

Royal Contract 421

Chapter 421 - Lord The Land

Tyra stared at the piece of cardboard resting in the palm of her hand. It looked so regal that only royalties were allowed to receive. It was so elegant that she almost wanted it framed.

After reading the content, she let her fingers run into the letters embossed on the paper. She read again the words written on it in bold, scripted letters.

If things turned out differently, it would have been her name written right next to him. But she had already accepted her fate. The two of them were just not meant to be.

She still felt a slight pang of hurt from losing the man she loved more than she had realized before. The guilt also ate at her heart after hurting him with her betrayal.

"Do you think we should attend the wedding?" She asked the man at his side, who also had an invitation from Dani.

Since she married him and continued with their charade, she made sure not to keep secrets from him. Not something as big as this.

She was still in Paris, buried in her work, avoiding staying with him at his house for too long. She felt that it would be better to keep their relationship the way it was, just a business arrangement.

"Only if you think you are up for it, Tyra." He said, not wanting to force her if she was not ready.

He already realized that what she had with Alex had been extraordinary. She had paid dearly for losing him because he had seen that he was a good man.

He was not forcing her to face something as painful as seeing the man she once loved marry another woman. He could still hear in her voice that she was affected by this.

It did not help that the woman he replaced with her was one remarkable woman too. He would know because he almost fell for her too. The only thing that saved him was discovering he did not have a chance.

"Troy, my father would be expecting us to be there. Now, that he had learned of our marriage." She related to him the call she received from her father a few days ago.

She still remembered the angry voice of his father when he called her and confronted her about her unexpected marriage. He commanded that she visit him with her husband as soon as possible.

She tried to buy them some more time before introducing her husband to her family. She was not ready for such chaos, not when she was still getting used to the idea herself.

She thought that she had already gotten away with it when he agreed to wait until she had finished with her contract. She still had more or less a month before that.

"I have no problem in attending the said event." He said definitively, wondering what was going on with the woman on the other end of the line. "It is you that I worry about all this. Are you ready to face the music?"

"The real question should be, will I ever be ready for this?" She admitted to him.

She felt anxious about the entire situation. Her emotions were all over the place, but the reason remained a mystery. She was conflicted about whether watching Alex waiting for his bride or seeing Troy again was the reason for her turmoil.

"You are the only one who can answer that." He concluded for her, not wanting to influence her decision.

He was leaving the choice to her, although he also received an invitation coming from Dani. She wanted him to attend because she considered him a friend.

But he already decided not to attend unless Tyra was also coming with him as his wife. That was the only time that he would make a public appearance again.

"Give me a couple of days to decide." She could not tell yet if which one of her options would best serve her interest at the moment.

She was still confused with the way things were moving in her life. The only thing working for her was the career that she worked hard to build. It was the only constant in her life at the moment.

She ended the call with him, reminding her to take care of herself and keep safe. She was back on the set, staring at the mirror in front of her. She waited for the crew to get ready for the shoot.

"Can I do this?" She questioned in her reflection but found no answer behind her stare.

Without realizing it, she was back in the past, recalling a time when he was still a part of her life. It was a time when Alex still wanted to marry her.

"You keep telling me that you intend to marry me, but..." She hesitated to continue what she had to say. She was not sure if she could demand his attention or his ring.

"You know how important my career is right now. I will never have this kind of opportunity again if I let it go." Alex knew that letting this job slip through his finger was not an option.

He could not commit to her yet. It would be unfair for her to be tied to him when he could not give her what she wanted, his commitment and time.

"I know what you are saying. I am also working on my career, but I am willing to give it up for you." She knew her job was nothing compared to what he was trying to establish. But it was as important to her as his work was to him.

She believed if she could do it, he should also do the same thing. But his work always took precedence over every decision he made.

"You know there is no comparison. But I love you. Just give me more time." He insisted, feeling desperate.

He loved Tyra very much, but he was still not ready to let go of his dream. He knew if he married her, he would not have any other option.

He would have to return to the kingdom and settle down with his fate.. His father would force him to take his place and lord the land his ancestors left him.

Chapter 422 - A Lonely Existence

"How much more time do you need? What else do I have to do to be enough for you?" She felt torn from her fear of losing him and the possibility that she would end up alone in the end.

The more he worked on his dream, the less time he spent with her. It did not help that her father kept nagging at her that she was not getting any younger.

Her father also insisted that she should be thinking of building a family soon. He did not believe that her modeling career would be enough to give her a bright future.

He reminded her that when her body started to sag and her beauty faded, she would be thrown away just like yesterday's news.

She still remembered what her father said to her. "You are not getting any younger. How sure are you that he will stay committed to you?" John's words, at that time, influenced most of her decisions.

"Do you have his ring on your finger? Men like him will eventually find someone else. Then, what? You will end up alone and unwanted." Her father pointed to her bare finger.

Her father's opinion poisoned her mind until she started doubting his love. She started questioning his intentions, demanding things she knew he was not ready to give.

"Please, Tyra. Try to be reasonable." Alex begged her when she demanded and gave him an ultimatum, making him choose between her and his career.

Alex knew he would not be able to pick one over the other. They were both equally important to him. He would only end up losing either way.

It was just that he was still trying to make a name in the industry. He was not ready. He loved Tyra and would marry her, he did tell her so, but she was demanding that if he did love her, she would marry him soon.

"If you won't choose, then let me decide for the both of us." She took a deep breath and held her emotions in place.

She convinced herself though he loved and cared for her, it would never be enough for him. She was tired of competing for his attention and love against his ambition.

"Please, don't do it." Alex pleaded with her.

He could already guess that she was about to break up with him, but he knew it was just her pride. He knew that she still was in love with him, and he would soon be able to patch up their difference.

He wanted her to understand why his company was relevant for their future. Once he had shown her that it was for them that he was doing all this for, and then, she would come back to him with open arms.

"Maybe it would be better this way." It was the final words she spoke to him before they parted ways.

But what she did not expect was that Alex's cousin would enter the picture. Edward had supported her, pretending to be her friend.

Edward became a shoulder to cry on when Alex continued to pursue his career, abandoning her. When he finally found her vulnerable, he went for the kill and seduced her.

