

## Royal Contract 731

### Chapter 731: Sealing the deal

"Jacob, what are you doing?" A voice behind him shouted, but he was busy with a patient.

He ignored her.

"I want you to take deep breaths for me." He instructed the young man, who sat in the bed as he moved his stethoscope along his back.

He knew that she was not done with him yet, but he preferred to care for his patients than do what she asked him to do. Besides, the hospital was swamped with people who needed him.

"Jacob!" She was now standing in front of him, on the other side of the bed. "I thought we had a deal." It seemed she was not giving up yet.

"Doc, the lady seems to be talking to you." The man shifted his gaze from him to the woman beside him, confused and slightly finding it awkward to be caught between them.

But he did notice that his eyes were glancing at her longer than necessary. Well, she was indeed beautiful and sexy. Men could not help but turn their heads at her.

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"Cassie, can't you see that I have a ton of patients to take care of today?" His eyes widened at her as if making a point and his hands gestured to the pack emergency room.

He promised he would try to make it to the meeting, but at the moment, he could not just leave his patients. A fire broke out in a nearby building, and many patients were still coming in by the minute.

"I can see that, but surely, the other doctors could handle their care." Cassie pouted as if she was disappointed about the entire situation.

As much as he would like to indulge her and make her smile again. At the moment, the lives of these people were his priority. The board meeting of his new company would have to wait for another time.

Cassie still had to learn that being a doctor was not something he did for the money. He genuinely cared about his patients and would never leave their side until he was sure they would be ok.

"Cassie, this is what I want you to do?" He left his patient and pulled Cassie out of the cubicle where he treated his patient. "Come with me."

Once outside and in an empty hallway, he finally faced her. "What?" She looked up to him with that stubborn eyes, ready to fight with him because of what she thought was right.

"I am a doctor first before whatever all of you want me to be. You said that you will be there to help me, then this is what I need you to do." He paused, studying her, assuring himself that she was listening to him this time.

"Ok. Fine." She finally settled down as her hands crossed her chest. "What is it?" She might not like what he had to say, but he knew she would still do it because he trusted her.

"I want you to have a lawyer draw up an agreement making you my CEO." He knew that was the only way that he did not have to think of that company that he never wanted in the first place.

She deserved it anyway, and besides, she was better at this job than he ever was. He had tried to study it. But between his profession, his fellowship, and the company, he had barely time for anything else.

"You could not just give your company away." She shouted at him, earning him some glares from the passersby.

He decided to pull her inside an empty stock room for medical supplies and lock the door. He did not want the others to learn that he had inherited a multimillion-dollar company. He liked his privacy the way it was as long as possible.

"I can, and I just did." For him, his decision was already final. The paper works were just for formality's sake.

"That is not how this works. Besides, why would you give me the company? What if I take it from you?" Now, Cassie looked exasperated, as if what he said was out of this world.

Well, if it was another person and not Cassie. Then, he would think hard before entrusting the company to anyone else. But this was Cassie.

It was a no-brainer.

He would give up the company to her in a heartbeat.

"Because you are you." He answered her as if that should answer all her questions, but she only stared at him as if he had gone crazy. "Will you steal it from under me?" He asked, directly looking into her eyes.

"Of course not." Cassie automatically answered him as if what he said was so unthinkable.

"Precisely why you are perfect for the job." He told her as his hands wrapped around her shoulders. "I know you will do better than me in this job." He pulled her even closer to his body.

If the worst-case scenario, she would decide to run away with his company and money. He would not probably blame her. He would not mind if she took that away from him.

He believed it was not enough payment for what his brother had done to her. For all the troubles and trauma she had to endure. And for all the help she gave to him.

"You think so," Cassie questioned him as if she was doubting herself. But he could already tell that she would manage just fine.

She was more resilient and more persistent than everyone thought. She would not have survived under Nick's rule if she was not beneficial in his operations.

He believed she was the brain of the corporation and not his foolish and evil brother. And he could trust her to manage the company left to him by his father.

"I know so." He tilted her face up so she would be looking at him. "You will do a great job in running that place." He assured her.

However, a knock interrupted their conversation as a nurse called for his attention. "I will be out in a few seconds." He told her before turning his attention to the woman in his arms.

Then, he lowered his head to her until their lips finally touched, sealing the deal between them.

Chapter 732: Career or love

Lance did not return to her that night nor the next day. Although he called to say sorry because of an emergency, she doubted it was the real reason.

She concluded that his father had something to do with it. She could think of several scenarios, the Count managed to force Lance to make those excuses, or he was fabricating all those problems to keep Lance away from her.

But what could she do? Should she force herself into their lives when it was evident his father did not want her?

She was left pacing in her office, not knowing what to do, conflicted about what she felt about the man that had turned her life upside down.

"Eida, the boss wants you in his office?" Her assistant told her.

That was another situation that was bothering her. Until now, she had not come up with a way to put Lance on the hot seat. Thinking about her job had suddenly taken a back seat.

She had never thought that she would end up in a situation like this since she had worked hard to avoid involving herself with a man. That had been her number one rule.

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But it seemed she broke her own rule just because she could not control her obsession with a prince. Now, she was even jeopardizing her career for him.

Was it worth it?

"Give me a minute." She finally answered, taking a deep breath to expel her thoughts out of her mind.

She could not face her bosses, feeling like the world was on fire. She had to think of another excuse for why her story took so long to finish.

After several calming breaths and a pep talk with herself, she grabbed her phone and walked out of her office, determined to plead her case with her bosses.

Once outside the door of the producer of the network, she could already hear him and another man discussing something. But that could not be her director. Who else was involved in the meeting?

"Are you sure that I am ok to go inside? It seemed he still has a meeting with someone else." She asked his secretary, confused that she would send her in with another meeting, still ongoing.

"He said to send you in as soon as you arrived." His secretary shrugged her shoulders as if she had no idea what was going on.

She squared her shoulders, ready to face whatever was behind those doors. She had no idea who else was inside, but she would find out soon enough.

