

Royal Contract 531

[Chapter 531 - Do Not Disturb Sign](#)

"Do you know what you are doing?" She asked herself as she touched the petals of the red roses.

She had been staring at the flowers and the note he had sent earlier. It was a thoughtful gesture coming from him. Although this was not the first time, she believed it was sincere.

Nonetheless, she felt like they were barely back together, and he was reverting back to his old ways. But should she even consider last night would be anything better than the last time they were in a relationship?

She could feel it in her heart that he meant his apology. After last night, she truly felt that he cared about her. But was it enough to appease her heart? He never did mention anything about love.

"Wow! Where did those come from?" A voice suddenly startled her, making her abruptly look up from her position. He walked straight to her desk and stopped to admire the flowers. "A new admirer, perhaps." Evan teased her.

They had been, sort of, friends, but he had never gone beyond that out of respect for Marcus. In another circumstance, he would definitely have dated her.

He always saw her as attractive, sexy as hell, beautiful, and humorous. However, he did not go after what already belonged to someone close to him. He could not mess up with the bro code.

"Marcus." She answered, but lacking the enthusiasm she should be feeling for receiving such a gift.

As much as she wanted to rejoice that they had finally resolved their issues. Being neglected on the first day of their relationship was not exactly the way she had envisioned her day would go.

She woke up feeling excited about going out to dinner and seeing him again. She even tried several dresses for tonight before settling on a new one. However, she did not expect that he would cancel on her.

"Marcus?" His eyebrows rose in question, unsure if he heard the name right. "Are you two back together?" He questioned her.

He had not seen Marcus since the wedding or talked to him either. He did not have any idea that he planned to win her back. But he had noticed him watching her when he thought that she was not looking.

He was not surprised about the news anymore. He figured it was just a matter of time before Marcus realized that he could not live without her.

It would appear that all of his friends had caught the love bug. He would soon be flying solo on their gigs. Suddenly, his future looked so gloomy.

"Maybe you should ask him. He seemed to have lost the memo." She sarcastically said, returning her attention to the papers in front of her.

She had been sulking for far too long, waiting for him to call. She understood that he was busy, but she deserved more than the flowers, a note, and a brief text message.

She straightened her shoulders and sat upright on her chair before looking up at him. She might as well deal with what brought him to her station.

"Oh! Do I hear a hint of trouble in paradise?" He asked when she sounded like she had the world on her shoulders. "I thought that you would be ecstatic you two have reconciled."

He was not expecting this turn of events. He could only wonder what Marcus did to make her feel this way. He always thought that once Marcus won her over, he would do everything he could to mend his ways.

He had seen his friend change since she would not take him back. He had been witnessed how Marcus had blamed himself for losing her.

"I am. It is just that we are barely a day back, and he already canceled our date." She confided in him, feeling frustrated as she inhaled deeply, trying to shake off the feeling.

Not that she did not trust him. But she hoped that he would put more effort into making their relationship work this time around. She just felt disappointed that he had already put her as his last priority.

"Did he tell you his reason why he could not make it?" Evan asked, suddenly feeling sympathetic toward her issue.

He did remember his friend to be just like that back in the old days. He was also no different from his friend. He could not care less if he did not show up on a date.

He still believed that either they would understand, or he could just find another one. As the saying went, there was plenty of fish on the sea. All he needed was a hook and a bait.

"He only texted that he was swamped with work and back-to-back meetings. But he promised to call me later." She told him, asking him if that should be enough excuse.

She realized that falling in love was easy but being in a relationship was hard. But nothing in life was easy, she knew that. She had learned that the hard way.

"Maybe he is. He will call and make up for it. Just give him some benefit of the doubt this time." Evan gave her some advice, smiling and comforting her. "I assure you, he had changed to a better man."

He laughed at himself after hearing those words coming out of his mouth. He was giving relationship advice when he did not even believe in commitment.

"What is so funny?" She was surprised, hearing him chuckle. She did not notice anything laughable in what he said, recalling his words. In fact, she found it sweet of him to support his friend.

"Of course, it is not you, but me. I just did not see myself as a love guru, giving relationship advice." Evan admitted to her, shaking his head.

"Oh, that!" She could not help but laugh too. She also found it funny, now that she had time to think about it.

"But seriously, Marcus would not do anything to hurt you. Not intentionally. He must have a valid reason for it. Give him a chance to explain." Evan again felt amazed with himself.

"I guess you are right." She finally felt a little bit better. She needed someone to talk to now that Dani was unavailable, and Evan was a big help.

"Anyway, enough about me. Why are you here, Evan?" She decided to change the topic.

He only came to her if he needed something from her boss or wanted something done that her secretary could not do. She did have a reputation for being a miracle worker.

"I am just wondering if you were able to get in touch with Dani. We had tried calling Alex, but he seemed to be unavailable to take our calls." Evan informed her of his purpose for seeking her out.

They tried to ask Marcus, but he said that the two were unreachable. If they needed anything from him, he would be more than happy to deal with it. Alex did leave him in charge of everything.

However, there were some legal issues they had to discuss with Alex personally. Even if Alex had appointed Marcus as his attorney-in-fact.

"Unfortunately, I have not heard anything from Dani too. I was going to call her last night but changed my mind. I did not want to ruin their honeymoon." She admitted, but she realized now that Dani did not try to call her either.

She grabbed her phone and checked it. She began to think about it. Usually, Dani would have, at least, told her if they had arrived at their destination or texted her this morning that she had the wildest night of her life. Maybe not the last part, but there was nothing.

"Well, I thought that you might have spoken with her. Anyway, just in case she called, can you tell her that we needed to speak with Alex immediately." Evan requested, seeing that there was nothing much he could do about it.

Although he felt odd about this entire situation, even David felt the same way. But he hoped that his gut feeling was wrong, but knowing Alex, he would not have abandoned his business if it was under attack.

But Marcus assured him that the couple was just taking advantage of their moment of bliss.. It would seem the newlyweds were enjoying their honeymoon by putting a do not disturb sign on the door.

[Chapter 532 - Take The Reins](#)

"My men are already scoping up the place." The duke informed his friend on the other line.

