

## Royal Contract 761

### Chapter 761: Better to have a family than an enemy

He had been busy the whole day at the office, especially now that Gerald had declared a war against the company. Gerald might not have said those words, but he hinted at it in his last visit.

Besides, he was not the only one. Many were circling, waiting for an opportunity to attack the company. But as long as he was there, he would defend what Ethan had worked hard to build.

"Hi, Mom." Alex greeted Laura, who was sitting next to her sleeping husband.

Laura looked at him with a tight smile. He could tell that she was trying her best to look ok, but deep inside, she was dying of waiting for her husband to wake up.

"Alex, did you come by to take Dani home?" Laura asked, still concerned for her daughter's sake instead of worrying about her condition.

She looked so fragile that he was afraid that she might be next to lie on that bed. But he could do nothing but show his support to these two women that had become a significant part of his life.

"Yes, but I hope you had a good rest and a decent meal at the hotel before returning here," Alex said, learning what Dani did for her mother.

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He immediately stood by Ethan's side and tapped him on his hands, hoping that the simple gesture would tell Ethan that he was not alone in this fight.

"I did, but I could not stay away from Ethan. He might need me, and I don't want him to wake up without me at his side." Laura said in her sweet voice as she leaned forward to the bed and touched her husband's hands.

He could only tell that this must be hard for Laura and Dani. He could not imagine the pain they must be feeling. But he knew that losing Dani would be worse than death, so he could only empathize with their situation.

They had a few more minutes of conversation until Laura pushed them out the door, telling them they should go home and rest. She insisted that she wanted to be alone with her husband.

"How is your Dad?" Alex asked Dani as they sat inside the car on their way home.

So far, Alex only knew that his condition had not changed after the operation. It had not worsened, but he had not gotten better either. The doctors could not give them any conclusive diagnosis unless Ethan showed signs of improvement.

He pulled Dani into his arms, seeing the heavy burden she was carrying on her shoulders. He had no idea how to lose a parent, but he could remember how hard it was to accept losing his grandparents. But he was still young then.

"I am afraid he may not make it this time." Dani finally admitted to him what she had always feared.

He understood her fear, seeing that it might not be easy for her to see her mother in that condition. Usually, Laura was her source of strength, but today, her Mom could not even help herself.

"I could not promise you that Ethan would get better. I wish I have that power, but I don't. But what I can promise is to be here for you." It was the only thing he could say to her.

He could only hope it was enough as he tightened his hold on her, kissing her on the top of her head as they allowed silence to comfort them.

Soon, they were back in their apartment. Instead of cooking tonight, Dani suggested ordering out. He agreed since he was tired himself. He believed he was ready to hit the hay soon.

As they busied themselves inside their room after eating dinner and preparing for bed, Dani suddenly turned to him. "How is the company?"

He was surprised that she was interested to hear about his day. He thought she was too wrapped up with her father's condition that she would not like to talk about anything else.

"As expected, many wanted to take it down into pieces." Alex disclosed to her what was happening in the company.

Technically, if Ethan died, Dani and her Mom combined would have the majority of the ownership of the company. She had every right to know what was happening to it.

"Yeah, I already thought of that. But I trust you and Marcus are handling it well." Dani concluded, always giving him the benefit of the doubt.

"We are trying our best. You are also welcome to join us if you want." He knew it could help her divert her attention from her father's situation. But as usual, she declined.

"What about Lance? Any news from your family." Dani asked him again. "I hope he is doing well compared to my father. After all, he is still young."

It was terrible timing that Lance had to undergo several surgeries just like Ethan. He never thought Lance would ever get involved in a motor vehicle accident.

But accidents were unavoidable, reminding him of when Dani went through the same experience. However, Lance's condition was worse. "But fortunately, the doctors assured us that he would recover soon. But they had placed him in an induced coma to expedite the healing process."

"That is at least one good news I like to hear." Dani smiled, probably thinking of his cousin, who also had been a good friend to her. "What about my brother? What is he doing now?"

He was surprised by that question, not expecting that she would ask him about Gerald. But like in the past, he would never hide anything from her, not deliberately if possible.

"I believe he wants the company for himself. He is now pursuing his initial plans of taking over the company." Alex told her, where Dani only nodded in agreement.

"I never suspected that he could be my brother. I wish I could understand what he had gone through, but I never believed in using the past as an excuse for what would happen in the future." Dani said as they finally lay down on the bed, ready to sleep.

"I agree with you on that. Gerald could not keep blaming Ethan for what happened, nor you." Alex said, pulling her to his side so he could wrap her in his arms.

"But I still hope he would soon realize that it is better to have a family than an enemy." Dani looked up into his eyes before planting a single kiss on his lips.

Chapter 762: Love was blind

Eida sat in the backseat while Amelia was in the front with Evan driving the car. The street was still busy with people walking along the pavement.

Traffic was still moderate, with vehicles going in different directions.

Her eyes stared at the lamp post that lighted the streets. She did not see anything fascinating or extraordinary with them, but it seemed to help her relax a bit.

"Are you sure that the Count would have left by now?" Eida asked as she sat restlessly on their way to the hospital.

She was not afraid of the Count. She would have faced him if she had to under normal circumstances. However, the situation was different now. She could not solely think about what she wanted but also had to consider Lance and the baby.

