

Royal Contract 561

[Chapter 561 - Failed To Make A Good King](#)

"Dad, what do you think would happen to me?" Edward walked towards his father, who was busy working on some papers.

He had immediately returned home when he heard that the couple had been rescued. Confirming about the involvement of Nick in the abduction had alarmed him.

He was afraid that he would be implicated in the case because of his association with Nick. He did not want to end up in jail, just like his partner.

His mission to get more information to absolve him from the criminal charges failed. He did not secure any proof that would disprove his involvement in the abduction.

"So far, I don't think Nick had mentioned your name in the case." The older Edward replied, finally looking up from his paperwork to face his son.

He could understand his concern, but he could only blame his son for this situation. He had warned him from the very start not to do business with the shady character of Nick, but his son did not listen to him.

Instead, he continued to defy him and proceed with his plans without his blessing. Although his investment did bear fruit, he still ended up in a tricky situation.

"What if he decides to implicate me in the case?" The young prince said with worried lines showing on his face. "I honestly did not have anything to do with the kidnapping." Guaranteeing his father with his words.

He sat on the available chair in front of the desk. Then, buried his face in the palm of his hands. He was desperate, trying to find a solution to his problem.

He had not relaxed since he had learned of the news, always looking at his back if authorities were following him. He immediately flew back to his country, hoping that his father could protect him.

Although he had diplomatic immunity against a crime in another country, he was still afraid of the implications arising from the incident. He did not want to be caught in the middle of the investigation on another soil.

"We will deal with that when it happens. As of now, concentrate on distancing yourself from this case." King Edward instructed his son as he returned to his work.

He wished that this was not happening to his son, but there was nothing else he could do but try his best to help him. He could not allow anything to happen to him. He was still his flesh and blood.

He did not condone what his son had done in the past. But he believed that he was innocent in this one. This time, he would support and protect him as his father.

"What about my chance to the crown?" He knew that should be the least of his concerns at the moment, but he still wanted to know if there was even a slim chance that he could still be on the running for the throne.

He had lived his entire life that nothing could stand in his way from becoming the next king. He had proven himself wrong upon realizing the mistakes he had done now, together with the past.

As of now, even he did not believe he deserved it. But he still would like to be given a chance to change his ways and prove he could still lead his people.

"Let us just focus on keeping you out of the dungeons first before we discuss the king's succession." The king stared at his son.

Pity was the last thing he wanted to show in his face, but it was what he was feeling at the moment. As much as he wanted his son to be the next king, he believed that ship had already sailed.

After this horrific incident, choosing him as the next king would be out of the question. The Council would never trust someone who made a grave mistake by dealing with a known criminal.

He would never convince them to accept him as their next king. His power to choose him as his successor would be vetoed by the Council, and he would not be able to do anything about it.

"Thank you, father, for your time. I am sorry again for all the trouble I have caused you." He bowed to his father, showing him the respect the king deserved.

This time, he finally admitted his shortcomings. Asking for forgiveness was the least he could do for all the troubles he had brought to his father and the kingdom.

But it would take a lifetime before he could atone for all his sins. The people might not forgive him, but he hoped it would not be the same with his father.

"Have you seen Alex before you left the city?" His father asked before his son could step out and leave his presence.

He would have liked his son to visit his cousin and his wife. It would be better for his situation if he would be seen with his family. Suspensions might be lessened against him if he would make the first move.

"I am sorry, Dad, but I rushed to come home when I first heard the news. I did not get the opportunity to visit them." He knew he sounded like a coward, afraid to face the consequence of his action. But it felt like it was his only option.

He had been fighting all his life for a place in this kingdom. Even if it had been written in his fate to be the next in line, he still had to prove himself to be worthy of the title.

But he was tired of it all. As much as he wanted to be king, competing for it against the man who had bested him in every way was a difficult task, or it seemed to be an impossible task.

"Besides, I am sure my presence would not be welcome if I had come near them." He finished before his father could react to his earlier statement.

His presence might only cause an uproar if he visited his cousin, knowing that he was still a suspect in his abduction. The evidence still pinpointed to him. Then, he still had a motive.

He believed that no matter what he did now, he would not be worthy in the eyes of the Council and the people. He finally decided to give up his right to even think of becoming a king.

Seeing the expression in the face of his father a few moments ago, he knew that his chances were none. He was only setting himself up to fail if he kept pursuing something that was not likely to happen anymore.

"That is fine. I will just send word to the prince and the princess." King Edward said as he leaned back on his chair. Then, he watched his son say goodbye and leave his room.

He thought of a get-well-soon gift that he could send the couple. He came up with several options, but none seemed to be enough. While the others were not appropriate with the situation.

He did not want to seem like he was trying to win them over so they would forgive his son. But in a way, that was his intention all along. He just did not want it to be too obvious.

However, his mind returned to his son, blaming himself for what he had become. He always believed that his son was the fruit of his upbringing.. He concluded that he had failed to make a good king out of him.

[Chapter 562 - No One Else To Blame But Fate](#)

"Jacob!" Cassie jumped out of the couch as soon as Jacob entered her apartment, excited to share about the latest development.

She had not seen him since his last visit. She had been looking forward to this day. Since he left, he suggested laying low for a while. He did not want them to be caught by his brother.

Although he did call a few times, it was usually brief. He said he was stuck on several on-call duties since then and assisted in several back-to-back surgeries.

"Hi, Cassie!" He greeted her as soon as he saw her. "I am sorry if I was not able to visit sooner." He locked the door behind him before proceeding inside the room.

He was swamped with work since he last saw her. It had been difficult for him to squeeze her in between his obligations in the hospital. He usually passed out on his bed by the time he went home, too tired to do anything else.

On the other hand, he also used that as an excuse not to see her. He wanted to evaluate his feelings for her after the kiss they had shared.

He did not want to string her along if he was not serious about her. He had to be sure first before he pursued any form of relationship with her.