It might be another client who wanted a story done on them. It was not unusual. Many wealthy people wanted their faces splashed on the screens and their daily lives broadcast to the whole world.

"Excuse me, Sir. You called for me." Usually, Eida would barge into his office if she knew that he had no other company or if she knew who else was in the room.

But with a new client, she had to practice good decorum and office etiquette. She had to act very professionally for her career.

"Hi, Eida. Please come inside." His producer gestured for her to proceed inside the room, but she could not recognize the man sitting on the other chair since his back was facing her.

She could only see the gray hairs on the top of his head and his broad shoulders. But the suit he wore told her that he was no ordinary man, concluding that he was either an investor or a client.

As she walked further inside, she still kept her eyes on their visitor, glancing at his producer, who had a wide grin on his lips. Maybe it was good news. But where was her director?

"Good morning, Ms. Harlowe." The guest greeted her when she was near enough, as he also simultaneously turned around to reveal himself.

His face was smiling, but his eyes were anything but happy to see her. What could she expect from the father of the man she was sleeping with, a warm welcome?

But what was he doing in this office? Suddenly, the threat that he would make her life a living hell and destroy her career came to mind. Was this the day?

"Good morning, Count Wellington. I am certainly surprised to see you here." She offered her hand to the man, unlike the last time they were in her apartment.

The man took it, but instead of shaking it, he lifted them to his lips and kissed her knuckles, treating her like a lady, which she doubted was his intention.

"Oh, I did not know that you two knew each other." Her producer interrupted their private conversation as she quickly pulled her hands from his.

He eventually took his seat while his boss remained standing near her. She would have taken a sit, but she knew she would be more comfortable if she stood up.

"Oh, we met before." The Count answered but did not give many details as he turned to her boss and smiled. "We have a very nice conversation about her life and career. How much do I admire her work ethic?"

But hidden in that smile, she knew he was up to something she might not like, and she was afraid to find out. She was usually strong and brave, but today, she was terrified.

Her boss turned to her as if waiting for her answer. She had no choice but to respond. "Yes, we have," Eida answered with a forced smile on her lips.

“Then, you would not mind taking this new assignment.” Her producer asked her directly, looking into her face as if reading her thoughts. But she could already see the excitement in his eyes.

She could tell that there was only one answer that her producer wanted to hear. That was a yes. She was put on the spot and had no way to say no.

Now, she understood why her director was not present. So, she would not have any backup to make excuses for her. But she never had back out from a challenge, and this man was assuredly testing her.

“What is the new assignment?” She finally asked, but already knowing it was something that would stretch her courage, resilience, and patience.

It would be a story that would make her choose between her profession or her relationship with Lance. Would it be career or love?

Chapter 733: A big fat liar

Did she actually think of choosing between her career and love?

Love, what did she know about it?

Her profession was everything to her.

Was she in love with Lance?

Eida had worked hard to reach where she was in her career now.

“What was wrong with me?” She whispered to herself.

She had no idea.

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She slammed her body on her couch, relaxing her head on the backrest as she looked at the ceiling, staring blankly above her. It had been a long day for her at the office. Her body was not tired, but her mind was.

Suddenly, she felt lonely. A feeling that she had hated since her parents died. An emotion she had buried in the deepest portion of her heart, swearing not to feel again.

She had managed just fine in her young single life. Even coped with what Nick had done to her. But since she found herself lying on that floor, staring into the eyes of that prince, her world had changed drastically.

“Why did you have to pursue him?” She shook her head, regretting putting herself in this situation.

She opened her television, putting it on a movie, but her eyes were not interested in watching it. Then, she pressed the channel switch, scanning the other networks that would pick her interest.

But still, nothing.

Until finally, she settled with a newscaster, reporting about the weather. It was better than listening to anything else. Finally, even if she did not understand half of what he said, she felt calmer.

Then, her doorknob started twisting and turning.

She was not expecting anyone as a company tonight, not even him. But he was the only one who would come to her door and open it without knocking.

But was she ready to face him after what happened since he left her? Did she need to tell him that his father had come over to her apartment and office?

Should she tell him that his father was willing to do anything to stop her from seeing him? Still, she did not feel like they were already at that level for him to fight for her.

She was not delusional that she was the girl he was looking for. Maybe now, he was amused with her. But when it came down to choosing between his title and her, she doubted he would give his position up.

"Hey, I was calling you all day. What happened to you?" Lance moved closer to her, standing before her with his eyes knitted in question.

She only looked at him but did not answer, still confused about what to do with him. But she kept pretending that she was interested in the news.

"Nothing." She finally muttered under her breath when he would not move out of her sight. "There were just some issues that I had to deal with at the office today." She was not lying about that.

She moved to the other side of the couch, away from him, unblocking the view of the screen. But he quickly grabbed the remote from her hands, turning off the television.

Then, he was on her face again.

"Is that really all?" He stood before her, looking unconvinced as he threw the remote on the other part of the couch.

She was not acting normal, so she could not blame him if he was suspicious. But how could she hide what she felt when it was churning inside her, making her close her eyes, to force herself to forget it.

"No." She could not lie to him. It was against her moral fiber to tell him that everything was ok when... "It is not." Opening her eyes again to gaze at him.

Now, his face was confused like her. His eyes focused on her face as if he was trying to read her thoughts, but how could he know what truly happened if she would not tell him.

"So, what is the problem?" He finally knelt before her, letting his fingers rest on her knees as he gazed at her more closely, convincing her to tell him.

She thought it would be easy to decide when he was finally standing close to her. But as she looked into his eyes, it was not. Had she really fallen in love with him? Was this what love felt like?

Her heart twisted in her guts as she recalled her earlier conversation with her boss and the Count. She thought it would be easy to give him up for her career.

"How much do you like me?" She believed she could not decide without knowing how he felt about her.

How could she risk everything for someone who might not feel the same way? Although she was unsure if this was love, she would still fight for it if he had the same feelings for her too.

“What kind of question is that?” His lips turned into a smile as if he found her question silly.

But she was dead serious, and she needed an honest answer from him.

“Just answer it.” Putting her hands on his face. And then she let her palms touch his cheeks, forcing his eyes to focus on her.

