

Royal Contract 741

Chapter 741: Empty promises

"Are you not going to tell me what is going on?" Dani asked, slightly afraid, seeing the worry lines on his forehead.

After Alex had hung up the phone and turned to her, asking her to change, she wondered what the problem was. He had turned silent since then. But she let him, thinking that he might need a few minutes before telling her.

Suddenly, he stood in front of her, staring into her eyes in the middle of their room. His face was a picture of a man carrying a heavy burden. She could only wonder what news he had received from that brief phone call.

"I need to tell you something," Alex spoke so softly that it was barely audible in her ears. Or maybe it was the warning bells in her head that prevented her from hearing him distinctly.

But she still understood him, making the hair of her arms stand up in anxiousness and her heartbeat speed up in fear. His expression and his voice said it all. Something was not right.

Suddenly the dream that she had came to mind, but she wanted to shove it in the back of her mind, but it kept nagging at her. Should she even listen to her dream?

"What is it? Tell me." She demanded because she could feel that it was not something good. But she hoped it was not as worse as what her mind would probably conjure.

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She had to know before her mind started jumping to conclusions. Was it about her father? She just talked to him early that morning. He sounded fine.

Her Mom? She doubted it. She was fine.

At least she did not want to include them in the list of possibilities. What could it be? Their friends or it could be his family. Please! She hoped not any of them.

Their entire business could collapse in the stock market, and she would not bat an eye at it, but she could not accept any of their loved ones getting hurt.

Then, who called him? Why did he ask her to get dressed in the middle of the night to go somewhere? She could not wait any longer as her fear grew inside of her.

Though, she doubted that this was any of his surprises.

She held into his arms when he placed his palms on both sides of her shoulders. As if to give her support. Suddenly she could feel her heart was about to explode from the anticipation as he wetted his lips.

"That was your Mom who called." Alex started but paused again as if checking on her reaction. But how could she react when he hardly said anything.

But somehow, she could already predict what was next. It was like her husband was giving her a hint so that the impact would be lesser.

But how could it lessen the pain if what was on her mind was what he was about to say? It would not matter because it would have the same result.

“What did my Mom say?” She knew her voice was too calm. It was like she was in the eye of the storm, waiting to make havoc in the next few seconds.

She could see the hesitation in his eyes, already feeling that what he had to say would break her heart. But she still hoped that it was not as worse as what was already in her mind as she felt the first teardrop in her eyes.

“Your Dad had another attack. He is now in the hospital, and it doesn’t sound good this time.” He suddenly pulled her closer to his body after saying those words that she had dreaded every day since her father had his first attack.

She always wondered how many years, months, days, hours, or even minutes she still had with him. Since each drag of air he took meant one less breathed, he had to take in his borrowed time.

“No...” She wanted to scream, but no words came out of her lips, just continuous sobs accompanied by heavy breathing. But internally, she was shouting from the top of her lungs.

Was this it? Is this his last time with them? She asked as she buried her face in her husband’s chest. But at least it was far worse than she initially thought. At least, she hoped that she still had time to say goodbye if this was the end.

But still, she wished and prayed that it was not.

She wanted more time with him. She still had to see her take the throne and become the real queen he wished she would be. And he still needed to see his grandkids.

Still, so many. Yet, not enough time.

Suddenly, she felt him move. She did not even realize he was now carrying her to the sofa in the middle of their room. She felt so lost in her sorrow. She had forgotten about the present as her tears continued to pour out her eyes.

“I need to see him.” She whispered in between her anguish, not wanting to waste another minute of crying when she could be by her father’s side at this minute.

She took the handkerchief Alex handed to her and wiped her tears dry. Although many still fell, she kept on wiping them until she could control herself again.

Alex immediately escorted her out of their apartment, their bodyguards already waiting for them. Instead of going by the front door, security escorted them through another exit. Outside, a car already waited for them.

Now, she understood why Alex had to delay telling her the news. She could see that he had to arrange everything for her, appreciating the handkerchief already waiting for her tears.

He understood almost everything about her, cared enough to know the little details that would make her smile and the extraordinary things that could give her joy. And most of all, Alex knew when he needed to be silent when she needed it the most.

“Thanks.” She finally uttered after recovering her voice from all her tears.

She looked at him, who had his arms around her for support. He appeared very calm, but she could hear his heart beating wildly across his chest.

He was as affected as she was by this news, but he would never show it because she needed him to be strong for the two of them.

He would look like the tower of support that she and her mom would hold on to until this ordeal was over. But he would never crumble down and cry in front of them.

“I am here as long as you need me.” Alex pulled her closer to him, planting a tender kiss on her lips before cradling her again in his warmth. “We will all get through this.”

She knew he was not promising her anything that he could not deliver. He was not saying that his father would survive this attack again just like the last time because, just like her, he was not sure.

But he was promising that despite what would happen, he would be there for all of them, which she appreciated very much. She did not need empty promises, but she only needed him.

Chapter 742: Stinking like a fish

Evan paced inside the room, unable to think clearly. Alex wanted him to check on his cousin, who had a recent accident and happened to be in the same hospital as his grandmother.

Then, he just learned that Ethan also had a heart attack just a few hours ago. David said that he could handle the situation while he was gone, but he was still concerned about the repercussion if Ethan turned for the worse.

“Just call me if you need me to return soon.” He told David on the line, knowing that they had to help Alex with the company. Usually, when the founder of a company dies, many vultures would circle, wanting a piece of what was left. Many would take advantage of the vulnerability of the company.

Although Alex was now the CEO, Ethan still held the majority share. It would not be a problem if Ethan left everything to Dani. But he recently learned that one of their partners turned out to be a Hamilton, too. So, that would complicate the situation.

“You take care of your grandmother and enjoy your vacation. Alex and I can handle this for now.” David ordered him as he hung up the call.

Well.

He guessed he better check on Lance while he was here. He had been close to him since they were almost the same age. Although they never agreed in terms of girls. Lance was a one-woman man while he was still unable to commit to anyone.

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Why should he settle for one woman? He was still young. But the image of a particular woman nagged at his mind. But he shook his head, not wanting to think about her.

"Would you stop moving around? You are again making me dizzy." His grandmother complained as her eyes followed his movement with curiosity.

He did not notice that she was awake. The last time he checked on her, she was fast asleep. Well, she must have woken up from his noise.