She already had been through enough with his brother. He did not want to add up to her burdens. Now, he believed he knew what he wanted with her.

"Do you think it is now safe for me to go out?" Walking toward him.

She had heard from the news that Nick had been apprehended. He was now in the custody of the police. She was glad that finally, the man she hated so much was behind bars.

She could not wait to leave this place and feel free again. She had so many things she wanted to do, but most of all, she wanted to spend more time with Jacob outside of these walls.

"We are still not sure. Nick still had many men roaming the streets, probably looking for you." He told her, moving forward until he stood close to her. "It might be more dangerous for you now that he is facing criminal charges."

He could guess that it was not the words she would like to hear from him, but it was the truth. He could not risk her life by sending her out when the coast was not yet clear.

He had not visited his brother since he was taken by the police. The last time he saw him was, on the night, his brother accidentally bumped into him at the lobby of this building.

Until now, he still had to schedule his visit with him. But he had to secure Cassie first before he did that. He believed her life was still in danger once his brother located her whereabouts.

"That is a load of crap. Until when are you going to lock me up in here?" She shrieked at him, unable to control the built-up emotions inside of her from exploding. She was done with the excuses.

She knew it was not his fault if she was hiding in this apartment, but she could not help feeling like a bird in a cage, with clipped wings, unable to fly free.

She only wished to return to her regular life, where she could do what she wanted. She also planned to find a job where she could use her skills.

She was done pretending like a bimbo who used men to get what she wanted. She was intelligent and capable of doing great things by using her talent.

"You are not a prisoner in here. Alex and I just wanted to guarantee your safety." Jacob hugged her, trying to calm her down.

He could understand her pain, her situation. It could not be easy staring at the four walls of this apartment all day, unable to see the world outside.

It did not help that he did not visit or call her more often. She must be going crazy on her own with no one to talk to or a friend to share things with.

"But I am sick and tired of my life. I don't want to stay here for a minute longer." She whined like a child, frustrated with her condition.

She returned to the sofa and slumped down on the soft cushion, losing the enthusiasm she was feeling earlier. She felt like all her energy zapped out of her by the news, banning her from going out.

She could not complain to Alex, knowing that he was still recuperating from what Nick did to him. She wanted to understand his situation and be reasonable.

However, her current state was taking a toll on her mental psyche. She had no idea how long she could handle her situation before she permanently went bat shit crazy.

"Give it a few more days. I will talk to Alex about taking you on vacation for a few days. Maybe that would help." Jacob suggested out of the blue.

He did not plan it, but it suddenly developed in his head and simultaneously came out of his mouth. He was not entirely sure if that was a good idea, but it was already out there. Taking it back would only worsen the situation.

He mentally thought of his schedule, whether he could take a few days off from work anytime soon. It would be tricky, but he believed he could make it work if Alex would agree.

"You will do that for me." Her earlier frown quickly disappeared, replaced by a gorgeous smile that almost reached her eyes. "Yes, I like that."

Her mood instantaneously shifted again, going in the opposite direction upon hearing his suggestion. She was ecstatic with the news that she would be out of here and going on vacation.

It was not just the out-of-town trip that she was excited about. It was the thought that she would not be alone. In addition to that, she would be spending time with Jacob.

"I am happy you like the idea." He sat down beside her and pulled her into his arms, relieved that he had made her smile. "Have you eaten anything yet?" He asked, trying to change the topic.

He still had to plan it in his head, if that was even possible, before going to Alex and recommending it. He did not want to add to the plate that was already consuming most of the man's time.

"Actually, I just nibbled a cookie but have not eaten anything yet." She suddenly remembered, realizing that she was hungry. She appreciated him more for his concern. She would not have survived this long if not for him.

After the kiss they shared, she was convinced that she had finally found the man that could make her happy. She had never felt this way before with all the men she had been with, especially Nick.

She was not entirely sure if he felt the same way. But she was willing to risk her heart with him. He was a good man and would not intentionally hurt her.

She would surely do her best to win his heart. She worked hard for what she wanted, and she was not about to change now.. If it did not work with Jacob in the end, she had no one else to blame but fate.

Chapter 563 Dying legacy

"Excuse me, Sir, I hate to interrupt. But..." A man knocked before showing his face by the door. "Sir, someone is looking for you on the floor."

Troy looked up from the papers he had been working on, dropping the pen on the side. On the other hand, he just scratched the back of his head, apologetic for his interruption.

He was instructed not to disturb his boss since he planned to finish early today. But he had no choice since the man downstairs seemed determined to see the owner of the establishment.

"Who was it, Ryan?" He said exasperatedly, breathing a heavy sigh. He pulled on his tie to loosen it more and started rotating his neck to unwind the tension on his muscles.

He did not want to shout at his assistant, that was just not his style, but he was irritated that he had disobeyed his order. Usually, he could rely on him to do his job.

He was still halfway from finishing his work, and he only had less than an hour to do it upon checking on his watch. He had plans for tonight, and he did not want to be late.

"He said that he is your father-in-law?" It was more of a question than a statement.

He actually did not like the man when he came to talk to him. The arrogant man walked inside the club like he owned the place, ordering everyone around, saying that his son-in-law was their boss.

When he had calmly explained that his boss was not available at the moment, still the uninvited guest demanded to see him. The man kept saying that he should call him immediately and inform him of his presence.

"He said his name is Mr. John Richards. He wanted to see you right away." Ryan continued with confusion and some hesitation when his boss remained quiet. "He had been creating a scene on the floor, so I decided to inform you."

He would have laughed at the outlandish claim of the man, knowing that his boss was single and had no known girlfriend, especially not a wife.

But he could tell that the visitor of his boss did not look stupid or crazy at all. He seemed to be someone important that he could not risk offending.

In his line of work, his primary obligation was assuring that the needs of each client were dealt with. Especially those who were classified as valued customers.