“I like you very much.” His lips uttered in his sweet baritone voice. If he would sing to her now, she knew she would love the sound of his voice. But was that answer enough.

But he did answer her question.

She wondered if she could ask him what was going through her head. But how would she know the answer if he did not know the question?

“Is it enough for you to give up your crown and your family?” She knew that was a loaded question. Not an easy answer to make.

Compared to what she was willing to give up, his stake was monumental. She knew that but still, to her, hers was her entire life.

“Where are these questions coming from?” His puzzled look covered his face, but he seemed to be taken aback by her question as he suddenly stood up.

He slightly turned to his side as if thinking before he returned his attention to her. “Did something happen? What is it that you are not telling me?”

She quickly looked down on the floor, avoiding looking at him. Then, she closed her eyes, wanting her mind to process her situation.

She did not want to judge him. But somehow, not responding to her question seemed to be the answer she had been looking for. As if clarity came to her in a tidal wave of emotions.

“I think we had played around long enough. Hurt people that we should not have. I think it is time that we end all of this.” She finally made her decision.

It was not just for her, but she believed it was for them.

She could not ask him to give up his heritage just because she felt the itch for him. She was not even sure if she loved him. But this was for the better.

But it did not feel right.

Why did her heart hurt to say those words? Because she was a big fat liar.

Chapter 734: With just a whim

“That was a new record.” Rick double-checked his timer, verifying he had the time correctly before recording it on their log. “But that was a dangerous run.” His team captain told him, confirming that he beat his last record by a few seconds.

Lance removed his helmet from his head, taking deep breaths to inhale the fresh air. Letting his hair fly with the wind as he cleared his mind.

"I only did my job," Lance answered sarcastically, moving away from his car. But before he could get far, he turned to the crew. "I want the car ready to run in thirty minutes."

He stepped quickly away from his team to return to his locker room to refresh before his next run. But he could feel that Rick was not yet through with him as he followed him inside.

He nodded to the other drivers who he passed by on his way, congratulating him for a good run. Some of them might be envious of him, while others might hope he would mess up someday.

"Are you sure that is a good idea?" Rick walked in front of him as he opened his locker to get a towel to dry the sweat on his face. Lance grabbed the bottled water Rick pushed in his hand, removing the cap in one twist, chugging half of its content. Still, he did not answer him right away, enjoying the water coursing down his body.

Then, he sat down on the bench in the middle of the lockers, trying to relax his body before his next run. On the other hand, Rick moved to his locker and leaned his big body on its door as he faced him.

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"What?" He looked up from his slumber. His face must be a picture of irritation, judging from the reaction on his friend's face. But he did not wait for him to answer his question.

He could not stand to look at his friend, so he laid down on the long wooden bench, putting his arm across his face and pretending to rest his eyes.

"Is this something to do with that chic? That media lady that you brought here." Rick continued talking even if he acted like he was not interested in listening to him.

"Did he ditch you, or did you dump her? But from the way you are acting. It might be the latter." Rick answered with a snicker on his lips. "I hope you banged her good before it ended."

He opened the bottled water he held in his other hand and drank a few gulps before staring at him again, trying to get a reaction from him.

From his stance, he implied that he was not leaving until he got to the bottom of the problem.

That was Rick. He would snoop into all his secrets, not content to only learn a few of them. He wanted whatever was bothering him out in the open because he never liked surprises. That was what made him great at his job.

"She dumped me." Lance finally mumbled, still confused as to why. "Happy?" He knew that was uncalled for since his team captain was only looking after him.

"I would be happy if you were not acting like a devil was lighting your ass." Rick chugged the rest of his water and threw the empty bottle into the canister on the corner.



It flew as if it would land in the middle, but it still bounced on the edge of the trash bin and landed on the floor. Rick did not care since someone else would pick it up. But his eyes focused on him as he waited for him to tell him more.

“We were doing ok. Except for the few minor hiccups, we seemed to be clicking.” He unhooked his arm from his face and sat again, facing his mentor. “I liked her, and she seemed to like me.”

He looked up momentarily at him before pushing his face on his palms, rubbing them to release his frustration.

“Then, what happened? I doubted that you did something that would offend her.” Rick knew him too well.

He was not a guy who would fool around or do anything intentionally to hurt a girl. But somehow, he still managed to do something to make her end what he thought was going so well.

He did not understand why.

Her reasons were so unreasonable.

Then, why did he run out of her apartment like his ass was on fire? Rick was right. The devil was on his tail and was about to burn him into hell.

“I think I did.” Because he realized he was not ready to answer her question.

That unreasonable question.

Why would she ask him that?

How could she ask him to give up his birthright? It was not as if he was giving up the throne, but it was a legacy that his family had handed down to him.

For what, for her.

Although he never saw his father eye to eye, still, he could not turn his back on him because of a girl. Could he?

But could he also give her up? Thinking about the woman who he turned his back on and left in her apartment.

Suddenly, he was concerned that he should have been more patient and taken the time to think this through. He should have asked more questions than just accepted the words that came out of her mouth.

“Well, I am not good at advising on a relationship. But one thing I know about it, you have to follow your heart.” Rick stated as he walked away to give him some time to deal with him alone.

He stood from his seat before his thirty-minute was up, walking towards the door, ready to make his next run. He strode to the pit stop to face his crew. He could see that his car was ready for another round.

“Guys, park the car. I am leaving.” He was still racing today, but not at the tracks but on the street.

He had to rectify what he messed up because he did not look at the big picture. He had to get to the bottom of this. He doubted that Eida would decide on something as big as this with just a whim.

Chapter 735: By far, the worst

"I hope you already know what you are planning to do." Rick stopped him as he was about to exit the locker room.

Lance stopped in his track and looked at his friend. At this point, he was not his mentor anymore. He tapped him on the shoulder, assuring him that he was ok.

He could see the concern in his eyes. He was afraid that he was not in his right mind to drive. "I am good. Did you see me out there? I was on fire."

One thing about him, the more stressed his mind was, the more he could focus on the road. He would manage just fine on the light traffic out there.

