

Royal Contract 691

Chapter 691: A guardian angel

Her eyes opened wide as Amelia stared at the man before her. The gasp that came out of her lips was barely audible. But to her, it sounded like an explosion that shattered her into pieces.

Nothing about this scene she was witnessing seemed to make sense. She felt like she was in some bizarre dream. But when her nails dug into the flesh of her palms as her hands fisted on her side, she knew then she was wide awake.

“Amelia...” Her name echoed in her ears, but her thoughts could only process one thing at the moment. He was here at her friend’s house.

Her eyes finally moved, scanning the state of the man who probably mirrored her face as shock registered on his expression.

His hair was still wet, and trickles of moisture glistened on his chest from the light coming from around him. His body was naked except for the portion covered by the white towel.

“Amelia, please come inside. Let me explain.” Her friend’s familiar voice finally registered in her brain, eventually seeking the source.

Her face shifted to the other figure standing closer to her, finding her friend wrapped in a robe. It was not that hurt her at all. She had seen her friend in a worse state before.

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But what crushed her heart more was the guilty look on her face as she kept begging her to come inside and talk. What is there to talk about in this situation? Finally, her eyes looked from one to the other.

“Amelia.” That was the last straw, hearing his voice, calling her name. A knife suddenly pierced her heart and twisted it several times to guarantee it would never be whole again.

Words.

She could not find the words she wanted to say. Her mind looked like a puzzle, and most letters were misplaced. She probably looked stupid just staring at the two people she trusted the most in her life.

Lance and Eida. They had betrayed her, breaking her into million pieces.

Without another word, she turned around and ran, letting her feet lead the way, allowing her instinct to direct her actions because, at the moment, she knew she was not in control.

“Amelia, please stop.” One voice after another reverberated in the hallway. She was glad that finally, it had stopped.

Her eyes could barely see anymore as tears flooded her face. Then, a hand touched her. She flinched, moving away. “My dear, are you ok?” A gentle voice asked her, unfamiliar but seemingly kind.

Still, she lowered her face, looking at the floor, at her feet, finally realizing that she was moving. Upward. It finally registered in her muddled brain that she was in an elevator.

When her eyes landed on the lady, she recognized her. "I am sorry. I must look horrible." Finally, she was slowly returning to her senses, but her heart was still torn in two as tears still flowed down her eyes.

"We all go through that." The kind lady moved closer and wrapped her in a warm embrace. "Come, my apartment is just over there."

At that moment, the elevator doors opened, and the woman dragged her with her. "I am not taking no for an answer."

She could easily protest and pull her arms away, but she did not. Her kindness seemed to drug her and put her at ease. She could not say no to the elderly, sweet woman.

Soon, she was sitting in this friendly woman's living room with tissues, sitting on her lap and a small basket for her trash. But the woman never spoke another word, as she just allowed her to wallow in her sorrow.

After what seemed to be a considerable time, her tears had finally refused to come out as they dried out on her cheeks, and her weeping had dwindled into an occasional sob.

"How are you feeling?" The woman spoke up but kept her position by the armchair, watching her. "I hope you are not annoyed with me for forcing you to my apartment."

Suddenly, her statement made her smile. As if her petite frame could force her to do anything. But she did come willingly at the time. She wanted to answer her, but she was still trying to compose herself, breathing more deeply.

"I don't want you to drive yourself out there in your condition. Nor would I think to leave you alone if you were on your way to the roof of the building." She continued with her soft tone, putting her hands on the chair's armrest as if trying to be more comfortable.

The smile that graced her lips was so adorable that she could not stop the laughter from bursting out her lips. Her face was a picture of innocence, but her words implied something else.

"That is better. You should smile more because I always love your smile. You look so beautiful." The sweet lady complimented, but she doubted her words, thinking how horrendous she might be at the moment.

"Thanks for that." She raised her hand, unable to explain what she meant by that. "But I assured you, I am not driving at my condition nor on my way to the roof."

It was only to reassure the kind lady. But thinking about it, she might have done those things if the lady was not kind enough to take her under her care for that single incident.

At that point, she admitted not thinking clearly. Although she was still a little unstable compared to earlier, she felt better after crying it out.

"Nevertheless, I don't want people to see you in such a state. I am sure the lobby and the street would be full of people who like to snoop with your business." The woman reasoned, which in her opinion, was again on point.

"I guess I would have disgraced myself in front of many strangers." Amelia conceded, again appreciating her help. "Thanks again, Ms..."

"Just Angela." The woman interrupted her. "I prefer if you will just call me by my given name since I think we can now consider ourselves as friends."

She gradually stood up and poured two glasses of fresh juices, handing her one. She did not even notice them before, only concluding that she was worse than she thought.

Luckily a kind woman, who she believed had already saved many people, had taken the time to help her. This incredible lady was undeniably a guardian angel.

Chapter 692: Serendipity

After probably a few minutes of talking to the woman, she excused herself and asked to use the bathroom to fix herself. She grabbed her bag from the sofa where she dropped it earlier and proceeded upstairs, where Angela pointed her to go.

Looking at herself in the mirror, she was surprised she still recognized herself. But it was not what she had expected to see. It was worse.

Her eyes were puffy as if she had been crying all day and night. She would know since she had done it before, many times due to her father. Her tears-stained cheeks looked like she performed in the cartoon show called the Joker.

She still had not described her nose. It will shame Rudolf next Christmas. Maybe Santa would let her light the sleigh by then. Overall, her mascara was all over the place, and her lipstick smudged outside her lips.

Quickly grabbing a soap, she scrubbed her face clean on the basin, removing all her makeup. Splashing cold water on her face also helped with the puffiness of her eyes. Somehow, it cooled down and reduced its swollenness, and it was not as red as before.