"I could not be hundred percent certain, but based on the nurses, Uncle Thomas usually left early after visiting Lance," Amelia responded, giving her a little assurance. Still, she could not help but wonder what she would do if she had to face the grandfather of her baby.

She could not promise that she would be able to stop her mind from saying what she thought of the Count and his manipulative ways.

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But one thing she knew for sure, she could not allow dictating what she should do and her child's future. Only Lance had that right, and she would wait for him to get better so she could tell him about their baby.

Then, it would be up to him to decide whether he wanted a life with them or only be a part of their child's life. Either way, she would not force him to love or stay with her.

"Don't worry. We will be here for you." Evan glanced at her through the rearview mirror, showing his support.

Then, silence covered the rest of the car ride as her thoughts brought her back to her dilemma while the others seemed lost in their world.

She momentarily stared at the two, who seemed to be acting weird since this morning. But as she had decided earlier, she would not meddle in their affairs unless they asked her to or if necessary.

Until then, she would deal with her problems and silently watch the two for any development. But she did see the appeal of the two of them ending up together.

What was she doing, acting matchmaker?

"We are here?" Ethan finally jarred her thoughts back to reality as her eyes saw the imposing hospital from her view.

Quickly, Evan circled the entrance and proceeded to the back door, where security was already waiting for them to escort them inside.

She believed they had given them special treatment because Evan had provided extra pay to these people, but if they were ordinary people, she doubted this would be possible.

Exactly why money was valuable to the world, she thought. It could easily purchase convenience and security, but she still believed not everything. The Count could still not buy her love.

"Are you ready to see him?" Amelia asked as they stopped in a waiting room. "I want you to prepare yourself because what you might see would not be pretty."

"The accident banged him badly, but the good news, he would recover from this," Evan added, warning her what to anticipate. At the same time, he assured her that he would be alright.

She stared at her best friend and then at the man she barely knew but began to like anyway. She felt lucky that she had friends willing to stand by her side in a time like this.

"I am aware of what to expect in his situation." She assured them, having reported more than her fair share of vehicle accidents during her younger times in the news industry.

But she was not saying it would be easy to see the man she loved in such condition. Her hands still shook as her heart drummed across her chest. She could not deny the fear that coursed through her spine.

"If you are ready." Evan finally acknowledged it was time. "But remember, doctors had to sedate him earlier. So, he might still be sleeping and would not know that you have been in his room. Let alone hear your voice."

She suddenly felt like a child, giving final instructions before going to her first day at school, but it was alright. She knew Amelia and Evan were only looking after her.

"Ok." It was the only word she could utter as she prepared herself for whatever she would find in that room.

She would settle to see his face if she could not glance at his eyes. She would be happy to feel his hands even if she could not sense his touch.

All she wanted was to tell him what he needed to hear. She could wait for as long as it took for him to respond to her. As long as he lived, that was more than enough. It was all that mattered.

Soon, they walked towards the hallway leading to his private room. It was not on the regular floors where the other patients were recovering. It was a specialized section of the hospital for VIP patients.

"Let me handle them," Amelia whispered behind her ears as they neared his room.

As expected, royal guards secured the area. No one could enter and leave the premises without them knowing. She was already aware of this. It was the only thing that had stopped her from running to his room that morning.

The guards smiled and nodded to Amelia and Evan, recognizing them and allowing them access to the area without questioning who she was.

Luckily, those men trusted them enough not to see her as a threat. Maybe the Count did not tell his security about her. It was possible since the Count would not want her relationship with the Prince to become an issue.

"Thanks." She heard Amelia speak to the guard standing by the door. Then, she was ushered inside by Evan, who quickly closed the door behind her when they were all inside.

Her eyes landed on him, lying motionlessly on the bed. The only visible movement she could see from her view was the machines on the sides that were helping him through his injuries.

"Go on. Lance had been waiting for you." Amelia slightly nudged her by the shoulder. "We will sit here and wait. She pulled Evan to the side by the waiting area at the corner of the room.

She gradually moved, stepping closer to his bed. She could finally witness with her eyes what her friends were talking about regarding his condition. Lance did look pretty bad. But she was glad that despite that, he would recover.

Finally, she stood beside him. If she stretched her hands, she could touch him. But why was she hesitating? Was she afraid that she would hurt him? Well, she doubted he would feel any pain at the moment.

Still, she just stared at him, checking every inch of his body for his injuries. His head had bandages covering half of his face. Those exposed to her had cuts and bruises on them.

"I am here." She finally whispered, but she doubted he heard it. She stared again into his face, still handsome despite his condition.

It must be the reason they said that love was blind.

Chapter 763: Renounce the child's existence

Her eyes scanned the rest of his body, checking if nothing was missing. She breathed a sigh of relief, seeing that despite the bandages on his body and the cast on his arms and legs, everything else seemed to be just as it should be.

Finally, she stepped forward until her body touched the bed while her hands reluctantly moved to cover his hand. It felt cold but not dead cold, just chilled by the air conditioning cooling the room.

She slightly rubbed his skin, hoping to put some colors on them, warming them up so that his blood would flow more clearly along its veins.

"I am not sure if you wanted me here after what I said to you." She mumbled, not too loud but not too low either. She hoped it was enough for him to hear her words, not caring if the other two in the room heard her.