"I am sorry, Grandmama. I thought you were asleep." He walked towards her and kissed her on the forehead.

To top it all off, he had to worry about his grandmother. But it had nothing to do with her physical health condition. She seemed to enjoy her stay at the hospital too much.

He was starting to suspect that she was faking her sickness, noticing a few inconsistencies in her symptoms. She seemed to be ok, despite just having a mild heart attack.

He was a lawyer. He could spot these things easily. Now, he could see that her grandmother probably planted her friend, playing matchmaker on his behalf, so that she could force him to return home and stay for good.

It had always been what his grandmother always wanted for him. But it was not what he wanted. He was happy where he was, but he wished that his grandmother would go with him.

"I am awake now," Angela answered him with a no-nonsense smile. "Who just called?" She finally asked when he stayed silent as he stood beside her, holding her hand.

Finally, he slumped his body on the nearby chair and closed his eyes. Suddenly, he would rather be back in his office than deal with his grandmother, who had her eyes focused on his face.

How could he have fallen into this trap? He knew he could not lie to her. She always knew when he was not telling the truth. But he could not keep tolerating her wish for him to find a girl and settle down.

"It is not important." He answered her, changing his frown into a smile as he looked at her. He did not want her to suspect anything. Besides, he had been on the phone almost every minute since the last hour, so it was unlikely his grandmother would think he talked to her friend.

"You know that I raise you, right?" Angela looked him deeply in the eye, sitting comfortably on her bed.

She was supposed to be discharged from the hospital today, but suddenly she came up with an excruciating pain coming from her side. So, the doctors had to hold the discharge papers and had her for another set of tests and observations.

But the way she was acting now. She seemed to have forgotten all about the pain, but still, he could not call her on her lie. He had to pretend that she was sick.

He also did not have the heart to break his grandmother's heart by telling her that he saw through her facade. He still wanted her to believe that she was a good actress. It was the least he could do for all her sacrifices for him.

“Of course, Grandmama. Do you need anything?” Evan sweetly asked, knowing that when she started with that question. He had to prepare for what was next.

“I did not raise you to lie or be rude, not even on the phone.” She voiced her concern, using that tone that could melt anyone’s heart.

He remembered confessing his sins when he was young to her after she caught him doing something she did not like. He would not go into details, but as a result, he had never lied since then.

So, no matter what he did, bad or good, he would tell her. Because lying to her was not an option. Now, he wondered what he should say to her. It would appear she had heard something earlier.

“Ok. Amelia called, but...” He was about to make some excuse, but he lost the chance when her eyes narrowed at him. He knew that look, and he better shut his mouth since, in her eyes, he had made a grave mistake.

“I don’t know what you have against that beautiful, kind-hearted woman. You could not even be polite to her on the phone. Did she do something so terrible for you to act that way?” Angela asked him, disappointment displayed magnificently in her eyes.

If other people could see this interaction, many would side with her. She was giving a spectacular show for his benefit. But just like she said, she raised him. He knew most of her tricks.

“Ok, fine. I will call Amelia and apologize.” He knew it was the only answer that his grandmother would accept.

With that, he pulled his phone out of his pocket and called. But he pretended to be busy dialing, but he could see in his peripheral vision that his grandmother was sporting a satisfied smile.

But he noticed that she had been waiting for her to visit the whole day despite Amelia informing her that she would not be able to come. He would bet that something was going on with his grandmother.

He knew it. He was right about all of this. He believed this was just an elaborate matchmaking scheme that her grandmother planned. But he would show her that her plans would not work. Not on him anyway.

But he wondered if Amelia was innocent about this and just another victim like him, or was she on it with his grandmother.

He would find out eventually.

He could sniff a setup from a mile away. And this was stinking like a fish.

Chapter 743: A bonus

She wondered if she should go inside, all by herself, but she could not leave Eida in the car. What if she suddenly woke up? That would be a bigger problem.

But what else could she do? It would seem that the only person she knew who could help her was a bigger asshole than she thought.

Maybe it might be better to take Eida home and allow her to rest. They could always come back in the morning. But she wanted to know Lance's condition.

"I can call Dad." She mumbled to Eida, who was still past out on the black leather cushion.

She could do that but looking at Eida's face, remembering how brave she was, living her life the way she always wanted it. She realized she also wanted that.

She had to get away from her father's shadow for good because he would never learn to love her. But he would not have a second thought about using her for his benefit.

"I think we should better..." She was about to tell the driver to drive them home when her phone suddenly rang.

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Suddenly, she was surprised to see the caller, not expecting him to call after she had hung up on him. Anyway, why was he calling?

To add more insult? No way, she would not allow it.

She let the phone ring, not answering it, just staring at his name until it went silent again.

But it went on again, then again.

She guessed he was not giving up. But what if it had something to do with Angela. She could not forgive herself if she ignored his call and later found out that Angela needed her.

Without a choice, she finally answered it on the fourth ring. "Yes, Evan," Amelia answered without saying anything more. She would wait for him to state his reason for calling before responding. She was already humiliated, and she did not want to add anything to that experience, not from him.

"I am sorry if I am a bit rude when you called. I was under a lot of pressure and not thinking clearly." The man on the other line spoke on the phone, but she could sense the insincerity in his voice. Like he was forced to say those words.

"Is Angela by your side?" She could tell that Angela might have learned about his behavior and now forced him to retract it.

She waited for him to respond, wondering if he would lie about it. Or something. But she was surprised again when he finally answered. "Yes."

She guessed at least he was honest about that. Now, she knew that he did not call because he was genuinely sorry for his action, but at least he was doing it for his grandmother.

"So, why did you call? Was it only to say you are sorry?" If that was the case, she could hang up now and be through with him. She did not want to waste another single breath talking to him.

"No, I wish to hear what you asked me earlier." He exasperatedly answered her. It was as if the words were going through his teeth with much difficulty.

Should she tell him? She suddenly found herself questioning. She still needed his help if she would see Lance with Eida. Could he help her? Could he trust him?

She would never know if she would never try.

Besides, what would she lose if she tried to seek his help? The worse thing that could happen was he would say no. Then, that was it.

"Are you still there?" Evan asked when she failed to respond to him right away.

"Yes, I am here." She answered, finally deciding. "Can you help me sneak a friend inside the hospital?" Then, she explained her friend's condition and why the press could not see her.