"Good luck, then." Rick saluted him before stepping away from him, allowing him to leave the building. But he could still see that he was not satisfied with his answer. But he knew Rick was thankful that he canceled his run.

Although he did not need luck, he needed a miracle that Eida would be open to hearing him out. And that she would not shut him out because of his narrow-minded decision to let her go that easily.

He quickly jumped into his fast car, ready to race again, not for his career but her. Was this love? He was unsure, but he was willing to take a risk with her.

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At least with that, he was sure, stepping on the pedal as his car roared into life. Soon, he was leaving the parking lot, moving along the busy street.

He only hoped that she would open her door once she had learned it was him behind it. If not, he had no choice but to camp outside her door until she got tired of shooing him away and had no choice but to face him.

"You got this." Pepping himself up for what he needed to do. If he had to grovel at her feet for her to forgive him, he would as long as she would give him a chance to prove that whatever was going on with their relationship, they could still fix it.

He stepped on the pedal, shifting the gear to a faster speed, seeing that there was clear traffic ahead. Although he was not racing with other cars in the street, he was still determined to run faster than the allowed speed.

He could not wait a minute longer not being with her. He felt that every second he wasted was time that would lessen his chances with her. The sooner he arrived at her doorstep, the better.

"Not another stop light," Lance said frustratedly, seeing that it was about to turn yellow on him. He could attempt to beat the red light. He knew he could make it with his current speed, but a minute would not make much difference.

He shifted gear, eased on the gas, and slowed the car until it stopped at the intersection. He believed that with speed also came great responsibility.

He might be good at what he does, but he could not compromise the safety of the other people on the road. He could pay for a broken property, but life was not replaceable. He could not fix that.

"Really?" He looked at the street after a few seconds, amazed because it seemed that he had stopped for nothing when not a single car crossed the road while he was waiting.

If he had crossed the red light earlier, he would have been there in a few minutes. But it was still better to be safe than sorry.

As he saw that the lights were about to turn again, he revved up his engine, ready to race for the finish line.

At least to get to her apartment where he hoped she was waiting.

He grabbed his phone as he remembered something. He dialed it as he waited for the yellow light to turn green.

When it started ringing, he looked down at the screen. But as he looked up again, the green light was already on. He put the phone on speaker and dropped it on the seat beside him.

Not waiting for another second, he held the steering wheel in one of his hands and the gear shift in the other. With the coordination of a well-oiled machine, he roared his engine and had the car speeding up in a couple of seconds.

Finally, he could hear someone on the speaker calling for his attention, so he looked at it for a second. Then there it was.

Lance could see a bright light coming his way and speeding fast, visible from his passenger window.

He knew then that no amount of skills could get him off from what was to come. He had no way to avoid the next thing that would happen.

His hands gripped hard on the wheels as if it was his only life support. But this time, instead of looking at the light, he looked down at his phone and listened.

At that moment, it was the last voice he wanted to hear.

Eventually, he felt the impact. His hands lost their grip on the steering wheel as it flew in all directions. It was mere seconds, but, in his mind, it was like he was watching it in slow motion.

He could imagine what was happening to him as his head swayed to the side, hitting the metallic bar by his door. Fortunately, his seatbelt stayed intact, protecting him from being thrown on the street and the airbag from the intensity of the crash.

But he could only wonder if he would ever survive the trauma of the accident as his entire body went numb. He could still sense that his car went spinning. But he did not care about that. He was used to those situations.

But as he looked at the wrecked window in front of him, he could only wonder what damage his body incurred, just from the sound of metal crashing and breaking, forcing their movement to stop, and the stench of rubber burning on the concrete road.

He would be lucky if he would survive the night. He always wondered if this would happen to him inside the arena, but he had never allowed his fear to bother him, to control his action.

Sadly, it happened when he least expected it.

Although this was not his first accident, this was, by far, the worst.

Chapter 736: Best friend

It was late as she looked again at her watch. Amelia waved her hand to the chauffeur she had hired while she was here to take her around town.

She decided that while she was here, she might as well deal with promoting some of her charitable programs lined up on her agenda.

The driver assisted her inside the car and returned to the driver's side. "Where to, Ms. Amelia?" Then, he turned to her, asking for direction as he started the engine.

"Just drive me back to the hotel." She tiredly responded, yawning a bit, feeling the exhaustion of her body. She could not wait to reach her room and hit the bed.

At least she felt she accomplished something today, suddenly missing going back to work. Maybe it was time she left and went back to the place she had considered home for the last three years.

She looked at the view outside of her window, thinking that she used to call this place home, but now, she felt there was nothing else that would anchor her down to this place. It was time to leave for good.

"Yes, Mam." Her driver responded, quickly glancing her way before focusing his eyes on the road.

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Amelia leaned her body on the backrest in the backseat of the car, closing her eyes, expecting it would take around thirty minutes before arriving at her hotel.

Then, her mind finally relaxed, allowing her body to enjoy the steady movement of the car as if it was humming her to sleep. Fortunately, she did not have to deal with traffic when it was this late.

But tonight was not the case as the driver informed her that they had to take the longer route because of heavy traffic ahead. It was either an accident happened or a construction.

Anyway, she had no choice but to be patient as the car turned around, away from the shorter path toward her hotel. She decided to rest her eyes, closing them as she rested her back in a more comfortable position.

"Excuse me, Miss Amelia." The driver's voice woke her up. She did not even realize that she had dozed off. But she was glad. She needed it after a few nights of restless sleep.

She looked out the window, finally comprehending that the driver was telling her that they had reached their destination. She smiled at him and thanked him for his service.

Once inside the hotel room, she removed her shoes, dropping her bag with her phone on the lone chair in the middle of the massive space. Then she tumbled down on the bed just like she had imagined in the car.

For the first time, all she wanted was to close her eyes. She smiled at herself, looking forward to a dreamless sleep. "Tomorrow." She mumbled in her sleep. "I am leaving tomorrow." Finally, deciding that she had enough.