"After what I did, I feel I don't deserve to stand in front of you. But I need to see you." She paused as she felt the first tear drop on her skin. She did not even realize that she was crying as her eyes focused on his closed eyes.

If things would not work out for them, she would at least like to see his eyes, even for one last time. To hear him laugh about something even if it was not because of her jokes. She wished him to live even if it was not for her.

"If you open your eyes and tell me that you don't love me and never want to see me, I promise I will never bother you again. But before that, there is one thing that you should know." Her tears had come down like a waterfall, falling nonstop as she thought of not seeing him again.

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She could not even continue her words as her sobs increased their intensity as she stared blindly at his face. She never thought that heartbreak could be this painful.

The other time, she thought she had already broken her heart and torn it to pieces. But now, shredding it was worse as her heart squeezed the life out of her, making it so hard to breathe.

Then, she felt gentle hands on her shoulders, giving her comfort. Amelia must have noticed her situation and had come to her rescue. She was a great friend she could always depend on despite what happened to them.

For a few minutes, she allowed herself to feel the pain and the tears to flow out of her eyes. She believed she needed to release all those pent-up energies before proceeding with the rest of what she still had to say to him.

She finally stopped at some point, allowing her tears to subside. Then, she could see again, tapping her friend that she was ok. She had to say it before she lost the will to do so.

"I am sorry about that." She began again when Amelia returned to Evan's side. "But it is just hard to see you like this." She said, slightly smiling, remembering the times they argued about almost everything but still enjoyed it in the end.

"Anyway, as I said earlier, there is something I wish to tell you." Using her normal voice this time. She heard in some studies that comatose patients were aware of what was happening around them even if they had seemed to be sleeping.

She was hoping that was his case. She wanted him to know that he had something else to live for, more than ever. There was a reason why he had to fight harder to survive.

Although she had not heard him talk about kids, she knew Lance would love to have many of them. She had seen him interact with kids when they were out. He seemed to be natural around them.

She could tell that he would be a great father. Probably a better parent than her. She could already imagine the smile on his face as he stared at their little child. How she hoped she would also be a part of that.

"I need you to live because you are about to become a father." She whispered close to his ears as she leaned forward, careful not to touch his injuries that covered almost his entire body.

She somehow felt his breath on her face when she stared at him. Then, she swore she saw his eyes twitch. But when she observed more carefully, it was gone.

Maybe she only had imagined it. Her brain wanted it so much that she conjured it in her mind, replacing reality with an illusion.

But still, she hoped that he did move his eyes.

He was finally waking up.

He woke up because she heard her voice.

His eyes would open because he wanted to see her.

But those were all wishes that might or might not happen today.

She finally straightened again but kept her hands holding his. She did not want to lose the only connection they had. She wished to remember the feeling of having his skin connected to hers.

But the warmth that radiated on his hands this time made her smile. She hoped it was an indication that he was getting better. At least, that was what her mind wanted to believe.

"I need you to get better. I love you." She finally uttered those words, hoping they would penetrate his heart and reside in them. Then, when he woke up, he would recognize it and realize it came from her.

"More than ever, our child needs you." She again spoke up, a bit louder this time, hoping that if he heard those words, he would finally force his eyes open.

"You are going to be a good father." Then, she squeezed his hand tighter, hoping to get some response from him.

However, a different reaction exploded in the room. "Father? Child?" A male voice shouted by the door.

She did not even notice someone enter the room as her attention was on the man before her. She quickly turned around, seeing the angry face of the Count as his eyes focused on her.

She could also see the shocked faces of her friends, like her, who must be unaware of the Count's sudden presence.

"What foolishness is this?" The Count continued, lowering his voice, probably not wanting the other people outside to hear his words. Then, Count Wellington strode toward her, his face still a mask of fury.

She could only assume that he heard what she said to Lance when he entered the door. She did not wish him to know about the child until Lance had decided what he wanted, but it was now out of her hands.

She thought he might have already left since nobody had seen him in the vicinity, but it seemed they were wrong. Or, he might have returned for something else. Maybe someone informed him that she was here.

Whatever the reason was, the problem was he had discovered her secret. What would happen now?

Anyway, whatever happened, she would do her best to protect this child, even from her child's grandfather.

But the sad part was, looking into the Count's eyes. She firmly believed that even if this child carried their blood, this man would still renounce the child's existence.

Chapter 764: A single rose

A child.

A bastard child.

The Count could not believe what he had just heard. It was utterly outrageous. His son could not have a child with this woman. Else his son's chances of becoming King would evaporate into thin air. They could kiss the Kingdom goodbye.

Lance could not have anything to do with this woman, watching with contempt at the woman who had her hands on his son as if she had a right to touch him.

"Would you leave us for a few minutes?" He swiftly stopped and ordered, realizing they had company when they stood up from their seat on the corner. "I need to speak with Ms. Harlowe alone."

The Count recognized the two as Amelia and Evan, his son's friend. But he did not realize that they had any connection with this woman.

"It is ok. Wait for me outside." Eida spoke softly to the two, who were hesitant to leave.

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"Are you sure?" Amelia asked, still uncertain if she should leave the room, staring at him as if he was the devil himself.