"You will be just fine." She breathed deeply, prepping herself up, ready to go on with her life. Not exactly. But at least one step at a time.

Her eyes stared at herself one last time, admitting she still looked presentable even without makeup. Well, it was much better than her earlier look.

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She took her bag and held it in her hand, ready to go back downstairs, and thanked her guardian angel for saving her from herself. She must have taken up so much of her time.

Once she was in the living room, she never bothered to sit down, planning to leave as soon as possible, feeling she had already overstayed her welcome.

"Angela." She moved around the room, looking for her, but she was not anywhere nearby. "Angela," Amelia called to her, louder this time.

She wondered where her kind hostess was since she did not want to roam alone, appearing like a nosy guest. Still, she did not respond to her.

It was slightly creepy to be in someone else's apartment, and the owner suddenly vanished. "Angela." Her voice was an octave higher.

Amelia believed that should be enough to call her attention even if she was in the other rooms. But still, no movement. Her logical mind told her to leave without saying goodbye. She might have gone out or to sleep.

However, her instinct told her to search for her new friend. She might be in the other room. Practically, she would search the kitchen first, smelling the delicious aroma coming from the other room.

"Angela, are you in here?" She asked again, in a milder tone. She had no more need to shout as she moved further inside the room, seeing the oven light on and what seemed to be cupcakes baking.

She moved closer, going around the huge kitchen counter in the middle. Then to her surprise, her eyes landed on Angela, who was lying on the floor, unconscious.

"Angela," Amelia called to her, touching her friend's wrist to get a pulse. But she was not responding to her call, but her fingers felt a weak pulse.

She was afraid to touch her further, not having much experience in conditions like this. Standing up, she rummaged through her bag and took out her phone, dialing the emergency hotline.

"Angela, hold on." She knelt back down on the ground, trying to check on her condition.

She could tell that she did not bump her head anywhere since there were no signs of injury or blood on the floor. Maybe she had a heart attack, which was quite common for a woman her age.

"You will be just fine." She kept telling her, waiting for an operator to take her call.

After what seemed to be the most stressful wait she had to do, the ambulance arrived and helped her take care of her friend.

"You can ride with us if you want to accompany your grandmother." She looked around the lobby as her friend remained unconscious as the paramedics wheeled her out of the building.

She could see that the incident had started to gather a crowd, but that was not her concern. She had no idea where her family was, but she believed she would need someone to stay by her side for now.

"Yes, I would like to go with her." She decided to pretend to be related so she could take care of her in the meantime. It was the least she could do after she showed her kindness.

She hopped into the ambulance, riding at the back of the truck, sitting just beside her. She tried her best to stay clear when the paramedic did her job, but her hand kept holding hers, assuring her she was not alone in this.

"She is lucky you were there to call for help. Her attack could have been fatal if not treated immediately." The woman in uniform told her.

It seemed that fate had been working in both their favor today. This woman had saved her from earlier. Now, she was returning the favor.

"How is she doing now?" She could not help but feel her heart squeezing tightly, but compared to earlier, not with anger but with fear.

"She is stable for now, but we will know more after the doctors have checked on her and run some tests." The paramedic told her. "Don't worry. You did well. You are her guardian angel."

She doubted she could take that role, thinking it was more suitable for this kind lady than her. She was no angel, thinking of the horrible things she wanted to do to her friends.

Anyway, she would say that this day was a series of flukes in her life. One unfortunate incident after another, but not likely to happen again. But if fate would ask her, she would prefer to experience serendipity instead.

Chapter 693: No puppeteer but a mere puppet

Ethan's eyes kept looking at him as he laid quietly in his bed, inside the privacy of his private room, drinking his favorite whiskey.

Gerald could not believe the audacity of that man to tell him that he was his father, remembering looking into his eyes as he explained his connection to his father and mother.

His fist had balled, ready to punch him, wanting so much to beat the crap out of him. But for the first time in his life, he could not move as he looked into those eyes. It mirrored his. It was as if he was looking at himself.

"Then, why hesitate? You should have shot him?" Because you knew he might be. His mind debated inside his head as he stared at the white ceiling.

He shook his head, denying the lie that came out of his enemy's lips. He should not trust him. His father had warned him that he might pull something as ridiculous as this to make him believe in his deception.

He tried closing his eyes, hoping that the alcohol and fatigue would finally take over and envelope him in darkness, but it was no use as his thoughts returned to the moment he looked into Ethan's eyes.

"It is not true." His body bolted up into a sitting position, unable to stand, seeing the face of the man that had caused his misery. While his eyes were wide open, his focus centered on the white, empty wall.

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No paintings hung on his white wall, no memories that would remind him of his mother. It was his haven from the miserable life he had endured growing up. It was the only place that did not remind him of his mother.

He loved his mother. Her love had been the only thing that kept him going through this time. But his father assured him that his word had more weight than what her mother had taught him. Hatred eventually took over his childhood until now.

He stood from his bed and walked over to the side table. Only to discover his decanter was already empty. He needed more. He wanted to drown his thoughts.

Hopefully, by the time he woke up, it would be different. His life would be back to the time before Ethan walked through his door because his brain refused to accept what this man revealed to him.

At the moment, all he wanted was to hurt him, but he could not. He had the chance earlier, but something stopped him. Suddenly his mother popped into his mind.

"Because..." He mumbled, taking his empty glass and walking out the door, unable to finish his statement.

As he passed by the hallways, down towards his office, he never failed to see the paintings her mother had done for him and his father. His eyes focused on one piece after another.