But, she did not give the full details why she and her friend needed to get inside. She just allowed to speculate that her friend needed medical attention and they were avoiding the press.

"Oohhmm!" He only mumbled on the other line as if he was thinking about it.

She waited for a response for a minute before demanding an answer. "Well?" She questioned, growing impatient with every tick of the clock. She was afraid that a reporter might suddenly notice their car and the occupant.

It was not likely a fancy car would be waiting on the pavement outside the hospital premises without anyone noticing, especially the nosy paparazzi who always loved a scoop.

"Fine." He finally replied with a sigh. "That seems to be a good distraction for tonight." He added before standing up from his chair. "Give me a few minutes. I will call you back."

Then, he hung up the phone and looked at his grandmother, beaming with happiness at what she had witnessed. In her view, it seemed that they had made up. But she did not need to know the full details.

He was only doing this because it sounded like it was exciting. He had not done something like this since college. Anyway, it was something to do to pass the time.

"Grandmama, go rest. I need to help a friend." He spoke to her softly before kissing her goodnight, leaving the room immediately.

But first, he needed to check on Lance. He had to know his condition. So he could report back to his friends. He only wished that he was better than what the reports were implying.

"Hey, Edward." He walked up to the man he never thought he would speak to ever again. But he was in the waiting room and was Lance's family. He might know something. "How is he?"

However, he would still never trust a man like him. Despite what he heard about changing his ways, he would never lower his guard around this man.

"Not good. The last time the doctor came here, he was still unstable." Edward answered him with a solemn look.

He did look like he was concerned, but many could fake such emotion. Even he could do it in front of a grand jury if necessary to win a case. So, such an act would not fool him easily.

Edward supplied a few more information, but nothing looked promising, but he was not ready to give up. As long as a man was breathing, he could never give up hope, and not even when his feet were almost on the grave, he would still hope for a miracle.

“Can you update me if anything changes?” Evan asked him, thinking of his friend, who was worried about his cousin.

Alex could not lose two significant people in his life almost simultaneously. Not his father-in-law, who believed and mentored him into his position and loved him like he was a true son.

Not his cousin, who was also his best friend. The person that he grew up with and had treated like a brother just like the rest of them.

“Nurse Jane, right?” He called to the woman who took care of his grandmother, blocking her path when he bumped into her in the hallway, effectively stopping her from wherever she was about to go.

“Yes, does Angela need something?” She immediately asked, raising her brow slightly at him.

He guessed this nurse was in cahoots with his grandmother, but it was not relevant at the moment. He would need her help with the plan he had in his mind.

“No, but I do.” Evan talked to her in private in an empty hallway, making her cooperate with his plan.

Now, he dialed her number. Again, he was only helping her because he needed a distraction, not because he wanted to see her. But admittedly, seeing her would be a bonus.

Chapter 744: Life or death

Her heart thundered across her chest as they passed through the media frenzy, blocking the hospital entrance.

“Mrs. Blackstone. What can you tell us about your father’s condition?” A reporter shouted on her right.

Some media personalities also threw a series of questions at her husband regarding the company’s stability. It was ordinary for speculations to float in the industry in times like this. But she was confident that Alex would manage it just fine.

More questions still flooded her ears, but she refused to answer them as they bombarded their way to the front entrance. It was no use if they used the back entrance. The reporters were everywhere.

Luckily, the hospital security also helped part the crowd, allowing them access to the lobby floors. Once inside, the staff quickly ushered them to a private area where the doctors would update them about her father’s condition.

She walked along the white corridors, smelling the sanitized atmosphere around her. It was not a comforting feeling. To be surrounded by the essence of death in the air.

She closed her eyes, suddenly remembering her dream. The white walls that surrounded her. Was this part of her dream? Maybe she had not woken up yet.

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"Dani?" Alex gently squeezed her shoulders to drag her back to the present. Sadly, realizing it was not a dream.

She looked up at him, questioning him with her eyes. She had no idea if he had asked her a question or told her something. She was clueless about what was happening around her.

"Are you alright?" Alex looked at her eyes, concern written all over his face. She wished to say she was ok. But she knew in her heart that she was not.

She could only bury her face in his shoulder, unable to utter a word, feeling her heart crumble into pieces at the thought of losing her father.

"Come on. I got you." He whispered near her ears as he guided her inside the big room reserved for her and the entire family and friends, waiting for updates on her father's condition.

She slowly lifted her face, finding familiar people gathered in the room, but her eyes zeroed first on one person sitting on the other side of the room, alone and in deep thought.

She had always been a picture of perfection and elegance in her eyes, but today, she was as distraught just like her. Her eyes stared at the blank space before her, yet no tears were visible in her eyes.

"Mom," Dani called to her as she came closer. She immediately enveloped her in a hug, letting go of her husband in the meantime.

At the moment, her Mom needed her more. Or was it the other way around?

Her Mom pulled her to the vacant chair beside her, where she sat uneasily beside her. She only saw her mother like this when one of them was sick. But she believed this was the worse by far.

She understood that she had no make-up on her face since it was the middle of the night. She and her father might have already been sleeping when it happened.

"What happened, Mom?" She inquired, finally asking the question she had thought of since hearing about the incident.

Alex was unsure, so he opted to wait till they were here to learn the truth. He said he did not want to force her Mom to recount the event on the phone.

"We were already sleeping when your Dad made some unusual noise that woke me up. I thought he was having a weird dream or a nightmare." Her Mom finally started telling her story.

Her face was calm, but her eyes were shallow. As if it was empty. There was no emotion in them. She could only surmise that her mother was still in shock. She had not fully grasped the situation or refused to accept it. It was the reason she had not cried yet.

"Then, what happened, Mom." Dani encouraged Laura to tell her everything.

It was the only way that her mother might realize the truth. Her father was now fighting for his life to survive. It might not be the same as the previous attack. It could be worse, so much worse.

"I tried to wake him up." Then, she saw her mother's eyes shift as if she remembered the ordeal. "But he would not, then he started gasping for air, holding on to his chest as if he could not breathe."

Finally, her mother broke down and cried. "I was so afraid." It was the last words her mother said as her tears dropped down like a waterfall on her shoulders.

She grabbed her shoulders, running her hands on her back, just like how she used to when she comforted her. This time, the wheels had turned as she consoled her mother.