"Shit." He uttered in surprise, not expecting that the man would have the nerve to step into his territory and disturb his business.

He momentarily closed his eyes to relieve some of the tension that suddenly flooded his system. He was already feeling frustrated a few minutes ago. Now, he was on the edge of his temper.

He never liked the father of his bride. The pompous old man already judged him not worthy of marrying his daughter when they had first met. He did not even give him a chance to prove himself to him.

Not that his approval was relevant in their marriage. But he was hoping that even if the matrimony was a fake one, there would be lesser complications to deal with.

"Sir, are you married?" Ryan questioned his boss, seeing his unusual reaction.

Usually, his boss was calm and collected even under extreme pressure. But he seemed to be on the edge of exploding at the moment.

He was uncertain if he should believe the man outside about his assertion that his boss was already married. But judging from his reaction, Ryan concluded that it might be true.

"Yes," He finally admitted to his assistant, pushing his chair away from the table to create some breathing space. "Now, would you go and bring Mr. Richards here." He said before turning away from the man to stare outside his window.

He had no plan or the time to explain to his assistant about his married life. He was already on a tight schedule. The last thing he wanted was to create another fiasco if he kept the man waiting for another minute.

He had tried to separate his personal life from his work. He had never brought Tyra anywhere near his business, not because he did not want to. But because he knew that eventually, they would go on their separate ways.

That was their arrangement, and he did not want to break the rule. Tyra also avoided putting him in the limelight, so nobody seemed to care that he was her husband.

"Yes, Sir." His assistant answered, still shocked by his admission that he was already married.

Although he had only worked for his boss for a short time, he was not aware that he was hitched. He never once mentioned that he had someone special in his life.

There was no indication that he was married. He would have noticed it, but his boss hid it well. He almost thought that there must be something wrong with him since he never dated.

"Please, Ryan, don't mention any of this to anyone," Troy instructed his assistant. Ryan promised before he continued on his way and left him in peace.

Once alone in the room, he quickly walked to the window and stared at the darkness that enveloped the city. He wondered what brought his father-in-law to his doorstep. What could he want now?

Then, he remembered that John had mentioned something about an investment. He contemplated if he was planning to cash in on his promise to look into it.

"Troy." A heavy thick voice echoed in the walls of his office as the man who was now part of his family walked further inside the room. "I hope you don't mind me dropping by unannounced."

The man walked confidently inside the room with his eyes roaming around every corner of the room. He seemed to be assessing the place, evaluating his son-in-law, based on his taste in decorations and furnishings.

He could tell if the man was worth his while if he had an exquisite preference for the arts and fashion that surrounded him.

As of now, the man, his daughter married, was nothing but a cheap scoundrel who wished to be part of them. He finally concluded from his initial estimation.

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But he could not show his distaste for this lowlife human being because he had something he needed from him. He planned to use him until such a point that his daughter realized that he was not worth her time and left him.

"Not at all." He answered back, offering him a seat that was adjacent to him. "I admit. It is quite a surprise. I hope your purpose is nothing serious." He was not beating around the bush with this man.

He had sensed that the old man wanted his daughter to marry someone from his associates. A man who came from a wealthy background and old money. Someone who belonged in their class.

So, he could only ponder what the man was doing in his presence, pretending that he was glad to see him. Unless his earlier assumption was correct. It had something to do with money.

He had heard despite his appearance, his father-in-law was having some difficulty in his company. He needed fresh capital and investment to salvage what was left of his dying legacy.

Chapter 564 A performance of a lifetime

He watched his father-in-law in his peripheral vision, contemplating if the rumors were true about his impending bankruptcy. He still needed to see his books to confirm the state of his affairs.

He would have helped him if he had been a good father to his wife, but judging from how Tyra talked about him. He only used his daughter for his own intentions. He never cared about Tyra at all.

"Would you like a drink, John?" Troy offered as he walked towards the small table containing his favorite drink. It was one of the best brands of scotch he served in his establishment.

He had always been a gracious host even to his enemies when they had come to visit him for a friendly chat. But ironically, there was nothing pleasant in their conversation, just hidden agendas that needed to be addressed.

He believed that tonight was no different. His guest might appear to be in a jolly mood, but deep inside, he could discern his true intention.

"I love one," John replied with a smile still planted on his lips.

He could certainly use one if he was going to stand the presence of his present son-in-law. However, he had a business to discuss, and he did not want to waste any more of his time.

He stared at the young man, carrying his drink. He still could not fathom what came over with his daughter to marry such a man. He did not see the appeal at all.

The man had no class, nothing that would indicate that he belonged with their kind. He might be wealthy and bathing in money, but he would never be one of them.

In his opinion, Troy was still a poor boy, dressed in expensive cloth. He had no business being married to his daughter. The sooner he ended this charade, the better.

"Let us cut to the chase. I do not think that you came here for a lovely chat," Troy stated when he had returned to his seat behind the desk and faced his visitor. "So, what is it that you want?" He said directly to the point, drinking his liquor in one go.

He did not see the point of prolonging their suffering by pretending that they enjoyed being in each other's company. It would be a foolish effort and a waste of both of their time.

He smiled

"Fair point." The older man acknowledged his statement, agreeing with him. Unlike him, he took a sip of the brown liquid and savored the taste in his tongue.

At least, he approved with his liquor preference. It was a good brand and one of the best in the market. He also had this in his collection, but he had not touched the bottle, still sitting in his cellar.

He put down the glass on the side of the table with half of the content still untouched. Then, leaned on the chair, crossing his legs in the process of making himself comfortable.

"Well," Troy said as he waited patiently for the man to discuss what he set out to do by coming to his office.

He could already guess what he wanted, but he still wanted to hear it come out of his mouth. Whether he would agree to this investment scheme. It would be another matter for his financial and legal team to review.