His father insisted on hanging them in almost all parts of their house to remind him not of his mother's memories but of the mission his father wanted him to accomplish. To make the man responsible for his misery pay.

He walked straight ahead, avoiding looking at one more portrait, going directly into his office. Maybe working would help divert his mind into something else.

"Sir, do you need anything?" His maid came closer, noticing him. But he only waved her away, dismissing her in his presence.

He closed the doors and sat immediately on his desk, placing the empty glass in the corner. After taking a few breaths, smelling the alcohol in his breath, he took a file and started reading it.

After the jumbled words kept repeating in his mind, he knew he could not continue. His mind was not making any sense, only wasting his time.

"This is all bull..." His fist slammed on the files, making the desk vibrate from the impact, causing some files to go out of place. It was no use. He needed another distraction.

Closing the file again with a thud, he turned around and faced his window, looking at the massive lawn outside. He did not grow up in this place, but it had similarities to where his father had kept him and his mother.

He could imagine kids running on those grasses, laughing, and just enjoying, not minding sweating under the sun. But that was not his memory.

He had grown up barely a kid, unable to play with children his age since his father had told him he had no time for silliness. At an early age, his father had him burning the midnight oil.

Aside from excelling in school, he also had to undergo survival training. From self-defense lessons to the use of weapons, he had to learn them all.

"What is this, Dad?" He mumbled as his fist clenched at the armrest of his chair. "Is Ethan my father?" His heart was on fire, feeling his blood boiling through his veins, burning everything in its path.

He could feel steam coming out of his skin at the thought of someone using him as a pawn in their games. Well, one of them was lying and the other the truth. Which one was which?

His mind returned to the man who courageously walked into his lion's den, unafraid of the consequence of revealing himself. He saw it in his eyes. Ethan was ready to die in his hands.

"It still did not mean anything." He hissed angrily. Standing up, he quickly walked to his whiskey and poured another full glass. He believed that should do the trick.

He looked outside again, watching kids playing on the pond. If Ethan was his father, could he have lived a different life? The answer is no because he had abandoned him.

Ethan had allowed Joaquin to raise him like a soldier who would do his bidding. He was nothing but a son who had no use to Ethan and a boy who was just a toy to Joaquin.

With this thought dangling like a carrot in front of him, his vision turned black as his eyes focused on one of his mother's paintings hanging just on the wall near him.

"Damn all of you." His hand swung towards the frame, seeing it as a target, then a shattering sound reverberated on the wall as bits and pieces of glass, together with what remained of his drink, glittered on the floor.

Suddenly, he concluded that he was not the one controlling the strings. He never had control of what was happening. He was no puppeteer but a mere puppet.

Chapter 694: Bastard son

"What is going on here?" A voice by the door asked in a surprised tone. His friend continued to walk further inside his office without waiting for permission. "Are you ok, man?"

A sudden movement by the door snapped him out of his trance, finding his friend looking at him with confusion. He quickly took a deep breath and turned away from him, walking back to his desk, ignoring his friend's question completely.

He saw in his peripheral vision that his friend followed him, sitting in front of him comfortably like he never needed an invitation. On other occasions, maybe, but not today.

"What are you doing here, Mike?" He finally asked, shifting his face until his eyes met his friend. "I did not call for you." He was dismissing his presence, so his friend should heed the warning in his tone and leave.

"Yes, I know that. But apparently, I can sense that you need me by your side today." His friend seemed to be so thick-skinned that he missed the sign altogether.

Or he was just completely ignoring him and, as always, meddling with things that he had no business with anyway. It would not be the first time he would be doing this to him. He believed it would not be the last.

"So, what was that for?" His friend continued, pointing to the commotion earlier.

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His eyes finally saw what his action had created, seeing the painting glistening with the amber liquid. The broken glass might have caused the slight tearing in the middle portion of the canvas.

To an art collector, it would not be such a big deal. His mother was not a successful artist because her work did not reach the galleries.

His father would not allow his mother to sell any of her works. Maybe it was why she stopped painting for a long time because no one else would see them.

However, he firmly believed that if people had seen her collections. She would have been famous. Suddenly, his mind remembered how Ethan adored her last work.

"It was nothing." He finally answered his friend, dropping his eyes back to the folders on his desk. But he knew he could not fool his friend.

"Nothing is when you go to a bar, have some drinks with a nice girl and fuck her senseless," Mike said, challenging him to contradict his statement. But when he kept his silence, he continued.

"This." His friend stood up and picked up a large shard of the broken glass to show to him. "My friend, this glass is what I called fuck up."

He could not deny that his friend had a point, and arguing with him was useless. He was trained by the best. Soon, he might even overtake him.

"So, tell me, what is bothering you?" He threw the glass into a wastebasket and returned to his seat, wiping his hands with a handkerchief he pulled from his pocket.

He turned around again, debating whether he should relate to his friend what happened earlier. But that was not something he believed he could share with anyone.

Again, his father's word echoed in his mind. "There was no one person in this world that you can trust other than yourself. The rest of the people around you just wanted a piece of you."

He wished he could shut his father up and go on with his life. But he had believed every word he had said all his life. How could he suddenly turn off that switch?

"I know Ethan was here earlier. Did something happen while he was here?" Mike asked concernedly, replacing his playful voice. "I came by earlier, but when I saw that you were having a serious conversation with the old man, I left."

He had never noticed his friend earlier, but suddenly, his father's warning echoed in his mind. Was his friend spying on him? But that was insane. He was his friend, and he would not admit that if he was.

He felt more frustrated now. Whether his friend was a friend who he could trust or someone that would be ready to stab him in the back if an opportunity came.

His eyes studied him, remembering the long friendship they shared. Yes, his friend was capable of doing many horrific things, but to betray him.