Fear clearly showed in her eyes, but there was also defiance in their depths. She seemed ready to defend her friend against him if the need arose.

Suddenly, he wondered if she was the right woman for his son. Yes, his father was one of the wealthiest people in the world, but money was not the only thing that mattered in their Kingdom. Power was.

"Yes, I will be fine. The Count and I will only talk." Eida smiled at her friend, seemingly assuring her friends that she would manage just fine.

"We will just be outside." Evan finally spoke as he guided Amelia outside, but his voice also contained a warning.

Young people nowadays. They always allowed their emotions to control them rather than using their brains.



He quickly moved toward the woman claiming to have his son's child and confronted her once the two were out of sight.

He had encountered many of her kind before, and she would stop at nothing unless she got a good exchange for her effort. Who would not want to land a good man and a Prince at that?

However, he could not allow her to besmirch his son's name just because she wanted to trap him in marriage.

"Are you saying you are pregnant and my son is the father?" Count Thomas finally asked, but this time he used a calmer tone.

He realized that losing his temper would not help him resolve this issue. But he would find a way to deal with this problem once and for all. It had gone long enough.

"Yes, I am carrying your son's child." Eida finally responded, unafraid to face him as she stood tall in his presence. "And I want him to know that as soon as he woke up."

Her bravado was admirable, and he would commend her for that. Most people would shake at his presence, especially when they knew he was not pleased with their actions. But he was not here to praise her for being a worthy adversary. He had to find a way to get rid of her.

He stared at her, studying her. He had already offered her an enormous sum of money that most women would have grabbed easily. But not her. She declined it.

"How sure are we that the child you are carrying belongs to my son?" He had to ask since he had reports of her reputation.

She had been sleeping from one man to another. He could see from how her face changed that he had hit a nerve. He had been right about his assumption.

This woman had a terrible past that would never pass with the Council, not even through him. She was not the woman worthy of his son's devotion. She would only be a disgrace to their good family name.

"I am sure you already had my background investigated. I would not deny that my past was not perfect, but I never tried to hide it from your son." She stated, not even blinking when she looked directly into his eyes.

Suddenly, he would have liked this girl if only she came from a reputable family with a good solid background, but that was not the case. The fact was, she would not be good enough for the crown.

He was not a monster everyone might perceive, but he had a legacy and a promise to uphold. He saw the opportunity for his son to take the throne that used to belong to them.

He could not allow anything to stand in that way, not this woman and not the child she was carrying. Besides, he would never be sure if the child she was carrying was his son because he had no plan to find out.

"It is irrelevant if my son knew it and he was ok with it. That is not the issue here." Count Thomas moved closer to his son, staring closely at his sleeping form.

Lance might not realize this now, but he was only looking after his future and the future of this family. But eventually, his son would see the larger picture.

No one deserved the crown more than him. His son had worked hard to be in this position. He was not going to let it go to waste. Not for this girl and her child.

"Then, what is the issue?" She stood before him, determined to fight for her right and her child.

He could see it in her eyes. She was not going to back down easily. Maybe she believed that she loved his son and Lance loved her. If that was the case, offering her more money would never be enough.

But then, that was also something he could use to his advantage. Ms. Harlowe might have a terrible record between the sheets, but her reputation was still impeccable in her professional life.

Could he risk telling her about his secret? But it could be the only way to make her disappear from his son's life. Still, she was a reporter. She might leak this delicate information. But then again, he could still use it against her.

"How much do you love my son?" The Count finally asked, facing the woman who could ruin everything for his family.

This woman was like a rose. She looked beautiful in everyone's eyes but underneath, her thorns could be deadly. He could not allow a single rose to destroy what he had worked hard to achieve.

Chapter 765: Rightful share and more

"This is delicious." The stunning woman sitting next to him on his living room sofa said as he spooned another piece of the delicious chocolate dessert into her mouth. "But I think I already had enough."

The woman declined another mouthful. Instead, she took the wine from the center table and drank a few sips. He followed her lid and drank half of his wine while watching her.

He could not understand the fascination of these models to starve themselves to death to maintain those skinny figures. But who was he to judge when he liked how they looked and felt underneath his touch.

"You have nothing to worry about." He whispered into her ears as he leaned closer to her, putting his hand on her exposed knees, letting it glide up toward her inner thigh. "I will take care of that." Letting his lips graze on the side of her neck.

Soon, her hands wrapped around his neck, permitting him to proceed with his plans. "How do you propose to do that?" A challenge or an invitation that he gladly accepted.

"Simple." He let his lips answer her as he kissed her, devouring her while his hands started exploring her body. Like every other man, he had needs that required fulfillment.

His other hand grasped the strands of her hair, making her tilt her head to the back, giving him more access to her shoulders. He moved the strands of her skimpy silky dress down on her arms, and slowly, it glided smoothly off her, exposing her upper body to him. "You have a lovely body." He complimented, skimming his hand at the side of her perky breast before going down on one of them, making her moan in pleasure.

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On the other hand, she also began working on his shirt, slowly removing the buttons starting from the top. He hissed when her fingers traced his chest, enjoying how her soft palm caressed his skin.

He pulled her up from the sofa, making her stand before him. Then, with just a little tug, her dress fell to the floor, leaving her in just her sexy thong, another fascinating thing about models as he enjoyed his view.