He had been staring outside his window since he came back to his office before he decided to call Ethan. But he hardly saw the scenery outside. His mind was only concentrated on one thing.

He and Ethan had agreed to coordinate their investigation and operations for a faster and more efficient result. That was to get their children back soon and alive.

If they had confirmation of the location of the hideout, then he would let Ethan handle the rescue mission. Fred knew his men could also tackle the task, but he agreed with Ethan.

Alex had the best-trained force in the business to handle the job. Besides, they had the most determination and motivation to rescue their leader than any of Ethan and his men combined.

"Are you sure that this reporter is not just a ploy to send us on a wild goose chase?" Ethan could not help but be skeptical since they had been chasing a lot of dead ends.

Whoever was responsible for the kidnapping of their children, he believed he was always one step ahead of them. Or even two. He was clever and had a lot of resources.

He also suspected that he was responsible for the chaos in his company and even Alex. He was beginning to doubt that Nick was the sole culprit in this.

This unknown individual had carefully studied them, coordinated his attack, and executed them with precision. He had been hiding in the shadow for far too long, blending between the light and the darkness that nobody saw him coming.

He believed Nick was involved, but he had some help. Nick was not capable of managing something this big. Someone else might be running the show and using the clueless Nick as the fall guy.

"I think we can trust her. I believe that she accidentally stumbled on this story when she came after Nick for some personal reason." Fred related to Ethan.

The duke asked Eida why she was coming after Nick. But she declined to provide her reason. Still, he believed that she had no other interior motives for sharing this information, aside from getting a lead in this story.

"How did she know that Nick had a part in the abduction?" Ethan still had doubts about the authenticity of the report.

He always had good relations with reporters, but he never trusted them. They would praise and love you as long as you did not give them a reason to attack you.

But once they found a story that would make big bucks. Then, they turned into sharks that would strike without warning. Or vultures that would prey on their victim until there was nothing left but the carcass.

"A witness talked for a wad of cash," Fred told him. Then, he continued to narrate to him what she told him.

She had one of her leading investigators follow Nick wherever he went. That was when he had stumbled on the big hideout, more like a fortress, hidden on an average size island.

It was heavily guarded, which piqued his interest, so he had no way of investigating inside. His investigator decided to check the local pubs, searching for information.

Luckily, his tour guide knew some people who could help him with the right amount. One of them mentioned seeing two bodies carried out of a plane by armed men in the middle of the night.

The man was just unsure if they were alive or who they were. He was too far to see clearly, and it was dark. Only a few lights were on that night on the tarmac.

"Then, she had this weird suspicion that the missing couple from their honeymoon might be the two people seen that night. However, she could not confirm it until she had talked to me." Fred concluded his narrative.

Fred was not a hundred percent sure of the story since a drunk man could be concocting stories to earn some money. But he could not pass up a lead even if it might end up as another bogus information.

"Sir, excuse me. But Major Barry is asking for you to return to the room." One of his lieutenants had walked into his office, excusing himself for the interruption, but the urgency called for it.

"Give me a minute. I will be right behind you." He told the man before dismissing him.

He could only conclude that it must be a pressing matter for the major to demand his attention. They might have the latest update on their current operation.

"Excuse me, Ethan, but I need to go for now. I will get back to you as soon as I hear some news." He knew that the waiting game was probably killing him, just like it was doing to him.

However, they had to be patient and stay calm. It was the only way to save their children from whoever was running this operation against them.

He rushed to the other room to find out what was so urgent that Major Barry had sent for him. But he was hoping that it was positive intel that would show that they had found them.

"Yes," Duke Frederick addressed all the officers in the room, focusing his eyes on the major who was talking through the intercom.

He assigned the operation to one of his top officers, who had proven time and time again his ability to lead and provide good results.

"I think my men had found something from the tarmac. A hair clip that resembled what the princess wore on her wedding day. It must have dropped on her hair when she was carried out of the plane." Major finally reported to him when he ended the call.

He was almost a hundred percent sure that they were closing in with the abductors, finding the couple and saving them. That clip was a rare piece that had no possible duplicate.

"Then, have your men scout the place and inform Agent Tim regarding everything you gathered so that they could start with their operations." The duke commanded, feeling only slight relief.

At least, there was a possibility that they had finally found them.

For the first time, his team finally had a solid lead. All they needed now was the confirmation that Nick was hiding them in that fortress of his.. Then, Tim could take the reins in the rescue mission.

[Chapter 533 - A Real Worthy Adversary](#)

"Hey, wake up!" He said in a low voice, tapping him on the cheek to call his attention.

He knew that the drugs were about to wear off. He needed him to listen before somebody caught them. He could not waste this opportunity because he might not get another chance.

It was probably a combination of skills and luck that he snuck into the room without anyone noticing him. He found an open window and stealthily crawled inside.

"Hmmm." He moaned incoherently. It was the only reply he heard from him so far as he continued to shake the unconscious man on the bed.

He looked around the room, checking if there was any other movement. Fortunately, all had been quiet, and he did not detect anyone else with them.

He had to work behind the shadows to avoid getting any attention from the men outside. It was already dark, with only a glimmer of light coming from the window.

"Hey, you better wake up and prepare yourself. We are getting you out of here tonight." He whispered to him as he leaned to his ears, avoiding making too much sound.

He stepped away from him and looked at the medicines on the table near his bed. He scanned the labels, looking for the drugs that kept him in a vegetative state.

He pulled a syringe and a vial out of his pocket, immediately replacing the content of the sleeping drug with a placebo effect. He only hoped the doctor would not notice what he did when he administered his next dose.

"I had replaced the sedatives with something that would relieve some of the pain, but I guarantee you that once I move you later, your injuries will still hurt like hell." He spoke again to him once he was done with the medication.

He looked at his watch and then the dextrose hanging over his head. It was almost dripping dry. He knew he had to hurry because the doctor was almost due to check on him any minute and administer his next dose.

He returned the vial to its exact position, cleaned up the mess he had made, pocketed his trash, and quickly returned to the still unconscious man. He leaned closer again to him and slapped his face just strong enough to wake him up.