“But if you are not ready to share that with me, that is fine too.” Mike finally gave up, knowing him so well. He could be stubborn most of the time. “Anyway, I just came by to tell you that they were closing the case against Nick.”

His friend stood from his chair and was about to leave. “And also they have a lead to his death. I guess your assumption was right. He made some enemies inside.” His friend strode to the door. “If you need anything else, call me.” Then, he was gone.

He did not stop him. He was not ready to trust this information with him or anybody. It was a sensitive situation. It might not even be true.

But then again.

He was the only person he had trusted all this time, his only friend, and he was like a younger brother to him. He believed he could trust him, suddenly changing his mind.

He stood up from his chair and called to him. Running after him, he must have already reached the exit. He was not outside his office anymore.

But as he passed the hallway, he stopped. The painting that captured Ethan’s eyes was now in front of him. Suddenly, he was curious.

How did Ethan figure out that this was his mother’s painting? His mother’s signature was different from her usual initials. He was not an art expert, but he had studied some with her mother’s guidance.

He examined the painting closely, following what Ethan had done earlier. Letting his fingers run on the rough edge of the embossed paints, feeling it the way that man tried to examine it.

But nothing.

He stepped away from it, feeling that it might be an old painting of his mother that she replicated, creating familiarity with her old friend, dismissing the idea that it held some secret.

As he moved away, he turned one last time. Then, there it was in plain sight. He was Ethan’s son. His bastard son.

Chapter 695: Overdue conversation

Jacky still felt over the moon as she stared at the big rock on her finger, remembering how Marcus had proposed to her. Although she initially thought that Marcus was not ready for such responsibility, she was pleased to be wrong.

“I am so happy that you are finally engaged.” Dani stared at her as she walked into her friend’s office late afternoon, carrying her coffee and some files.

Jacky admitted that she loved to wake up late in the morning but not on a workday. But give her a break. She was still on cloud nine after the grand proposal, in addition to the fantastic night she had with her man.

She noticed that her friend had her hand extended toward her as she neared her table. She believed it was her friend’s birthday the other day and not hers.

"Thanks, but what is this for?" She took the small box wrapped in golden paper with a tiny red ribbon on top of it.

She stared at it, trying to figure out what could be inside, curious about it. But still, she was confused about why she had received a gift. She shook it a little, feeling if something would rattle inside, which would give her a clue.

It was not heavy, but something was moving inside.

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"Why don't you just open it?" Dani suggested as she took the files she placed on her table and started skimming on them, but her friend still glanced in her way as she unwrapped the paper.

She could see a black velvety box inside. It could only mean one thing, a jewelry box. "You should not have bothered."

Suddenly, she felt like crying as tears moistened her eyes, seeing how much her friend valued their friendship. She immediately opened the lid and found a short gold chain.

It sparkled every time a light passed through it. What seemed like a simple bracelet had small diamonds embedded in it.

Her eyes also found engravings on it after close examination.

JACKY, MY SISTER BY HEART... DANI

It was not the gift's monetary value that made her tears fall from her eyes but what was meant by those words. She would not exchange their friendship for anything in the world.

To her, blood was overrated. It was what was in their hearts that made them a family. To think Marcus proposed in front of those people she had considered her family made it more special.

"Considered it as my prewedding gift. But assume there is more to come." Dani warned her, but she knew if she kept refusing her, she would still do it anyway.

Her friend knew that she was not a charity case and that her friend could dole out her money every time she felt she needed it. She had worked hard for every penny she spent on herself or the gifts she gave to her brother, Andy.

She did not need more than what she could afford. But she accepted her friend's gift because it symbolized their friendship. Nothing more.

"I love it. Thank you, Dani." She stood up, and at the same time, her friend also did, and they hugged each other. "But you need to stop spoiling me. There is someone else who is willing to do the job." She teased her friend, although she did not mean it.

She just wanted her friend to stop giving her so many expensive gifts. She never wanted Marcus also to do the same. She was happy to be with them.

"Shall I put it on you?" Dani offered, taking the bracelet in her hand and fastening it around her left wrist. It was indeed beautiful and looked very expensive.

She raised her left arm to see what it would look like as she jiggled it, and it danced through the light, creating patterns on the walls.

"It does look great on me." She jokingly said as they both returned to their seat and discussed her plans for the wedding, which was still nil.

How could she have plans when she barely had time to wrap her mind around the idea that she was getting married. Soon, she would be "Mrs. Jacky Kenley." It did not sound so good to her ears. But in her heart, it was all she ever wanted.

"Anyway, if you need any help, just ask me." Dani offered since she did have experience on the matter. She also remembered her friend, Abby, who did her beautiful gown.

"I will surely take note of that." Jacky would need all the help she could get. She might be great at organizing things, but when it came to her own, she might suck on it.

She was about to stand up and get back to work when someone interrupted them. "Excuse me, nobody is out there, so I decided to proceed here." A familiar voice she knew she had heard before talked behind her.

She thought that she might be here to visit Dani about their project. She had been here several times before. It was not new anymore.

"Hi, Haley. Come in." Dani quickly said upon seeing her friend by the door.

Jacky finally turned around to see her and was about to leave the two alone. "Please, go right in." She gestured for her to enter. "Can I get you something?" Offering her refreshment as part of her job.

In the heat of the moment, all thoughts about Haley vanished in her mind. But it seemed that Marcus also forgot to mention her again, or maybe he also forgot about her.

But now, all memories of that day returned. She still had no idea what her last relationship was with her fiancé. But looking at her ring, she knew she had nothing to worry about anymore.

"Hi, there, Dani." She greeted their friend before shifting her attention to her. "But actually, I am here to see you, Jacky." Haley looked at her with a friendly smile.