He had no plan of entering into any kind of agreement with him, not blindly, just because he was the father of his wife. But he would consider it if the offer was viable. After all, making money was always his business.

"I think you already know why I am here." The older man eyed him with an arrogant look. "I have a few business proposals for your perusal." John heard it in the voice of this young man and saw it in his eyes that he meant business.

He had underestimated the young man, thinking that he could easily manipulate him to agree with his conditions. It seemed that he had to

He was not here to beg him to consider his proposal. He was not taking no as an answer. He believed that this man owed him for taking his daughter and marrying her.

This man ruined the carefully planned future he had set for his daughter. Therefore, he should pay for it and assure that his daughter would still have a legacy to inherit from him.

"I will have a look and have my team check on it too," Troy said, putting the files at the side of his table without even looking at its content. "Is there anything else?"

He smiled at his guest, indicating that their meeting had just been concluded. He checked on his watch, seeing that he already had wasted precious minutes entertaining this man.

He was not particularly interested in investing in his company. But he would still have a look at it once he had more time. At the moment, playing the good son-in-law was not part of his plan.

"I hope you will get back to me as soon as possible," John said, not 22:31

liking the tone the young man had used in speaking with him.

He was also offended that he was obviously dismissing his presence without guaranteeing that he had agreed with his proposal. He did not even look at the files that he and his team had carefully prepared.

The ringing of his mobile phone interrupted their discussion. He was supposed to respond to him, but he answered the call first. He held his finger in front of him, excusing himself.

"Tyra!" He quickly stood up from the chair upon realizing it was his wife, who was calling.

He had been focused on his visitor. He did not bother to look and see the name on the screen. However, he was still glad to hear her voice. It had always made him smile.

On the other hand, he could see that his visitor had suddenly had taken an interest in his conversation upon hearing the name of his daughter.

Very well, he thought. He might at well entertain John and present him with a show. He had never tried an acting career, but he would still give him a performance of a lifetime.

Chapter 565 A doting husband

He had to be careful in handling the conversation. He had to act convincingly in front of his guest, but that was easy. He had been trained to be charming and compelling when luring clients.

He did not want his father-in-law to suspect anything unusual. He sensed that he was listening carefully to his every word and watching every gesture he made.

"Yes, I am sorry for the late call." She started to say on the other line. But she did not finish the remaining of her sentences when Troy cut her off.

She was about to inform him that her flight had been delayed. She was supposed to arrive in an hour. Then, he was picking her up at the airport. But her words were lost when he started talking.

"No worries, honey. I will be there on time. By the way, your father unexpectedly came by." He used a word of endearment in the conversation to make her father believe in their act.

"But I am coming to pick you up as soon as we finish our chitchat." Then, followed it with an explanation so that she would not get confused about his act.

He was giving her a heads-up that his father had unexpectedly come to visit him. He did not want her to learn it from someone else and be surprised.

They had agreed never to keep secrets from each other. Most especially when it would affect the other in some way. He believed that she should know what his father was up to.

"Are you saying that my father is there with you right now?" Tyra voiced her concern, quickly forgetting about her initial reason for calling.

She was not expecting that her father would actually go out of his way to confront her fake husband about his investment scheme. She could only think of one reason for him to visit her fake husband.

Now, she had confirmed that her father was desperate because, in any other circumstance, he would not stoop so low as to ask from her husband for help.

She knew what her father thought of Troy. He was very vocal about his dislike of him. But for her father to visit him at this time. Then, he must be really in big trouble with his company.

"Yes, and he sends his regards," Troy said, almost laughing at his words, but he managed to control it and instead smiled like a schoolboy, talking to his crush.

He had met many men like him. There was no love in the man sitting across from him. He concluded that his father-in-law only knew how to use people, nothing more.

"Funny!" She knew he was joking. "You are enjoying this act too much." She reprimanded him and giggled at the same time.

She never thought that she would ever feel this happy and carefree, talking about her father. It was all because of this kind, thoughtful man she married.

She realized that it might be a fake marriage according to their arrangement. But it might as well be a real one. They were almost living like they were actually a couple.

The only lacking in their relationship was the consummation of their marriage. Other than that, the two could easily pass up as a real married couple from another's perspective.

"We are stuck in this. Might as well have fun with it." He whispered into the receiver, making sure that his guest would not hear him. He always used it as an excuse why he enjoyed her company.

But at this point, he already realized that losing her would be devastating for him. He had become attached to her, but he was unsure if it had something to do with love. Not yet.

Nonetheless, he was not about to declare his feelings for her. Not until he saw a sign that she also felt something for him. He did not want to rock the boat when it was cruising smoothly on a steady shore.

"Anyway, I will see you later, my love." Blowing her a kiss on the phone before ending the call.

He did not wait for her reply since he wanted to get rid of his unwanted guest at the soonest possible. He had to hurry because he still had to pick her up.

She was trying to say something on the other line, but he failed to hear her as he pressed the end call button on the screen. He returned his attention back to his guest.

He did not want his father to hear any more of their conversation, afraid that he might say something that could trigger his curiosity,

"I am sorry about that." He said, placing his phone down on the table as he faced his father-in-law again. "Tyra sends her love." Of course, it was a lie, but he could not help himself from saying it.

But the smile on the other man's lips was obviously forced as he acknowledged his statement. He concluded that the love between the father and the daughter had always been one-sided.

"Judging from what I heard, you seem to be spoiling my daughter." He said, running his fingers through his beard as he spoke to him. It was as if he was thinking of something.

He wondered if he could stir some trouble in their relationship. He knew a few things about breaking up a marriage based on mistrust and misunderstandings.

"I will give her everything she wanted if I could." He admitted, but this time, he meant it.

However, he looked at his father suspiciously, thinking he might be up to something. He could only speculate that it might not be anything good.

"Well, it is just that you might be overdoing it. Next thing you know, Tyra might be abusing your generosity." He stated as if he was stating a fact.