"Hey, if you can hear me, and I hope you do, remember that the drug will wear off soon enough. You have to pretend to lose consciousness once the doctor injects your next meds, or he will figure it out that I switched the medication." He told him.

He could see that he was trying to open his eyes, but all he heard was his moan. He could tell that he was already conscious, but his body was still not functioning.

He had to make sure that he understood what he said, repeating it once more for good measure. He had to be wide awake and with at least some of his body function once they moved out of here.

"We will return for you. We will get you and your wife out of here tonight." He continued, hoping that his hearing and brain function was already operational even if his motor functions were still failing him.

He would have stayed longer, but he was already sensing some noises outside. He had to leave shortly before the guards found him inside. He could not blow the plan.

"I have to go. I will see you again tonight." He said one last time before rushing to the window where he entered.

He gently closed it after getting out in the exact way it was when he entered. He did not want anyone to notice anything amiss.

He walked again along with the shadows of the night, avoiding being detected by the roaming guards. Then, he finally disappeared into a dark corner.

While inside the room where the unknown man had just left, Alex could feel that the drugs were losing their effect on him. Although it was a slow process, he could already make a bit of sense of his surrounding.

He was slightly confused if what he heard a few minutes ago was real or just a dream. An unfamiliar voice spoke to him about helping them escape. He tried hard to see his face, but he just could not open his eyes.

Suddenly, the darkness disappeared, replaced by a bright light, making him aware that he was not alone anymore. Noises could be heard coming from somewhere around him. A door opened and closed, and then louder voices filled the room.

He could not pinpoint the exact location, but he knew that the voices were just nearby. He believed that the voices sounded familiar, but he could be wrong or just hallucinating.

"Good evening, Prince Alexander. I am glad that you are finally awake." The doctor walked to the side of his bed to check on him. "I hope it had been a comfortable and restful sleep." He smiled at him, but he was only being sarcastic.

He examined his pulse and flashed a bright light on his eyes as he forced his eyelid open. Then, he moved around him like he was planning to do something.

"How are you feeling?" He asked when he finally saw him open his eyes.

He gave him a bright smile, showing him a missing tooth on the other side of his mouth. He grabbed the vial on the tray and a syringe and filled it up. But he did not administer it yet, just stared at him for a while.

"What had you been giving me?" Alex asked in his croaky voice when he finally regained some movement. Even he did not recognize the sound he was making.

His mind was starting to recall everything that was happening to him. Still, some fuzzy images confused him, but everything was starting to make sense.

He could finally move his lips and slightly turn his head to look at the doctor. He could even move his fingers a bit. It was a sign that his muscles were regaining some of their strength.

But he knew he was still too weak to move, much more fight against these men. First, his body was covered with bruises. Then, he barely had nutrients left in his body to sustain his energy.

"Just something to boost your energy." The doctor said, followed by some laughter from the other side of the room. "Don't you worry about that? I am here to make you well." He was, for now, the doctor thought.

He picked up the needle again, flicking it with his finger in front of him. He let some of the liquid drip on the side of the metal point. Then, he moved back to his side and smiled again.

"When I get out of here, I will make sure to stick that needle in your ass." Alex hissed angrily, finally saying the words more coherently this time.

He raised his hands to grab the doctor before he could stick the needle in his arms, but something stopped him. He realized that his arms were handcuffed to the side of the bed.

Then, pain shot up in his side, making him wince a bit, knocking the wind out of his lungs. He had forgotten that his injuries hurt when he moved.

"I am sure you will, Alex." The doctor mocked his patient, pretending to be afraid of him as he tried again to attack again. But only hurting himself in the process. "I am sure you will." The doctor repeated as a series of laughter ensued.

He was still alive because his boss still needed him to be. It was just a shame that when he had served his purpose, he could kiss his life goodbye.

He was not disappointed in him. This prince had shown a great deal of bravery and character by surviving this far. As he continued to fight for his every breath.

However, it was an honor to meet a real worthy adversary.

[Chapter 534 - Hit A Big Jackpot](#)

"The transportations are already arranged." Ethan walked to the room where the elite unit was busy preparing for their departure.

Tim had assured him that he had chosen the best of his men to join the rescue mission. His men had been trained as soldiers but had loyalty and honor like noblemen.

They would not hesitate to fight and die to accomplish their goal. Not because of money, but motivated by the thought of saving a member of their family. Just like what they did for Ben.

"Do you think those arms would be enough?" He added, seeing the men doing their final checks on their weapons.

He had supplied them with all the latest arms and equipment money could buy. He believed that skills alone would not be sufficient if their enemies were armed with more advanced technology than their team.

They would be battling at a disadvantage if that was the case. The mission would more likely fail. Playing on an even field or having more advanced weaponry would give them a higher percentage of success.

"We are ready, Sir," Tim answered as he and his team stood straight, bags packed, body armed in full battle gear, and ready to roll out at any second notice.

This time, he was not allowing his team to tackle the task without him. He knew he would be more efficient in the field with his men, coordinating their attacks where he could see the actual scene.

He felt helpless, commanding blindly on the safety of the four walls around him. While his men fought with courage on the open battlefield.

He already had wounded men lying in hospital beds. He could not help but be responsible for them. He could not afford to add more nor wait for someone to end up in a coffin.

As of now, he was the best man on the job to lead his team. He could not let Alex and his men down just because of his injuries. He did not need to fight a one on one battle. But his team needed his eyes and his mind to lead them.

"You are not saying that you are going to deploy with them. Your wounds are still fresh. You can hardly move." Ethan expressed his concern, surprised to see the injured team leader wearing his black uniform.

He could understand his want to be part of this operation, but he did not believe it was wise. He would only hurt himself further by joining in the bloodbath.

He could already picture that the criminals would not easily give up. He assumed these mercenaries would fight hard to protect their fortress and keep their hostages.

Money was a great motivation for them, but fear was far more effective. He believed that whoever was running this show knew quite well how to manipulate his men. He had dealt with hard criminals like them before.

Men like them would not show fear or mercy. They would fight till the death because there was just no other choice. They would still die if they ran.