"Me?" Jacky was a bit surprised, but at the same time, she was expecting it too. She remembered how much Haley tried to corner her so that they could talk during the ceremony.

Now, it would seem that she had no more choice but to confront her. She believed Haley was not going away until she had her moment with her.

She was going to talk to her whether she liked it or not. Anyway, she finally nodded at her to follow her to the other room. Jacky was ready to finish this overdue conversation after all.

Chapter 696: Welcome to the family

They moved to the empty conference room that Dani sometimes used to meet with clients. Jacky ushered her guest to sit on one of the many chairs around the oval table.

It was not as big as the other conference room, but it was still large enough for the two of them as she stared at her guest, who sat with her back straight on her chair with her legs crossed underneath the table.

She looked at the epitome of elegance and style. She had many similar qualities to Dani that she admired. She admitted before that she wanted to be her friend too.

"Hi, Jacky. I am sorry if I suddenly came here unannounced, but I want to talk to you." Haley began as she placed her beautifully manicured fingers on top of the table and directly looked at her as she sat on the other seat on the head of the table.

There was no hint of anxiousness in her eyes, as her breathing seemed normal. There was no dilation in her eyes to indicate she was dreading this meeting.

But she knew Haley was picking her words before she had spoken. She had no idea why but she had the feeling that she would know soon enough.

"That is ok, Haley." She responded but keeping her hands on her lap underneath the table. Although she was ready to face her, her nerves were still slightly showing in her fingers as they slightly trembled.

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"I am sorry if I came on too strong at the party. I really would like to clear some things with you." Haley explained, but before she could continue, her phone rang. She held her hands to excuse herself as she answered the call.

Haley stood up from her chair and walked just outside the door to have some form of privacy. In the meantime, she remained inside to wait for her to return.

She sat quietly in her seat as she partially heard her conversation. Well, at least the part where she was the one speaking, and some of it was louder than her normal voice.

It was confusing since she believed she knew who she was talking to based on her one-sided conversation. She patted her pocket but came up empty, only to realize that she had left her phone on her desk.

She wished to play with her phone or text someone so she would be distracted and not keep eavesdropping on someone else's conversation.

"Fine." She heard her visitor say to the line, but before she could listen to more of the conversation. Haley ended the call.

She watched her guest drop the phone back into her bag as she walked back into the room with an apologetic smile. Her eyes looked guilty, but she could not figure out why as she returned to her seat.

"I am sorry for the interruption, but I think it would be better if we wait for Marcus," Haley told her, resuming her position earlier.

Her face must have registered shock or surprise as she gave her a friendly smile. "I am sorry again, but Marcus wanted to be here before I say the reason why I am here."

"Marcus is also coming here." That was news to her since he had never mentioned anything about this when she last saw him this morning.

"Yes, I told him that I plan to see you today, but he insisted that he should come with me. Now, he is probably on his way up by now." Haley confidently smiled at her as if everything would be alright.

"Can you just tell me what this is all about instead of making it so mysterious?" Jacky questioned her guest, finding the entire situation irritating. She had no time for their games.

The two of them were communicating with each other that she had no idea of until now. But whatever they were talking about behind her back, she did not like it.

"I was going to tell you, but he insisted that he wanted to be present. Just a minute longer, and he will be here." Haley continued. Pleading was not the word she would use with the way she was convincing her to be a bit more patient.

She gazed down at her watch, observing the thin hand as it moved one tick at a time. She wished she could force it to go faster because her patient was wearing thin.

She was not exactly known for this particular trait. It was not one of her best characteristics. She tapped her feet as the seconds ticked by to a few more seconds before the minute was up.

"Be straight with me." She stared at Haley, not waiting for Marcus anymore. "Did you have a past relationship with my fiancé? Or have a current affair with him? Or a child that I don't know of that you two are keeping from me?"

She rattled questions that circulated in her mind. Things she conjured with the way these two morons were acting around her. Who would blame her if she came up with these conclusions?

"She is not my girlfriend, nor did she become one. And I am sure that I don't have a son or daughter out there. At least that I know of until now." A voice suddenly answered all her questions coming from the door.

She turned and found her fiancé looking directly at her with a smirk on his face. He certainly was not alarmed by her questions. But he seemed confident about himself as he came closer to her.

"Then, what is going on in here? What is this all fuss is all about?" She was again confused as her eyes shifted from his fiancé to the other woman in the room.

She could see that Haley wished to say something, but Marcus silenced her with his stare.

"If none of you speak right now, I am leaving." She threatened since she had reached her limit.

"I am his sister." Haley finally blurted it out. Haley smiled at her, standing up from her seat and holding her hand. "I only wanted to say welcome to the family."

Chapter 697: Go with the flow

Gerald stared at the window for a while, wondering whether he should come down and visit her. But what would he say to her? He kept staring at the view outside, debating what to do next.

He could hardly concentrate on what he was doing anyway. Since he had discovered what could be the truth, his mind would not stop bothering him if he should pursue getting tested for their DNA.

If it would turn out positive, then what Ethan said was true. Ethan was indeed his father. But he did not want to get any sample from Ethan. It would be admitting that he partially believed in his story.

"I am just going downstairs," Gerald finally told her secretary, unable to stop the urge to get to the bottom of the truth.

He walked to the elevators and waited until he arrived at her floor. As he walked towards her office, he noticed two women went to the adjacent room, leaving Jacky's table unoccupied.

He decided to use this opportunity to get Dani alone in her office without her friend snooping around in their conversation. He had noticed that Jacky was like a bodyguard, always protecting her friend from unwanted guests. He could see that Jacky had her hands preoccupied with her visitor too.

