

Royal Contract 571

Chapter 571: The higher chain of command

"If you are asking if I told them anything, I did not. I can guarantee you that. If the two knew something, it did not come from me." He denied saying anything to the two, ensuring that his face did not reveal anything that would make him suspect anything.

Lying about that was easy for him. In this line of work, he had to be good at everything to save his skin. That included making excuses and lying to his teeth to get away with something.

"Then, can we count on you to check what they know and report back to us?" Mike questioned him as if he was giving him a choice.

However, he could tell that he had only one option. To do what they were asking him to do. He knew better than to cross them. Not until he guaranteed that he and his family would be safe.

"Of course, you can count on me to determine what they could possibly know. Dani believes that I am a friend." Samson tried to convince the man that his loyalty still lied to the organization and their boss.

At this time, there was no assurance that he was safe nor his family, despite the promise given to him by Dani. Based on the range of the influence that the underground organization had.

He had no way of knowing who else he could trust. Just now, this man managed to come and visit him, probably without the knowledge of the district attorney.

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He was even unsure if the man guarding him was here to protect him or kill him if he managed to piss off the boss. All he knew now was he was not safe, not yet. His family was still in danger if he did not do what they asked him to do.

"Well, I am not sure if you have gained her trust or she was the one manipulating you," Mike said as he stood from the couch and assessed him from head to toe. "Anyway, we will know at the result of this case."

The man fixed his coat, tapping his palm to straighten the crease formed when he sat down on the couch, then buttoned up the rest of the buttons.

"By the way, if anyone should take the fall in this case, it should be Nick. After all, this was entirely his idea." Mike reminded him. He did not need to spell out what he meant by that.

"I am sure that you will want to wrap this case immediately. Your mother and sisters will probably miss your company if this drags on." He quickly added.

There was no threat in his voice. It actually sounded like a genuine concern for his well-being and family. However, he could not be fooled by the subtle implications in his word.

"As you said, my family will surely miss me. Therefore, I will wrap this up as soon as possible. Nick will definitely rot in jail." He had to say what this man wanted to hear.

The man stared at him as if he was reading his facial expression. Then, he again extended his hand. This time, he grabbed it and shook it firmly, making sure to seal the deal.

"Thank you for seeing me. I hope that you get the justice that you deserve." The man spoke, moving away from him, walking towards the hallway that would lead to the exit of the house.

On the other hand, he decided to make dinner. He was hungry and had nothing else to do at the moment. He would have to think of his next moves while eating.

Shortly after, the guard who came to his room showed up and walked towards him. The guard only stopped when he was already close to him.

"Who was that? He seems to be new." He asked the guard, who started picking on his food.

He did not mind sharing what he had prepared with them. There was always more than enough supplies to last them a month, and they continued to replenish it every week.

It was also a perfect opportunity to bond with them and win their trust. He needed to know whose hands he put his life with. At the moment, he needed to investigate more on their backgrounds.

"Did he not introduce himself to you?" The man looked at him funnily as if that was a dumb question to ask.

He continued to eat his share of the food, taking a break from his assignment, knowing that his partner was on the job. They usually took a turn in taking a break.

"Well, he did say his name, but I want to know more about him." He did not want to seem suspicious of the man, just curious.

He thought that this man might know something more than he did. After all, he did pass their very stringent scrutiny. He must have shown them his credentials.

That was if this man in front of him had no clue of his visitor's involvement in the underground group. It would tell him if he could trust this man, in a way.

"According to the papers that passed through the system, he is a new member of the district attorney who would be handling your case." The guard said with a shrug of his shoulder as he continued to eat his dinner.

"That is all I know." He continued after swallowing the food in his mouth.

"Well, I know that part, but I wish I have more information about him." He lied to the man, even though his visitor never supplied that fact to him, but what he just learned was gold.

He just confirmed that the man was planted in the DA's office to spy on him and the prosecution team. He was placed there to secure the conviction of Nick.

At the same time, to guarantee the safety of the organization and their boss from prosecution.

It was clear that whoever Mike was, he was not any ordinary member of the underground organization. He must be someone in the higher chain of command.

Chapter 572: Beautiful romantic affair

"Where are you?" Alex asked on the phone, a bit worried that she was running late.

She had left the office almost an hour ago. She was bound to be home at this time. Yet, he had continually checked his watch, and she was already late by more than a quarter of an hour.

He was about to call his bodyguards, but luckily she answered on the second ring. He was not anxious because he feared that something might have happened to her. He had a different reason.

"I am just a block away. There was a traffic build-up not far from here because of a car accident." Dani answered him, explaining why she was still on the road, staring at the street outside the window of the backseat.

She knew she was capable of driving herself to work from home to her office. But Alex insisted that one of her bodyguards chauffeured her around.

Although, she would admit that she was a little shaken by the scene on the street, seeing the mangled bodies on the metals of the car wreck.

Under normal circumstances, it should not affect her since it was a usual sight in the street of New York. But after all that happened to her, the car accident, then the abduction, she could somehow picture herself in that situation.

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"I am just wondering what was taking you so long," Alex replied as he breathed deeply, slightly relieved that she was ok.

He finally admitted that he was still affected by their experience, just like her. He still worried when she left his side and was on her own.

Although he believed that she was more than able to defend herself, as proven by what she did on the island. Still, he could not help but think of her safety.

He had doubled her security, especially when Tim and Ben were still on leave, recovering from their injuries. He could not take any chances when two of his best man was not around.

"We are just entering the building. I will see you in a bit." Dani informed him, not wanting him to worry about her.

She could sense, just like her, he was still thinking of the incident. The therapist who was working with them informed that it would take time before they could fully recover from the trauma of the entire experience.

However, they should not worry. Every day it would get better as long as they worked together. Having a support system helped speed up the healing process.

"I love you, Alex." She quickly added in a whisper, suddenly recalling that she had almost lost him.

It still made her shiver recalling her horrible experiences. But she had to push through the pain and the horrific images that popped up in her mind.

At least she had something to be thankful for. She did not witness the shoot-out on the camp where they were taken. She heard that the aftermath was horrendous.