"I assure you that I had been in worse condition than this," Tim answered him, seeing the concern in his eyes. "If you are worried that I will compromise the mission because of my condition."

He was explaining, but he was cut off by Ethan. "No, I am not questioning your ability as a soldier and a great leader." Ethan quickly said before the man misinterpreted his intention.

"You need not worry about me if that is your concern." Tim quickly interjected. "I can handle myself just fine."

He would not give Ethan a chance to doubt his usefulness to the team despite his condition. He could still move, and he could still shoot. But what mattered most would be his tactical expertise in situations like this. That had always been his strong suit.

"Then, I wish you godspeed." Ethan already knew when it was best to just agree than to argue.

Even if Tim had been doing this for almost half of his life. He was still not in his best condition at the moment. Ethan could only hope that Tim knew what he was doing. Because the consequence was far too great.

Ethan could only watch with hope and a prayer that the mission would succeed in bringing home his family, safe and sound. Moreover, he swore that he would hunt down the true mastermind behind the attack in his family.

"Men, let us move out," Tim ordered his men, carrying their bags and arsenal with them, walking towards the waiting transport.

Each one of them knew that every time they stepped on a mission, they were already putting one of their foot on the brink of death. With just one false move, they could end up digging up their own grave.

On the island, two of his best scouts checked the place and had gone closer to the fortress. Using high-powered binoculars with night vision capabilities, they immediately counted as many hostiles they could spot in their position.

So far, they were more than two dozen they had seen roaming the grounds and the perimeter. There could be more hiding in the shadows and inside the structures.

"Do you think Alex and Dani are inside?" One of the men asked the other man beside him, guarding their position against possible threats until their other teammates arrived.

He could see that they were outnumbered, but he was confident they could take them all down. The other team might have more, but it did not mean they were better.

With Tim leading them, he had no doubt that their leader could pull out some tricks up his sleeves that would help them obtain their objective.

"With that kind of operation, I had no doubt." The other man answered, studying the perimeter for possible entrance and exit points.

As he scanned the place more, something had caught his attention. A movement on the far side of one of the smaller structures. He focused the lens of his binoculars on that area.

Something was peculiar about the scene that he could not take his eyes away as he stared at them.. He wondered if he might have just hit a big jackpot.

[Chapter 535 - To Die With Honor](#)

He saw a group of men come out of one of the buildings. Some of them were laughing, but the other three at the back were silently conversing.

He took pictures of the group, but he could not get a good angle of the man in the middle. Then, they disappeared to the other side of the building.

"Come on, let us go back to the group." He told his partner after taking several more pictures of the entire compound.

He had to report to Tim what they had gathered. Then discussed the best possible strategy for rescuing the captives. It had always been their standard procedure.

Although they already had received intel earlier, they could not rely on another man's word. They always did their due diligence, confirming the intel before acting on it.

"Sir, so far, most of the reports are accurate. But I think they had doubled the guards compared to earlier." The man narrated his findings to their leader.

Tim sat on the side of a big rock, away from the prying eyes of possible intruders or enemies. He needed a good hiding place since he could not defend himself in a close encounter.

However, he was a good shooter, almost hitting his opponent on the significant points of the body. He could either render them immobile or dead, depending on the situation.

What happened to him in the previous incident was a case of misjudgment. He had allowed his emotion to get the best of him, seeing that his opponent looked so young. He had let his guard down. But not this time.

"Looks like they are on high alert." Tim looked at the pictures on the screen.

He could see several men guarding the perimeter. Their stance was stiff from the way they stood. He also noticed how they held their weapons. Either they were expecting an attack, or they were guarding something or someone important.

"Another thing, Sir." He pointed at the group of men in the photo. "The one on the left. I think I know him." He indicated the man with a full beard almost covering half of his face, standing on the side of what seemed to be the leader in the middle.

"Who is he?" Tim asked as he examined the pictures thoroughly. The men in the photos were unfamiliar to him. But they did look like they had some military training just like them.

"I think we toured together in Afghanistan. They called him The Beast." The man related that this man showed no mercy on their enemies. Killing them without remorse even if they already surrendered.

He remembered that The Beast was court-martialled. Then, he was kicked out of the force for his brutality and inhumane treatment of their captives.

"What about the man in the center and on the other side?" Tim asked, wondering who they could be.

They looked like they were high on the ranks at the way the other men were protecting them. He wished he could see the face of the man in the middle. He might give them some answers on who might be running this entire spectacle.

"No idea, but the other man seems to be carrying a doctor's bag. Maybe he was a physician, caring for their wounded." He speculated, but still, he had no accurate answers to tell his boss.

"Ok. Send those pictures to our IT. Have them run their faces on the database. Maybe they might have some luck in identifying some of them." He instructed as he checked the other pictures.

He studied the structures with his team, identifying the possible holding cell of their captives. The old Victorian house seemed to be the largest structure in the entire area.

There was another large building not far from the area, which was also heavily guarded. Then, at least four smaller structures were scattered in the area.

"Ok, guys, are we ready to do this?" He asked his men when he finally formulated a plan.

He already had studied the layout of the entire area even before they came here based on the initial information. All he had to do was incorporate their latest findings.

He had to coordinate their movements in a synchronized fashion. There was no room for mistake, and every second counted. The repercussion of one of his men missing his mark would be catastrophic on their part.

Although he had no doubt that his men could handle their own, still a successful mission relied on the accuracy and precision of their actions. In addition, going home without any casualty.

"Are there any questions?" He asked his men before they plunged into a war zone.

He had laid out his plan to them, each one assigning a significant role in the mission. Each of them had to play their part precisely the way he had instructed it. The timing had to be synchronized to a tee.

If not, he was also aware that many possibilities could happen. But they were always prepared for any contingencies. He believed that there was no such thing as a perfect plan.

"None, Sir." Each one of them answered as they synchronized their watches to the second. There was no room for error. But if such a case should happen, they should know what to do.

"Good." He checked his injury, seeing that it was still patched up tightly.

He still felt the excruciating pain when he suddenly moved, even after ingesting some mild pain killers. But it was a pain he would endure for this mission to be successful.

However, he prayed that this battlefield would not be filled with their blood but with the others. He could not lose anyone of them, not his men and not the people they were here to rescue.