She looked up and saw Alex not too far, staring at her. She knew he was watching them, waiting if she would need him. But he never tried to interfere with them, just stood there showing his support.

"I am afraid too, Mom. But we will be here for each other no matter what." Dani borrowed what Alex told her. She was not giving her mother any false promises that she could not keep.

She felt her grip on her tighten on her body, confirming that her mother heard her even if she could not answer her right away. It was more than enough for her to know that she could be there for her mother as tears also started rolling down her eyes.

Crying was never a weakness as far as she learned through her experiences. It was just a way to release the emotions that burdened the body with all its troubles.

She would cry it out now with her mother in her arms so that later, she could be much stronger for her when she needed her the most.

But the moment they had been waiting for, a man in a scrub suit appeared at the door, looking directly at them. But Alex intercepted him first before her mother could notice him.

But the grim face displayed on the doctor's face was not promising at all. She wished for a miracle, but who did not. She believed that probably all the people in this building asked for it at some point today, asking whoever had the power to grant such to bestow them that gift.

"Mrs. Hamilton." Finally, the doctor walked up to them, providing courtesy to his patient's wife. "Mrs. Blackstone. I am the head doctor who is handling Ethan's health condition." He introduced himself.

But she did not care much about common courtesy or respect. She wanted the facts that would finally tell them what was happening to her father.

Her mother stopped crying but looked at the doctor, nodding to him as acknowledgment, both of them waiting for the result of his operation.

"How is my Dad?" She finally asked for her mother, who seemed to lost the ability to speak. After seeing the face of the doctor, her Mom must have predicted what he was about to say as she started crying again.

Now, she was afraid to hear what the doctor would tell her. It was like she was in a courtroom, waiting for the verdict. Would the judge say life or death?

Chapter 745: A different light

Amelia kept looking at her watch. She had been patiently waiting for him to call, but, so far, it had been half an hour before he called again. "What do we do now, Evan?" She answered on the first ring, anxiously anticipating their next move.

She looked at her sleeping friend before looking at the driver, who looked at her questioningly, probably wondering what the plan was. How could she tell him when she also had no idea?

"I am working on it," Evan responded with slight irritation. "I need you to be patient." As he added, calmer this time.

Then, he was silent for a few seconds as if he was thinking, but she could hear the background of the hospital. She also noticed someone else with him, but it was too far. It was not clear.

But could he blame her for wondering if he would ever call after what he did earlier? She knew he was only helping her because his grandmother forced his hand. But she was taking advantage of it.

She would do everything she could to help her friend even if she had to act civilized with this man. Still, she would watch herself around him. She still could not trust a man like him.

"Fine. Should I wait for another hour?" Amelia answered sarcastically, but she could not help it. He was making her blood boil, just hearing his voice.

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"Stop it, or I will hang up this phone and never talk to you again." The man threatened, then she heard him talking to someone else again. His voice was faint. He must be covering the mouthpiece. She could not understand what they were discussing even if she strained her ears on the receiver.

She sat in the backseat and waited till he returned to the line. Then, she heard the noises on the phone. Then, he was back talking to her again.

"Here is what you are going to do." He started explaining on the line the first step. Then, somebody beside him interrupted. It was a female voice that sounded familiar.

She might know who was helping him in creating this diversion.

She appreciated it, but they had to act fast because she believed a reporter had already spotted their car and was getting curious.

After giving his instructions, Evan ended the call.

"Start the car, move the car to the next block and park it on the side," Amelia asked her driver.

Immediately, the driver followed her, speeding away just in time before the reporter could reach their location and determine the car's occupants. That was close, she thought.

She looked around her, gazing at the back window, checking if anybody followed. Fortunately, it seemed that they were in the clear as they moved on to the street sign where there were not many people around.

"Now what?" She mumbled as she waited for him to call again, staring at her phone, inspecting if she missed any calls or messages. But nothing.

She recalled her conversation with him, checking if she had the instructions correctly, but, so far, she believed it was correct.

Then, her heart suddenly skipped a beat when a knock came through her window. A man wearing a white coat and a mask stood outside. She wondered what he wanted, not expecting anyone to come knocking on her door.

She looked around, but no one else was with him. She partially opened the window, just an inch, just enough so she could talk to the man.

She would never open her door to a stranger. That was dangerous. That was a recipe for disaster.

"What do you want?" Slightly afraid to talk to the man wearing a mask.

"Ms. Amelia, do you want me to deal with him?" His driver finally asked, noticing her agitation. Her driver was about to exit the car when she stopped him.

"No need." She responded to the man in the wheel when the man outside her window finally removed his mask, revealing himself.

"It is me." He said, sporting a bright smile on his face, highlighted by the light coming from the lamp post on the side.

He tapped on her window again, indicating that she should lower it down some more.

"What are you doing?" She asked, suddenly wary that he was wearing a doctor's uniform.

What game was he doing? She narrowed her eyes at him, suspicious of his actions. But from the short time she had known him, she could not discount a stunt like this.

"You said to help you. Here I am trying to do just that." Evan answered him like it was the most logical answer. "Why don't you open the door and let me in so we can talk?"

"How? And why are you dressing up like you are a doctor?" Amelia again was baffled by this man's actions.

She finally opened her car door to allow him entry to the car since many people were starting to stare at them. She did not like the unnecessary attention.

"Because it is part of my props." He said as he entered the car to explain to her what else would happen.

"You see. An ambulance is waiting for us in that corner." Pointing to the other direction.

She strained her neck, but something was blocking her sight. So, she would have to take this man's word for it.

"Then, I will take your friend here." Evan finally looked beyond her to check on her friend, who still slept peacefully at her side. "And ride the ambulance together until we are inside the hospital."

She looked at the man, who had a smug look on his handsome face, feeling like he had just solved a world crisis. Sometimes, she wished to punch a man who seemed to think so highly of himself, just like this man.

"You can just have asked the driver to do that or pay the MT. You did not have to come yourself." Amelia appreciated what he did, but still, she preferred if she did not have to look at his face.

That handsome face, her mind kept reminding her.

“And miss all the fun. Not a chance.” He answered her, looking directly at her face as if daring her into a staring contest. But she quickly looked away. She was still fuming with him.

For what?

She was angry at him for acting like a jerk and making her feel like she was nothing.