“Ok. I will see you soon. I love you.” Alex said, hanging up the phone.

He immediately dropped the phone on the kitchen counter and busied himself. It was the only thing that would occupy his mind until his wife walked through the door.

Since he took over the operation of the business of his father-in-law. He rarely stayed at his apartment anymore, doing what he loved to do in his spare time.

He had been busy juggling the business and spending time with Dani. His apartment had been a refuge for taking a bath and sleeping for the time being.

A few minutes later, he could hear the door open then close gently. He already knew it was Dani, hearing the steady tap of her heels on the marbled floors.

“Hey, are you in the kitchen?” She asked, seeing that the living room was empty. But she heard something moving in the other room.

Besides, her nose had already picked up the delicious scent of food cooking. It had been a while since her stomach had growled in excitement.

Her body was already looking forward to dinner just by the aroma enveloping the entire room from whatever he was cooking. She sometimes prepared dinner for them, but she just was not as good as him.

“Close your eyes. I don’t want you to see my surprise.” He quickly showed up before her, stopping her from proceeding to the kitchen.

He held her by the shoulder, turning her around to avoid her from peeking inside the kitchen. He did not want to ruin the surprise.

He had already set up the table for his prepared dinner for her. All he had to do was heat up the food and put the final touches. But dinner was just half of his surprise for the night.

“Wow, this sounds exciting.” She said, giggling like she was about to receive a Christmas present. “I can already smell the delicious smell.” She sniffed through the air, trying to get more whiff of the delicious aroma.

When it came to surprises, she could count on Alex to create something extraordinary. As much as she wanted to best him, she always came short.

She did smell something she liked. It reminded her of something, but she was not too sure. But it did seem to be her favorite. She wondered if Alex cooked it or just ordered it from her favorite restaurant.

“You have to close your eyes first before I show you my surprise.” He ordered, not allowing her to move from her place until she complied with his request.

He would have loved to bring her somewhere very special, but their current situation still limited his options. For now, he was happy to serve her with whatever he believed would make her happy.

Fortunately, it did not take much to make Dani happy. Doing simple things for her was more than enough to make her smile. She did not ask much from him. His love had been all she ever wanted.

"Fine, but promise me that I will have the first bite." She demanded, having some difficulty controlling her hunger.

She suddenly remembered the lunch she had with Gerald. She admitted that his boss brought some delicious food, but it had nothing compared to this one.

She had declared even without seeing or tasting that whatever was served on their table would be the best meal she ever ate in her entire life.

"Of course, I made it just for you." He encouraged her to close her eyes so they could proceed with his plans.

He waited until she had closed her eyelids shut. He waved his hand in front of her face to assure himself that she was not cheating. Not that she would intentionally do that.

"Let's go. I am already starving." She complained when he kept stalling her.

The delicious food was calling to her as if they were begging her to eat them. She could feel her stomach protesting from the delay.

"Come on." He guided her towards the table and helped her on the chair. When she was comfortable on her chair, he finally served the plate of food in front of her. "Bon a petit."

It was the signal that it was time to open her eyes. As soon as she did, her eyes lit up, and her nose pointedly sniffed the scent coming from the plate before her.

He opted to cook her favorite instead. He just chose something that would remind them of their first meal. They were not even a couple then. Actually, they were not even friends.

They were two people thrown into a situation where they needed each other. Fortunately, that was the start of their beautiful romantic affair.

Chapter 573: Decipher the surprise

"Hey, I am happy that Marcus and Jacky are back together. Jacky believes this time it will be different." She stated, in between chewing on the succulent lamb and savoring its juicy tenderness.

She wished, this time, it would finally work out for their two friends. Both of them deserved to be happy because they were good people who were just confused about their feelings and situations.

She and Alex also took time before they could admit their feelings for each other. It was not easy for them to give their trust after what they had experienced in the past.

"I hope they will find a way to work out their relationship. I think they will be good for each other." She concluded based on her observation from their two friends.

She could remember the first time she met Alex. She still could not believe that she had made the first move and seduced him. She might be intoxicated, but she was well aware of what was happening.

She could never blame the alcohol on her system. All it did was pushed her to do what she wanted. She admitted she was very attracted to this man that sat beside her even during that time.

"I think Marcus is serious this time around. He was different since they started dating again." Alex confirmed her assumption. "In a good way."

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He had noticed that his friend had changed from his previous womanizing ways since he realized his mistake with Jacky. He believed, this time, Marcus would be more thoughtful and careful not to hurt Jacky again.

"Anyway, what do you think of my cooking?" He asked since it had been a while since he had made this dish.

He only served the main course for now. He still had one more prepared, chilling inside the fridge, just waiting for the dessert portion of the meal. It included the rest of his surprise.

"I think you never lost your touch. This is still my favorite." She placed the fork on the plate after putting the last portion of the meat in her mouth.

She raised her thumbs up to show him how much she enjoyed the meal while chewing on the remaining food inside her mouth. She used her thumb to clean up the oily juice that touched the side of her lips.

"Well, do you still have room for one more surprise?" He asked, smiling at her expression as she placed her thumb on her lips.

He always found her adorable when she ate without a care in the world when they were alone together. She truly savored the flavors of the food she ate.

"There is more?" She looked surprised, but at the same time, excited about the next course.

She grabbed the napkin off her lap, wiping the rest of the juices off her lips. She had enjoyed the first course of the meal. She could not wait for the next one.

For her, it was always a treat when Alex cooked for her. She felt pampered and loved whenever he went out of his way to do extraordinary things for her.

She appreciated that he never tried to buy her expensive stuff, like jewelry, clothes, or material things. He knew her well enough to be aware that those were not what she wanted and needed.

"If you are up for more, maybe I still have one more I like to give you." He did not want her to guess what he had been planning. He tried to be vague about it.

He always loved to see the amazement in her eyes whenever he revealed what he had prepared for her. He was fortunate he never had to go to the ends of the earth to give her the world.

She appreciated every simple thing that life had to offer. That included everything that he did for her. He was already looking forward to revealing to her the next surprise.

"What are you waiting for?" She asked, putting aside the empty plate before her.