Aside from acknowledging his skills, he had always believed in a higher power who always guided him in everything he did. He attributed all his success not only to himself but to his men.

But most especially to the great one that had followed his shadow and protected him until now. He grabbed the pendant lying on his chest and kissed it, making a sign of a cross.

It was not a sign that he was not afraid to die. But a symbol that he was ready to meet his maker. He already did what he had set to do.. There was nothing more he would want than to die with honor.

[Chapter 536 - That Perfect Smile](#)

"Why did you cancel the dinner?"

"Are you dropping by tonight?"

"Are you insane?" She had been rambling to herself just like an idiot as she strode back and forth around her room. She had been practicing what she would say to him just in case he called.

She stopped as she walked by the mirror in her room and stared at herself. She just felt frustrated with herself. A part of her wished to understand Marcus. But another part just wanted to strangle his neck for making her feel this way.

"You, not him." She pointed to herself, looking at her reflection. "Have you gone mad?" She kept talking to herself.

She had been sulking in her apartment for what seemed like forever, waiting for Marcus to call. But disappointedly, her phone had been silent since she arrived at her apartment.

She had checked her messages countless times, but there was nothing. She had no idea what to think anymore about their current situation as doubt and fear crept into her heart and mind.

"Just stop it, Jacky." She told herself, slightly slapping her face, waking herself up from her madness.

She went out of her room and decided to just go about her business. There were tons of chores she had to do anyway. It was time to distract herself from dwelling on things that were out of her hands.

Just when she had finished preparing her dinner, her phone started buzzing on top of the counter. She had already forgotten that she had left it there. She guessed her tactic worked, at least for a while.

"Yes," Jacky answered the phone immediately without looking at the screen, not caring who might be calling.

She had given up hearing from Marcus and waited enough to last her a lifetime. Maybe he would still call, but she was not expecting it anymore.

She was not mad at him. After talking with Evan, she knew that Marcus had changed compared to the man she once knew. However, she could not help but expect much more from him.

"Hi!" A familiar voice came from the other end of the line. "First of all, I am sorry." He continued when she had remained silent. "I know you are sick and tired of hearing me say sorry, but I am truly am."

He could hear her breathing in the other line. Her silence only meant one thing, she was hurt again by his action. But he had a valid reason this time. The only problem was he could not tell her even he wanted to.

"Please, Jacky. Say something." He spoke again on the line, wishing he was with her, holding her hand, kissing her.

Instead, he was stuck in the office, reading a report that his assistant had just given him. As much as he wanted to go and be with her, it was just not possible.

Then, he remembered the operation going on right now that he also wished he was a part of. But at the moment, he had his obligations to fulfill.

"I understand." She finally answered him, finding the words that first came to mind. But her voice lacked sincerity.

She wished she could whole-heartedly understand why he was acting strange. She hoped he would give her more than sorry as an explanation for his actions.

"I don't think you do." He responded, hearing the edginess in her voice.

As much as he wanted to divide his body to be present in three places, he could not. He had to prioritize his time to the most immediate matter.

Although he had promised that he would always think of her first, his situation now demanded more of his time. He believed when all of this was over, she would eventually understand his reasons.

"If you give me a valid justification for canceling on me, then maybe I will." She finally admitted. "Anyway, did you call just to say you are sorry? Or do you need anything else?" She asked calmly, not knowing what else she wanted from him.

As she said, she was not mad at him. Maybe a bit sad that he was not with her. Maybe lonely that for the first time, she thought she would not be alone anymore, and yet, here she was about to eat dinner on her own.

"I promise I will explain everything to you once my problems are resolved," Marcus said on the line, hoping that she would not press on and catch his lie. Lying by omission was still lying.

In the meantime, he would just have to risk that she would not hate him for putting her at the last of his priorities. For now, that was the only option he had.

"I promise I will make it up to you once all of this is over." He remained vague about his statement, hoping that she would assume that he was referring to the problems he was facing with the company.

He also hoped that he could handle these problems by himself. With the way things were going with the rescue, it would seem that he would be alone for a while.

He could not depend on Ethan with his mind distracted by the operation undergoing at the very moment. He could only count on himself to figure out what was ongoing with the two companies left in his charge.

"Fine." She finally agreed with him, feeling much better now that she had heard his voice. "I will expect a big gesture more than the flowers that you usually sent your bimbos." She added, slightly smiling on the phone.

She knew the drill. When Marcus was done with a fling, he would be sending them gifts with a sorry note. A few more cancelations, then the no-show. Finally, the women would get the drift. She was just dumped.

"Thank Alona for me. Tell her she had exquisite taste." She quickly said, knowing who had sent her the flowers and the note. It might be his idea, and the words might have come from him, but Alona did all the work.

"Again, I am sorry about that too." He knew that he had just made a mistake. "I promise to do better." He could not help but feel relieved after hearing her voice change. It was sweeter this time.

He could picture her looking at him with that big soulful eyes, threatening him to behave, but her lips curved upward, showing him that perfect smile.

[Chapter 537 - Not Taking No For An Answer](#)

She finally hung up the phone after probably almost half an hour of just talking to him. Somehow, she felt different this time. She realized she could trust him compared to their previous relationship.

Evan was right. She could sense a changed man in him. He was not the Marcus that she first met who did not care about her feelings. This man today might not be in love with her yet. But he truly cared about her.

"Love?" She mouthed in a breathless whisper. Yes, she guessed that she had been in love with him.

She was unsure when it happened, but she only realized it at some point in their relationship. It was an unfamiliar feeling but a scary one. She was afraid it would not be reciprocated.

That was probably the reason why she had worked hard to make her relationship with him work. But during that time, he did not feel the same way as her. Now, she was unsure if that was what he felt for her. He never did actually say the word love.

"I love you." She said out loud, but only the space in front of her heard it. Her heart knew that it was real. She truly loved that man with all her heart.

She guessed she always knew that she would never love anyone else. So, no matter how much she tried to replace Marcus inside her heart, to cut him off, out of her life. She could not.