Planting a seed could sometimes bear fruit, but it depends on the situation. Some ripened on age and became sweet and tasty, but some might also rot before reaching maturity.

He was hoping for the latter. He was hoping that Troy would divorce his daughter. Then, Tyra would be free to marry another. Someone more worthy to be with her. Someone he approved of.

"I don't mind if she does. But I don't think she is anything like that. She will never take advantage of me." He defended his wife, not liking the implication that this man was saying about his own flesh and blood.

In this arrangement, he was the one that would accept payment for his services at the end of this charade. But, he never actually cared about the money. He only wanted to help his wife with her situation.

"Anyway, if you don't mind, but I still have a few things to finish before I leave." Troy finally had enough of his visitor. "I will get back to you as soon as we finish reviewing your proposal."

He stood up from his chair and guided the man to the door. He was not giving him any more of his time because he did not deserve it.

He did not like the man who raised his wife. The old man did not even show his own daughter some respect. At this point, he was not just protecting his wife. He would also become a doting husband.

Chapter 566: Member of the working class

"Hey, my friend. I think you need to slow down." Jacky walked into her office, carrying several more files that she requested. "Maybe you should take a break."

It was her official day to be back to work, and she was playing catch up with all the cases that she left behind and missed. Several new clients also landed on her desk.

She was glad that most of her cases were already resolved and had a favorable outcome. But she wished to review those who were not so fortunate.

"I think I have rested more than enough." Dani quipped back at her friend, not even looking up from the files on her table.

She had been in her office for more than a few hours. It was hardly overworking on her opinion. Her friend was just overreacting to her condition.

She was perfectly ok. The doctors had already given her a clean bill of health, including her therapist. Therefore, she could not see a possible reason why she could not return to work at the same rate as before.

"Let me remind you just in case you are forgetting. It is just your first day back. David said to take your time." Jacky reiterated, worried that her friend might be overdoing it.

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Although her friend looked like she was doing great, Jacky still could not help but worry about her condition. She could never imagine what her friend had gone through during those times in captivity.

But she could assume that it was not full of unicorns and rainbows. If she had to guess, it might be a recipe for nightmares.

"You can tell David that I am back, and I will work hard just like before," Dani said with a smile on her face as she finally looked up to stare at her friend.

She could not blame her family and friends for worrying about her. But it was getting frustrating, trying to constantly assure everyone that she was back to her regular self.

She wanted to shout that she was ok and ready to go back to work. Instead, she gave her friend a reassuring smile with a sharp look, saying to back away.

She loved them and understood their concerns, but if they kept smothering her, she might finally explode. At least Alex thought it was time for both of them to resume their lives.

"Fine. I am now walking away." Jacky raised her hands, indicating that she had given up and received the message.

She quickly left the room since she had already placed the files on the top of her desk and had nothing else to do inside her office. Besides, she knew that look, and she did not like what was coming next if she kept on pestering her boss.

She was happy, even if a bit anxious, to see her friend back to her regular schedule. She had missed her, but now she could relax, knowing that she was safe, Alex, too.

"Jacky, thanks." She shouted before Jacky was out of her sight.

She knew her friend meant well, but if she wanted her life to return to normal, she had to start doing what she had always done before the incident had happened.

Alex had offered to take her on another honeymoon, but she declined. She just wanted some form of normalcy before going on a trip again.

Besides, she wanted to be on top of the case once the hearing started. She could not afford to let Nick get away just because the case lacked evidence for a conclusive conviction or due to some technicality.

"Excuse me, Dani." Jacky showed up at her door with an apologetic smile. "Do you mind if I take a short lunch break? Andy is just a few blocks from here and wants to see me."

It was a rare occasion that she had a chance to see his brother, and she did not want to miss it. It might be a while before she would have an opportunity to see him again.

Besides Dani, Andy was the only family she had. She did not grow up in a regular family, but she still felt blessed because of them. She would never dream of anyone else.

"Of course, you can take as long as you need," Dani said upon hearing that Andy was in town. "Please, tell Andy that I miss him. I will try to make up to him some other time."

She would have come along with Jacky, but she had things to finish before the day was over. She could not neglect her responsibility, especially when she had just gotten back.

"Are you sure you will be fine on your own?" Jacky asked with a slight reluctance to leave her alone.

She swore to Alex that she would never let her out of sight. She felt guilty that she planned to go out to see Andy. But it was probably just for an hour, and then she would be back at her station to check on her.

“Hey, I am not a child. I am perfectly capable of taking care of myself.” Dani responded with a raised brow.

She was uncertain if she should be happy or angry with her friend for worrying too much. However, her friend had nothing to fret about as far as she was concerned.

“Do you need anything else before I leave?” Jacky looked at her watch and estimated that she still had several minutes to spare before she had to leave. “What about I order you lunch or something?” She continued.

She remembered that it was almost lunchtime and her boss had not arranged anything to eat yet. Usually, she handled that, but she forgot about ordering food with the sudden change in her schedule.

“Jacky, do me a favor and leave before I change my mind,” Dani threatened her friend with a tone she commonly used on the opposing team.

She stopped what she was doing and got up from her seat. She quickly dragged her friend out of her office and pushed her out the door.

“Hey, no need to be harsh,” Jacky complained, but she was not hurt in any way. She was just being melodramatic.

She suddenly missed having her around the apartment. It had been quiet living alone without her friend, staying in the next room.

She had missed her early banging on her door before she went on her morning runs. She also reminisced the long conversations she had with her over a movie. Then, they would share popcorn or an ice cream while sitting on the couch.

“Go! I don’t want you to be late and make Andy wait.” Dani intentionally closed the door on her friend, implying that their discussion was over.

She could get her own food. She did not need an assistant that would wait on her every need. Although, more often than not, Jacky did handle the food during lunch or the other things she needed in the office.