The worse part was, she allowed her hurt and anger against Alex to cloud her judgment. She ignored Alex's reasons for choosing his company over her.

She eventually chose Edward over him, believing his promises and lies. It was too late by the time she learned about her mistake. Edward left her after getting what he wanted.

"Tyra, it is time." She woke up from her trance, realizing that she had zoned out.

She looked up to see a crew member, signaling that her shoot was about to start. She quickly abandoned her past to focus on her future. She finally decided that it was time to close that chapter of her life.

Burying her past did not work for her. It only proved that it would continue to haunt her forever if she did not do anything about it now.

On the other side of the world, he thought of their conversation. "You know you don't have to attend if you don't want to. Stop letting your father dictate your life." It was his last piece of advice to her before she said goodbye.

He also stared at the invitation that he received. He had no qualms of attending and supporting a friend to her happy ever after.

Alex was a good man, and Dani deserved to be happy with him because she was a good person too. He knew that they never meant to hurt anyone else with their relationship.

It was not the couple's fault that they found themselves caught in a relationship that both ended badly. Troy still believed that they all deserved their second chances.

He was also thinking of his wife. Maybe they were only married on paper, but he had learned to care about her. It was the reason why he had agreed to this arrangement in the first place.

He might not love her, but he was willing to protect her and prevent her from getting hurt any further. He knew what it was like to lose the person that he loved. He knew that it would not be easy to recover from such a loss.

"Cancel all my meetings tomorrow." He instructed his assistant. "I am leaving for a few days."

He knew that Tyra needed a friend more than ever. Maybe surprising her with a friendly visit would help cheer her up. He certainly could need some company.

It had been lonely since she had left. Troy was getting used to seeing her moved around his house. Now, the only thing he could hear was the silence that echoed in the walls and the coldness of the air inside the room.

Despite his effort to shove what his mind was trying to tell him, he found himself thinking about it. Suddenly, even though he did not want to admit it, his heart could not keep denying his feelings anymore.

Marrying her had been a source of light in his darkened heart. Having her around had been a fire that kept him burning.. Her leaving had suddenly turned his life into a lonely existence.

Chapter 423 - No More I But Only Us

"Are you ready?" A question that she heard for the hundredth time since yesterday.

After finishing their obligations with work, they started preparing for their trip to his hometown. The couple, with their families, decided to have the wedding done in the palace.

Although she would have preferred to be married where she had grown up, she did want to make a compromise with him and his family.

Since he chose to stay with her in New York to live the rest of their lives together. It was only fair the ceremonies took place in his hometown.

"Is anybody ever ready for this?" She answered him truthfully, finding it hard to imagine that the once charade of the wedding was finally coming true.

It would be a very long vacation, together with the final preparations, the pre-wedding rituals, and the wedding rite. Then, there was also the honeymoon phase.

In a few weeks, she could finally claim him as hers alone. Nobody could take him away from her because the love that would bind them together would be hard to break.

"Honestly, I am sure that I am not. But if we help each other, I am sure that we can easily make this work." He answered her, recollecting his view of marriage a few months ago.

He was so adamant about avoiding marriage at all costs. He was so sure that he was not ready for such a commitment. That marriage was a hindrance to his success in achieving his objective.

But now, he was excited to tie the knot with the only woman he would ever love with his entire being and his whole heart. He could never envision his future without her in it anymore.

Maybe he just did not care about how he was marrying her. The important thing was he would have her as his wife soon enough. Hopefully, there would be no more delays or anything that would stop them from saying their vows.

"I guess so." She agreed with his statement. She believed with their teamwork as husband and wife, they could achieve anything, and nobody could stop them.

They might not have known each other for that long, not even a year. Well, except for that one unforgettable night. Still, she believed that in that short time. It was enough to build a solid foundation in their relationship.

They were finally driven to the airport, where his private plane waited for them. It would fly them to their wedding destination, back to his home where he first originated.

"Are you looking forward to being back at my home?" Alex asked, hoping that her second time in his territory would be a much incredible experience than in her first time.

Even though she had assured him that her entire stay at the palace had been satisfactory. He still felt that it could have been better. Remembering the things that went wrong during those times.

"Of course. I already told you. I love your family, your place, especially the rose garden of your Nanna. I will always love to visit it from time to time." She truly enjoyed the last time she had been in his hometown.

She would never mind coming back for more time spent in that lovely home and revisiting the places they had been. She would also love to explore more sceneries with him during their free time.

"I am happy to hear that." Alex felt satisfied with her answer. His earlier apprehensions eased out, hearing that she shared his opinion about the place where he had grown.

Even if he did want to leave the place behind, it did not mean that he never wanted to return and visit from time to time. He loved his home, and it will forever be his home in his heart.

As they flew to the country he called home, he watched her in his peripheral vision, observing her silence. Since the plane took off, she had been quiet on her side of the seat, checking the clear sky outside.

"Is everything ok?" He could not help but wonder what was going through her mind.

He hoped that she was not changing her mind about getting married or something about having cold feet. Or, it could be something that was troubling her. He wanted to know.

"This is nothing." She tried to deny it. Basically, it was not something that both of them should worry about.

She was just uncomfortable since they left the comfort of his home. With their pack sets of luggage, they had traveled for hours to reach his country.

This time, they were not flying to his childhood home to merely visit. They were attending a special event, actually, the grandest event of the decade.

The Council of Elders insisted on hosting the ceremonies at the kingdom. The wedding should follow the traditions upheld by their ancestors since the beginning of time.

"Do we really have to go through all that trouble? Can't we just skip that part and go straight to wherever we are staying?" She protested, although she already knew the answer to her question.

She had worked so hard to avoid being in the limelight. She declined any kind of interview about her personal life, not wanting to catch any attention of the press.

She valued the years of her privacy, evading anything that would require her to make a public appearance if she could help it. But, it would seem that all of that would end very soon.

"You already know that this is part of the arrangement we made with our parents." Alex reminded her, but he would gladly disregard their tradition if it made her uncomfortable.

He could not expect her to follow blindly everything he or his family said. He did not mind if she would contradict him once in a while as long as it was not beyond reasonable.

"I'm sorry, but I will not allow the two of you to vanish in one of the most historical events in this country," Antonette uttered in disbelief when she overheard the conversation of the couple.