As he stood outside her office, he noticed how hardworking she was. Was it a common trait they inherited from their same father if Ethan was his father?

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He could not keep standing by her door and watching her work. Jacky might come back soon, and he had to accomplish what he had come here to do.

"Ahem!" A mild knock on her door made her look up from her work, forcing her to look at him. "I hope I am not disturbing you." She looked busy, but he believed she could not decline the boss of her time.

She immediately closed the folder she was working on and leaned on her chair, gesturing for him to come in and take a seat. It was all he had been waiting for as he moved further inside.

"I am a bit busy, but I always have time for you. So, what can I do for you, Gerald." She asked him, but all he could do at the moment was stare at her face as he walked closer to her desk.

His eyes studied the contour of her face, the shape of her nose, and the color of her eyes. It was as if his mind was comparing all her features against his. Looking for a pattern or similarities that would indicate they were blood-related. So far, he did find a few.

But those few were so distinct that he was starting to believe Ethan. But still, he needed confirmation through the use of science. Without it, he would remain in doubt.

"I was going to follow up on the case I assigned to you. Although you seem to be on top of things, I still want to offer my services if you need a second mind." It was an excuse. Because from what he had observed, she was handling the case the way he would have managed it.

Was that another one of their similarities? Was that enough to say that she was his sister?

He suddenly flinched, remembering how he felt about her, loving and wanting her. Was it the blood, wanting to be with her sister driving him to get near her and not lust? He hoped so if she was his flesh and blood.

"You know that I am always open to any help I can get, especially coming from you." Her enthusiastic response to her offer indicated that she might have no idea of what Ethan had revealed to him.

If she knew, she might not be as receptive to him, would she? He wondered what her reaction would be if she had learned of this news. Would she accept him as her brother?

"Good. Do you have any questions that you need help with at the moment?" He had to prolong their conversation until he figured out how to get a DNA sample from her. It was the only way.

He moved on his seat, shifting from one position to another as he scanned the room for anything he could use. Hair if he could spot her brush, but that would be in her bag in the corner of the room.

Blood, but that would require her to bleed. That was not another option. Bodily fluids, such as saliva and sweat, were his best bet, but how to collect them.

"At the moment, I am busy with my other cases, but if I have one, I will go directly to you." She answered him, indicating the files piled up on her desk.

He could sense that she was implying that she was busy and would rather be alone but was too nice to show him the door. But he still had to get a sample from her.

"By the way, I heard that Nick's case was closed. It is sad what happened to him, but I hope it has somehow brought you some closure." He could tell that it was a sensitive topic but a good subject for conversation, using it to prolong his stay in her office.

"Yes, I am partially glad, at least that particular part of my life was over. But I still wished he had served his punishment and not died just like that." She reiterated her belief that everyone deserved a second chance.

It was one of the things he believed they did not share. Maybe it was something Dani picked up from Ethan, but in his case, he grew up with a man who taught him to put matters in his hands.

Again, he could not help but think if he had grown up raised by Ethan, would he be different. Would his principles be as pure as Daniella's?

But the sad fact, with a clenched fist on his side, his mind reminded him that the man who claimed he was his father abandoned and left him in the care of a man who hated Ethan.

Now, he was confused about whether to continue what his father had made him promise on his mother's grave. Or just believed Ethan and went from there. Go with the flow.

Chapter 698: An illegitimate brother

But believing Ethan did not mean that he could forgive him for what happened to him. It might change a few things in his plans, but it did not mean that they would automatically become one big family.

But before he went on ahead of himself. He still needed a sample to prove that it was even true. That Dani could be his sister.

Gerald hoped that what he felt for her was a protective instinct to keep his sister safe and not a sick obsession to possess her like Nick.

“At least you can close that part of your life and finally feel safe again.” But the reaction on her face told him that she still had some doubts.

Suddenly, his suspicion that she might know something about another entity involved in the kidnapping might be true. She might be aware of him but could not pinpoint him yet. This information suddenly changed everything.

Because if she learned his true identity, his secrets might not be safe with her. What to do with that knowledge? Well, one question at a time. He still needed his sample.

“Yeah, I guess you are right.” Dani finally replied, but her eyes still seemed bothered by something else.

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But something caught his eyes as his head turned around the room. The trash had an empty cup. It might have her lipstick on the top portion or some of her saliva.

That should be enough sample if he could get his hands on it. But it would be too suspicious if he suddenly took the trash with him. That would come out as weird and creepy. He should better come up with a better plan.

Suddenly, her mobile phone rang, making her preoccupied with something else. She excused herself as she answered the call, turning her chair away.

He saw that as an opportunity to grab the cup, and fortunately, it was empty. He quickly folded it in half and slid it into his pocket.

By the time she turned to face him, he had secured the cup safely where she could not see it. But it was trash that he doubted she would be looking for anymore.

“I am sorry about that.” Apologizing for making him wait. But he did not mind since he had already accomplished his mission of coming to see her. He finally had his sample.

“I think I would not waste any more of your time. But I also need to get back to work.” He stood up from his chair, watching her, but his mind was already thinking of what he would do next.

“Oh.” She was slightly surprised, but she understood. “Thank you for stopping by and offering your assistance.” She told him, looking thankful that he had offered his help.

He immediately rode back to the elevator and took out his phone. With a few flicks on the screen, his phone started ringing. Soon, a man answered.

“I need to see you at our old meeting place. I have something for you to do.” He instructed on the line before quickly ending the call.

A few seconds later, the elevator chimed and indicated he had reached his floor. But instead of going up, he was now in the lobby of the building, walking on his way out. As soon as he reached outside, he whistled, and a cab stopped in front of him.