“Excuse me. But we are not a source of your entertainment.” She interjected, slapping him on the shoulder, unable to control her irritation anymore at him.

“Ok. Fine. I was only joking. But honestly, I also need to get out of there for a while. I need a breather.” His face suddenly turned solemn, remembering why he was doing this in the first place.

Amelia did not respond right away, slightly taken aback by his sudden change of attitude. She was not expecting that from him.

But she felt guilty that she was rude to him.

What if he was also going through something? She did not stop to consider that since she only focused on her worries. Now, she suddenly saw him in a different light.

Chapter 746: The truth

Evan watched Amelia attend to her friend, who lay on the bed still intoxicated, while he stood, leaning on the wall by the door, lingering till he could make his exit.

Nurse Jane could only give her friend an IV fluid to rehydrate her. Other than that, they could do nothing but wait till the alcohol in her system subsided before she would wake up.

“Thanks, Jane.” He heard her tell their friendly nurse before she walked out and nodded at him, leaving them in silence.

Amelia pulled the white blanket, tucking her friend snugly before moving away from her. Then, he watched her walk toward him.

“I guess my work here is over.” Evan finally uttered when she stopped in front of him. “Goodnight, Amelia.” He stood straight, nodding at her, ready to leave. Then, he felt her fingers grip him by his arms, stopping him from taking another step out of the door.

“Wait.” She quickly said. Then, slowly she pulled her hands back to her side, waiting for him to turn around. “Thanks for helping me with my friend.” She added. “And...” She slightly paused.

“Don’t worry about it.” He quickly answered, knowing that this must be awkward for her as it was for him. “I am sorry too for my disgusting behavior since we met.”

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He believed they never truly started on the right foot. So, it was hard for them to continue with all those misconceptions hanging on their heads.

He believed his grandmother was right about her. She was not the usual girl he associated himself with, and he did not handle their situation correctly.

"Since you are saying sorry. I think I also need to apologize for quickly judging you despite not knowing much about you." Amelia looked down at her entwined fingers before her.

"Don't. Your presumptions about me are spot on." He was indeed a womanizer, so he was not hiding that fact. "I like my woman just like the way I like my clothes."

He could see that she was slightly surprised by his admittance, but he did not see the point of lying to her. It would only lead to more complications that he did not need today.

"Still, I should never have judged you for your lifestyle." She finally responded, moving her head until her eyes gazed at his face.

"I might as well say the same thing." He smiled at her, glad somehow they had cleared the air between them. "Do you want to have some coffee?" He offered. "I know a place, just on the lower floors." He pointed outside the door.

"I don't think I should leave my friend alone." She reluctantly answered, turning around to check on her.

"You know what, I am going to check on my friend too, then get myself a coffee because I know I am not sleeping tonight," Evan said indifferently, not that he wished to force her to join him.

That was up to her.

"You can come with me or not. But I am sure your friend will not be waking up anytime soon." He commented, waiting for her final response before he took his leave, seeing the indecision in her eyes.

"Ok. I will also have some coffee. But I also need to check on a friend if you don't mind." She stated as if that was her condition.

He did not mind if she needed a stopover somewhere. So, he moved aside and let her leave the room first. Then, she stopped at the station, calling the woman's attention at the desk.

"Would you know where I can find a patient? His name is Lance Wellington." She asked the woman, who looked at her questioningly.

"Are you a family member?" The woman asked, not giving them information that easily.

"Yes, I am." She finally answered. "I am his best friend." She told the woman confidently.

"I am sorry, but we can only give information to family members." The woman shut her down.

"But." Amelia was about to plead her case, but he decided to pull her instead. He did not want her to make an unnecessary scene.

He knew she would be wasting her time, but that woman would never spill a single bit of information. He dragged her towards the hallway, where there were no people around.

"Wait, I need to know where he is and his condition." She pulled her hand away from him, but he did not let her go. "What is wrong with you?" She asked, struggling in his grip.

“Why are you looking for that man?” He finally asked, trying to calm her down. “Are you truly his best friend?”

If she was, then she should be contacting his family. She should be standing in the waiting room with them. Suddenly, he wondered who could be this woman standing beside him.

Come to think of it, the only thing he knew about her was her name. He did not even learn her last name from all their interactions.

“Of course, I am.” She responded irritably at him. “It is a long story.” She finally slumped down on the wall behind her, suddenly feeling deflated.

She unexpectedly looked like she had run out of air, exhausted, but that was not the worst part. She started crying. Not just tears, but she was sobbing uncontrollably.

He had no idea what to do with her. He had never been in a situation like this before. As he stared at her, he gradually pulled her towards him, allowing her to rest her head on his chest.

Then, instinctively, his right hand wrapped around her shoulders, then the other gently patted her hair. He doubted if he was doing it right, but that was what his grandmother did to him when he was a child.

“I need to know that he is ok.” She finally mumbled between her sobs when he felt she was slowly calming down.

He kept her in his embrace, letting her know he was there for her. But his mind was debating whether he should believe her or not. But his intuition was telling him that she was telling him the truth.

Chapter 747: A deep scar

When he felt that she had considerably calmed down, he wiped her tears with his handkerchief from his pocket. Then, he dragged her across the hallway and ushered her inside the elevator.

“Where are you taking me?” Amelia asked, a little perplexed with his action, but she still cooperated with little resistance. They stood side by side in the elevator as it slowly went down.

“We are going to get some coffee. You will pull yourself together before visiting your friend.” Evan offered, taking charge of the situation.

Then, the elevators opened to the lower level, where he guided her toward the small coffee shop. There was hardly anyone around, probably because most were sleeping at this hour.

A few minutes later, Evan handed her a hot coffee and a sandwich. “I thought that you might be hungry. I am.” He indicated that he also bought himself one.

But she guessed he must have heard her stomach growl earlier in the room. She suddenly remembered that she had woken earlier starving because she hardly had food the entire day.

“Well, you said a long story. Maybe just cut out the unimportant ones and go with the juicy details. We at least have...” He looked at his watch. “... fifteen minutes before the coffee gets cold.”

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She could see that he was joking, trying to lighten the mood, and she appreciated it, but could she tell him about her life. He was still a stranger to her.

Maybe it was better to get it off her chest now than to keep it bottled up, waiting for it to explode, just like moments ago. Besides, telling a stranger might be better since she would not need to see that person again.