She was the one assigned to oversee the overall matrimonial event, starting this day until they had left the bridal ceremony for their honeymoon.

She was a petite middle-aged woman who acted according to a systematic plan and strict order. She had handled almost every royal ceremony of the kingdom for the last couple of decades.

"Antonette, I am sorry. I did not mean it." Dani immediately took back what she said upon seeing the panic on her face.

She believed that Antonette was about to have a heart attack from her suggestion. She realized that most people in this country valued their strict traditions.

She remembered how Alex had propositioned her into a contract precisely because of the said tradition. Honor had been an integral part of their culture.

"I know this is not what you practice in your country, but this is very important for my family," Alex explained to her. He remembered the only time that he followed one of their tradition was on his birthday.

He had stopped practicing it when he decided to leave his hometown to live and start a new life in another place. He never thought he would end up back home to honor his family and their tradition.

"I guess a few photos and a couple of smiles will not be that bad after all." She forced a smile on her face as she faced Antonette. Then, she leaned her head on Alex before he saw her frustration.

She turned her head on the window and could only stare at the massive assembly of people from her view as the airplane started to make its descent.

She continued to look outside as the plane made a soft landing. After a few whiles, it eventually stopped. She knew it was time for their first public appearance as a royal engaged couple.

"Don't worry. It will be a quick press conference. We will be back in the villa in no time." Alex wanted to sound reassuring. But just like Dani, he never did enjoy smiling in front of the camera.

As much as possible, since he had lived in New York, he had maintained a low profile. Nobody suspected who he was. The only people who knew his real identity were the people close to him. He made sure to keep it that way.

Presently, it would seem that all his efforts were in vain as he still ended up doing what he had ignored all those years. Now, they had forced his hand to do this. What could be next?

Still wrapped in his arms, sitting right next to her, he rubbed his hands on her shoulder. "Come on. Let us just enjoy this new experience together." It would be the only way to look at it. See it on the brighter side.

She could only nod in agreement with him. Arguing about it would not solve anything. The best way to deal with this situation would be to respond to all the questions with a smile and straightforward answers.

She was not afraid of the press nor answering their queries. She had nothing to hide. She would be proud to tell the world that she was marrying one of the best men in the world, at least next to her dad.

But another reality set in that she finally realized. She would be giving up her private life. She would be compromising in everything she did, every decision, and every action.

It would be the end of her independence, because like it or not, she would be sharing her life, all aspects of it, with him. But instead of being afraid of it, she welcomed the idea.

From the time they say their I do, there would be no more I but only us.

Chapter 424 - The Grandest Royal Celebration

As expected, the media had the place surrounded. If not for the security, there would be chaos. Reporters, photographers, and paparazzi were not known for their decorum.

It would seem that the news of their relationship and the upcoming wedding had reached the world's attention. The two were not local celebrities anymore but the world's latest hot news material.

"How long have you known each other?" A local news reporter asked their prince.

"When and where did you first meet?" A foreign national media representative reporting for an international news channel questioned.

"When did you learn that you are meant for each other?" Another inquiry that floated in the air during the mini-conference.

Many more questions about their personal lives circulated around the enormous space the organizers provided for the gathering, but the size of the crowd could not be described as mini.

But those queries stuck to both of their minds as they recalled their past. Alex and Dani had decided to keep that one particular single night a secret between the two of them.

Though they had not talked about it anymore, both still keep that night as a special memory, a night never to be forgotten. But it was an event in their life that they did not want to share.

Instead, they told them the story of meeting at the office of her former boss. He was a client that she had worked with. Then, seeing each other again in her new job.

"It was like fate is on our side, acting as a matchmaker as our paths crossed again." Alex sensationalized their past history, providing an intriguing and exciting backup story for their love affair.

But he left out the part of the offered arrangement and the other things that might put them in trouble. As far as the press was concerned, their love blossomed just like another romantic story.

"Was it love at first sight, Ms. Hamilton?" Another question that made her think.

She and Alex alternated in answering the queries, helping each other out in some difficult situations. So far, the press was eating at their words. Loving everything they were saying.

The two of them continued to sit at the center of the crowd, while on another side was Antonette, guiding them to the process.

Even though she was strict, she was an expert in handling these things. She would tell them when it was wise not to answer a question if she felt it would only worsen a situation.

"No. It was not. We actually started like cats and dogs. Always being in each other's throats." She explained to them, speaking calmly over the microphone with a silly smile as she remembered their few earlier encounters.

How can she even call it that? Love at first sight? When she was drunk the first time, she met him. That was just impossible, although she did find him attractive. She would admit that as much.

He had been the object of her dreams since that fateful night. But she could never count it as love. Physical attraction and wanton desire, maybe what she felt at first, but not emotional ones.

"Sorry, but we had run out of time. Mr. Princeton and Ms. Hamilton still have many other engagements. It has been wonderful to have all of you here, but for now, we have to end this conference." Antonette swiftly thanked all the press who attended the small event.

Both were relieved to be escorted out of the room and into the waiting car. It would drive them to the palace, where they would make an audience with Alex's parents.

It had been an eventful morning, but the day was not yet about to end. There were still several schedules that they had to attend to before they could settle back to the villa to rest and be alone again.

"After having lunch with Prince Alexander's parents, Duchess Katherine insisted that both of you have to join her for tea with the wedding coordinators for your final approval." Antonette continued to recite the itinerary she had arranged for the day.

The couple had long stopped listening to her. They continued to walk along the wide hallway that led to the massive dining room where Alex's parents were already waiting for them.

"Do you want me to create a diversion while you run?" Alex whispered in her ears, seeing the frustration on her face upon hearing the meeting about the wedding preparations.

"Well, we can make a run for it. But I think Antonette will never stop from hunting as down." She replied to his tempting suggestion.

She could not help but think of the rose villa, missing the bed that she had missed so much. Then again, she knew she had responsibilities that she had to attend to at the moment. Instead, she focused her attention on their next appointment.

Both were excited to have lunch with the other older couple since it had been a while since they last saw them. But the rest of the remaining activities, not so much.