He had left a mark so deep that she could not erase her feelings for him. But she did not regret it one bit, getting back with him. She could feel this would be different.

She thought that maybe this incident was just a minor bump in their relationship. It would be up to her to make it work by doing something about it or ruin it by jumping to her silly conclusions.

"I think it is time that I take matters into my own hands than wait for him to do so." She mumbled to herself as she stared at the food in front of her, still untouched.

She quickly stood up from her seat and grabbed some things in the cabinet. She started packing up the food she had prepared and put it in a bag.

She believed it was time for a late dinner picnic with his man. She should go to him if he could not visit her. It was what good girlfriends did. Take care of their men.

"Yes, I am his girlfriend." She told herself as she changed into something suitable for a late-night dinner date.

He might not have labeled their relationship. But if he wanted this to work. Then he should start realizing he was now in a committed affair.

She was not taking any other options from him. Either he took what she was offering, or he could kiss his ass goodbye. She would not have a second thought of saying sayonara to him. This time for good.

After almost an hour, she stood on the pavement outside a massive and impressive building. Most of the employees must have already left, judging from the time.

Taking a deep breath, she said to herself. "You can do this." She looked up at the tall structure and pictured him standing in one of those windows, looking down at her. But that was unlikely since he had no idea that she was coming.

Many lights on the glass windows above were already off, but several were still bright with life. She guessed that he would be on the upper floors, cooped in Alex's office, finishing up his work.

When she walked up to the lobby, guarded by two security men, she stopped. Luckily, she knew them. She had been in this building several times before when she did some errands for Dani. They did not doubt her alibi for visiting so late.

Her next stop would be at Alex's office on the top floor, where Marcus would be. She quickly rode the elevator, slightly nervous about what might be his reaction to her unexpected visit.

Her hand fidgeted with the bag she was holding as she stared at the numbers on the small screen. Finally, the ding signaled her arrival on the designated floor.

As soon as the door opened, she was surprised to see the entire floor. She looked at her watch as she stepped out of the small box and walked into the large hallway.

It was late, but the entire office was buzzing with life. She expected to see a room almost darkened with only a few lights on. Then, maybe one or two people would still be working with Marcus. But not this.

"Jacky, what are you doing here?" Someone finally called her attention.

A tall woman walked toward her. She stood in front of her and gave her a big hug before letting her go. It had been a while since they last saw each other. In a way, they had become good friends.

"Alona, what is going on in here?" She could not help but ask, curious at the scene in front of her.

She could only come up with one reason why so many employees were working their asses off at this late of night. Something big was cooking in the company. It could either be a good thing or not.

She would not know since she had been in her bubble the whole day, daydreaming of strangling Marcus for standing her up. She did not catch up with the grapevine with what the buzz was all about.

Suddenly, she connected why Evan was adamant to hear from Alex. It must have something to do with this. But then again, Marcus should be dealing with that since he was the one left in charge.

"Just a busy night. Nothing out of the ordinary." Alona nonchalantly answered her. As if this was a common thing and nothing to worry about. "Are you here to see Marcus? I can tell him that you are here." She quickly offered.

She could not tell her what was happening in the office. First, she was not an employee here. Another, even if she was, she was not privy to the situation.

"Yes, I want to see Marcus, but don't tell him that I am here." She started explaining. Her nerves were back as she thought of her impulsive decision.

"You want to surprise him." It was more of a statement than a question as Alona realized her intention. She started giggling like a schoolgirl, supporting her friend with her plan. "Oh, this is exciting."

"Stop that. How is your boss anyway? Busy, in a good mood?" Jacky asked, hoping to get a feel of her situation before she went barging into his office unannounced.

"All I can say is that he will definitely be surprised to see you." Alona encouraged her to go on with her plan.

His current boss had been under a lot of stress due to these problems he had stumbled on. It was just his first time on the job, yet it felt like he was already sitting on that chair for years from the look on his face.

She looked at the double doors of the office, and for the first time, she felt intimidated. But she would not back down. She had set a goal, and she would make sure to accomplish that before the night was over.

"Hi! Can I invite you again for dinner?" She quickly said before she forgot her lines. She strode into the room with a purpose, smiling at him, waiting for him to answer her.. "This time, I am not taking no for an answer."

[Chapter 538 - More Prayers For A Miracle](#)

She must have dozed off as she lay in bed, plotting their possible escape. But she was nowhere near anything plausible as far as she could remember.

She woke up from a dream, abruptly making her check her surrounding. She was still alone, and the pitch-black darkness of the sky outside her window still indicated that it was late in the evening.

It would probably rain, she thought, since she had hardly seen a star up in the vast sky. She could still hear some voices outside, but not as loud as before. It was as if they were keeping their noises down to avoid catching anyone's attention.

"We need to get out of here." She mumbled to the air around her.

She was not raised to be a religious person. She never did hear her father talk about believing in anything that could not be seen by the human eye.

Although her mom had taught her how to pray when she was young, she had quickly forgotten about it as she grew older. Her focus had shifted between right and wrong.

Eventually, she only believed in making her own destiny, doing what was right, and apologized sincerely for doing something wrong.

"Please, help us." She prayed to whoever was listening, to whoever would care to assist them in their time of need.

She never required a higher power to grant her wishes or aid her with what she wanted. She had managed to survive without praying and believing in anything other than her capability.

Now, she wondered if she was wrong. She realized that there was nothing wrong with seeking help from someone who might be watching over them. After all, she would need all the help she could get.

Suddenly, she was startled by a very faint movement outside. She could hear the mild creaking of the floor as if a man was walking in stealth mode, but the old woods could not take the weight as they gave in from the pressure.

After a while, the knob moved, followed by the giggling of keys. The door squeaked open, slowly making a wide gap, avoiding a loud sound. Then, a man stepped inside.

"Who's there?" She asked since he never opened the ceiling lights. The only light in the room came from the small lamp on a table beside the bed.

She squinted her eyes to see if she could have a better view of the man. But judging from his size, she believed she knew him. What he had planned to do, she had no idea as he looked around the room without answering her question.

She stepped forward, curious about his presence but not too close since she still had to confirm it was him and not someone resembling him in the dark. At this point, she could not be too cautious.