She could already picture the different desserts he had prepared for her in the past. All of them were to die for. She just absolutely loved them. They were divine.

She watched him stand up, leave her side, and strode towards the fridge. He opened the door and rummaged inside it, taking something out of the lower portion of the cold box.

“Remember this?” He said as he walked towards her, carrying a plate with the delicious treat.

He placed the plate in vacant space before her and allowed her to feast her eyes in its enticing colors. He knew that it was one of her favorites.

He did remember how much she had loved it the first time he made it for her. He did not know, at the time, that strawberry was her favorite, but it was fortunate that he also loved the red berries.

“Wow! You are truly amazing.” She happily expressed her appreciation for his effort.

She could already feel her appetite working overtime just by looking at the creamy and pinkish treat. She could not wait to dig in and take her first bite.

She took her fork and was about to take a piece of it when he stopped her. He held her hand from taking her first scoop of the strawberry trifle he made for her.

“Wait, before you destroy my masterpiece, I have to warn you to proceed with caution. I don’t want you to choke on a piece.” He told her, giving her a fair warning on what to expect of his dish.

He could see the curiosity in her eyes from what he had said. The hesitation to touch the dessert because she was assessing his words.

“What are you up to now?” She asked, narrowing his eyes on him, looking at him suspiciously. She could sense that he was hiding something. That this was not the last of his surprise.

She thought of finding a ring inside the sweet, creamy dessert, but then again, he just gave her a new wedding band. That could not be it.

It could not be a piece of jewelry since she already had many of those that she rarely used at all. Then, she realized that it might be something else.

But what could it be? So far, she had no idea at all. Just like before, she was left guessing. Using her detective skills, she tried to decipher the surprise.

Chapter 574: Just around the corner

But no matter what she thought of, she knew she was nowhere near solving the mystery. Her husband was just too good at making her guess.

“Just take a taste and tell me what you think of it.” He encouraged her, releasing her hand.

He could not help the smile that showed on his lips, seeing the confusion on her face. He believed that she was trying to solve the mystery behind his surprise. But he was not giving up his secret, not yet.

“Fine. If I choke, then it is your fault.” She flippantly threatened him with a raised brow as a show of protest.

But when she took the first bite, memories of their first date came to mind. She quickly forgot about what she was protesting about. She could only concentrate on the explosion in her mouth.

If earning a man's heart was through his stomach, she believed he caught her heart through his dessert. She fell in love with him all over again.

"Do you like it?" He asked after watching her take her first taste.

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He could see the delight in her eyes after letting the sweetness touch her tongue. She even closed them as she savored the different flavors in that one bite.

"Well, I will end up with a big belly and chubby cheeks if you keep feeding me like this." She cautioned him as she took another piece into her mouth. "I wonder if you will still love me then." She jokingly responded.

She took another bite, unable to resist the delicious taste that kept her wanting more. Eventually, her mind reverted back to the same question.

"Is this the surprise?" She continued to wonder out loud. She did not mind if it was. It was a wonderful treat that she would cherish for the rest of her life.

"Finish it, and I will tell you my last surprise." He told her, placing his elbows on the table as he continued to watch her eat her dessert with gusto.

He also could not wait for her to finish the dessert so he could finally tell her what he had in mind. It was a surprise that he had been working on, even before he married her.

He was supposed to reveal it to her after the honeymoon. As soon as they got back. But the unfortunate incident happened, and all his plans had to take a back seat.

"Why don't you help me? I think you also need a little flab on that perfect body." She teased him as she fed him with one bite of the dessert.

As she scraped the plate for the last bite. She realized that something was stuck at the bottom of the layer. She moved the fork around it, and finally, a metallic object revealed itself.

It was too flat to be a ring, so she could already rule that out. She could see a familiar shape from her view, but she needed confirmation.

She picked it up with her finger and wiped the extra cream covering the shiny silver object. She now had a better view of what the item was.

But it only made her more confused than before, having no idea what it meant. She dangled the object in front of her, showing it to the man who obviously put it there.

"A key?" She finally voiced out her curiosity.

The first thing that came to her mind was a car, but then again, why would he give her a car. That just did not make sense to her. She also already had a key to their apartment. Not necessarily a key but access to this place.

Then, an idea went through her mind. Another apartment?

That was just insane since they already had a perfect apartment that suited their needs. They had no use for another one. A bank key for a safety deposit box? Still, she doubted that.

“Yes, a key.” He finally answered her, showing off his perfect teeth as he smiled at her reaction. “The key to our future.”

He could see that she had some sort of mixed emotions. He could see some form of excitement in her eyes, but still the curiosity about what he was talking about.

He still had not revealed the purpose of the key. However, it was more or less a symbol nowadays since many things did not use keys anymore.

High-tech cars could be started using electronic devices or even fingerprints. Even doors or locks did not use keys anymore. Many used cards, passwords, voice recognition devices, or other modern security means.

“What for? Who uses keys in this day and age?” She asked since the only key she had in her possession was a key used to open an old vintage chest. A box she inherited from her ancestors.

Other than that, everything was replaced with modern technology. Maybe other people still used it, but she doubted that his gift was something that came from the past.

“You will see.” He stood up from his chair and held his arm to her. “Will you join me on a trip?” He asked her as he waited for her to take his arm.

He could see that her confusion was growing. But he was not about to spoil his surprise by revealing it before its ready. She just had to wait.

“Where are we going?” She questioned him as she hooked her arm on his and allowed him to lead the way.

She thought they were going to the bedroom where he had kept his gift, but she looked at him with utter shock when he walked in the opposite direction and headed to the exit.

“You will see.” He answered her but did not supply more information. “I hope you will like this one.” He whispered in her ears before they exited the door.

If she was excited and anxious about this, he was too. He had planned all of this for her. But at the end of the day, it was her who would decide if she liked his surprise or not, not him.

He could keep creating a beautiful world for the two of them, but it would be useless if she was not a part of the building process. It had to be a shared effort to form a solid foundation.

He was not disregarding that she might react negatively about his plans. But he just wanted to be prepared for their future since he believed it was just around the corner.

Chapter 575: The key symbolized the future

She could only assume that their destination had something to do with the key. Her eyes wandered on the lighted street, checking if she could guess the direction they were taking.