After thirty minutes, he waited inside a cafeteria, far from the busy business center, with a black coffee in his hand. With people coming and going, but none he would recognize, even if he wanted to check their faces.

It was the part of the city they could safely converse without people recognizing him much or the person he was meeting. But he needed his help with this one. But he could not see him in the places he frequented.

He looked again at his watch, wondering why his date was late. But he knew this person was a busy man, just like him, but he knew he could trust him.

"Where are you?" He anxiously sipped on his coffee, almost drinking most of it.

He was not afraid that someone might see him, but he wanted answers, and he was itching to get them at the soonest possible time.

"I am sorry if I am late, but if you did not get the memo. I am retired and was on vacation." The man sat across from him with a big grin planted on his face.

The man raised his hand, catching the attention of the server. After ordering, he dismissed her and proceeded to look at him.

"What is this all about?" He curiously asked, sitting comfortably on his seat.

"If you are retired, why are you here?" He could not blame the man for not pursuing his career in this art. But sometimes, fate had different plans for all of them.

"Because I could not stay away." He indifferently replied, thanking the woman who placed the coffee before him. "Anyway, what is this meeting about?"

"I need you to have this tested for DNA compatibility," Gerald explained but did not give him enough details to indicate who owned those samples.

He handed him a plastic containing several strands of hair and a paper cup wrapped in plastic.

"This seems very important, but why the secrecy." The man asked again, but he could not tell him.

"I am sorry, Lord, but this information is on a need-to-know basis." He told the detective, hoping that his skills had not waiver since it had been a while since he had last used his services.

As the man said, he was retiring.

"Just sent me the result in our usual way." He instructed, not wanting to meet with him again. That would be too risky.

Then, he dropped some bills on the table, covering the coffees they ordered and a few tips.

He moved out and rode another cab, not saying anything else or looking back. But his mind went back to the girl left in his office building. His sister, if the DNA tests would match.

As long as she had no idea about his identity, he was ok with that. But his mind still wondered why Ethan had not told her sister that she had an illegitimate brother.

Chapter 699: A possible queen

Lance ran his hand through his hair, feeling the frustration running through his body. Until now, he was bothered by the turn of events. He was not expecting that he would end up in such a complicated situation.

He had been reviewing the papers before him, but all his eyes saw were the image of her beautiful face, remembering the way her body moved with his.

“Aaahhh!” Shouting his annoyance at how his body and mind were reacting to her. He was like a schoolboy who just had started having sex. He could not control his need to have her.

He stood up from his chair, going to the side of his table and taking a full glass of scotch. He should not be drinking at work, but he had a valid reason.

Taking a large swig before swallowing a mouthful, he returned to his seat, hoping that it was enough to relax him. He settled the glass on the side of his table, returning to his work.

So far, it was a futile effort as his mind swirled to another face. His mind shifted to the woman he had sworn to protect and love. But just as a friend and a sister. He slumped down on his table, cradling his head in the palms of his hands.

“Look at what you have done.” A bass tone interrupted him, jerking him away from his thought.

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He looked up from his position, looking at his father, who walked through his doors, not waiting for his secretary to announce his arrival.

“What did I do this time?” Lance asked irritably as his eyes narrowed at his father, wondering what he was talking about this time.

His father had reprimanded him this morning when his father summoned him to appear before him during breakfast. He thought it was the end when he told him that he had no plan to marry his childhood friend.

When his secretary heard his father’s angry tone, she immediately moved back and closed the door to give them some privacy.

“Amelia is missing because you humiliated her by rejecting her.” The Count said in an accusing tone.

“You know she has been in love with you since you were young.”

His father’s eyes were blazing with fury, but his hands fisted on his side, but still, he tried to control his temper as he continued to walk toward him.

“Missing?” He was suddenly alarmed by the news. His mind quickly searched for places where his friend could have gone in times like this.

He stood from his chair, moving to the window as guilt again engulfed him, remembering his face of Amelia when she saw him walk out of Eida’s room.

He had no idea that Amelia was in the house, not expecting that she frequented Eida's apartment. He was not even aware that Eida was entertaining a guest.

"Yes, his father had been looking for him. Since yesterday, she had not shown up in their house, but it was doubtful that she had left the country since her papers were still in her room." His father continued, explaining the current situation.

His father paced in his office as if waiting for him to make a move in looking for her. But he had no plan of doing that. Amelia was not his obligation.

"Well, are you not going to do anything about this?" His father stopped in front of his table and stared at him, angrily narrowing his eyes, directing at him.

"Amelia is a grown-up woman who had lived her life alone, away from us for a long time. I am sure that she was more than capable of taking care of herself." He was not falling into this trap that his father and friend set up for him.

Once he started searching for Amelia, they would think that he had finally conceded to their desire and proceeded with their plans. He was not allowing them to meddle with his life.

He might be confused about how he felt for Eida, but he did not want to marry Amelia. He was sure of that. There was a difference between the two.

"So, you are letting Amelia suffer because you are too high and mighty that you could not even show mercy to that poor girl." The Count was using guilt to push what he wanted.

His father was good at this tactic. He did not mind before since he did not find anything wrong in following his suggestions. But this time, it was different. He disagreed with what his father wanted.

"Marrying Amelia is putting her in misery. Not marrying her is showing mercy." Lance corrected his father, believing that he only wanted to save them from a lifetime of torment.

He walked back to his chair, thinking of looking for her to make sure she was safe, but he had no plan of telling his father about it.

"What is wrong with you? Amelia is beautiful, kind, talented, and more. Besides, she already loves you. Why are you having doubts about marrying her?" His father exasperatedly asked as he waved his hand in the air as if he was slowly losing his temper.