"It is me. Don't make a sound." He finally whispered, not wanting to make too much noise. He stepped a bit closer to her, revealing his identity as the light reflected on his face.

He still could not believe that he was doing this to help her. He must be crazy for listening to her idea. He probably had gone insane by putting his life and his family in danger because he pitied her.

He walked a bit closer until he stood in front of her, studying her face and seeing her relax when she realized that it was him. She could not blame her for always being on guard. Anyone in her situation might feel the same way, even him.

"What are you doing here?" She asked, still slightly confused, but hope started to creep into her heart. Maybe he was here because he had changed his mind.

Then, she remembered the items he was going to buy for her. Disappointment crashed her back to the ground, seeing a bag he held in his hands.

He only brought her some items he thought she might need to make her stay in this prison more comfortable. When she did not give him a list earlier, he said he would just pick some things himself.

"I am getting you out of here." He finally spoke. This time he knew there was no turning back. "Are you ready to leave?" He asked her as he moved towards the window and peeked outside.

He was not expecting that the guards would double up tonight. He was not also aware that their boss would arrive either. But he already had set the ball in motion.

There was no other choice but to do this now or just scrap the entire plan. But from the way he saw her husband, he would die here if he did not get him out now. It was now or never.

"Really, Samson? You are helping us out of here." She had to ask again, afraid that she might have heard him wrong. Suddenly, she remembered her prayer. Maybe an almighty being was watching over them.

She stepped closer to him, looking over the window just like him. She could see the guard roaming the grounds, wondering how they would get out without those men noticing them.

"Yes, so stop bugging me before I change my mind." The gentle giant slightly turned in her direction to make her stop talking.

He again scouted the grounds, planning their escape route. He could already see that it would be tricky since the men watched vigilantly for enemies.

Even if he had been a part of this group for years. The boss would definitely declare him an enemy once he discovered that he had planned to make their prisoners escape.

"Thank you for doing this for us. I will make sure that you will not regret it." She swore to him, hoping that all of them could get out of there alive so she could keep her promise.

However, her enthusiasm was dampened by the scenery outside. She just could not see a way out of there. Not if her friend was the only one who would be helping her and Alex.

Under such conditions, she could not fathom a successful escape.. She believed she would need more than luck but more prayers for a miracle.

[Chapter 539 - Patience Was The Key To Success](#)

A few minutes earlier, inside the spacious room. The doctor injected the drugs into his patient. It would render him temporarily in a semi-comatose state, just like what he was instructed to do by his real boss.

He had been pretending to be working for Nick for a few months now. Infiltrating his operation to get close to him and his plans. He had been gaining his trust and spying on him at the same time.

He was not alone in this mission. Several of his men also came along with him, situating themselves in the different areas of Nick's business.

"How is he?" The man, who seemed to be in charge, stood at the corner of the room. He had stayed away, behind the shadows, out of the view of the patient.

He came here, wanting to see for himself the famous prince. The one who captured the heart of the elusive heiress of the mighty Hamilton Empire.

He also wanted to witness how the mighty royal darling of the crowd had fallen in his hands. He had never envied anyone in his life. But this prince had his blood boiling to the core for some reason.

"There is no need to worry about the prince, Sir. He only incurred minor injuries, not enough to be fatal." The doctor related to him the condition of their captive.

"But the medication I administered to him would immobilize and keep him unconscious in the meantime." The doctor resumed his explanation as he walked along with their boss outside the building.

"Just make sure that he will never escape." The man said in his arrogant and authoritative voice, striking fear in the hearts of his men. "I never like sloppy work, and I will never tolerate mistakes."

He did not care for the condition of the prince. He had his reasons for taking the couple, and it was all part of a grand plan. A plan that he never thought would land in his lap.

He had been waiting for a chance to take down the almighty Ethan Hamilton. Now, he had his chance to do so. Daniella Hamilton was just a bonus that would add nicely to his collection of accolades.

"I assure you that he is not going anywhere." The doctor confidently told the man at his side, showing him his sly smile.

He was not afraid of the new boss. He had handled his father for years without any problem. He was one of his father's most trusted men. He was secured in his position as one of the heads of his team.

He had worked for the old boss for more than ten years before he eventually died of a disease. His abusive behavior towards his body had finally caught up with him.

He always thought he would end his reign in the underworld in a more honorable way, with guns blazing and a bullet in his head. But he succumbed to his sickness on his death bed.

He was a doctor, but he was not a miracle worker. He failed to save his life despite all the advanced technology and money at his disposal. But he promised the old man that he would guide his son to his success.

"Good. I know I can always count on you." The boss tapped the doctor on the shoulder, rougher than it needed to be, as they continued to walk towards the manor.

He could see the old house that had outlived its purpose. This house might be one of the best during his time, but now, it was just a piece of garbage occupying prime land.

In his opinion, outdated trash should be thrown into the dumpster or incinerated to ash to make way for something better. It had no space in his world, just like this old man.

If he failed to deliver what he promised, he would not have second thoughts about disposing of him. He would have no use for old and incompetent men.

"What about Nick? What are you planning to do with him?" The doctor asked, trying to find out the next part of the plan. So far, he was only privy to this one.

He always thought their new leader would make him his confidant and adviser. After all, he had been in this business for a long time.

He had helped his father build this underground empire and made it to what it was today. It was an enormous and powerful association, untouchable by the authorities and feared by their kind.

"Patience, my friend." The man smirked at him. "In due time, you will find out what will be my next move." He never did like sharing all his moves.

It was one of the things his father thought him well. To hide his best cards until he had the right timing. Then, he would strike and win the entire game.

Taking a risk was the best part of the game, but he always had a trick on his sleeves. He would not allow anyone to beat him in his game.

"As you wish, boss." The doctor said, but he was starting to get skeptical about how he was acting around him.

He doubted that this young boy had any plans of including him in the big league. He had been keeping him in the dark for far too long, and he was beginning to resent it.

However, out of respect for his father, the doctor still gave him the benefit of the doubt. He was young and eager. He would learn in time that he would need him in running this business, the doctor thought.

"I am glad you agreed." The young boss spoke condescendingly, patronizing the older man.