But that was an assistant’s job, Dani defended herself. She could not be expected to do all the work in an office, but she assured herself that she still could manage to take care of herself.

Her title might say that she was a princess, but she was far from one. She would never allow power, money, or a title to dictate who she was. For her, she was just another member of the working class.

Chapter 567: A self-sufficient woman

A knock on the closed door after probably a quarter an hour that Jacky left alerted her of a visitor. But it could be just Jacky forgetting something.

But when she looked up, she was surprised to see not Jacky but a familiar face standing by her glass door. She quickly stood up and unlocked her door to welcome her visitor.

"Gerald, did you need something?" She quickly asked as soon as she opened the door.

She could not think of any case she reviewed today that might be under his office. Maybe it was still in the new files that Jacky had recently brought in, which she had not touched yet.

"Hey, I did not mean to disturb you, but I heard that you are back." Her guest said as she widened the door for him. "I also heard from my assistant that Jacky left a while ago." He continued.

He stopped when she suddenly frowned, suddenly aware of how creepy he sounded. It seemed like he was stalking her, which was not a good sign after what she just had gone through.

"In truth, I was in the elevator with the two of them and overheard their conversation. I heard that Jacky mentioned that you still have not eaten lunch." He immediately admitted and lifted his hand.

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He showed her a paper bag in one of his hands and two cups of soda on the other. He did not mean to eavesdrop, but he was standing right next to them. Therefore, he could not help but hear their conversation.

He was on his way to grab lunch outside and changed his mind instead. He decided to invite her to lunch to welcome her back to work. It was the least he could do for her.

"You did not have to do that." She suddenly felt embarrassed about his boss dropping by with food in his hands. "I already arranged for my lunch. It must be on its way now."

She hoped that would not offend her boss and send him away and back to his office. However, he remained in his position without any intention of leaving.

"Then, we can wait for it and share a nice lunch together. Unless my company is bothering you." He quickly added the last part of his sentence.

He did not want to pass up the chance to be close to her again. It was a rare opportunity, especially now that she was already married.

If all he could get was a few moments with her, then so be it. He would be content just to see her smile, maybe even laugh at his silly jokes.

"Honestly, I forgot to order lunch." She had to admit it to him since he would find out anyway. "But I am actually not hungry yet." However, as she said her last word, her stomach suddenly made a grumbling sound.

She could not hide the sound of an empty stomach from him. She thought of another way to get out of having lunch with him, but she did not want to offend him.

"Please, all I am offering is food. It is my way of thanking you for all the work you did for me." He said in a solemn look, pleading with her to accept his offer.

He could see that she was not forthcoming about the idea of eating with him. But he was not giving up that easily. He would show her that he was harmless and would really like to be her friend.

"Fine." She finally agreed. She believed that if she continued to refuse to have lunch with him, he might see it the wrong way.

He had always been a gentleman and friendly, so she did not see any harm with sharing a meal with him. Besides, it was not like they were going out on a date or having dinner.

"Thanks. But can I come in?" He asked since they were still standing by the door. One of his feet was still out the door.

"I am sorry. I totally forgot my manners. Please, come in." Dani automatically stepped aside to allow him entry to her office.

She moved her things on the side, putting the papers she had finished on the outbox tray and setting aside the files she still had to work on later.

Then, she created an empty space on the surface of her desk for the food that he brought with him. While he pulled a chair next to the table for him.

"I hope you like Mexican. This is one of my favorite dishes, but do not worry, if you do not like spicy food, I also ordered some salad." He came prepared, not knowing what she preferred.

If his memory served him right. During the times they had working lunches or dinners, back when they were still working on a case. He noticed that she did like chili dishes.

"I love to eat a variety of food. I do not mind some hot dishes as well." She confirmed to him as they both sat down and opened the containers on the table.

She could see some of her favorites, but come to think of it, she liked many kinds of food, so it was hard to pick any as her only favorite.

Maybe she preferred some from the others. But to her, food was food. She would eat anything available to her. She was not that picky at all.

"Then, bona petit." He gestured that she should dig in first. He had always been a gentleman.

His career had always been his priority before. But now that he was already almost at the pinnacle of his success, he thought maybe he should start looking for a partner.

Unfortunately, the woman that caught his attention was not available anymore. Well, at least, at the moment. He was too late.

"I think this is a new age. Men can also go first." She offered, motioning that he should choose the food that he liked.

She had been fighting in a world where men dominated her whole life. Based on experience, to be recognized in this field, she had to be just like most men. She had to be a self-sufficient woman.

Chapter 568: Love for keeps

Jacky went back to the office a bit later than she promised, but she did not mind. She actually would not be surprised if she did not come back at all.

She would have liked for her to spend more time with her brother. They might not have shared the same DNA, but the bond they had was strengthened not by blood relations but by love, just like what she and Jacky had.

“Hey, I heard that Gerald came over while I was out. What did he want?” Jacky asked as she brought in some papers and placed them on her desk.

She remembered seeing him earlier on the elevator when she was on her way out. She even greeted him. He did not mention that he needed anything from her boss. She wondered if she had forgotten something, but she could not think of one.

“He only offered to share his lunch with me. He accidentally heard from you that I have not eaten anything yet.” Dani looked at her friend accusingly.

She was not mad at her friend. But sometimes, her big mouth could also be her biggest flaw. Sometimes, she said too much for her own good.

“Oh!” Jacky suddenly realized her mistake. “I am sorry about that.” She quickly apologized, putting her hands together in a pleading gesture. “I really need to put a seal on my lips.” She bit her lower lip as if to make her point.

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She admitted that being talkative brought her into trouble more times than she could count. However, it was also one of her greatest assets.

“Do not worry about it. Anyway, do I still have any pending schedules later this afternoon?” She changed the topic of conversation, wanting to focus on all her obligations for the day.

She was almost finished reviewing the new cases on her desk. She selected a few clients that piqued her interest. While the rest were just ordinary cases that could be handled by a junior associate.