But what was she running away from this time? Was it her past or the present? As her mind conjured up the image of a man that was not her prince charming, but a man that looked like a pirate, ready to steal her virtue.

Soon, she was floating in dreamland, but instead of running away, she was with the man on the sandy shore, frolicking under the sun, smiling at whatever he was saying.

Then, she abruptly woke up, bothered by her dream. "No." She said to herself, unable to accept that she was still thinking about him.

Suddenly, she felt thirsty and hungry, remembering she barely ate much during all her meetings. Now, her stomach was demanding sustenance.

She rummaged in the mini-fridge, finding a can of juice and some chips on the cabinets. Better to eat than think about that man.

Once satisfied with what she found, she settled on the sofa and opened the television to entertain herself. Maybe a late movie after eating would lull her back to sleep.

As she scanned the remote, looking for something interesting, her fingers accidentally stopped at a news channel before deciding to take a bathroom break.

Then, when she came out of the bathroom and returned to her seat, the news finally caught her attention. Usually, she would skip anything about road accidents, but something about it made her watch.

"A man was found almost lifeless inside his car. After a car collision on the empty street in the middle of downtown." The reporter said. The screen showed a flash of the car and the occupant, who had his blood over his face.

She tried to look closely at the screen, wondering why he seemed familiar, maybe because she had seen that sports car before. Someone close to her owned that car, but that could not be him. He was always careful in the street.

Then, displayed on the screen, written in bold letters, was something she would never expect to see in the news, as the reporter confirmed his identity.

PRINCE LANCE WELLINGTON WAS INVOLVED IN A DEADLY ACCIDENT.

She dropped the food she held in her hands, letting it fall on the floor as her mind swirled with the terrible news. She could not fathom how that could even be possible. It sounded so surreal.

She listened some more, hoping to get more information about his condition, but just like her, the reporter was still clueless about where the ambulance took the prince.

She quickly stood up and ran to her bathroom, fixing herself, realizing that she had been crying while watching the news. Then, she grabbed some new pair of clothes and changed. Not caring about putting a makeup, she rushed back to the room.

"Please, Lance. Fight." She mumbled, hoping that he was ok. Praying that by some miracle, he had survived that collision.

She ran to the chair where she had left her things earlier and searched her bag, looking for her phone. With a quick dial, she called the one person who might have the information she needed.

But it took her several rings before someone finally answered her. "Eida, where is he?" She demanded on the line. She had to know where they had taken him.

All sleep and tiredness had gone out of her system. She was wide awake and ready to run to wherever Lance was. She did not care what time it was.

Despite what happened, Lance might not love her the way she wanted, but he still loved her as a friend. And she would be there for him as his friend.

But the other line remained silent. "Eida, are you there?" But she could hear someone moving and breathing on the other end. "Eida, where is Lance?"

"He... is... not... here." Finally, Eida answered her, slurring her words. From the way she sounded, either she only woke up, or she was drunk. But she was leaning on the latter. But why?

"Eida, do you know where he is?" She tried again to get through to her. It seemed that, in this incident, she was the one with the clear head between the two of them.

"Probably, in hell." She shouted at her. This time, it was much clearer as her voice echoed in her ears, making her move the phone away from her face.

"What happened to you, Eida?" Suddenly, she felt sorry for her friend, realizing that what happened to her and Lance might be connected to his accident.

She sat back down at the seat, waiting for Eida to answer her question. She could not leave until she got to the bottom of the problem. She knew Eida knew the answer to that.

"I..." Then, she started crying uncontrollably. She had never heard of or seen her friend in this condition, especially not because of a man. "I... dumped him." She finally repeated after calming down.

She now knew that her friends truly loved each other. She had no reason to be mad at them because love was not a feeling that anyone could control.

But the question remained, where was Lance. But she also could not leave her in her current state. Eida also needed her right now. After all, she was her best friend.

## Chapter 737: Bad omen

"My princess, do you like my gift?" A voice asked behind her.

A new car.

It was her very first car.

"Yes, it is beautiful," Dani answered with a brimming smile on her young face.

She rushed outside the door and touched the metallic paint cover of the hood, admiring the latest model of the car she had been dreaming of since she received her license to drive.

"What do you think?" He asked her, moving behind her as she examined every detail of the car.

"I love it." She uttered, hugging him tightly, feeling so lucky to have him in her life.

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"What about my other surprise?" He asked.

Another surprise?

She looked at his old, tired face, puzzled by his words. Why did he suddenly look like he was fading in her eyes? The more she stared at his face, her vision seemed to blur, no matter how much she squinted her eyes.

"I wish I could have been a good father." His words turned solemn as if it was full of regrets.

"But you are the greatest father." She assured her as she hugged him again, unable to understand why his father would say such things.

Closing her eyes, she savored the feeling of being in the arms of the first man she ever loved. His hands tightened around her as if he felt the same way.

Then, her hands suddenly felt light. As if she was not holding on to anything as she slowly lost her balance. Quickly opening her eyes, she found herself alone.

All she saw was white, nothing else. She rubbed her fingers through her eyelashes, hoping to clear her vision, but it did not do anything to change the result.

"Dad!" She shouted, wondering if the white light hid him from her view.

"Dad?" She called again when he did not respond to her call. She repeated it, louder and louder.

"Dani..." A different voice responded to her call.

"Dani." He also kept repeating, but she could not see his face.

"Dani, wake up." Finally, her eyes opened, still blurry, but she could recognize his voice.

"I think you are dreaming." Alex's voice explained to her as he came closer. But it was taking her time to understand with her still perplexed mind.

Her fingers felt her face, discovering the tears that filled her eyes that might have caused her impaired vision. Then, her hands finally touched her husband's face, trying to determine if he was real.

"Just try to relax and breathe." His tone calmed her down, slowing her quickened heartbeat and evening out her air intakes.

Finally, after he wiped the rest of her tears with the edge of the shirt that he had removed from his body, her eyes saw his concerned face.

"I think I am ok now." She finally uttered, still remembering portions of her weird dream as she momentarily closed her eyes.

"Are you sure?" He remained by her side, shifting to sit beside her, wrapping her in his arms. "Do you remember what it was all about?"