It was not yet that late. The pedestrian was still packed with people walking in different paths. Probably some were on their way home, while the others might still have personal business to attend to.

"When will you ever stop surprising me?" Dani asked the man beside him, still feeling so lucky to have a husband as great as him.

She might not be looking at him as her eyes continued to scan the street outside. But she could feel his eyes boring into her. She could feel his soft breath on the top of her head.

Her heart steadily beat together with his as she leaned closer to his body. She never felt calmer than when she was with him. She never felt more at peace, knowing that they were now one.

"Never," Alex whispered as if his words were solely for her ears to hear. It was a secret that only the two of them would share.

He would never stop putting a smile on her face. He knew that simply buying things would not cut it. He had to be more creative if he would ever see her face in awe.

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It was a challenge that he would never get tired of accepting as long as he lived. Keeping his wife happy was a promise that he would uphold forever.

"Are you sure you will never get tired?" She smiled at him, turning her head to face him. "You will never stop loving me."

She had never doubted him before, and she had no plan of doing it now. But she would still like to hear him say it. She stared into his eyes as she waited for him to answer her.

"That is the only thing in this world that I am sure of." He picked up her hand resting on her lap and placed it on his lips. With a tender kiss, he swore. "I will never get tired of loving you."

He looked into her eyes, oblivious of the two men sitting on the front seat, listening to their conversation. For him, it was just him and her in their little bubble.

While the two men could only look at each other and wink. Imagine two bulky men silently giggling in excitement. They could not help if they could hear their conversation inside the car.

They had witnessed the failed relationship of their boss to the supermodel. They were happy that their boss was finally happily married to the woman he loved. They knew he deserved it.

"Me, too." She gave him a quick kiss on the lips before returning to her previous position, settling her back on his chest. "I love you so much."

She allowed his warmth to envelop her body as their car cruised and maneuvered on the slightly busy street of the city. She could not wait till they arrived at their destination.

This time, she stopped trying to guess what he was planning and just allowed the experience to take over. She would let her adrenaline shoot up in excitement once he revealed to her what he had worked hard to show her.

"I love you more." He answered, not letting her beat him. But it was not a competition for them. It was just giving as much as they could for the other.

They finally settled in comfortable silence, giving their hearts and body the chance to communicate in the meantime. Their eyes wandered outside, but their minds only had thoughts of their future.

"Sir, we are near. Shall we proceed inside?" The one driving the car spoke up as he looked in the rearview mirror toward his passenger.

"Yes," Alex answered, suddenly aware that they had arrived.

He had been lost in his thoughts that he barely realized his surroundings. It was a slightly longer drive, but fortunately, the traffic was moderate, so it did not take that long to reach their destination.

"Oh, we are here." Dani was also alert in an instant about the situation.

She had been watching the beautiful houses they had passed, wondering what they were doing in this part of the city. But she kept her thoughts to herself.

She would not ruin the surprise by coming up with her conclusion. But learning that they were here, wherever that was. She could feel her excitement coming back.

"If you will indulge me once again by closing your eyes." He instructed as the car started moving again along the large gates and into the long driveway.

He would have looked for something near where they currently lived, but he wanted something different for them this time. He needed more space to move and start a family.

"I think I know the drill by now." She winked at him before closing her eyes, making sure not to peek.

She had no plan of making it harder for him. She was sure that he had put a lot of effort into making this surprise worth their while. She could hardly wait to see it.

Although her mind already conjured some thoughts about what he was up to, still, she planned not to make any conclusion. Not until he revealed it to her.

"No peeking." He warned her as the car continued on its way until it finally stopped.

When the engine died, he opened the door and went out first. Then, he guided Dani out and asked her to make a few steps away from the car.

"Can I open them now?" She asked when she heard the car door close behind her.

She had already concluded that they must be standing in front of a big house, judging from the gate she saw outside. She wondered who she was meeting tonight in this place.

Who could the house belong to, and why was he so mysterious about it? Her mind started asking herself silently as she waited for him to give the go signal.

It was barely a minute, but she felt like it had taken forever before he finally said, opened them now. When she finally did, she found a barely finished house.

There were no walls, no roofs, just posts in the different portions of what seemed to be an unfinished house. She could already picture a big mansion would be erected in this lot.

“What is this?” She finally found her voice to ask. She was definitely surprised to see his surprise, but she was still confused. This was not what she was expecting to see when she opened her eyes.

“My surprise. It is my wedding gift to you.” He waved his hands in the air to show her his big surprise. “I want us to build our home in this land.”

He turned her to face him, wanting to see her reaction. But her face remained blank as if she was still thinking about it. He wondered if she liked the house.

“Don’t you like it?” He finally asked. Then, he began to doubt if he made the right decision to plan this without her.

He was absolutely sure that she would love the idea of building a home with him, so he could not understand why she did not seem to agree with this one.

It took her a while to register what he was saying. She realized that they never actually talked about finding a home other than where they were currently staying.

So, this was a real shocker, not just a surprise. She was once again overwhelmed by his actions. She was turned speechless as she stared at the skeleton of their future home.

She pulled the metallic object in her pocket and held it in her hand, staring at it as she said. “I love it.”

The key symbolized the future that she had always dreamt of with him.

Chapter 576: Not just anybody

He just came out from a meeting regarding a business crisis that had consumed most of his day. He was tired. It was late, but he still had to finalize his report.

“I will see you tomorrow.” He talked to his lawyer, who had a full plate to accomplish. “Make sure that the contracts are all prepared so that we can present them to the board without any problems.”

He waved his hand to his companion as they went in their separate ways. He continued on his path towards the lobby and out the main door.

He was not expecting to see a familiar female face waiting for him at the doorsteps. It was a face that he found adorable at their first meeting. But lately, he was finding the intrusion in his privacy annoying.

“Hey, Mr. Wellington, you have been ignoring my calls.” It was more an accusation than anything else.

She had been waiting for him to come out of the building almost half of the day. Because he would not give her the time of day to even answer her calls.

She had tried to make an appointment with his secretary, but she kept telling her that he was fully booked for the month. She did not believe it one bit. It was just a ploy to get rid of her.