She did not see anything interesting about her lunch with Gerald. She was thankful for his gesture, and she appreciated his friendliness. She still looked forward to working with him, but that was it.

“I think you are all clear for the day. The last one on your appointment had rescheduled for tomorrow morning.” Jacky said as she recalled her calendar list.

David also instructed her not to put too much on her plate for the rest of the week. He wanted her to ease back to work and not overwhelm her with several cases and meetings all at once.

“Really?” She was slightly surprised since, on an ordinary day, she would have something else to do until the end of her work shift. “I guess I will be going home early today.”

However, she already guessed that her bosses and Jacky were manipulating her schedule. She disagreed with them, but she knew she could not do anything about it.

Anyway, that is fine since she wanted to check on Alex too. She believed that he might be overworking too while she was not around. Although he still had to work from their apartment.

The doctors advised him to give it another week before going to his office. Thankfully, they did not see anything that indicated any hindrance from his full recovery.

“Me, too!” Jacky excitedly spoke up as she thought of spending time with Marcus.

She did promise to cook for him for dinner tonight. She could not wait to drop by the grocery to get some of her recipe for her famous dish.

She did remember a saying that a way to a man’s heart was through his stomach. She hoped that was true because she would do anything to make this relationship work.

“Are you and Marcus really back together?” Dani finally asked her friend.

She had wanted to ask her about their status since she heard about them reuniting. But due to the recent events, she had forgotten.

She was glad that her friend was happily back with Marcus. She knew that Jacky deserved to be with a person who would love and protect her. She only hoped that Marcus had finally realized her worth.

She did not want her to experience getting hurt again just because Marcus was not ready for a commitment. However, she would support them as long as she believed Marcus deserved another chance.

“Honestly, I can’t believe it either.” Jacky finally sat on the vacant chair in front of her desk. “I never thought that I would be able to forgive Marcus.”

She also still could not believe that they were back together. It felt like it was a dream. That at any moment, she would wake up and realize that nothing about it was real.

“As long as you know how you feel about him, fight for it,” Dani imparted her thought about what she thought about her situation.

She could understand Jacky and her concern, but in life, nothing was absolute. Jacky had to take risks to find out if Marcus was the one for her. Just like the way she had taken a chance with Alex.

It was the only way, or she might end up alone or with the wrong guy. However, based on what she had seen with Marcus, he seemed to have changed because of her friend.

She had noticed it before, and she could clearly see it now. She just hoped that Jacky and Marcus found a way to get through all the struggles and obstacles that would come their way.

That was the only way they could make their relationship work, by working through their problems together, just like what she and Alex had been doing.

“I know you are right. I plan to do my best to win Marcus’s heart.” Jacky told her friend.

But before she could continue, the phone ringing on her table made her stop, making her realize that it was time to go back to work.

"Anyway, shall we continue this at another time? But I am glad that we finally have time to chat." Dani said, reminding herself that she still had a few more stuff to finish before going home.

She watched her friend rush out of her office, moving toward her desk. She smiled at her, seeing that she was genuinely happy about her relationship with Marcus.

This time, she could see that it was different, in comparison, to the first time they were together. She could see that glow in her eyes when she talked about Marcus.

She could feel her happiness whenever she spoke his name. It would seem that this time, it would be love for keeps.

Chapter 569: Fit for the Gods

"Hi, hon!" She quickly answered when her mobile phone suddenly rang after a few minutes of getting back to her papers.

She had seen the caller on the screen, and she could not help her lips from curving into a smile. She had tried not to think of him while working, but he still kept creeping in from time to time.

"Hi, why are you calling?" She asked, surprised to hear his voice.

She hugged her phone on her ears as she leaned down on her chair and turned around to face the windows. Her eyes might be looking at the view outside. Still, her mind was busy thinking about the man waiting for her at home.

"I missed you. What time are you coming home?" He demanded on the phone. "I am lonely without you." He continued to grumble.

He had been busy the whole day, but his mind kept thinking of his wife, who was away from his side. Now, he wondered what she was doing and when she would be back.

"Alex, I miss you, too." She said sweetly over the phone, suddenly wishing to be by his side. However, "Is everything ok?" she quickly became concerned that he might be having a problem.

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She could not help but worry about him, especially when he still might be hurting. Sometimes, she wondered if he was just saying that he was fine, but she still noticed that he still was slightly in pain.

She did catch him taking a pain medicine the other day. He quickly dismissed it, saying he just had some minor pains but nothing serious.

"I am fine. I just want you to come home early because I miss you." Alex repeated, assuring her that nothing was wrong with him.

He just did not feel at ease when he did not see her around. His therapist told him that it was perfectly normal after what happened. But eventually, it would go away.

He did double the security, guarding her everywhere she went. He was not taking any chances that Nick might still have a few tricks up in his sleeve.

“Fortunately, I would probably finish early today. But if I have to guess, you might have something to do with that.” She could not disclude her husband from her suspicion.

She assumed he might have called David, her boss, for a favor. Maybe asking him to lighten her load for her first day back on the job.

She could not ask for a better husband who would do anything to take care of her. She had finally realized that to be an independent and self-sufficient woman did not mean that she had to survive on her own.

It was not all about taking care of oneself, but it also meant being equal with her partner. It meant that she could also rely on her husband and the other way around.

“It was David’s idea that you should take it easy, not mine. But I did agree with him.” He admitted, not planning to lie to her.

When he called him earlier about a contract, her name did come up in the conversation. David suggested giving her time to adjust, at least for the day. After all, David understood what they had gone through.

“I do not mind. I also want to go home early, anyway.” She said to him as she turned around again and faced her desk, ready to get back to her work. “Can you wait for me in a couple more hours?” She asked.

She just needed to review a few more clients. Then she would be done for the day. Just like her husband, she could not wait to see him and spend the rest of the day and night with him.