"Finally, my son is home." Duchess Katherine uttered with so much enthusiasm. "Welcome also to your new home, Dani." She quickly grabbed her future daughter-in-law in a warm hug before turning to do the same with his son.

She had been waiting for this day since she started helping with their wedding. She believed she and Laura were more excited about this union than their children were.

"It is nice to be back," Dani responded by hugging her. She did enjoy her last stay in this place and had looked forward to returning since then.

But, it was not only the place that she missed. She also learned to care for the duke and the duchess. She considered them as part of her family too.

"You are family now. The wedding is just a formality." Duke Frederick expressed his happiness upon seeing his son and their new beautiful daughter, greeting them both with a wide grin.

He guided them both to their respective chairs. Dani would be sitting on his left while Alex was beside her. On the other side was the duchess who would be facing Dani.

"If you will excuse me, I will leave you both for a while. I will return later for your other appointments." Antonette excused herself since she was not joining the meal.

She left the couple with the capable hands of her employers to attend to some other matters, only to return after the luncheon was over.

She had managed many nuptial events for the royal family. But, it was rare that she saw a genuine couple who were totally in love. Most of the marriages she handled in the past were couples forced into the situation.

It was refreshing to work with two people who could not wait to get married, not because they just wanted to get it over with. But because they could not wait to be together forever.

She felt inspired by their story and the love that was clearly displayed in their expressions and actions. She believed this would be her best work yet ever.

This would be the grandest royal celebration that the kingdom had ever witnessed since the last century.

Chapter 425 - Magic Touch

She went straight to the living room as soon as their escort delivered them to the Rose villa. She preferred staying in this little house in comparison to the castle.

She slumped down on the soft cushion of the sofa, putting her feet up on the center table. She allowed her body to relax, closing her eyes on the process.

"I'm sorry." It was the only words that came out of his mouth, but she already knew what he was apologizing for, from the way things went with their meetings.

Their parents kept telling them that their opinion mattered. They had the final say in what will happen at the wedding. But when they both saw the extent of the ceremony, both Alex and Dani were not prepared.

"Did you see the size of that cake?" She uttered in disbelief, recalling the picture and the details of the wedding cake.

But that was not the only thing that surprised her. The enormity of the guest lists was beyond her imagination. When she said that she would prefer a smaller wedding ceremony, this was not what she was expecting.

"Honestly, I have no idea that they could bake a cake like that." But he did love the taste of the raspberry combined with white chocolate. "In any consolation, the selections were quite good."

He did not find any fault in the food tasting as everything was done exceptionally well. But he did agree that their parents had overdone the preparation.

"With that amount of food, we could probably feed a quarter of your country." She said exasperatedly. Although she had exaggerated her estimation, she still believed it was just too much.

She was just not a fan of too extravagant gatherings, but she knew she could not fight their tradition. Still, she could not help but protest.

She opened her eyes to stare at her fiancé, who was now looming over her. He stood in front of the couch, staring at her miserable existence.

"Come on. Maybe we can let it slide just for now. After all, it is just one day. After that, we have the entire future together." Alex allowed his body to sink on the sofa beside her.

He rearranged her body until she was aligned with the sofa, lying down comfortably with her head on a throw pillow, and her feet on his lap.

He could tell that she was exhausted from the busy schedule since they arrived. Even he could feel the tiredness of his muscles and the aching of his feet from the stressful day.

"What else can I do?" She resigned to her fate. Despite the numerous things that she never envisioned in her dream wedding, she had to push through with the ceremony.

She could not disappoint her mom and Katherine after all the effort they had put into this event. They were only thinking of what would be best. She could not find fault in that.

Besides, she was marrying a prince. She should have already expected this kind of situation. It was her fault for not being hands-on in the preparation and letting them do all the heavy lifting. Now, she had to accept the consequence.

"I suggest we just enjoy the ride." Alex could not think of any other way than to let the inevitable happen.

He started working with his hands in her foot, easing the tension on her muscles. Then, he allowed his fingers to move around her toes and then applied some pressure on the sole of her feet.

Judging from her silence, she was already enjoying the massage he was giving her. He believed in that aspect. There was something he could do to help her.

"I am certainly enjoying this one." She finally breathlessly muttered as he hit another pressure point under the sole of her feet.

Her foot was killing her from moving from one place to the other, then from walking the long hallways of the palace. She wondered how anyone could ever live in such an enormous space.

She had grown up in a huge mansion, but it was still relatively small compared to the palace. The ballroom alone was massive that she could already imagine the number of people that would fit in that enormous room.

"Then, allow me to ease some of your tension." He could feel in her tense muscles the strain of the wedding on her.

She only just recovered from her accident. Alex did not want her to relapse into another ailment because of the pressure of this wedding.

"Thanks. I really needed this." She could call for a professional masseuse to help her relieve her strained muscles. But she preferred his hands over her body because it also gave her other pleasures that no other hands could provide.

With his skillful hands, all her troubles were slipping away. But she did remember something that caught her attention earlier during the meeting with the coordinators.

The only thing that she had loved about the plan that they made was the church where they would take their vows. It was a magnificent archaic work of art, an architectural structure worthy of praise due to its beauty and grandeur.

She already fell in love with the place from the pictures. She could not wait to see it with her own eyes. She could already imagine its colorful designs and its intriguing history.

So far, it was leading in her list of things she liked about this wedding. Except, of course, her groom, who would always be on the top of the list.

"Can I still suggest that we run away tonight and head out to the courtroom?" He jested as his hands worked on her ankles, slowly working their way up her calves. Slightly teasing her, promising for something more.

"I suddenly wish that we run away to Las Vegas and allowed Elvis to perform the ceremony." She answered back with disappointment in her voice.

But her protest was short-lived as the next sound that came out of her lips was far from a complaint.. Her words slowly turned into a series of moans as she felt his magic touch.

Chapter 426 - Series Of Domino Effects

He sat at the dimly lit club as he waited for the person he would be meeting tonight. He had been avoiding him this past week, unable to confront him with what he had promised him.

Until now, he was still missing the key ingredient in his grand master plan. Without her, there was no way he could proceed with their scheme to take down their enemies.

"Find me that bitch if you know what is good for you." He shouted as he dismissed his men, who continued to fail to give him what he needed. He drank the remaining liquid in his glass, hoping that it would calm him down until his next meeting.