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"I am not. I am just busy." Lance finally answered her as he rushed outside the building towards his waiting car, parked out front.

But in reality, he was actually avoiding her. He had no time to deal with nosy reporters. He already gave her the official statement of the palace. He had no intention to add more.

Besides, he was not the one in charge of the public relations of the kingdom, his cousin, or his wife. That was not his obligation and definitely not his problem. He had better things to do than to answer her questions.

"No. You are not." Eida spoke up in a higher tone, matching his stride step by step. Although she was almost running and leaping just to catch up with him.

But she was not letting him get away with disregarding her right for the full story, just like they promised her when she helped them with the abduction case.

She believed that what was released to her and the press was not the entire story but a limited version. She wanted the exclusive due to her and not the generic version.

"How would you know? Have you seen my schedule?" He challenged her, unlocking the doors of his car with one-clicked of his key.

As he entered his car through the driver's side, the passenger side door suddenly opened. His unwanted company joined him, sitting by his side without his permission.

"Yes, I have. Well, a friend of mine asked your secretary." She quickly corrected her statement. "But that is not the point." But before she could continue.

"What are you doing, Ms. Harlowe? Get out of my car." He asked calmly, not wanting to shout at a media personality.

He had no idea if he wanted to be amused with this woman or irritated by her persistence. However, he was starting to believe that getting rid of her would not be that easy.

He had to think fast because he still had things to do, and she was a distraction he did not need at the moment. He just did not get why she was targetting him when she could stalk someone else about the story.

"Not until you give me an appointment and a time to talk about my situation. I clearly remembered that we signed a deal." She wanted to deal with him since he was the one who convinced her to sign that damn Non-disclosure agreement.

Although her agreement about getting the exclusive story was just a verbal understanding, she was not letting him back down from his word.

"Fine." He finally answered her, knowing that she was not going anywhere. "Let us make an appointment for next week. I will ask my secretary..."

"Definitely not next week." She started to buckle up the seatbelt around her body, not planning to leave his car until she got a better offer. "What about now?"

She demanded since she was done chasing after him. It was a better idea if she could start getting information from him at the moment when he had no more choice.

"I can't now." He said, looking at his watch, ticking every second he argued with her. "I still have a meeting." He said, lying through his teeth. "And I am already running late."

He just could not deal with her at the moment. Besides, he had to evaluate first if he should share any information with her. He could not just tell her everything.

"Fine." She would at least bargain for something closer. "What about tomorrow? It is a weekend." She added the last part, emphasizing that he was working, giving him no excuse to refuse.

She believed that her interview did not need to be official yet. They could just have a casual question-and-answer portion, so she could build a better story for her piece.

He looked at her, thinking of her suggestion. He was not working, but he already had a prior engagement. Suddenly, something clicked in his mind.

"I guess you have a date for tomorrow." He said casually, smiling at her, giving her that boyish grin he was famous for.

He could squeeze her into his busy schedule the next day. He already had a plan in mind for their interview. That was if she would agree to what he would propose.

"Sure, I am in." She agreed, extending her hand to him to seal their deal. "So, where are we going to do the interview?"

She felt excited, knowing that she had finally made him agree with her interview. She could finally get the facts she needed for her new story.

Lance grabbed her bag sitting on her lap and took out her phone. She tried to protest, but he shoved the phone toward her. "Unlock it, please."

She had no idea what he was planning, but she did what she was told. She pressed her index finger on the recognition button, and the phone opened. "What are you doing?" Eida asked, but he ignored her question.

He started pressing some numbers, and a phone suddenly rang. He pulled out his phone and unlocked it. Then, he started typing on it.

"Wait for my call." He told her, returning the phone to her bag and handing it back to her. "Now, can you go home?" He asked her. "Or, do you need a ride?"

He noticed that it was dark and getting late, and he could not leave her in a place with barely any people around. He might as well give her a lift.

"No, that is ok. My car is just over there." She pointed at the sleek sports car parked a few meters away from him. "But thanks for offering. Then, I will wait for your call."

She unbuckled her seatbelt and quickly unlocked the door, moving out of his car. She waved him goodbye before moving away from him without waiting for his reply.

He watched her stride towards her car, shaking his head from left to right. He just realized that he was wrong about reporters or specifically her. She was not just anybody he could get rid of.

Chapter 577: In the dark pit

Something was definitely moving behind her. She could feel the cushion of the bed shifting under her. Then, a light touch on her shoulders, followed by mild massaged on her tightened muscle, made her moan in satisfaction.

“That feels so good.” She finally spoke, loving his caress on her body. She could see herself floating among the clouds, enjoying the moment.

She felt his hands swipe her hair to the side, exposing her neck to his view. While she continued to close her eyes, reveling in the sensation his fingers created on her skin as it pressed on her flesh, untangling the tension on her nerves.

He continued to let his hands roam her back, letting his fingers do their magic. However, she felt that there was something off about him. She suddenly became alarmed.

His hands were different. It was softer. It was as if it had not done anything laborious in his life. It did not resemble her husband’s hand, who was slightly rough.

She reminded herself to ask him about that. He did promise that he would tell her why he had rough hands. It was not full of callous, but it had a few once in a while.

Then, he leaned forward and finally spoke to her. “You are mine.” She knew who it was. He was not Alex. She quickly opened her eyes and screamed.

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“Don’t touch me.” She told him, moving her hands, warding off the unwanted man on her bed. She did not want him near her or touching her.

She could not understand why she was going through this again. She believed she had gotten away from the horrible nightmare. But here she was again, caught in the middle.

“Get away from me.” She continued to shout, getting away from the hands that gave her the sudden chill.

She quickly moved on the corner of the bed, clutching the sheet around her as she avoided his touch. She could clearly picture him in her mind as her eyes remained sealed shut.

She felt a sudden movement beside her, coming closer, and it frightened her even more. She flayed her hands at the first contact of a hand on her skin. Fighting off her assailant.

“Dani, wake up!” A man’s voice penetrated into her consciousness. But her fear still overpowered her reason, unable to distinguish reality versus the illusion entrapping her in the dream.