"Lance is a childhood friend. We grew up together." She began. Telling him the story was not that simple, but slowly, it became easier.

"So, you fell in love with him and discovered that your friend also was in love with him. But Lance love who?" Evan asked, his eyes full of curiosity as he drank the rest of his coffee after taking the last bite of his sandwich.

"Of course, Lance loves my friend. I think because he only saw me as a sister." Amelia told him, irritated that he kept asking so many questions. Then, he remembered that he was a lawyer.

But the funny thing was, she never realized that she was also in the last bite of her sandwich. He managed to distract her with those questions, not realizing she was feeling more comfortable around him.

"Well, that is a very long and complicated story. That is why I swear not to fall into that trap. Relationships are complicated. Love is worse." Evan concluded as he leaned on his chair, watching her.

"So, it is better to keep changing partners when you feel like the girl is becoming clingy." She asked, raising her brows at him. Suddenly, she was not convinced about his macho image, Casanova's act.

She wondered if there was a deeper reason why he ended up thinking like that, a past trauma with relationships and family issues. Those were only a few things that might have caused his deep fear of relationships.

"Hey, stop looking at me like that. I am not a test subject that you should analyze. I have no issues nor traumatized as a child." Evan quickly clarified, probably reading it in her face.

He was indeed a lawyer and a good one, just like what Angela said. "Anyway, now that you know why I need to see my friend. Would you help me find him?" She knew she could count on him with that. He seemed to be a resourceful guy.

"But before we do." This time, his face changed. Gone was the playfulness in his lips. His eyes suddenly grew serious. "I need you to prepare yourself because this might not be what you are expecting to see."

Suddenly, fear again crept into her heart. "What are you saying?" How would he know what Lance's condition was? She was confused by his words. "Do you know him?"

It was the only possible explanation.

"Yes, Lance is also my friend. But he is not my best friend like you guys." He finally admitted to her, extending his hands to her to give her support. "I can take you to him right now."

She quickly stood up, not wanting to waste a minute longer. "Then, take me." She allowed him to guide her back to the elevator, and they rode up again to their next destination.

She wanted to be mad at him for not telling her earlier that he knew Lance. But she also understood his reason for delaying it. He probably saw that she was not ready to see him with her condition earlier.

But she was now.

She was ready to face the worse scenario she could come up with because somehow, he had prepared her for it. But she still hoped that Lance would still survive and recover from this.

Even if he did not end up with her, she still wished him to have a happy life either with Eida or someone else who would make him happy. She would never stand in the way of his happiness.

Fortunately, she recognized the guards standing by the door of his private room. She learned that most of their families went home while some were waiting in another room.

"Do you mind if I check on him?" She asked one of the guards.

Thankfully, he nodded right away, opening the door for her.

"I will wait for you out here." Evan offered, not going with her inside.

She quickly entered, not wanting any of their families to know she was there. As of the moment, she only wanted to see him and no one else.

She was not surprised to see him with bandages covering almost his entire body. His injuries could range from broken bones, burns, cuts, and internal injuries.

She just wished that he was strong enough to recover from this as she continued to walk closer to his bed. Watching his closed eyes, purpled skins, and a broken heart, assuming it was the cause of the accident.

She still wondered what happened to the two people she cared about the most. How did they end up in this situation? Would this incident leave a deep scar in their lives? She hoped not.

Chapter 748: Never-ending dream

Eida woke up with a terrible headache as she held on to her head. She opened her eyes, but the bright white light hurt them, so she had to close them again.

With her eyes still closed, she sat up from the bed, slightly swaying, slightly disoriented. Then, she dropped down unceremoniously on the floor.

"What the heck?" She touched her knees, the first one to bump on the tiled floors. Luckily, she held on to the bed for support before her body sprawled on the cold surface.

Her eyes had no choice but to open, scanning her surrounding. She was shocked to see that she was not in her apartment anymore. Where was she? But she remembered drinking last night. Maybe more than she could handle.

"Am I dead?" She asked, pinching herself, which was nonsense since her knees were still throbbing. She pulled herself up and determined that it was a hospital room.

What was she doing here? As she searched her brain for answers. She suddenly remembered bits and pieces of images and conversations in her head, but it was still a bit blurry. Were those dreams, or did they happen?

“What is going on?” She asked herself again.

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If she had an accident, she should be badly hurt. But she seemed fine, checking her body for injuries. She could not see anything else wrong with her except for the headache and the pain in her knees.

Still, why was she hooked up with a needle in her arm and wearing a hospital gown? She shook her head to clear her thoughts, remembering seeing Amelia in her apartment.

Then, she placed her in a cold shower and then an ambulance. That did not make any sense to her. She moved away from the bed, but the hose prevented her from going far. Drastically, she pulled it out of her arm, thinking she did not need it.

Maybe she could ask someone outside. But before she saw someone, she felt woozy again. So she took the first seat she could find and rested, closing her eyes to dispel the dizziness.

“He is so handsome, but did you see what happened to his face.” One female voice said, not far from her position.

She ignored them, not particularly fond of gossip. She liked facts, straight from the horse’s mouth, not hearsays.

“With technology, it would be easy. Many great plastic surgeons would be willing to work on his face.” Another voice said.

“Yeah, you are right. But I hope the prince will survive all his operations. They said some of his injuries would require specialized surgeries, difficult ones.” The voice became serious as sadness enveloped her words.

“I actually hope to be part of it, but the gallery is already full.” the other female said.

But she was uninterested in their other conversation as her mind wrapped around the word “Prince.” How many princes do they have in their country?

She could count a few. Then her instinct kicked in as she continued to listen to their conversation, trying to gain more information. Although she doubted they thought of the same prince, she still wished to confirm it.

But after a few more minutes, she slightly believed it was him, but they never mentioned his name. Then, another nurse came and frightened them away, making them run back to their obligations.

“Hey, what are you doing out here?” The nurse finally stood before her. “You should be resting and getting your fluids.” She continued, staring at her arms where she removed the needle.

“Who are you?” She asked, suddenly realizing that the woman knew her.

"I am nurse Jane." The woman introduced herself to her. "And you are my patient." She assisted her up from her seat and accompanied her back to her room to lie down on the bed.

"Why am I here? What happened to me?" Eida asked, thinking she might know.