He would never be able to serve Alex's head on a silver platter if he could not get her back. He had to get the evidence she stole from him, in addition to the files she promised to give to him.

His men exited the room as another figure approached him. His guest had finally arrived with his entourage. He certainly knew how to make an entrance.

"Prince Edward, glad you can make it." He gestured to the other available seat in front of him while he waited for him to settle down. "I am sorry for not being able to accommodate your earlier request, but things had been hectic this past week."

He knew he could not keep avoiding him. But maybe he could persuade the prince to be amicable with his change of plan. As of now, there was no other way since he still had not recovered his golden goose.

"I was starting to worry that you have forgotten me, or worse, avoiding me, Nick." Prince Edward settled comfortably in his seat and ordered himself a drink as he observed the man in front of him.

He had asked for a meeting with him earlier that week. But, his secretary had been going around in circles with their excuses. He was about to send his men to search for him when he called to set up this meeting. He was running out of patience because he was also racing against time.

His father was already calling for him to go home because of the upcoming wedding. It was a critical and crucial event that could cement Alex's position on the throne.

His claim as the king could be hanging in the balance if he could not find an immediate solution to his problem. The only way was to discredit Alex to the Council.

If not, he could only think of one more possible way to hinder his assertion to the throne. But he was hoping it would be his last resort. It was dangerous, and it required elaborate planning.

"Of course not. I am merely busy working on our business and other arrangements." He was not lying about the first part, but he still had to work on the latter portion of the deal.

In any consolation, his partner was not the only one not getting what he wanted. He could not exact his revenge on Ethan either. Not until he had all the papers in his hands again.

At the same time, his plan to get Dani back was running down the drain. As her marriage to Alex came closer, his desperation also intensified.

His blood boiled every time he thought of Cassie running away and taking all the evidence with her. He blamed himself for not seeing it coming a mile away. He felt stupid and a fool for trusting a whore like her.

"So, where is my result?" Edward demanded this time. He had waited for him to make his move, but until now, nothing had happened.

He shifted in his position, showing Nick that he meant business. He was not here to take crap of meaningless promises from him. He could not continue to watch on the sideline as he watched his future slip away.

Alex continued to flourish in his business, and the wedding proceeded as planned. Although he had heard of the accident, nothing impeded Alex from getting what he wanted.

But he did wonder if it was a genuine accident or a foul play. In their position in the royal family, nothing was impossible. Many wanted power and used extreme measures to get it. He could not help but wonder if Nick was behind it.

"This is the projection for next year, but as you can see, your money already doubled at this point." Nick handed him the latest spreadsheet of the prince's investment in his company.

If the trend continued to grow as he expected it would. Edward's investment would triple by the first quarter of next year. In the business aspect of the deal, he did great.

He had always been cunning in his business dealings. He guaranteed he would make a killing before entering any mergers, acquisitions, or other business transactions in his line of business.

"I am impressed. Honestly, I am starting to doubt your skills in the business as my cousin rises in the ranks." Edward intentionally stated, as his tone hinted displeasure.

Although the success of his investment in his company would catch the attention of the Council. He still believed that it would never be enough to satisfy them. It would not be reason enough to hand him the throne.

"I assure you that as I promised, it will continue to increase in numbers. You will have more money to bring back to your family and your future kingdom." Nick had to make this man, playing at his hand, or else he would lose all his control on him.

The money he infused in his company did help him to gain new grounds in the business. He could not allow him to pull out now. He was starting to catch up with Ethan's company being in the top five of the leading board.

"But what about our other arrangement? I am losing my patience in this. I needed Alex on his knees, losing everything he owned and begging for his life." It was what they had agreed on when he handed him the money.

It was not only the money that he needed. He wanted Alex out of his way. He never wanted him dead, but he had to secure his position in the kingdom.

If he had to resort to extreme measures, then he would. He would not hesitate to go to the drastic means if he had to secure his victory.

"Everything is arranged as planned. All you ever have to do will be to sit tight and enjoy the show." Nick hoped he sounded convincing because he could not let him notice that he did not have control of the situation.

It would have been easier if he had those files. He could use them to ruin Ethan's image and reputation, subjecting him and his company to a sequel of investigations that would run for years.

In turn, this would plummet the company's share down. Eventually, Ethan, with Alex, would be losing the trust of their investors. Finally, it would be a series of domino effects until Ethan and Alex had nothing left, not even their pride, but first, he needed Cassie.

Chapter 427 - A Moth To A Flame

"Where is that chauffeur?" Jacky mumbled to herself as she again looked at the clock on her phone.

Still, the person assigned to pick her up was a no-show. He was already late by almost an hour, something that she hated the most. Time was a valuable commodity that should never be wasted.

She had been pacing inside her apartment, double-checking her luggage if she had forgotten anything. Then, inspecting her checklist for things she might have overlooked.

She was about to call Alex since he was the one who made the arrangements but thought against it. She would give it a few more minutes.

She did not want to disturb the couple unnecessarily, who probably was already having a great time. Besides, the private plane would never leave without her, would it? She thought as she debated her action next as the clock ticked by.

Her thoughts were interrupted by a familiar ding that resonated inside the house. She automatically stood up from her seat to check it out.

"Finally." She exhaled a heavy breath since she was starting to get exasperated with the situation.

She moved to open the door, expecting no one else but the person bringing her to the airport. If not, she would abandon waiting for him and find herself another alternate ride.

"It's about time." She stated in a barely controlled anger as she opened the door. "Do you know what time it is?" She continued, feeling frustrated with the man.

She did not wait for his answer nor even look at the man as she walked back to her luggage, sitting on the living room floor. "Don't bother to answer that. Just get my things because we are already late." She instructed as she grabbed her carry-on bag.

She believed that a man like him should act professionally and be on time. "You should know that..." She was about to unload what was on her mind when she stopped in mid-sentence.

"Still barking orders, I see." A man with a very familiar voice finally spoke up.

She immediately recognized the voice and the man when she finally looked up to see his face. To say she was stunned to see him was an understatement. She was lost for words.

"Well, I was sent here to drive you to your destination. There was nothing in the job description about carrying your things." He resumed saying when she remained silent, just foolishly staring at him.