She rested her head at the crook of his shoulders, feeling the warmth of his bare skin against her cheeks, finding comfort in his nearness.

"A portion of it. I was still young..." She recounted what she remembered of her dream, finding the first portion as a past that she cherished most about her youth.

"But, I don't understand the rest of my dream." She looked at her husband, puzzled as if she wanted him to answer the missing piece. "Why did he vanish?"

"It could be just a dream that your mind conjured up because of the stress. It may not mean anything." He spoke to her softly, trying to reason with her.

He pulled her closer to him, stroking her hair gently, assuring her that it might be nothing. He did not want her to have these recurring dreams, thinking that it was something she should fear.

"I guess you are right." She answered him, hoping that he was speaking the truth.

But she always had that nagging feeling. Some dreams were a manifestation of the past or something that might still occur in the future. But still, it could turn out to be nothing like Alex said.

"Shall we go back to sleep?" Alex offered, pulling her back down under the covers, tucking her nicely until she had closed her eyes.

Then she felt him lie down beside her, pulling her closer to his body, feeling his warm hands covering her across her chest. It was heavy, but she liked feeling his warmth, seeping through her thin nightgown down to her skin.

As the minutes ticked by, his breathing slowed down, indicating that he had fallen back to sleep.

But somehow, having him around, feeling his skin against her body, finally had given her comfort as the darkness took over her consciousness again, putting her in a deep sleep.

However, a buzzing sound disturbed the silence around her, making her disoriented as she opened her eyes. She searched for the sound, wondering if this was another dream.

Her head lifted from the pillow as her eyes scanned the room, then eventually, she changed into a sitting position, allowing her feet to dangle on the side of the bed, planting her feet on the floor. Finally,



her eyes landed on the window that was still dark. But all she heard was silence except for the clock ticking on their nightstand, and nothing else created a sound.

“What is wrong?” Alex asked, squinting her eyes at him when he opened the light on his bedside.

Then, they both heard it.

He quickly grabbed his phone, which made all the buzz on the nightstand near him, and also opened the lamp that flooded the room with a dim light.

“Yes?” He answered on the receiver.

She could not understand what the conversation was about, hearing only monosyllable words coming from him.

“We will be there.” He finally said before ending the call.

From the look on his face, she could tell it was not good news. She looked at him, questioning him, but he only said a few words.

“We need to get dressed.” Dragging her out of their soft bed.

Suddenly, her mind screamed that her dream was a bad omen.

Chapter 738: A sweet dream or a terrible nightmare

Eida stared at her phone, wondering what was wrong with her phone. That was twice that someone called her, then hung up on her.

Those were two important people she had been waiting to call, and when they finally did, they just suddenly ended the call, not even saying goodbye.

She took the glass of wine on her table and placed it back on her lips, drinking the remaining liquid until there was nothing left. Then, she leaned her body on the couch, holding the empty glass in one hand and the phone in the other.

After the phone remained silent, she threw it to the side of the couch, rendering it useless. She thought they were never going to call.

“Who needs them?” She uttered in her slurry words, pulling herself up into a sitting position and grabbing the bottle of wine to pour it into her glass.

But, on second thought, she decided to grab the bottle instead, leaving the empty glass on the table. Who needs etiquette when she drowned in her misery?

She chugged the wine, letting the small mouth of the bottle touch her lips. Then, she drank from it, filling her mouth until she could hardly swallow it.

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“Well, they could both rot in hell.” She shouted in the room, hoping they could hear her. Then, she repeated it, seeing the phone not far from her, screaming it to the top of her lungs.

After releasing the pressure building inside her, she raised the bottle again to her mouth and drank a mouthful, hoping that it would finally drown her, away from her thoughts.

But it only fueled what was already circulating in her mind.

His face floated in the forefront of her mind. His voice echoed in her ears like a broken record. He left her without fighting for her, without making her feel that she was at least important to him.

She never wanted to put him on the spot, but she wanted to hear some hope that this relationship or whatever the two of them were doing would at least lead to something.

But he left her without any assurance that he was coming back. Then, he called, remembering that moment clearly in her mind.

How happy she was that he called?

She thought that he realized that he could not live without her. He came back to grovel at her feet, begging her to take him back again. But he only called for a second, listened to her, and probably slammed the phone on the wall upon hearing her voice.

She could recall that she had never heard his voice, only that crashing sound. It was so loud that she had to remove the phone far away from her ears. Then, the line went dead.

"Am I that unlovable?" She raised her eyes to the ceiling, expecting someone to answer her. But silence enveloped her. She was alone.

She took another mouthful, knowing too well that she was drunk. Or was she? She guessed she was, but then again. She was not.

She stood up from her seat, only to learn that she could hardly balance herself. She had no choice. She fell back on the soft cushion. Then, her hands landed on her phone. The one that she had already thrown away.

With new courage coming from her intoxicated state, she took it and dialed his number. She would let him know what she thought of a man like him. He was a coward, a spineless coward.

"Answer your goddamn phone." She hissed at the receiver, waiting for the call to connect, but it did not.

The operator told her that he was unavailable.

Of course, he was not available for her, remembering that he had smashed his phone. She was an unnecessary nuisance in his life. He would not want anything to do with a woman like her.

She was damaged goods as his father, the great Count Wellington, thought of her. She was nowhere near a good candidate for his son, a noble prince of their lovely country, while she was a lowly reporter who had a terrible record with men.

"He was probably right." She whispered to herself, convincing herself that she should be glad that it was over between them. If she loved him, she should set him free.

His father was right. She could not offer a man like him anything that would benefit him. At least she was saving him from the scandals associated with her name.

If the press researched through her past, they would dig enough about her life. They would find several skeletons in her closets and a few dirty laundries in her laundry basket.

"Eida, are you in here?" A familiar voice drifted in the air. Was she hallucinating or dreaming? But she was still drinking, so she could not be sleeping.

She held the bottle into her mouth and drank from it again, hoping to extinguish the voice. She did not want to deal with her either. The guilt was just too much.