"Your friend brought you here because you had too much to drink. You were too intoxicated, and that is not good." The nurse wiggled her fingers at her as if she was a child, reprimanded for her naughty deed.

She allowed her to tuck her in, hoping she would supply more information. As of now, she was her only source.

"Which friend?" Although she could already guess, she required confirmation. Though she could count on her fingers the number of people she knew, she considered her friend.

But more than that, she would also like to ask about the prince.

"Amelia, of course." Nurse Jane answered her. "You must be too passed out to remember anything. She found you in your apartment, almost unconscious. You know it is dangerous to drink like that."

She understood the woman's sentiment. She was here to assist with the care of their patients, but she did not need a lecture. She needed facts.

"Where is she, Amelia?" She asked since she did not see her anywhere. She wondered if she went home after depositing her in the hospital.

But what was she doing in her apartment anyway?

"I don't know. Maybe, Amelia is in Angela's room with Evan." Jane explained, which only made it worse for her.

Who were those people? She did not remember any of those names related to the prince. That was if Lance was really in the hospital.

"Angela and Evan? Were they a family member of Prince Lance? Is Amelia now in the prince's room?" Eida saw an opportunity and went for it. She only hoped it would work.

"Nope, of course not. What made you say that? Angela is a famous actress, and Evan is her grandson. They are not in any way related to the prince." She answered her, smiling as if she was talking nonsense.

But somehow, it just confirmed her fear. The prince the two nurses were talking about was indeed Lance. He was involved in an accident, a car collision. But how, he was a very responsible driver. She was worse than him.

"Where can I find Prince Lance? Can you show me, please?" She knew she might still sound a bit drunk or crazy, but she had to find out how he was doing. She had to see him.

But the nurse tried to calm her down. When she seemed to become hysterical, she called for assistance. Then, they placed her back into her bed.

But more than that, she wished this was all an illusion as she closed her eyes, feeling the effects of alcohol kicking in again, or was it something they stuck on her as she dozed off, hopefully to a never-ending dream.

Chapter 749: Support for the family

Dani just learned that the operation was successful. They had revived her father from a near-death experience, but he was still in a critical condition.

However, the doctors, despite their expertise and the modern technologies, could not give them a guarantee that he would pull out of this alive. If he did, there was still no assurance that he would recover completely.

"There is a chance of paralysis, leaving him in a vegetative state." The doctor finally told them his prognosis.

It was like choosing from two evils when she thought about it. Her father could die, in which he would finally be at peace, but that would mean he would be leaving them for good. Or he could live but only to suffer. But was it any better?

But she was praying still for a third option. She had never wished for a miracle more than ever in her life. But now, she wanted one. She would do anything to save her father from this horrible situation.

"Mom, are you ok?" She finally asked when the doctor expressed his sympathy and excused himself to attend to his other patients.

Her focus shifted to the woman who needed her most now than ever. She would be her strength as long as she needed her. She would help her through this, just as her mother was always there for her.

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"Yes, I am feeling much better." Laura bravely said, putting up a forced smile on her lips. But in her heart, she could feel that she was devastated. "I just want to see your father." She requested, looking directly into her eyes.

She nodded, understanding what her mother needed. She assisted her into the recovery room, where her father rested after his operation.

Not many were allowed to enter, so it was just her with her mom. Once inside the room, she guided her mother to sit on a chair near her father's bed while she remained standing behind her.

She had never liked hospitals, particularly their white color, meaning the buildings, the walls, the uniforms, or the sheets. It usually signified illness that led to death.

"Your father hated hospitals or doctors, not because he was afraid of dying." Her mother uttered, extending her hand to his father, enveloping his hands in her smaller ones. "He just could not stand the thought of us getting sick."

She could only stare at her mother's action, unable to respond to her as tears threatened to drop in her eyes. But she could not cry again because it would only trigger a chain reaction, keeping her breathing steady, hoping it would be enough to control her emotions.

"Ethan said that he would not know what to do if anything should happen to the two of us." Then, her mother turned to her with a gentle smile gracing her lips. "He said that we are stronger than him. He needed us for him to survive, not the other way around."

Dani rested her hands on her shoulders, both of them taking support from each other. Then, she felt one of her mother's hands touch hers, squeezing it tight as if letting her know that she was also there for her.

Her eyes finally roamed around the room, observing the many changes made to its facility. The white backgrounds were gone, replaced by colors that hid the whiteness of the room. Somehow, it felt more friendly, less eerie.

Then, her attention went back to the man lying on the bed, sleeping peacefully with his eyes closed firmly. It did not even twitch.

"We became strong because of him," Dani finally spoke up, thinking of the many things her father did for her. "Because of his love for us."

Then, her mind brought her back to a memory where she first received her first bike. Ethan took her out to the garden, giving her the instructions and the encouragement to learn how to ride it.

She remembered falling several times, bruising her skin in some places, but he never allowed her to give up, making her stand up from her fall and forcing her to ride it again until she eventually mastered it.

It was one lesson she would never forget.

"He never raised us to be weak, Mom." What else could she say that could bring peace to their hearts.

This time, her eyes moved towards his face, wanting to see him open his eyes more than ever. But his eyes remained shut.

Still, she observed her father's labored breaths assisted by the machine attached to his nose and mouth. It only showed how difficult it was for him to breathe.

Suddenly, her heart drummed inside her chest, as if it was beating with the machine, beating loudly right next to his bed. If only she could take away his pain, she would. But even that was not possible. She was helpless like everyone else.

"I know." Laura smiled again at her, patting her hand one last time before letting her go. "I think you should return to your husband. He must be worried about you." Returning her full attention to her husband.

"What about you, Mom?" She asked, looking at the back of her head questioningly. "Aren't you coming back with me?"

Laura leaned forward, much closer to the bed. Then, her hands lifted his hand and cradled it on hers like she did not want to let him go.

Eventually, she caressed his skin and placed his palm on her cheeks, like she was transferring her warmth to his, savoring the only contact his situation could allow.

"If you don't mind, I just want to be alone with him for a while." Her mother said, requesting a few minutes she could spend with him.

A private moment where she probably could talk to him without anyone else listening. Not even her.

She smiled at her mother, granting her wish. She kissed her mother on top of her head. And then, she moved towards the opposite side of the bed, kissing her father on his forehead.