He suddenly remembered a scene in the past about her carrying her things. He could not help but smile as he recalled that incident.

"What is so funny?" She finally responded, finding her voice again. She noticed the slight snicker in his lips, which irritated her more. "What are you doing here anyway, Marcus? You are not the driver I was waiting for."

She was not amused to see him in this setting. Not when he was clearly enjoying himself at her expense. She thought that he had already changed from their last encounter, but it seemed that he was still the same.

"Sorry, I was not laughing at you." He tried to excuse himself. Then, he decided to be honest about it. "Actually, more or less, it is about you. But anyway, I am here because the one assigned to pick you up had a minor incident with his car."

He quickly changed the subject before things worsened. Judging from the daggers coming out of her eyes, she was not enjoying the idea of his presence.

He was already at the airport when he had learned of the situation. Instead of finding another one to replace the driver, he opted to do it himself. It was supposed to be faster and easier.

But on his way to her apartment, Alex called and asked him to make a side trip. Hence, the lateness of his arrival to pick her up.

"Oh, what a noble gesture, picking up a damsel in distress. Well, since you are playing the part, then you can start carrying my things so we can leave." She pointed at her several pieces of luggage.

As a sign of peace offering, she decided to pick up the smallest one and moved towards the door. Leaving the rest of her things, expecting Marcus to carry them to the waiting car.

"You do travel light." He sarcastically said, looking at the three huge suitcases. "Are you sure these are all your things? Maybe you forgot something else." He could not stop himself from further antagonizing her.

He could never understand the need to bring too many clothes, bags, and shoes in a single affair. But to be fair, he did appreciate them on a woman's body, more so when he was taking them off.

He could only shake his head to where his thoughts were heading. It was not the time or the place for him to be fantasizing about her.

"Could you wipe that smirk off your face before I wipe it for you?" She did not know why she suddenly felt defensive when he had not done anything to her at all to merit such a reaction.

She should actually be thankful because he was doing her good deed. But, maybe her irritation from earlier and then that smile that she had tried to forget since they parted caused her to act irrationally.

"Fine. If you do not have any other instructions, we should get moving." He took out his phone from his pocket and called a number. After a few seconds of hanging up, a knock came on the door.

"Yes," Jacky asked, surprised to see two men in suits standing by the door.

"We are here to carry your things." One of the men answered her politely.

"I came prepared." He simply said before moving at her side. "Shall we?" He grabbed the small bag in his hands and carried them for her.

She did not have time to protest as he ushered her by her elbows outside her apartment with the two men carrying her other luggage.

Once in the elevator, all she could do was stay silent, unable to have a quick comeback to what happened inside her apartment.

"Just say thank you, and we are even." He knew what she was thinking. For Jacky to be speechless was a victory in itself, but he did not find joy in it.

He just wanted to make things better between them, even if they could not go back to what they were used to when they were still together.

He had already told himself that he should stop thinking about her. A future with her was out of the question. He had already burned the bridge that connected them together.

Still, he found himself attracted to her. He could not seem to move on without her. But he could not force her to take him back after what he did.

Nevertheless, it did not stop him from admiring her from afar. But he could not stop dreaming that she would forgive him even though he knew he was only bound to fail and get hurt.

Regardless, he was like a moth to a flame, hoping to get that spark of fire back in his arms.

Chapter 428 - Full Definition Of True Love

"Good morning, babe." A voice penetrated to her foggy, still sleep-induced brain, waking her up in the process.

She forced her eyes open, finding the blinding light distracting her sight from the view. But she did not need to see the man to know who was leaning close to her face.

Moving closer to her, he covered the source of the bright light. It gave her a better view of the man who stood in front of her. It was the same handsome face that highlighted most of her dreams.

"Good morning too." She responded in her still raspy voice, also feeling her parched lips. She slowly let her tongue slid out of her lips, moving it around, moistening the dry spots.

She never thought that she would find herself comfortable presenting herself to this man in her messy hair and unbrushed teeth. But he had made all things impossible seemed impossible.

"How was your sleep?" He asked, clearing her face with the loose strands.

He loved staring at her face early in the morning before she opened her eyes. She looked young and innocent, adoring her smooth skin, void of artificial coloring.

He was reminded again of the first time that he saw her. Not at the office but at a club, wearing her thick makeup and pretending to be a much older woman.

But he saw right through her disguise, knowing who she was behind the facade. She was a lost woman, trying to find answers in the wrong direction.

"Great. I had never slept like this for a very long time." She admitted. "Have you been awake long?" She wondered as she looked at him.

She observed that he was still in his pajamas, but his hair was already combed into a messy style. Then, his breath had its minty flavor, which meant that he had already brushed his teeth.

Even though she slept like a baby in his arms. She was always on the clock as she struggled juggling between her work, the wedding, and their relationship.

She never got the chance to sleep in and wake up late in the morning. But she was expecting that she would be up by dawn, so she wondered what had changed in the schedule.

"Just a few minutes before I woke you up." He told her as he moved beside her to get closer and had her in his embrace.

He remembered feeling guilty for taking advantage of such an innocent girl. But when he woke up, to find her missing and no way to look for her. He took it as a sign that fate had given him a way out.

She did not want to be found, and he was not searching for her. It was a one-night stand, just like what she wanted, and he respected that decision.

"But I thought we have a meeting early this morning." She could almost picture Antonette's face, full of lines.

She was concerned that Antonette's carefully planned schedule was ruined because both of them had stayed in bed for the early part of the morning.

Although she was not complaining, far from it truthfully. She savored the feeling of the soft bed on her back and the warm body pressed against hers.

"I had it postponed for later." He informed her as he let his fingers play on her shoulders, then shifting her until she was fully facing him. "Because I want to do this."

He covered the remaining space between them and attacked her lips. He could never stop the craving he had for her. The need to satisfy the hunger he always had for her.

"I want this too." She responded with the same explosive reaction.

The chemistry between them was undeniable, forming a bond that was so strong, it was almost unbreakable. But like any other chemical composition, other factors could still break the connection.

But it could still be avoided by carefully handling the relationship and avoiding factors that could lead to a destructive effect. But it was easier said than done, yet still possible, given that they already established a solid foundation.