"Eida, what are you doing?" The voice asked again. Then an image appeared in front of her.

She squinted her eyes to look at her, but it was a blur. Her eyes seemed to be impaired by a white mist roaming around her. How could a cloud enter her apartment when the windows were closed?

She ignored her illusion, not wanting to give it another thought. She was about to drink again in the bottle, but the unwanted delusion snatched it away from her hands.

"Give my bottle to me. If you want to drink, get your own." She snapped to the image standing in front of her.

"Eida, you need to sober up." The voice calmly spoke to her. Then, she knelt before her, right between her spread knees as she sprawled on the cushions.

She knew her voice, but she refused to acknowledge her. It would seem she was not an illusion, but she was here inside her apartment with her.

Suddenly, she closed her eyes, not wanting to look her in the face. She was still ashamed after what happened. The last thing she wanted was to hurt her.

She thought it would be easy to face her if she was not alone, but now, she was here. She had no idea what to say. Sorry seemed to be not enough.

What more could she do to earn her forgiveness?

But was there anything else she could do? Because, at this point, she believed betraying her friend's trust was unforgivable. All she could do was hide from her and never show her face again.

"Eida, I am not mad at you." She continued, sitting beside her on the couch, facing her. "I understand now what happened." She could feel her hands as they gently stroked her hair.

"You don't know what you are saying, Amelia." Slurring her words as her hands moved to touch her friend's face. She needed proof that she was not a figment of her imagination, but her hands would not steady, or was it her eyes as she kept missing her target.

Still, she could not fathom whether this was just a sweet dream or a terrible nightmare, just waiting to happen.

Chapter 739: Fighting to survive

Amelia moved away from her, taking the bottle and the empty glass with her two hands. She believed Eida already had more than enough. She needed to stop.

She stepped into her kitchen, finding the things she would need. Hopefully, the things she heard about sobering up a drunk truly work because if not, she would be dragging a drunk reporter across town, trying to find the hospital where they were keeping the prince.

But she stayed tuned on the newsfeeds, hoping to get some news about him. Something might pop out from it. She needed every information she could find about his location and condition.

She did not want to call the Count and especially not her dad. She still did not want to have anything to do with them. But she believed they might be aware by now.

"Where is your coffee, Eida?" She had been rummaging through her cabinets but still had not found one. How did her friend live this long in this kitchen, finding everything out of order?

She was a reporter, not a chef. She guessed the kitchen was the least of her favorite part of the house, finding several take-out boxes dumped in the trash, a few more in the fridge, and one more pizza box on the table, barely touched.

"Finally," Amelia held the container that said coffee, but just her luck, it was empty. She guessed she also ordered her coffee instead of creating one.

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She tried one more container. Still, it was empty.

"What now?" Then, an idea set in. Another of the things she read in the article.

She returned to the living room, finding Eida snoring. At least she had finally fallen asleep. But she needed her to wake up. Or at least to look presentable.

What would I do with you? She thought, but she was her friend, and she could not leave her looking like that.

"I hope you will forgive me, but we have to do this." She spoke to the sleeping body before her.

Slowly, she pulled her friend up from the sofa, but she was heavier than she thought. She was as tall as her, a bit fleshy but still skinny. But somehow, she resisted moving from her place as she started to moan her protest.

But she pulled her even more until she forced her, supporting her weight through her shoulders, carrying her from the living room to her bedroom until they reached her bathroom.

"Where are you taking me?" She finally went conscious, probably woken up by their movements.

"We are going to..." She did not finish as she pushed her body away, making her slightly unbalanced, while Eida darted for her bed, swaying, almost missing the bed.

Before she reached her, she rolled on the edge of the bed. Then, she slid and landed on the floor on her back. She heard the thud, so she would guess it would be painful. It would probably have a bruise in the morning.

"That hurt," Eida shouted, closing her eyes while her hands moved to her ass and hips, massaging her flesh.

At least that would slightly wake her up, but that would not be enough to sober her up. Seeing that she was not hurt badly, she went straight to her cabinet, trying to find the appropriate clothes she should wear.

Then, she walked inside the bathroom, took several towels from the cabinet, and placed them on the counter. She would be needing them later.

Then, Amelia was back at her side, dumping the clothes on her bed. She picked her friend up from the floor, who was already comfortable returning to sleep on the wooden surface.

"What are you doing?" She complained, still eating her words as Eida resisted her, but she applied more force this time. "I want to sleep in my bed."

"No, you don't." She sternly said to her, gripping her tightly, shoving her inside the bathroom, and placing her under the shower.

She moved back a little but still tried to hold her, afraid that she might slip on the tiles. Then, she turned the shower on, full blast, as water rained down on her friend.

Her friend struggled, shocked by the cold shower, but she held her in place. She might not sober up quickly. At least she would not smell like a skunk, stinking in her alcoholic induced state.

Then, she slowly sat down on the floor, slumping her back on the tiled wall, and started crying. She quickly turned the shower off, hoping it was enough to wake her up.

She must have remembered why she was drinking in the first place as the water covered her tears, but her wails echoed on the small square inch space.

She believed it was better to cry it out than use alcohol to drown her sorrow. It would not help because the pain would keep building up inside, still wanting the release.

"It is ok, Eida. I am here." Amelia hugged her friend, not caring anymore if she would get wet. She just needed to console her friend and let her know that she was not alone.

But would telling her about the incident be a good idea after seeing her like this. It might only worsen the situation. But not telling her and leaving her on her own was not a good idea either.

What should she do with her situation? She wondered as she ran her fingers through her wet hair. She guessed she had no choice as she pulled her friend up after feeling that her crying had subsided.

She did not want both of them to have pneumonia as she wrapped herself also in one.

Soon, Eida was sitting on her bed, watching her move around the room but not saying anything. She fixed her hair, combing it in place, but it was still very wet. She could not tie it yet.

"What are you doing, Amelia?" Eida asked, still looking drunk but slightly more aware of her surrounding.

"I am helping you," Amelia answered her but did not give more details at the moment. She needed her soberer before she could tell her anything. She believed she had another plan.