Afterward, she stepped out of the room, returning to the rest of their family. When she entered the room, she was surprised that many more came to visit her father, family, and friends who cared about his well-being.

Nonetheless, she was surprised that another figure stepped out of the crowd. She was expecting it to be Alex, but it was her brother who walked toward her instead.

She only wondered why he was here. Was it to show his support for the family because he finally considered them family now? Or was it something else?

Chapter 750: Not acting as the hero

Evan watched her enter the room. The fact that the royal guards recognized her meant she was telling him the truth. But who was she really, again forgetting to ask her full name?

In his defense, he did not get the chance when he got distracted by her crying and her sob story.

He was left wondering as he loitered in the hallway, waiting for her to come out of the room. He could follow her inside, but he knew when his presence was not necessary. So, he kept walking until he realized that it was almost dawn.

The light outside the window had brightened up the hallways, slightly removing the eerie feeling of the place. Still, it was a hospital. Many people died in this place every day, if not every hour.

"Evan, I did not know that you were here." Suddenly, a voice called him from behind as he gazed outside the window, watching the tiny people crawling down the street like ants, getting ready for the day.

He was not surprised to see a familiar face visiting the Prince when he turned around to check who had called him.

"Uncle Fred." He responded with a smile, disregarding the formality since he had grown close with the Duke during his friendship with his son. "I was in town when I heard last night about the accident. Alex asked me to check on Lance."

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He immediately explained to the older man who stopped not far from him. He also noticed the other four well-dressed men behind the Duke looking his way.

Evan moved closer to the Duke, who had several companions he had seen before but never had the chance to meet, except for Lance's father, Count Wellington.

"I hope that Lance fully recovers from this." He offered his sympathy to the Count, although he doubted his words would mean much to him.

"Thank you." The Count responded in his solemn voice. "Are you also a friend of my son?" He finally asked him, scanning him from head to toe.

"I am. By the way, I am Evan Blake." He extended his hand to the Count to introduce himself formally.

The Count took it, bowing their heads lightly as in their customs. Then, the Duke stepped aside to introduce the other men behind him.

"This is also my friend, Mr. Leonardo Stewart. You might have heard of him from Alex." The Duke introduced the last man on his right.

Who had not heard of the man? He thought as he extended his hands to him. He was one of the wealthiest men in this country, if not the world.

"Of course, Mr. Stewart. Alex speaks highly of your businesses." Evan responded with some enthusiasm, remembering that this man was expanding in their city.

He could use an account as big as his company. Besides, opportunities like this were hard to come by, maximizing his chance to land him as a client.

"I am glad to hear that. But I can also say the same thing. Alex seemed to be doing so well with his business. I am just concerned about what happened with Mr. Hamilton." Mr. Stewart replied with pity on his tone, but his face maintained an unreadable expression.

He must be good in a poker game, Evan thought as he closely examined the man.

However, he was not surprised to hear that they were already aware of the news about Ethan. Events like this were hard to hide from the media. Besides, Alex must already have updated his family about his father-in-law's condition.

"We are all hoping he will also pull through from this." Evan expressed, thinking of what his friend was going through.

He was suddenly glad that her grandmother was acting out her sickness. He would not know what to do if she was in the same boat as Ethan.

He could not imagine what Alex was going through with his father-in-law and cousin, both on the brink of death.

"We are all praying for Ethan and Lance's quick recovery," The Duke spoke up for everyone else in the group.

Then, the door of the room gradually opened, revealing his companion. Evan looked at her, but her eyes scanned the men before him, who eventually turned their heads to see who exited the room.

"Amelia?" Is that you?" The Duke asked, probably the first one to see her.

"Good morning, Your Highness," Amelia addressed him upon seeing the Duke, slightly curtsying in his presence.

"Amelia, I am so glad that you are here." Mr. Stewart walked fast toward her, enveloping her in his embrace. "I have been calling you. Why are you ignoring my calls?"

It made him frown his forehead at what he was witnessing. He expected the Duke would know her if he had been friends with Lance since childhood.

But Mr. Stewart?

The two knew each other. How? He asked himself as he continued to observe the people before him who seemed not surprised by the reunion.

"Dad, I am fine," Amelia answered, shocked to see his father and looking like she was embarrassed by the scene his father was creating.

But not as stunned as he was to learn that she was the daughter of one of the wealthiest men in the world. Who would have guessed that? Not him.

"Will you excuse us, Your Highness?" Amelia faced the Duke, "... but I need to speak to my father alone." She waited until the Duke nodded his head, granting her wish.

Evan watched as she dragged her father to the other corner, not wanting their conversation overheard by the Duke, the Count, and the other guests.

"Fred, if you do not mind, I want to see Lance before he undergoes his operation this morning." The Count excused himself, not particularly interested in the scene on the other corner.

"I will go with you." The Duke and their associates joined him inside, leaving him to wait outside.

He wished to go with them to see Lance, but at the moment, he could not leave Amelia alone, not until he knew she was ok.

He moved to the side, leaning on the wall, pretending he was not watching the interaction. But his eyes kept darting to the other two people on the floor, seemingly silently arguing about something.

He suddenly believed there was more to the story she did not mention last night. His curiousness would not allow him to rest until he found satisfaction.

When he saw Amelia sprinting away from her father and going straight to the elevators, he instantly knew something was wrong.

"Amelia, wait!" Evan shouted, not caring if his voice bothered anyone. But she did not stop, continuing to sprint in the hallway.

But he saw her father's face when he passed by. He seemed not happy about her running away. Finally, he read something in his expression. He seemed furious.

He ran after her, ignoring the glares he was receiving from the people he bumped into along the way. He stopped the elevator just in time before it completely closed, inserting his hands in between the metal doors.

"Do you have room for one more?" He jokingly said, hoping he could brighten up her mood. But he was not expecting what she did next as she stepped closer and wrapped her arms around him as the door eventually closed.

But for the first time, he did not mind.

He did not flinch when she started to cry on his chest. This time, he knew what to do as he circled his arms around her shoulders, letting his fingers caress her hair in slow, gentle strokes.

“Don’t worry. I am here.” He finally whispered near her ears, using a soothing voice that he only used on his grandmother.

He just wanted to help and get to the bottom of this. Still, he firmly believed that he was no gentleman in his book. And just for clarification, he was not acting as the hero in this story.