He had been trained his entire life to take over his father's legacy. Although it had been a few years ahead of schedule, his father's death was unavoidable. He had to take over as soon as possible.

Soon, he would declare himself the new king. The true rightful heir to the throne of the city. His father had hidden him from the world long enough, preparing him for his time to take his place.

"Sir, we are here." The other man standing on the other side of the boss finally spoke up.

He had been silent the entire time, only listening to their conversation. He was a man of few words, but his actions spoke volumes. He had been protecting the boss since he was a teenager.

"Give me a moment." He said as he waited for them to give him some space.

He stopped by a locked door, excited to see the occupant of the room. But he just stared at the closed door. The other people with him were left wondering what he had planned for their other captive.

It was not time yet to see her, he told himself. As much as he wanted to, he knew that it would ruin what he had planned all this time.

He had already waited this long before taking over the business. He could wait a little longer for what he had in mind for this woman.. As he had said earlier to his man, patience was the key to success.

[Chapter 540 - The Knight In Some Baggy Clothes](#)

"Sir, my men are ready to go in," Tim reported to his counterpart at their home base.

He could tell that Ethan was carefully monitoring the entire situation. He wanted him updated with all their movements if it was possible.

After getting the assurance from all his men that they were all set, he gave the signal to move into enemy territory lines. He had already briefed each one of them on their responsibility. The rest would be up to them.

"I want all of you guys back in one piece." He reminded his men as they, one by one, left his position, leaving him alone in a darkened portion of the area just outside the perimeter fence.

With a long-range rifle in his hand, he could put down with ease some of the targets assigned to him. It was the best that he could do with his condition. At least he would be covering his team from any attack on their backs.

He could not run fast or fight in hand-to-hand combat with the wound still limiting his movements. The best option for him to help his team was to shoot the enemies from his angle without being caught.

"Careful on your left, Charlie." He instructed on his earpiece, calling the attention of one of his men.

Then, he watched his team infiltrate the camp of their enemy. So far, they had entered the fence without anyone noticing them. He let the scope of his rifle check each of his men.

He could see the place swarming with guards. He could not just shoot any of them. He had to be careful not to alarm the rest caused that would cause chaos if they were made aware of their presence.

Each of their targets went down as his men worked on their assignments. He had instructed his men to clear out the northern portion first, then worked their way to the building they believed their boss was held.

"Another one is coming on your left, Bravo." He spoke the call sign of one of his teammates, making him aware of the danger near him.

At the moment, his team was doing a splendid job securing their first objective. But the mission was far from over. They had just begun, and the hard part was yet to come.

On the other side of the fortress, two figures moved in the corner, hiding in the shadows of the night. One stealthily moved as he maneuvered around the place. The other one followed nervously, keeping close as much as possible.

"Are we close, Samson?" She whispered as she tried to inhale deeply. She could feel her heart almost skipping a beat every time she heard something other than the sounds the two of them made.

Her hands were cold from the nerves she felt in her body. She was breaking a sweat as if she had run a mile at full speed. But she hardly moved as they went from one corner to the other in slow motion. A snail might surpass them if they kept at this pace.

"Just over that corner." He pointed to the next house. A small one. "That is where they are treating him," Samson answered her before putting a single finger on his lips to tell her to keep it quiet.

He said they had to be careful not to be caught because she would end up back in her prison or worse, while he would end up dead for helping her escape.

Fortunately, he had come up with the idea of distracting the guards while they made their escape from the main house. If he had not foreseen the event earlier, they would not have even made it outside her room.

Besides, he had studied the entire house since he arrived at this place. He knew how to move around the vicinity without alarming the others.

"Ok." She acknowledged his warning, knowing that he was right. She had to follow his instructions if she wanted them to get out of here alive.

She knew how to fight, but she was not trained in this form of combat. It was more than she could handle on her own. Luckily, she had a big man on her side. Hopefully, he would be enough if the need arose.

She could see that he was carrying two guns on both sides of his body, but she would not be surprised if he had one more hidden in his body for backup.

She wondered how good was his aim and if he had already killed somebody in cold blood, without mercy. He was still a criminal despite doing a good deed at the moment.

"We are here." He finally said as they safely crossed the space between the two structures without anyone noticing them.

He went to the window he used earlier and checked if somebody had noticed his presence earlier. But it had remained unlocked, so it was safe to say that nobody knew he was here.

Luckily, the window was covered by a tall bush, preventing passersby from seeing them. He looked at her as he prepared her to crawl their way inside the small hall.

Inside, the man lying on the bed had been conscious for a while now. He had regained most of his body function. It still hurt like hell when he suddenly moved his body, but it had subsided a bit compared to the other night.

He remembered the words of the unknown man. He wondered if it was a figment of his imagination, a hallucination that was playing in his drug-induced mind.

But then again, why did the drugs suddenly had not worked when injected into him. He did not feel sleepy, and he did not feel paralyzed anymore.

Although he pretended that it turned him useless in front of the doctor, just like what the voice said to his ears. There was nothing he would lose anyway if he followed his command.

"Come on, you can take the pain." Finally, after some encouragement, he had made it to a sitting position, holding on to his ribs which was the one badly hurt.

Maybe the medications helped a bit to heal him, in addition to the time given to him to sleep, but he was not yet fully recovered.

He believed he still might have a few minor bone fractures but not enough to kill him, not yet. His body was covered with bruises, but he pushed through the pain, wanting only to escape with his wife.

"You can do this. You are getting out of here with Dani." He thought to himself, gently rotating his shoulders, trying to make the blood flow again throughout his body.

Then, he heard the sound of a window opening on the other side of the room. It was coming from behind him. But it was taking all his effort to turn around and check on it.

"Alex?" The sound of a familiar angelic voice reached his ears. It suddenly made him move his body quickly.

The pain shot up in his side, making him slightly twist on his side to alleviate the pain. But the adrenaline of hearing her voice was also starting to kick in.

He could feel the excitement of seeing her again. Hope had resurfaced in his heart at the thought of escaping with his wife.. He could not help but think that he was the damsel in distress and she was the knight in some baggy clothes.