“I will kill you if you come any closer.” She threatened the man who tried to touch her face. Her eyes remained closed as she relived the horror of her dream.

She swiped his hands away, scooting further into the headboard, hugging her knees tighter around her in a protective stance.

"Please, don't hurt Alex." She pleaded as tears rushed down her face.

She wished it was a dream, but she was afraid to open her eyes only to realize that this was real. Her mind immediately imagined her husband, tied and beaten up.

"Hey, it is just a dream." He came closer but took caution not to make sudden movements. He did not want to scare her any further. "It is me, Alex."

He was awoken by her sudden scream. He assumed that something had happened to her. He quickly opened his eyes and checked on her.

He immediately saw her on the far side of the bed, sobbing, her body trembling, seemingly in fear. He thought that there must be an intruder in their room, scanning his surrounding.

However, he did not see anyone else. The room remained dimmed by the low light coming from the windows. No other sound could be heard around them except her sobs.

"Come on, darling, open your eyes." He encouraged her in his soft tone as he came closer to her, realizing that she must be having a nightmare.

It had been a long time since she was in this same condition. She had stopped having her terrible dreams when they started building their relationship.

He believed the constant reassurance of his love had healed her and drove her away from the nightmares. However, he understood that they had a recent traumatic experience.

He might be carrying the situation better, but sometimes he also had dreams about it. He still recalled the fear that gripped him every time he thought that Dani was in danger.

"I am here. No one is going to hurt you." He kept saying as he leaned closer without touching her.

Letting his presence and his voice calm her down. This time, he set aside his own fears, knowing that Dani needed him to be strong for the two of them.

Finally, she opened her eyes, hearing his soothing words, waking her up from the horrible images that plague her mind. Her blurry eyes could not see him clearly, but her heart finally recognized it was him. The man that she trusted with her life.

"I am sorry." She uttered in her confused state. Still recovering from the recent event.

She started wiping the tears that flooded her face, imagining what she probably looked like, realizing that she just had a nightmare.

She could still recall most of it, but she quickly buried it in her mind, not wanting to relive the horrible scenes. She focused her eyes on the man that sat beside her, enveloping her in his arms.

"Are you alright?" He asked as he ran his hands on her shoulders, down her arms, trying to calm her still trembling body.

He could guess what was on her mind, but he would not press for her to tell him unless she willingly wanted to share it with him. But he would wait until she was ready.

"Yeah!" She shrugged her shoulders, shaking off the horrible feeling. "It was just a dream." She dismissed it. "I am sure that I will get over this just like before."

She showed him a weak smile, assuring him that she would be fine. She honestly believed, just like before, she would eventually get over this.

"Well, if you want someone to talk to. I am here." He offered as he pulled her again tighter in his arms.

He could not imagine losing her. If the only way to protect her was to deal with the problem, then he would do his best to speed up the process of eliminating the cause of all her misery.

"I know." She answered him, leaning closer to his body, absorbing his warmth to calm her down.

Eventually, her breathing evened out, and her heartbeat slowed down. Then, she gradually returned to sleep. So far, a dreamless one.

He watched her sleeping form, feeling his anger brewing inside of him. He could only think of one thing at the moment, and it had everything to do with her.

"I will make this nightmare go away for good." He whispered to her. "I promise." Swearing to the woman he vowed to love and protect as long as he was alive.

He could not stand seeing her getting hurt over and over again just because of the insaneness of one man. He would go to the end of the earth to make him pay.

As far as he was concerned, Nick belonged in the dark pit, way below the ground, surrounded with blazing fire, burning for his sins.

Chapter 578: Traveling separately

"What do you think about going on a trip back home?" He suggested, fixing his tie in front of the mirror. "Maybe just for a few days." He added, thinking she would never agree on a long trip.

She just got back to work, so the likelihood that she would take a vacation was not even remotely possible. She would never agree if they both took a break.

He did not mind putting his job in the back seat for her. He could trust Marcus to handle it for him. So far, he had done very well in his absence.

Besides, Ethan had suggested it to him once. He was willing to take on the role of a consultant for Marcus. Of course, with the blessing of his mother-in-law, Laura.

"I don't know, Alex." She answered hesitantly, thinking that she had tons of work waiting for her on her desk.

She only started on a case. It did not feel right that she would abandon it. She could not do that to the firm and especially not to her client.

“Why don’t you think about it first before you say no?” Alex offered, not wanting her to shut it down instantly. “Besides, Mom is begging for us to come and visit.”

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He was hoping that she might still change her mind and reconsider. A few days of rest, a familiar environment, and his family’s company might give them some good.

He could still remember what happened early this morning when he woke up, finding her totally distraught because of a nightmare she had.

“Ok. I will think about it.” Dani conceded, standing up behind him in the mirror. “But, I am not promising anything.” She hugged him, resting her cheeks on his back, wrapping her arms around his waist.

She wished it was that easy for her to say yes to him. But besides her responsibility at work, she had one more concern. She hesitated about traveling long-distance, especially if she had to take the plane.

Although, she had complete trust that their security would not make the same mistake again. She still could not help shiver at the thought of dozing off on the air and landing somewhere.

“That is all I ask.” He uttered as he gazed at their entwined bodies in front of the mirror. He held her hands in his, not wanting to let her go.

He knew that she was still going through a lot. He was not over his trauma too. But he believed he was made tougher than her. Therefore, she would need his support more than ever.

He could only wish that he could magically make her fears disappear and bring back the smile on her face and her uninhibited spirit.

But it would take time, but he was not hopeless that their lives would eventually return to normal. Together, they could get through this. With each other support, their wounds would heal.

“Thanks.” She responded, feeling his heartbeat on her face. She could hear the steady drumming of his heart, wishing she could be as calm as him.

All she could do at the moment was draw strength from him. Because, as much as she wanted to appear strong, she could feel that something was broken inside of her.

But like before, she would get through this. She was not giving up easily. She would push through her fear, one day at a time. However, could she rush into it? Still, she was doubtful.

“Well, you better hurry up. You have an early meeting.” She reminded him, pulling herself away from him.