"Then, can we forego with breakfast and make it lunch?" He suggested, knowing what he exactly wanted to do aside from filling his belly with food.

He would prefer to fill himself with the scent of her. Ravished her with his hunger and drank himself with every intoxicating pleasure she could give him.

"Can we make it dinner?" She teased Alex but knowing it would be too much of a stretch.

Luckily, he liked sleeping without a shirt on. All Dani had to worry about was removing his pajama pants. Then, she would have access to all of him.

"Oh, I wish. Now, you are killing me." He knew that he would never be satisfied with quick sexual intimacy on the bed. "You are a very naughty woman."

He swiftly removed what remained of her clothing, admiring the magnificent view in front of him. She was more than a beautiful face with a beautiful body to him.

To him, she was the epitome of perfection because of what was inside her heart and mind. He would be forever in her debt because she had made him a better man.

"Only for you." She uttered, a bit breathless in her response as she allowed him to take the lead.

She wanted this as much as he did. She craved for his every kiss, obsessed with his every touch. She could not get enough of having him inside of her, uniting them as one.

"And all I need is you. Without you, I am nothing." One of the hardest things a person could admit to another person. To commit and surrender everything to one person was like sentencing oneself to death.

But to him, it was like he was reborn. He was given a new life, to live it with the woman he loved. To build a new home, where his heart would flourish and grow to spread more love.

He could not wait for them to start their family and have kids to love and care for. He believed it would definitely make him the luckiest man alive.

"I always felt the same way. You are my life." She sealed her confession with a kiss.

The consummation of their love was the final straw, cementing their vow to each other. They did not need the formality of the wedding or the signing of a marriage contract to proclaim love.

"I love you." He whispered into her ears as he cradled her soft body against his muscular ones.

He felt so lucky that he had found her again. But he was not the only one. She also felt the same way as she expressed her own feelings for him, over and over. "I love you more."

It seemed that fate finally had a change of heart when it decided to entwine their destiny. It might have taken a longer road. But, they still ended up going in one direction.

It was fortunate that they had walked the same path. If not, Alex and Dani would not have known the true meaning of happiness and contentment.

They would not have discovered the full definition of true love.

Chapter 429 - A Thousand Bolts Of Electricity

The trip to the airport had been quiet. Then, during half of the flight, the two passengers barely spoke any words, except a few questions and brief answers. Nobody offered a more in-depth conversation.

"Do you need anything?" The female flight attendant politely asked her, offering food, beverages, alcohol, and assortments of entertainment to choose from.

"Thanks, but I am good for now." Jacky could not eat anything as her nerves were at the edge. Then again, changed her mind. "I can certainly use something a bit stronger." She requested from the only other woman on the plane.

The woman nodded her understanding and moved to the other side to ask the same question. But this time, her voice changed, hinting at a bit of seduction as her body insinuated another kind of offer.

"I will have whatever she was having." He told her, not particularly interested in entertaining her advances.

At another time, his eyes would probably wander in her direction, but not anymore. He believed in some ways he had changed. He could not look at a woman in the same way again.

The stewardess moved to get their drinks. Though a bit disappointed by the rejection, she still served them respectively with a smile on her lips.

"Thanks," Jacky said to the woman, slightly surprised with what she witnessed.

She had already assumed that when the girl made her first move, Marcus would grab the opportunity to get her number. But she was not expecting that he would ignore her just like that.

As the minutes flew by, Jacky remained in her seat on the other side of the plane. While Marcus sat on the opposite side by the other window.

Although they had been just a few feet away from each other, to them, it would seem they were a million miles apart. They had created such a big wall between them that it was hard to look past it.

Then, something happened. The intense turbulence shook the plane, rattling the crew and the passengers on their seats. The few remaining liquids in the glass on her hands started to swirl, spilling some of it on her hands.

It was a regular occurrence in a flight like this, as the wind grew its strength in their current altitude. But it was not an incident that the pilots could not handle, not a situation to panic or worry about.

"Oh my!" She could not stop the words from escaping her lips as the hair in her nape stood up, and her stomach started to churn.

She had never been completely terrified of anything, but at the moment, she was shaking like a leaf. She was not afraid of heights or flying. In fact, she was excited about this trip.

However, she was afraid of falling, crashing down at the vastness of the ocean. She could imagine sinking at the bottom, never to be found again when she accidentally gazed down at the infinite blue water below her.

"We are experiencing slight turbulence due to a change of wind direction because of a weather disturbance, but it is under control. Please stay buckled on your seat for the meantime." The captain informed the occupants outside the cockpit of their current condition.

"Are you alright?" He asked her in his calm tone, sitting across from her on the other aisle.

He did notice her sudden change of expression when he happened to look in her direction. Then, he remembered that she barely had any experience in flying. This incident might be new to her.

"I'm ok." She turned away from the window before she felt sick any further. She automatically closed her eyes, leaning her back further in her seat.

She was not going to admit to him that she was scared. It was not the time or the place to admit vulnerability to a man who liked to take advantage of a situation.

As far as she was concerned, her earlier stunt or previous act of chivalry did not prove that he had changed. It could only be an act or a temporary lapse in her character.

"Are you sure?" He continued as he unbuckled his seatbelt and stood near her. "I think you are a bit pale. Do you want me to sit down beside you and hold your hand?"

He meant well when he offered his help to her. He could see her struggling with her breathing, although she was fighting hard not to show him.

"You don't have to do that." She took a few deep breaths to calm herself down.

After all, she was assured by the captain's words about having the situation under control. She did not want nor need his help, not if she could help it.

She would never allow herself to be a charity work that he needed fixing to feed his ego. Afterward, he would discard her because he had lost interest.

Somehow, his presence and her feelings for him had been her motivation to distract herself from her fear. She knew she did not hate him. But it did not mean that she wanted to be friends with him again.

Although, she could settle for a civil relationship, considering their friends, Alex and Dani, in the equation. She could not keep avoiding him or associating with him.

"If you are sure." He still hesitated, continuing to observe her physically. Although, he did notice that she had started to relax in her seat, a good sign that she was feeling better. "Anyway, if you need anything, I am just on the other side."