Then, she stepped closer to him, straddling him on the sofa cushion. Without waiting for an invitation, he buried his face in her chest, enjoying the feeling of her soft mounds on his lips.

But as he kissed her along her chest while his hands held her thighs, pulling her closer to him, the sound of shoes approaching from the other side of his house alerted him of another company.

He could only think of one man who would be bold enough to interrupt him when he entertained a guest in his house. It could only be his friend who thought of himself as untouchable because he knew he could get away with it.

“Woah! I did not mean to interrupt.” But on the contrary, Mike walked into his living room, sat on the vacant chair, and looked at him, not caring if he was in the middle of fucking someone.

However, in their underground world, it was nothing ordinary. Sex, guns, and killing were part of their daily lives.

“Don’t mind him. Stay.” He whispered to the woman in his arms when she was about to move, testing if she was like some girls he had dated.

But apparently, she was as she stayed and only looked at the other man without inhibitions. She did not even bother to cover herself up. However, he had already known she was no different from most girls who only wanted something from him.

From the moment she had sent sexual signals during dinner, he knew she was just another easy prey. But he still liked playing with her.

“As much as I want to stay and watch how she would fuck your brains out, I have no time. I am a busy man.” Mike said as if he was bored. “But we have something important to talk about.” He continued. “I heard about your plans from the grapevine.”

Hearing his words, he knew that what he would like to discuss was a sensitive issue with grave urgency. Therefore, no one else should learn about their conversation.

“I am sorry about this. But could you wait in my room while I deal with this?” He gently touched her face and pulled her for a soft kiss. He might be cruel to his enemies, but he could never hurt a woman unless she could be the enemy. Besides, he still needed her for the night.

“That is ok.” His date said as she gradually stood and picked up her clothes. “But don’t take too long.” She whispered, giving him one last peck on the lips before moving away.

“Well, that is one hot date,” Mike commented as they watched her disappear in the hallway.

“Why are you here, Mike?” He asked again, not wanting to make speculations about his visit.

“I thought we are laying low against the Hamiltons?” Mike finally spoke up, knowing that they were finally alone. “What changed, Gerald?”

He remembered telling his friend they would have to stop attacking the company when the investigation was still hot. But he failed to inform him that he had resumed his plans.

At the same time, he had not told him about his current position with the Hamilton family. Still, he would hold on to that information until he found the right time to divulge it, not only to him but to the entire business community.

However, he believed he could include him in his plan to take over the company. It was not exactly a secret anymore as Alex had discovered that he had already bought several shares in their company.

Still, he underestimated the Prince, thinking he was just a dummy that Ethan used to run the company.

But now that Ethan was sick, he thought he could easily manipulate Alex under his fingers. But he had proven him wrong when he quickly caught his hand on the cookie jar and immediately stopped his attack on the company.

But he was not going to give up yet. He was not done with them, not quite close.

He knew that even though Ethan had admitted he was his son, he had no plans of adding him to his will. But it did not matter anymore. He still intended to get what was his rightful share and more.

Chapter 766: Stay or leave

Amelia could not sleep that night. She could only wonder what happened inside the hospital room, but Eida refused to tell them anything. She dismissed the encounter with the Count as if it was nothing important.

She could tell it was anything but good, especially when she was dealing with the formidable Count. She would know since she had grown up with Lance. She knew how controlling his father was.

She would admit that compared to her father, the Count was much better because she could see that he cared about Lance, unlike her father, who only wanted to use her.

“Oh! Why is it so hard to sleep?” She mumbled as she covered her head with a pillow, blocking the little light from the window and the almost inaudible sound brought by the mild wind.

She had been turning in her bed, unable to sleep as different thoughts went through her mind, thinking about her friend’s current pregnancy with no father condition.

Then, her mind started nagging that it was not the only reason. A man, probably sleeping at this moment on the opposite side of this apartment, was keeping her awake.

“Ooohhh! Stop it!” She wished her mind would listen to her for once. She had been distracting herself from thinking about that incident, but it kept creeping back into the forefront of her consciousness, and it was frustrating her.

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"This is useless." Amelia finally gave up on knocking herself, so she shoved the pillow out of her face and kicked the blanket off her body as she dropped her feet on the side of the bed to stand up.

She decided to get a glass of milk, hoping that would help. It was either that or get herself drunk, which was not an option. She still needed her full brain function to deal with all that was happening around her.

She walked out of the room, tiptoeing in the living room, avoiding making unnecessary noise. Then, she was lurking in the dark kitchen, moving slowly through the table and chairs.

"Ouch!" She did not see the foot of the stool that stood in her way, making her knee bump into it.

Her hands automatically touched her knees, feeling the pain going through her nerves from the impact. She should have opened the lights instead of creeping like a thief in the dark. Then, she was about to open the fridge when the lights suddenly turned on, almost blinding her. She had to cover her eyes from the brightness of the room.

"Whose there?" A man's voice suddenly made her aware that she was not alone anymore. "Oh! Sorry. I thought there was an intruder."

Of course, she had easily recognized his voice even if she did not see him immediately. However, she suddenly felt too aware of his presence when she heard him move closer.