He was not supposed to go to work today, but he insisted on attending a board meeting scheduled today. It was just a half-day event. Therefore, he promised to return home as soon as it was over.

“They just have to wait. I still like spending time with my wife.” Alex said adamantly, pulling her towards him, then planting a quick kiss on her lips.

He missed doing that to her. Fortunately, his injuries were healing nicely. He could move more easily without hurting that much anymore.

"You are so naughty." She reprimanded him, but instead of breaking away from him. "Just one kiss." She leaned forward, capturing his lips in one passionate one.

She could not help it. She just could not get enough of her enigmatic and charismatic husband. She was glad that he was getting better and better each day.

"Come on, let me fix your tie," Dani offered since she had ruined it when she pulled him into a deeper kiss.

She let her fingers hold the long silk cloth and took over on tying it around his neck. She had watched countless times how her mother had fixed her father's tie every morning of their married life.

She was unsure if his father had intentionally told everyone he could not put on his own tie. But her mother indulged his claim and performed the task every morning for him.

It was one of the most adorable gestures that her parents had shared with her. There were countless more. Small things that made their relationship so much sweeter.

She had been witness to their great love story. She could only hope that she and Alex could match it if not surpassed it. She would be one of the luckiest women alive if that ever happened, just like her mom and even Katherine.

"If you keep up with that slow phase, then we will not be leaving this room anytime soon." He pulled her towards his body, trapping her in his arms as her hands busied themselves on his tie.

He was teasing her, enjoying the feel of her body against his. It seemed that his plans would backfire on him if he did not release her anytime soon, feeling his body responding to her nearness.

"Finished." She quickly said, planting a soft kiss on his lips before pushing him away. "We are leaving now." She told him, grabbing her bag from the table and putting on her shoes.

As much as she wanted to lounge all day in their room, she could not. She wished she could indulge with her desire to be wrapped around his body, but duty called.

Besides, she knew he did not want to miss this meeting. She did not want to be the cause of his absence or tardiness. She looked at him directly in the eyes before saying. "Let's go."

He only smiled at her adoringly, enjoying how she was barking orders for him to move his ass. He did not really care if he was late. He knew they would wait for him all day if they had to.

He agreed with his wife that it would be a bit irresponsible. Dani was right. He could not miss this meeting, not when he hoped to push through with the plan of traveling, once Dani accepted.

"Ladies first." He insisted as he ushered her out the door of their room. "But expect that I will be waiting for your return tonight."

It would be a long wait as far as he could imagine until she came back home. He wondered if he could concentrate at work if he continued to think about her.

Well, it would be a challenge for sure as he guided her to the two waiting cars that would bring them to their respective offices. This time, they would be traveling separately.

Chapter 579: On the fast lane

She was already awake even before the break of dawn, unable to contain her excitement about her interview. She kept telling herself that the only reason she was pursuing this story was that it was a good story and nothing else.

However, her consciousness was nagging at her. It kept insisting that she had another ulterior motive for wanting this story so bad. And, it had nothing to do with the story.

"Where is he?" She mumbled to herself as she waited for him in the lobby of the building where he told her to meet him last night.

She looked at her watch and realized that he still had more than ten minutes to spare before their scheduled appointment. He was not yet late, but she was just early and impatient.

She could still remember the scene last night after she left him and went to her car. She just barely revved up her engine when her phone suddenly rang. It was an unknown number, but she already suspected who it might be.

She turned around in her seat and eyed her caller, who was also sitting in the other parked car. She could only wonder what was going through his mind, but she knew how eccentric these royalties could be.

"I want you to meet me at exactly six in the morning." He said, continuing to watch her from his position.

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He gave his instructions in rapid order, not even giving her time to respond. When he was done, "Did you get that?" he asked. When she acknowledged that she did, he disconnected the call without saying goodbye.

Next, she watched him drive away, accelerating his engine when he passed by her car, which was still parked on the side of the street. He did not even look at her as he continued on his way.

She heard he was a hotshot race car driver, but she also knew a thing or two about the fast lane. She revved up her car again and pulled out of the parking lot.

A minute later, she was speeding up on the almost empty street, catching up with him. Eventually, she slowed down on his right side, matching his speed. "Bye!" She mouthed at him.

Then, she smiled and waved her fingers at him before slowing down and turning on the curve, finally parting ways. Showing him that she did not shy away from a challenge.

"Excuse me, Ms. Eida Harlowe?" A young woman approached her at exactly six on the dot.

"Yes," Eida acknowledged the woman's question, looking at her with curiosity.

"I am Gian." She introduced herself, nodding her head to her as a show of respect. "Prince Lance asked me to assist you to the changing room." She told her. "If you will, please, follow me."

She waited for the prince's guest to stand up and walked with her, passing the lobby and toward a narrow hallway until they had reached a door.

"By the way, you are more beautiful in person. I am an avid fan of your show." She spoke with a tinge of excitement, but she still acted professionally around her.

"Thank you. It is nice to know that people appreciated my work." Eida responded with a smile, always enjoying not the fame but the impact of her show on the people.

Gian opened the door and gestured that she should follow inside. She was expecting to see the prince inside, but the room was empty. She could see some of his pictures scattered around the room with his trophies and accomplishments.

She could see that he was really making a name in the racing industry. He was not just a face, who drove fast cars, so it would seem.

She did not have an interest in him before, so he was not keeping track of his records and achievements. However, she could not help raise her brows at what she had just discovered about him.

"Pardon?" She asked the young woman with a confused smile. "Where is Prince Lance?" Since she never mentioned his whereabouts.

She wondered if he was running late since he was not in his changing room, assuming this was his room. She walked towards a table where a set of racing uniforms was neatly folded.

She wondered if it belonged to him. Is this what he was going to wear? She assumed he was competing today since he offered to meet her here. She had no idea since she was not into racing, although she did like fast cars.

"The prince is already on the tracks," Gian answered her as if that should have been common sense. "He usually starts to practice before the break of dawn." She quickly clarified, probably seeing the surprise on her face.

"Oh!" Indeed, she was not expecting that. Then, she remembered that athletes did have a different kind of discipline that they followed.