"Why?" Eida hesitantly asked. Her eyes were still droopy, but she seemed more awake each minute.

"Because I am your friend." Amelia took her hands in hers and squeezed them tightly. "Now, do you trust me?" She asked her.

Eida looked at her, puzzled by her question, but she knew she understood her. When she eventually nodded, she continued.

"I need you to come with me. But I need you to sober up first before I can tell you the rest of the things I want to say." She tried to say it slowly because she needed her friend to understand every word.

"Ok." Eida finally answered in words, which made her smile. She needed her understanding and cooperation.

Soon, they were back in her chauffeured car, ready to scout the place for their prince. The newsfeed talked about a blackout about the prince's condition for safety reasons.

She was expecting that after what happened to him. The palace officials could not discount that it might not be an accident but an ambush on his life.

She just hoped that her efforts would not go in vain. She prayed that her friend and her friend's prince were still alive and fighting to survive.

Chapter 740: A civilized person

Amelia told her chauffeur to try the first hospital that came to her mind. It was the closest to the accident site and the best hospital in the city. It was likely where the ambulance took the prince.

It was a few minutes drives from Eida's apartment, but it would at least give her friend a few more minutes to rest before she learned about the accident.

"Thanks." She told her driver. If it had been just her, she would not be able to bring Eida down from her apartment and into the car.

Showering her and putting her into her clothes were already a struggle, but carrying her would be too much. She was like a big baby incapable of doing anything on her own.

Eida had automatically passed out in the car as soon as her back hit the backrest. It was not a surprise since she almost emptied the bottle of wine she had taken from her.

"Is there still traffic in the vicinity?" She asked the driver, remembering the earlier incident.

Lance's accident must have caused the traffic earlier. She surmised, realizing where the accident happened. If she had learned earlier, she would have arrived at his side the sooner.

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But things happened for a reason.

Amelia tried to believe that. And tonight, she had to discover her friend's condition, looking at the woman snoring beside her in the backseat of the car. And she believed her friend was more than enough reason.

"I think the road is clear from traffic, Ms. Amelia. We will arrive at the hospital in five minutes." The chauffeur estimated, looking at her, before returning his attention to the road, flowing smoothly without any hindrance.

She sat uncomfortably on her seat, gazing at the view outside and occasionally checking on her friend, waiting if she would wake up, but she was still sleeping like a baby.

She wondered what could have happened to the two of them. But was it wise to bring her into the scene looking like a truck just ran her over, dragging her on the road?

But what was happening to Lance? She nervously thought as she remembered the image of the man lying almost lifeless on the steering wheel of his car.

"Ms. Amelia, I think we have a problem." The chauffeur caught her attention, slowing the car before they could enter the hospital premises. "The entrance seems to be swarming with the media reporters."

Her driver pointed to the hospital's main lobby, where several media crew were already camping outside, probably just like her, looking for the prince.

The traffic was also building up in front of the hospital as more spectators rushed to the premises. He was still a prince, even if not the crown prince. Many would be interested in his condition.

But with that amount of media personality, it was likely they had already found the prince, and he was inside. All she just needed was to find another way to sneak in without the media noticing her or her friend.

"Park the car on the other side." She told her driver, trying to come up with a plan.

She felt relieved because if she had chosen the wrong hospital, she would have to travel almost an hour to the opposite direction of the other hospital.

"Just give me a few minutes." She told the driver and glanced beside her.

She had no issues if the media saw her coming through the hospital. She had several reasons why she should be here. Many did know that Lance was her childhood friend.

But Eida was another issue. Not that the media could pinpoint her relationship with the prince right away, but her condition would bring some interest.

After all, she was a competition in the business. Many would want a piece of her and use her situation to destroy her. But she could not allow that to happen to her friend. Her career was everything to Eida.

"Hang on, my friend. We are almost there." She touched Eida's face, who was still very drunk.

Then, an idea came to her mind. she grabbed her phone and called a number. She never thought that she would ever need this man's help, but she had no choice at the moment. She could not call anyone else.

"Yes." The man on the other line answered. "Amelia, what is it? Don't you know what time it is?" The indifference in his voice was getting to her.

She could not remember what she did to him that would make him suddenly lose interest in her. The dinner was not exactly perfect, but it was not that bad. Suddenly, his attitude turned cold toward her.

"Of course, I know what time it is." She snapped at him, suddenly wanting to drop the call on him. But she remembered she needed him. "I am sorry, but I need your help," Amelia turned to her friend as desperation hinted in her voice.

"Please, do not hang up." She added when he was silent for a second. "Evan, I need your help." She continued when he did not say anything.

She bit her lip, hoping that he would help her because she could not think of anyone else. But she had to help her friend somehow to get inside.

"Ok, what is it? It better be good because I also have things to deal with at the moment. Stop wasting my time." His voice sounded tired with slight frustration.

She suddenly wondered what could be wrong with him. What could he be doing at this hour? Maybe he was on a date and doing something, and she interrupted him in the middle of performing something.

She just automatically assumed that he would be in the hospital. But then again, it could be Angela. Maybe her health condition had taken to the worse.

She remembered she did not come today to visit her or even call. She had been busy that the last thing she wanted to do was return to her hotel room and sleep.

"Are you in the hospital?" She quickly asked, wanting confirmation. "Is Angela ok?" She continued, suddenly worried, feeling her heartbeat increase and drummed on her chest.

"Of course, I am in the hospital. Where did you think I was? Out on a date again." At this time, his voice was full of irritation, as if she was asking too much nonsense.

She was suddenly taken aback by his response and by rudeness. Maybe she caught him in a terrible time. "I am sorry. I should not have disturbed you." Hanging up the phone and staring at it as if it was about to bite her.

What was wrong with that man?

"Why do men have to be such an asshole?" She hissed at the screen, looking at his name displayed before her eyes.

Evan acted like he would not give up on her until he got what he wanted from her when they first met. He even hinted at it in their encounters and during dinner.

Then, he suddenly lost interest in just one date.

Was she that hideous in his eyes? Now, he could not talk to her like a civilized person.