Then, when she squinted her eyes against the light, she finally saw him just a few feet away, standing tall before him, making her suddenly nervous.

"No, it is just me, Evan." She finally found her voice and answered, but she did not realize she was catching her breath.

She quickly took a deep breath to calm herself down, not because she was frightened by him but because she had become too aware of him.

"I did not mean to startle you." He responded with concern, probably seeing her reaction to his sudden presence. He moved a little closer, placing the empty glass he was holding in his hand down the counter and standing closer to her.

"Are you ok?" His eyes scanned her from head to toe as if checking if she was ok.

"Of course, I did not realize anyone was still awake at this time." Her eyes automatically looked at the wall clock just on the opposite wall.

"Well, I could not sleep yet." He responded, reluctantly moving to the other side of the counter as he took out a bottle of scotch he must have hidden in the cabinet.

"I was just going to get some refill." Indicating the empty glass. He poured himself a half glass full before turning to her. "You want one." He offered, looking directly at her.

She had thought about it earlier but decided she should stick to her original plan. "No, I am ok. I was thinking of getting myself a glass of milk." She excused herself, turning away from him to open the fridge.

She took out a carton of milk from the cold fridge and walked behind the counter to get a glass, avoiding bumping into him since he stood near the cabinet.

It was the first time that she found herself alone with him again. The entire day, they were either with Eida or Angela. Even in the hospital, they always had other companies with them.

"Oh, good luck with that. I don't think milk would do much for me." Evan said as he raised his glass and took a sip of his alcoholic drink. "So, I will have to settle with this." Hissing after swallowing a mouthful of the drink.

"I do hope you get your much-needed rest then." She said, pouring herself a glass full only to realize that the box was already empty.

She made a mental note to get milk early in the morning to replace the one she just threw in the wastebasket. Maybe a few groceries as well.

They could not live freely in this apartment for long, and the least she could do was contribute. But at the moment, she felt she had to get going.

"Well, I need to go back to bed." She uttered in a shaky voice as she passed him, carrying her glass of milk.

But before she could move further away, he stopped her, grasping her wrist in a gentle grip. She could have easily pulled away from him, but she did not as she slightly turned to look at him.

"Please, stay," Evan said in his low baritone voice. "I just want us to talk." Then, he released her wrist, giving her the option if she should stay or leave.

#### Chapter 767: A hypocrite

His mind warned him to let her walk away while he still could. But his body seemed to ignore his logical part as he stopped her from leaving the room. Then, he gestured for her to take the other seat opposite him.

Both just stared at each other for a minute, undecided about which one should go first, unsure of what to say. But both eyes could not look away.

"I think you should drink your milk," Evan suggested, but he wanted to bump his head on the counter for such a lame line. He knew he could have come up with something better, but his mind went blank as he stared into her eyes.

"Maybe later." She responded with a smile, still holding on to the glass. "What do you want to talk about?" She finally dared to ask, deciding to lower her eyes to the glass, watching the moisture of the glass drip to the wooden surface.

He could already guess she might want to talk about it, but she did not want to open the topic. He could sense her hesitation as her fingers played with the water that pooled on the table.

"Earlier, something happened. It might have started as an accident, but I believed it meant more." Evan stated what he believed she was afraid to voice out.

He observed her face as it changed. The flicker of recognition in her eyes told him she remembered it too. But not just the accidental kiss but what happened after that.

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He still recalled it clearly, in the lobby of the building. He was returning to the apartment when he greeted the doorman. Then he heard a scream. It happened quickly, but his instinct told him to catch her as she fell exactly in his direction.

He did not witness the entire event, but he recalled her landing on his arms, but the impact was so strong that it took him down too. They ended up sprawling on the floor with her on top.

"I am sorry." She said as she scrambled to stand up from their position on the pavement. "I did not mean to land on you, but I tripped and lost my control." She tried to explain to him.

He also followed her, straightening up as he found his footing back. "Don't worry about it," Evan responded, just glad that no one was hurt. "Are you on your way back to the apartment?"

When she said yes, he suggested that they should go together in the elevator since he was already on his way back too. Things seemed to be ok as they talked about the weather.

Then, the man carrying a large package in the elevator accidentally bumped her with the box he was carrying as he went down to the lower floor. What happened next was history.

As she lost her balance and once again landed in his arms. Then, unexpectedly her face looked up to him, and his lips touched hers. Then, sparks flew in his brain as his lips moved to kiss her.

Unexpectedly, she responded with equal enthusiasm to his advances, as both seemed thirsty and needed replenishment. Unable to control the kiss, his tongue began exploring her mouth.

They only stopped when the bell dinged, signaling their floor. And he almost missed it if not for the child about to enter the small confinement with her parents.

"I am sorry about that." Amelia finally responded, bringing him back to the present. "It should not happen. I don't know what came over me." She apologized as if she regretted every minute of that event.

But he could read a woman like a book, and she appeared to be lying to him and herself. He could tell she liked it as much as he enjoyed every minute it lasted.

Yes, it was a long, torrid kiss full of passion, not just a kiss on the cheeks.

"I am not sorry, and I certainly am glad it did happen." Evan confidently responded because he could not deny that he wished to kiss her again.

He could see the agitation in her lips as they slightly trembled together with her hands. Then, her lips partially stuck out to wet her parched lips. How he suddenly wished to taste them again?