Now, she was starting to get convinced that he was not just doing this for fame, but he was actually serious about the sport. Maybe she had misjudged him due to his looks and lineage.

"Prince Lance wishes for you to join him in the race tracks, or else you can wait for him until he finishes his laps on the sidelines," Gia informed her.

"I think I will join him in the race tracks. Please, just show me the way." She quickly said since it was a no-brainer.

Of course, she would choose to go where the action was. She might as well enjoy the show in the front seat. She might learn a thing or two in the process that she could use in a future story.

If the prince was waiting for her outside, she wondered why she took her to this room instead. It certainly did not make any sense to her, but the entire story of the royal family was still a mystery to her.

"Well, he had one condition. If you want to join him in the tracks, you have to wear the uniform." Gia pointed to the folded clothes she was looking at earlier.

"Are you serious?" Eida asked, walking back to the set of clothes.

When she checked on it, she could see that it was about her size. She finally noticed the shoes that matched the uniform. It also looked like it would fit her.

She wondered how he had known her size. But she only assumed that he had his secretary probably researched about her. She commended him for his resourcefulness.

She was actually flattered that he would go to the trouble at all for her. Anyway, she felt more excited. She always loved to try something new.

"Yes, Ms. Harlowe," Gia answered. "I will give you a few minutes to change. I will be waiting outside the door. If you need any help, just call me." She offered.

She finally left her alone in the room to contemplate her decision. But there was nothing to think about. She quickly jumped into the overall suit and replaced her heels with her new racing shoes.

"I am good to go." She finally said to her assistant as she walked out of the room in her new sporty clothes.

She guided her back to another path where the sound of the engines was getting louder and louder. She could feel her heartbeat speed up with excitement. She could not wait to try her hand on the fast lane.

Chapter 580: Racing with a flat tire

"Are they competing today?" Eida asked the woman, guiding her towards a bright opening, almost shouting for her to hear her question.

She could hear the roar of the machines as the cars revved up for the race. She could also hear the buzzed of the engines as they sped up on the tracks.

She wondered if the prince was already running on the laps or still waiting for his turn. She could not contain her excitement as soon as she walked out of the arena.

"No. The competition is still in a month. The prince is merely practicing today." Gian corrected her, moving closer to her ears since she did not want to shout too loud. "This way."

She continued to walk on the sidelines, greeting the men in uniforms as they passed them by. Most of them also greeted her, some also whistled.

Well, they were, mostly, men. She was used to it. She just smiled and waved back to them. It was the price she had to pay for her chosen field.

"How often does he practice?" She could not help her nosiness. She was a reporter, after all. Asking questions was her business.

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She was genuinely starting to get interested in this sport. But she had to know more about it by learning some basics. She mentally noted to find out more about it once she got back in her office.

“Well, he used to practice almost every day. But when he concentrated on their business, he could only go to the tracks on the weekends.” Gian shared with her favorite reporter.

It was not as if she was sharing a piece of top-secret information. She was just enjoying the attention she was having with the reporter.

It would be a story worth telling her friends. She suddenly remembered to ask for a picture with her idol later as a souvenir. She truly believed in her talent and admired her stories.

She would have asked more, but her assistant suddenly stopped in front of a stall. She knew it belonged to Prince Lance since it showed the crest of The Palace and the House of the Count.

Several men gathered around the place, but she did not see the prince anywhere nor a car. She could only surmise that he was probably one of the drivers, cruising at high speed, taking another lap.

“Guys, this is Ms. Harlowe, the guest of Prince Lance.” Gian introduced her to the crew, who greeted her with a manly hug, treating her just like she was one of them.

She did not mind since she had worked around men throughout her career. She could handle a few punches and foul languages just like any of them, well, literally at least.

“Prince Lance would be back shortly. He still had a couple of laps more, then he would be free to see you.” The man in the red uniform and dark jeans informed her.

Judging from how he barked orders around and on his headset, she could tell that he was in charge of this operation. Then, he returned his attention to her as if he was not just shouting at everyone.

“I hope you don’t mind if I wait here with you.” She said, slightly raising her voice every time a car would pass by their location. “Which one would be his car?”

She craned her neck on the tracks, trying to identify the vehicle from the three cars, which were speeding almost neck-to-neck on the elongated lanes.

“That would be the one in the middle.” He answered. “I am Rick, by the way.” He finally introduced himself to her. “We take everything here seriously. So when I say move. You move.”

He began shouting again at the crew, waiting on the sideline and everyone who could hear him, telling them what they were supposed to do.

The excitement in the air was overwhelming as the last lap ensued and the three cars passed their location.

“Oh!” She was slightly surprised that Prince Lance was quite good at this. She assumed when she first learned he joined races like this, he would be somewhat in the middle, not on top.

His age looked around the late forties or early fifties in her speculation. He was probably a former race car driver since he clearly had been barking instructions on his mike.

She could only guess that the other person on the other end of that conversation would be the driver of the car leading the pack. He must be coaching the prince.

“One more to go.” She heard him shout, and the entire crew on the pit was cheering for their team to win the race. “You already got this,” Rick said confidently, for encouragement.

Although he had no doubt that the prince would give his best to win this. It might be just a practice run, but he always considered everything with seriousness.

He never put anything to chance, especially this one. In this game, one mistake could cause his life. Just one second could end everything he had worked hard on with his entire life.

“So, how does this work?” She asked, still a bit confused with the mechanics. “They go around on circles, and then?”

She had seen some race car competitions on the sports channel. But after a few seconds, she changed it to another. It just did not catch her attention before.

But she understood the thrill since she also liked driving fast. She loved the way her heart calmed down after a heavy day at work as she cruised in her maximum speed limit on an empty highway.

“The cars would go on several laps depending on the current rule of the game. Then, they would be timed. The fastest car would enter the qualifiers.” Gian explained to her as they watched the cars zoom to the final lap.

“If Prince Lance beat his previous record, it would guarantee his place in the qualifying round. Maybe we can even win the entire circuit.” Gian continued as she started clapping her hands to show support to their team.

They believed that racing was not an individual game. It was a team sport. Everybody had a role to play for the entire team to win the race. Missing one component would be like racing with a flat tire.