After saying their goodbyes, she immediately returned to the files and quickly worked on it. She wished to finish before the hour was through and finalized her recommendations for each case.

Then, she would be running back home to be with her waiting husband. She suddenly felt a different kind of excitement to think that she would be coming home to a house full of love.

Finally, she had her first home away from home.

“Jacky, I am finished here.” She finally declared after signing on the last dotted line. Then, she closed the file folder.

She dropped the file on top of the pile of folders sitting on her desk. It was the last case she had to review for the day. Now, all she needed to do was send them to the different partners who had asked her to review them.

The rest, she would be taking on herself. She had already set aside a few folders on another pile that interested her. It was nothing extraordinary, but the clients seemed to be in dire need of help.

“Are you already going home?” Jacky asked, seeing that she was starting to pack up her things.

It was rare that she was the first to leave the office unless she had other prior engagements. But she was glad that her friend was taking it easy this time.

"Yeah, Alex is waiting for me at home." She said excitedly, picking up her bag and pointing to Jacky what needed to be done with the files. "Why don't you go home too after sending this out? I know you are dying to see Marcus." She teased her friend.

She could only guess that her friend had been more excited about tonight than she was. She would support her as long as it made her happy.

But judging from the radiance on Jacky's face, she could not keep the smile anymore from showing on her face. She was sure that what she felt was also reflected in her eyes at the moment.

She also felt the same way as her friend as they looked forward to seeing the man that had caught their hearts.

"I am," Jacky admitted, grabbing the files on her table. "I will make sure to give him the best night of his life. I will be filling his belly with food fit for the Gods."

Chapter 570: Blessing in disguise

"Samson, you have a visitor." A guard banged on the door of his room while he was taking a shower.

He turned the shower off to check if he heard him right. He was not expecting any visitors tonight. Usually, if someone came to meet with him, he received a call or a message from his lawyer or the officer in charge of his case.

If he remembered correctly, nobody notified him about a visitor. Maybe it was something urgent, and they had forgotten to inform him beforehand.

"I will be right out in a few minutes," Samson shouted back, thinking that the guard might still be waiting outside his door.

Instead of ending up in jail, he was now staying in a safe house provided by the authorities for him. He could not complain since he might seem like a prisoner inside this house, unable to go out.

Still, he believed it was better than a two-by-three cell. In here, he had a room with a bathroom, a comfortable bed, and a steady supply of edible food.

"Hurry up!" The man behind the door shouted back.

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He had planned to take his time in the shower, but it had to wait for later. He quickly rinsed the suds off his body and wrapped himself in a towel.

After a few minutes, he was dressed and ready to meet his unknown visitor. He opened his door and found the hallway empty.

He assumed that the guard must have returned to his post. He moved towards the stairs and down to the first floor, where most guests were received at the living room.

"Good evening. I hope I did not catch you on a bad time." The man who sat on the couch immediately stood up when he saw him. "I am Mike Carter." He extended his hand to him when Samson stood just a few feet away from him.

He was told that Samson was a big man. But he did not expect his height and the bulk of his body. He could easily have been a football player, playing the field defender.

He still had to tilt his head up to come face to face with him, and he was not a small man. He could see the appeal of having him in the team.

“And who are you?” Samson asked, ignoring his offered hand.

It was the first time he saw this man, and he immediately did not trust him. There was something about him that did not sit right with him. He was just not sure what yet.

Dani had helped him make a plea bargain with the District Attorney. In exchange for a lower sentence or maybe just a slap on the wrist, he had to testify against Nick.

He had no problem attesting to everything he knew about Nick and his operations. In fact, he already had made an initial statement to the investigators, who handled the case.

“We have not met yet, but we have a common denominator. We have the same boss, although we work in a different section within the organization.” The man who introduced himself as Mike told him with a confident smile.

He pulled his hand away, realizing that the big man would not cooperate with him easily. He sat back down on the couch, crossing his legs and spreading his arms on the backrest, feeling comfortable with his situation.

He was here for a reason, and he was not going away without accomplishing what he had set out to do. That was not an option for him when this task was specially assigned to him.

“What are you doing here? How did you get through the guards?” Samson fired a couple of questions and was immediately on high alert.

“What do you want?” He continued when the man did not answer him but continued to lounge as if taking his time.

He realized that this man was not part of the people protecting him. He wondered how he was able to pass through the high-security protocol. Then again, he was not surprised anymore, knowing who had sent him.

The big boss had many connections. He had many people working under him, whether in the criminal underworld, the business sector, or the government.

He had not met the boss personally, but he had talked to him on the phone on some occasions. He knew that the boss was not a man he could mess with.

“You know what I want,” Mike said in his no-nonsense voice, but when the big man frowned at him, he sighed. “I am here for information.” The man had made it clear for him.

He was tasked to question the big man about what information he had already shared with the authorities. His boss was alarmed when he learned that Samson had agreed to be a state witness against Nick.

He had to know if Samson mentioned anything about the organization and the boss in his statements. If the organization was incriminated with the present criminal charges against Nick, it would create a big problem for their boss.

"If you are here to ask me about the big boss, I never once mentioned his name or the organization with the authorities," Samson informed the emissary of their supreme leader.

Although he had accidentally told Dani about the big boss, he had already arranged with her not to tell anyone else about it. She promised not to mention the big boss yet, not until they had discovered who he was.

Even Alex had agreed to keep his silence about the head of the underground. He could easily claim that he was unaware of his existence since he was drugged most of the time.

"Good." His guest nodded in approval. "Let us keep it that way." He continued as he changed his position on the couch. "Now, what about the couple? What do they know?"

He knew the story about this big fellow, helping the captives escape. The boss was pissed about it at first. He considered the big man a traitor and wanted his head in a silver platter.

But the boss quickly realized that they could use this situation to their advantage. He found the outcome of the recent incident as a blessing in disguise.