He suddenly felt like a horny teenager who wanted to kiss a girl but was afraid to scare her off. He never felt like this with another woman.

"Please, don't make things more complicated." She begged him as if she wanted him to control himself around her.

But how could he do that? When all he could think about was kissing her again after that incident inside the elevator. He could not sleep because his mind insisted that he knock on her door so he could see her again.

It was insane.

He knew it, but that was how he felt at the moment. He must be going crazy because he could not stop thinking about a girl. He was obsessing about kissing her again.

"I am not. It was a kiss between two adult people. I believe we both like it. So, what is the problem with that?" This time, he was not thinking anymore as he allowed his lips to do the talking.

Or, for this matter, his desire.

Maybe it was her nerves, he could only assume, but she started drinking her milk. Probably, feeling thirsty just like he was as he took his drink and finished it.

"I still believe it should not happen. I am still in love with Lance, and you are..." She halted in her words as if she tried to think of a better word to describe him.

But when she looked up and placed her glass down, he could not help the smile from appearing on his lips. She looked like Ms. Santa Claus with a foggy mustache on her lips.

"A ladies' man." Evan finished for her, already grasping her thoughts of him. He could not blame her since that was what he was. And he could not deny it.

He smiled at her, knowing fully well that what he had in mind would never work. He could not string her along, only to be another of his flings. She was just too good for him.

"Yes." She agreed with his self-depiction, but her eyes never bore judgment in them.

He reached out to her with only the intention of wiping the white cream on the top of her lips. Then, eventually, letting her go, finally deciding it was time to leave.

His grandmother was just fine, but he was not. He had to return home where he could return to himself. To remove all these unwanted feelings, he was developing for this woman.

But when his finger landed on her soft lips, he expected her to move, but she did not. He believed he could walk away, but his fingers lingered on caressing her lips.

Her doe eyes just stared at him as if waiting for more. Then, he found himself leaning over, following the direction of his finger as it traced her lips, kissing her again like what happened earlier.

"I could not promise you anything other than this," Evan whispered in her ears as his lips started to explore her face and neck. But now, he believed he was also lying to himself?

A hypocrite.

Chapter 768: With what?



Amelia was drowning in his kisses, unable to stop him from the onslaught of his hands on her skin. Warning bells rang continuously on her head, but her body seemed deaf, ignoring the danger of what she was doing.

Then, he said it to her. The words that should be sending her running for the hills. The terms womanizers used to avoid trapping themselves in any commitment.

“Ooohhhmmm!” And here she was, moaning in delight instead of fleeing with her life. Enjoying the momentary pleasure his lips were giving her.

However, thinking about his words, could she also promise him anything when she still believed that her heart belonged to someone else?

Still, she could not deny the sexual attraction she felt for this man. As much as she wanted to fight it, she lost the battle as her will started to surrender.

“Amelia...” Her name echoed in her ears as if someone was calling her. “Evan...” A surprising tone alerted her that they were not alone, making her aware of her surrounding.

The temporary cloud that covered her thoughts suddenly vanished as clarity opened her eyes to the present. She was sitting on the counter, cradled in Evan’s arms.

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He also seemed to realize the situation as he abruptly stopped and pulled slightly away from her. But he did not let her go until her feet were back on the floor.

“What is going on?” Her friend asked, looking astonished by what she had witnessed just now. “Are you two...?” Still, she was unable to finish her question since she seemingly still found the entire scenario shocking.

Amelia quickly fixed herself, trying to straighten her clothes. Luckily, her robe seemed to be still intact. But she doubted her hair, feeling it was flying everywhere from the way Evan buried his fingers in them.

“No, we are not.” She finally answered her friend, looking at her. “It was a mistake.” She added before turning and walking away from him without looking back, leaving her friend to wonder what just happened.

But she could not look at him, not after what happened. She felt so cheap, telling herself that she loved another then, making out like that with another man.

Then, the sad part was that she was willing to accept what he could only offer. She was ready to settle for less. It was just because she was attracted to him physically.

She did not even like him. But what was there to like about him when she barely still knew much about him. Now, she was settling for casual sex. She must be going crazy for this.

She ran to her room and hid inside, locking the door as if he would try to follow her. Why would he even bother when he could get it from someone else?

That was the sad truth.

Nothing about her was special, enough for someone to bother to want her to stick around for good. Even her bestfriend could not love her even after years of knowing her.

“Amelia, please open up.” She could hear Eida’s voice on the other side of the door. But how could she face her when she kept telling her that she loved Lance.

She stared at the door. Suddenly, feeling more ashamed of herself for being such a hypocrite. But then again, if she loved Lance. Meaning truly loved him. Could she be able to kiss Evan like that?

“Amelia, I know you can hear me. Please talk to me.” Eida pleaded by the door. “You know I am pregnant and should not be standing out here all night outside your door.”

How could she ignore her friend as guilt now nagged at her? She gradually walked toward the door, hesitantly opening the door for her.

“That is not fair,” Amelia uttered to her friend as her face dropped in her hands, but no tears came out. “You should not use the baby in this situation.”

Eida immediately wrapped her in her arms, closing the door behind her and guiding her to her bed. She felt she should be comforting her, not the other way around.