"Because I do not love her." He finally answered his father, opening a file of his work, pretending to be busy.

He lowered his head to the files, assuming a working position. But his father did not buy it as he grabbed the folder and closed it on his face.

"We are not yet through talking about this. Don't act like you are busy because you are drinking in the middle of the day." His father's eyes darted at his drink.

Nothing seemed to miss his father's attention as he grabbed his glass with a few remaining of his drink and threw it on the wall, smashing the glass to pieces.

“As long as you are my son, you will marry Amelia and become the King of this Kingdom.” His father shouted before storming out of his office, fuming with anger.

He watched his father’s back disappear behind the corner. Then he was once again alone in his office. But he was left with more things to think about than before.

His father had already mentioned his wish to make him King, which he had already declined. But it seemed his father was determined to pursue that route.

Now, he could see why his father was so adamant about arranging this marriage because this would suit his plans well. Amelia would be a suitable wife for a future King. But what about Eida, his mind asked. Did she have the qualities of a possible queen?

Chapter 700: Not wise to decide on an empty stomach

She woke up to the beeping sound, but when she noticed that the patient was still sleeping, she decided to close her eyes again and continue sleeping on the small sofa on the side of the room.

After a while, a tap on her shoulder woke her up. She gradually opened her eyelids, putting her hand above her face to block the light, allowing her eyes to adjust to the brightness inside the room.

“Excuse me, Miss Blake, but I think you have not eaten since this morning. There is a cafeteria downstairs. I can look after your grandmother for a while. Try to eat something first.” The nurse that woke her up had concern on her face.

It took her a while to understand what she was saying. Then, she remembered she had pretended to be her friend’s granddaughter. So, she could remain and accompany her while she waited for her actual family member to arrive.

“Just call me Amelia.” She introduced herself, uncomfortable using her friend’s name in her facade. “Oh, how is Angela?” She quickly shifted on the sofa and sat, finding her muscles protesting from the uncomfortable position her body injured while sleeping.

Her eyes darted to the patient who lay on the bed, still peacefully sleeping with the monitors steadily beeping in time with her heartbeat and breathing.

“She is fine and sleeping. Hopefully, she will recover and wake up soon. So, you better take care of yourself and eat.” The bubbly nurse smiled at her as she moved to take Angela’s vitals.

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“I am glad to hear that.” She responded, stretching her arms and legs to get the cramps out of her stiff muscles.

She grabbed her bag to check on her phone, but her battery must have died down as it failed to open after several tries. She quickly hid it away, thinking it did not matter at the moment.

“I am glad to learn that Angela has another grandchild who takes care of her. I kept telling her that she should not live alone in that apartment of hers. But she would not listen.” The nurse continued, replacing her bag of IV fluids.

"It was fortunate I came to visit when she had an attack," Amelia explained, not wanting the nurse to think she was living with her.

"Yes, it is a lucky break for her. I kept telling her that she should also ask her grandson to come over and take care of her or go and live with him, but she is a stubborn old goat." The nurse reprimanded the sleeping lady as if she could hear her.

She sat more comfortably as she listened to the nurse tell her more about her new friend and her family, which only consisted of his grandson, so it seemed.

"You should have informed his grandson about her condition." Suddenly she bit her lips, hoping that the nurse did not notice her slipped up. She did not want her to suspect her lie.

Pretending to be her granddaughter, she should know who her grandson was. She should be the one to inform him herself. But in her defense, his grandson should be checking on her condition. Not living life as if he had no family.

"Once, I called her grandson, finding his name on her emergency list, he quickly flew to see her. A real handsome man." The middle-aged nurse said dreamily. "A sweet boy too."

She continued telling her about the great qualities of the man who took care of his grandmother.

"He would not leave her side even for a minute, just like you. Afraid that something might happen to her while he was gone." She narrated as she finished her last check on the apparatus attached to her patient.

"Then, when Angela woke up, she was fuming at me for calling him. She said he would drop everything he was doing to be with her." The nurse's face turned solemn as she remembered those moments.

"He would even leave his successful life in another country just to come home and take care of her. She did not like that." The nurse kept telling her.

"I suggested she should at least live in a nursing home so that she will have company. But she also refused that." The nurse shook her head.

She disapproved of Angela's point of view or her grandson. Although, she understood her for not going to a nursing home. She had such a lovely home that leaving it would be hard.

However, she would forego everything to be with her and take care of her if she was her real granddaughter. She would not care about her successful career outside this city as long as she was with her.

She would have done the same thing for his father if he was not as cruel and selfish. But at the moment, she would rather stay here and take care of someone that was not her flesh and blood than go home to be with her only family.

"But maybe you should talk to him and convince him to check on her. I still have his number." The nurse took out a piece of paper. "I know Angela only has one grandson and no one else."

The nurse tapped her on the shoulders before walking to the door. It seemed she knew all along that she was faking it.

“Just holler if you wish to take that break, and I will happily take over for you for a while.” She offered again, leaving her alone.

It seemed her acting might be good, but they would never fool that woman.

She stared at the piece of paper in her hands, debating if she should call this man and tell him about Angela’s condition. But what would she say to him? What about Angela? Would she be mad at her for meddling with her affair?

But her stomach finally growled, reminding her that she had not eaten anything since yesterday, except for the sandwich that one of the nurses handed her last night.

She grabbed her bag and walked over to her friend. She took her hand and gently squeezed it. “I will be back.” Whispering as she planted a soft kiss on her temples.

She walked out of the room and informed the nurse that she would be by the cafeteria to take a break. With the number safely tucked in her bag, she thought it was not wise to decide on an empty stomach.