He could not blame her for rejecting his help. He did deserve whatever it was coming at him. As the saying goes, you reap what you sow.

But he could not also help himself for feeling worried about her. She had been a big part of his life. Honestly, she was the only woman who ever made a dent in his heart.

The flight went smoothly after that incident. The two arrived at the airport with only a bit of a delay after the mishap with the driver.

"Do you need any help?" He offered again when he was the first to unbuckle his seat and stand in the aisle.

He could see that she looked better than earlier. The color of her cheeks had returned to normal, and there was no sign of her slight panic attack earlier.

"I think I am good." She answered, trying to remind herself that she should act civilly in his presence. At least for the sake of their friends.

"Can I escort you down the plane?" He offered, hoping that she would accept, given that she looked a bit friendly this time. "The steps going down the plane are a bit steep, and your heels might get caught in the slits." He added.

He had seen many accidents involving those killer heels getting stuck on the metal strips, causing minor injuries. He was just avoiding that from happening, nothing more.

Seeing that there was no harm in accepting, she finally agreed. "Ok." She walked with him towards the door, letting him guide her, and held her by her elbow.

Sadly, she realized that Marcus was still the only man who could light her up in a second. When his slightest touch sent a thousand bolts of electricity to her entire body.

Chapter 430 - Just A Piece Of Paper

Lunch had been fantastic as they shared it inside their room. Afterward, Antonette finally showed up in their room carrying her list of things to do. This time, she was not taking no for an answer.

One by one, the guests were starting to arrive. Each guest would stay at different designated locations. Some within the palace, while the others at nearby hotels.

"Have you heard from Jacky?" She told her from their last conversation last night of her arrival today. Alex had already arranged her transportation, so it was just a matter of time before she saw her best friend.

"She and Marcus just landed at the airport. They are probably on their way to the palace." Alex informed her as if there was nothing wrong with that statement.

When he heard about the problem with the driver, he asked Marcus to arrange for someone else to pick Jacky, but instead, he volunteered to do it himself.

He did warn his friend about his plan. He was afraid that it might backfire on him and end up worsening his situation. But he could understand what he was going through, so all he could do was support him.

"Are you saying that they were on the same flight? Are you insane? Now, I won't hear the end of it from Jacky." She was already expecting Jacky's endless complaint about having Marcus on the same flight as hers.

She could already see her friend's face as she walked into the room together with Marcus right behind her. War would be easier to handle than a pissed Jacky.

"Easy. I think Marcus and Jacky had reached a cease-fire agreement for the remainder of the wedding." Alex reassured her fiancé that she had nothing to worry about.

After talking to Marcus briefly when they landed, he informed him that they were trying to be amicable. At least for the sake of their respective friends.

"Easy? Are you sure you know what you are talking about? We are talking about Jacky and Marcus here." She did remember how Jacky wanted to put Marcus' head on the spike.

After what he did to her, she had never been the same again. She could tell that her friend tried her best to be civil when they ended up in the same room. But the two of them alone, she was not too sure.

"I assure you that they are working out their difference as of the moment." Alex could only hope that he was speaking the truth.

Although, Marcus guaranteed that he was behaving appropriately. He could not help but be wary that he might say or do something to trigger an adverse reaction from Jacky.

"I just hope you speak the truth," Dani whispered to him as they continued to proceed to their next meeting.

Antonette led them to the west wing of the palace. It was where some of the offices were located. It was the part of the palace that Alex never particularly liked because it symbolized the responsibility he had turned his back on.

"Explain to me again why do we need to discuss a prenuptial agreement." She still could not wrap her mind around the idea of signing another contract that would determine the fate of their future relationship.

She completely trusted him. She believed there was no need for a pre-signed agreement. She did not require a paper to tell them how to live their lives as a married couple.

"Because it is for your own good. It would protect you from any eventuality." Alex stated as if what he said was a fact.

He did agree to it when the idea was presented to him. He was marrying Dani because of her and not what she represented or her possessions.

At the moment, he would admit that her value was significantly enormous compared to him. He was just a mere son of a Duke, but she was the daughter of a king, figuratively speaking.

"If my father had put you up to do this, I will tell you now that I will never sign it." She warned him as alarming bells started ringing in her ears.

She could already guess the mastermind of this crappy arrangement. Her father had his fingerprints spread all over this. She understood his reason, but she still did not agree.

"Your father only meant well. You could not blame him for protecting you from all possible threats. He already learned that lesson when Nick tried to use you." Alex explained to her, hoping that she would keep an open mind.

She stopped in her tracks, not wanting to participate in this meeting. She was right as Alex confirmed her father's participation in this arrangement.

"But you are not Nick. You have no ulterior motives for marrying me except because you love me. Am I right?" She could understand the need for prenup for other couples, but not for them.

She might possess more assets because of what she would inherit from her father. But Alex was already the one safeguarding it for her and her future family.

The way she saw it, he was already handling her fortune for her even before she even married him. He was running the company that was supposed to be her responsibility.

The matrimonial ceremony was just a formality, but they were practically married as far as she was concerned. For her, all that she possessed would be Alex, and the same applied to him.

"But your father is also correct. We don't know what the future might bring. Let me protect you now by letting us make an arrangement where we both could agree upon." Alex smiled at her, trying to be convincing.

He knew what he had agreed on when he suggested this to Ethan. It was the only way Ethan would sign off his business to him and retire from his position.

He had to assure him that he was not after his company and money. He only wanted to help him, not because he aimed for his position. He did what he had to do because he loved Dani.

He would protect her with his life, even sacrificing his own future for her. She was and would always be all he needed to survive and nothing else.

"Ok. I will hear what you have to say, but I can tell you at this very moment. We don't need to do this. I don't want to sign it." She stated as she continued to walk with him until they had reached the outer doors.

For once, she was thankful to Antonette, who did not interfere in their argument earlier. But now, she was not keeping her silence as she objected to this contract.

"That is all I am asking for." But he was hoping that she would see it from his point of view. "It would not hurt if you look at it and even sign it with me. I truly agreed with Ethan that this is important."

All he asked was that she opened her mind to the possibility that them signing a contract would not change anything.. It was just a piece of paper that did not represent what they felt for each other.