed it as a silly game that stupid men played to pass the time. But it was about her.

She still felt a bit violated, but the fact that he came clean about it changed everything. It only showed how much trust he had in her to share something like this with her.

If it was another man, maybe he would have buried that kind of secret and never mentioned it ever again. But Alex was no ordinary man. He had always been different in a magnificent way.

"I assure you that I regret being part of this bet. But it is done. Now, all I want is for us to move on from this. That is if that is also what you want." Alex could only plead with his eyes, hoping she would find mercy and forgive him for his childish mistake.

Luckily, he had learned his lesson and acknowledged his mistake before it became too late for them to fix it. Because the worst thing that could happen to a relationship was to break the trust that bonded them together.

"What about you, David? Do you agree with Alex?" She could not help her boss could have partaken in such a game.

She had so much high regard for a man like him. For grown men, who were successful in their own rights, it was not something she would expect them to do.

"Of course, I felt worse also for being a part of this." He did warn his friend about this entire thing. Well, especially about the confession thing. But he was glad that his friend was brave enough to face his fear.

"Well, I appreciate your honesty and for sharing this with me. But what do you think? Should I feel delighted, or should I unleash my rage right now?" She directed her gaze to her boss before changing her attention to her fiance.

She could not help but laugh internally at the worried look on their faces, especially when Alex did not expect what she was about to say. But being Alex, he could easily control his emotion.

"Maybe delighted." Alex finally answered with his boyish grin as he read something in her expression.. He did not want to jump the gun, but he did see hope in her playful eyes.

## **Chapter 420 - Absence Of Love**

"Thank you, Dani!" He said, looking at the woman at her side. They were on their way home after finalizing the last case she handled until she got back from their very long honeymoon.

He decided that he was not up to driving them, so he appointed one of his securities to chauffeur them home. The other security followed them closed by as they continued to secure their safety.

"Consider yourself lucky." She turned her head to him after gazing at the heavy traffic outside, not that it was any different from the other days.

She could still remember her recent car accident. She finally pieced it together after recovering from the trauma. It happened so fast that it took time for her to process what was going on. She was not able to act fast enough.

She did remember another car trailing close behind her. But it was not unusual with many rude drivers around, always in a hurry to get their way without considering the others.

Then, another car drove to her other side. It started moving faster as if it was trying to overtake her car. She did remember looking at the driver. Finding the look the driver gave her was a bit unsettling.

"I am. I was not expecting that you would leave me off the hook that easily." Alex never thought that she would be cool about it.

Well, at least that was what he figured from how she responded to his confession. She did give him a bit of a hard time explaining, but in the end, she appeared to take the entire thing not too seriously.

"Come on, a bet. What are we fifteen?" She smiled, raising one of her brows at him. She remembered high school. Those times were kids bullied the weaker ones.

She could see the way his brows furrowed at her statement

as if he was studying her with those penetrating eyes. She could not see the point why she should make a big deal of an insignificant game.

"Are you making fun of me?" He could see the glimmer of laughter in her eyes, although she was trying hard to control her expression.

He swiftly moved his hands towards her, grabbing her on her waist. She did not expect what he had planned as she was caught unaware.

Then, he let his fingers work their magic as he started tickling her side. She squirmed in her position in the backseat, struggling to get away from him. But she was trapped.

"Stop it, Alex." She admonished him as her hands tried to fend his attacks. But she had no possible escape as he tickled her relentlessly.

When she found an opportunity, she quickly shifted in his position and grabbed his wrist, pushing it away from her body. But she still had to avoid the other one from continuing its onslaught in her body.

She got a glimpse of Tim, driving the car, grinning at the antics his boss was doing. Tim could only shrug his shoulders, indicating that he could do nothing to help.

"You are no help. You should also be protecting me against your boss." She expressed her protest, directing her stare at the man behind the wheel.

She squealed again when his other hand made contact on the side of her waist. "That should teach you not to make fun of me." He temporarily stopped, letting her hold his hands in place. "Do you understand?"

"I do, but remember, I still have the upper hand. You still owe me one after this stunt you did." She raised her hands, letting go of him.

Although, she did comprehend that what he did was a man thing that only he and his friends would understand. She was not simply letting him get away with it without any form of repercussion for his actions.

"Noted." He conceded, knowing that he had no right to demand or contest against her wishes. He would do anything she wanted to make up for his participation in this bet.

"Anyway, what happened to your meeting?" She finally asked, remembering that he had left her for an appointment.

She could tell that his meeting today was important to him. He had been acting anxious about it, although he was trying hard not to show her.

She wanted to ask him about it earlier but forgot about it. But now that she remembered it, she had to know what the meeting was all about. Not because she demanded answers, but she was curious about it.

"I met with your father," Alex admitted to her. Though he did not think of telling her earlier, he was not planning to keep it a secret from her.

He just wanted to know first what her father wanted before discussing it with her. He thought it could be anything from business-related issues to marriage details.

"Oh!" She appeared to be surprised as she stared at him with a bit of worry. "What did he want? Is he ok?"

Since the accident, she was not able to visit him. Her mom dropped by the apartment to check on her, but she still had to make time to see her father soon.

"He is fine. As strong as a bull." He recalled how her father had greeted him when he arrived at his office at his home. "Your mom sent her love." He added.

"Well?" She looked at him, expecting more explanation from him. "What else did he discuss with you?" She asked anxiously, knowing that her father did not call for a meeting just for idle chitchat.

She could already guess that one of the topics would be her accident. She did hear some humor that Alex was investigating the incident.

Despite the assurance by the police that it was just an unfortunate accident, Alex still believed something else was in play.

Although, he was keeping that a secret from her at the moment.

She understood that he was only protecting her from the truth because he believed she was still recovering.

She had learned her lesson about doubting his actions. He would not keep them from her if he believed it would be relevant to the situation.

"He wanted to know if I am still capable of handling my responsibility. If not, he is willing to take it back, off my hands." He stated with a wry smile on his lips.

He could still imagine how Ethan confronted him about how he handled things on his end. He was not satisfied, even one bit about his performance.

"But you are doing well in your job. The company is thriving under your management. What more did my father want from you?" She demanded this time.

She did not like how her father was trying to manipulate Alex. He could not give his company to Alex, then threatened to take it back if he felt something did not see fit.

"He was not talking about the company. He wanted you back if I could not protect you." He looked at her solemnly, trying to study her face.

He did not want to take Ethan seriously, but he did make some good points during their conversation. However, he was not ready to give up on Dani just yet.

He promised her father that he would do his best to guarantee her safety. He would protect her using all his resources, providing her with all the protection she would need.

He even remembered telling Ethan, "I will offer my life at your mercy, to do what you see fit if I can not protect your daughter and keep her safe."

He was not afraid to end his life. He believed that she was an integral part of his life. Living without her would not be living at all.. Not with the absence of love.