“I have to because you will never open that door, and I will not be able to help you.” Amelia suddenly realized how lucky she was to know such a friend.

Yes, they had an issue because of a man, but her friend did not intentionally take him from her. She was right. She had no idea that they were falling for the same man.

But now, looking at her eyes, she could not see any judgment in them, only concern for her welfare. Her tone made her feel that she was not alone. She had a friend she could share her problems with just like her. They could always count on each other.

“I guess you are right again.” She stated, feeling the warmth of her friend’s hands on her. “I just...” Stopping as words failed her. She looked up to the ceiling, hoping it would help her with what she wanted to say to her friend.

“I am not here to judge you. Or tell you what to do or how to feel. I am here just as a friend who would be willing to listen to what you want to say.” Eida said as she squeezed her hands tightly, subtly telling her that she would always be there for her.

“I just don’t know what to tell you about what you saw out there.” She was telling the truth. She was confused as hell as to what she was doing, kissing Evan. The fact that she enjoyed it was worse.

She dropped her gaze to her friend, trying to read what else she might be thinking. If anyone could help, Eida would be it since she had numerous experiences with men, unlike her.

“It is ok to feel confused. Evan is an attractive guy and quite charming too.” Eida responded as if that should answer her troubles.

But that was it.

She had been surrounded by many attractive and charming guys, just like Evan. But no one was able to replace Lance in her heart. What made Evan different from them? Not that she was saying Evan had managed to penetrate her heart.

Was it because he was a self-proclaimed playboy? Still, she had no idea.

"I guess. Maybe it was the physical thing." Amelia finally admitted. Not having more explanation or not wanting to dig deeper into the problem.

"It could be." Her friend agreed with her, but just like her, even her words did not convince her.

"Anyway, enough about me. What happened with Count Thomas? You know you can tell me." Amelia changed the topic.

But she believed she should not dwell too much on her problem. Instead, she should focus on how she could help her friend with hers. Eida had more pressing issues compared to her sexual activity or lack of it.

She hoped her friend would trust her enough to help her with what she was going through. She believed it could not be easy what she had been dealing with even before the accident.

"About that." Eida began, but she stood up from the bed and walked towards the window. She stared at the dark view outside, but Amelia could only wonder if she had seen anything because her eyes seemed clouded by tears that refused to drop from her eyes.

She wished there was something she could do to alleviate whatever her friend was suffering from, but that was not that easy.

"What is it?" Amelia asked, hoping she could help just like this woman had helped her countless times before.

Eida finally turned to her, wiping the single drop of tear that escaped from her lids. But her lips sported a beautiful smile that confused her.

"I need you to help me." Eida moved towards her, sitting beside her on the bed as she twisted her fingers together as if thinking.

She could still see her hesitation to say it, but she understood that deciding in her case must be hard because she was not thinking only for herself but also for the baby.

But she could only hope she would always find the right one for her, whatever she chose to do. But she always hoped that she would include Lance in her plans.

"What kind of help?" Did Eida want to see Lance again? She believed she could still do that. But this time, they had to be more careful because the Count would not be as forgiving as the last time. "I can probably arrange a visit again tomorrow."

She was not promising with a guarantee since the Count might have tightened the security, but she could not give up. If she needed to help her friend, she would.

"No, I don't want to see him," Eida said, lowering her eyes to the floor as if she was in deep thought.

"Well, I think I still have friends..." She was about to tell her when her words finally registered in her mind. "What?" She questioned, feeling that she might have misheard what she said.

Then, she remembered that she might not be feeling well to see him tomorrow. There was no use seeing him anyway when he still had not woken up.

"I guess you should rest now and see him another time when he finally wakes up." She concluded, agreeing that it was a better plan. "As I was saying, I think I still have friends who could help us..."

"You are not listening to me." Eida interrupted her self-monologue as she stared into her eyes. "I need your help." She repeated, but it only confused her.

With what?

Chapter 769: Second life

His eyes could hear movements around him, but he seemed unable to open his eyes. His consciousness was aware of his surrounding, but something was preventing him from waking up.

Noises kept ringing in his ears, and some familiar voices echoed around the room, yet he could not understand them. Eventually, wondering if it was just a dream.

Then, something pulled him back to the darkness as all turned black. He was back to a deep slumber, buried in his dreams. He only hoped that tomorrow would be much brighter than his make-believe world.

"Welcome back to the land of the living." A lively voice spoke to him softly, but it sounded unfamiliar.

Who was that?

Lance could feel his eyes this time, compared to before. When he tried to move it, he felt it twitch. He could even feel his fingers as he tried to wiggle them.

"Do you know where you are?" The voice continued to talk to him, but he still felt disoriented, confused by his question.

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He attempted to open his eyes again. Finally, he felt pain in them. Suddenly, he became aware of the different aches in his body as if a car had just hit him.

"Hhhmmm!" His lips moved, but he seemed unable to form coherent words, feeling the dryness of his mouth.

What was wrong with him? He searched his mind for any form of information that would shed light on his situation. Because at the moment, nothing seemed to make sense.

"Here, just take a sip." Whoever stood beside him said as he felt a cold glass on his lips. Then, water touched his parched lips, relieving them from their dryness.

A few seconds later, he completely opened his eyes, gradually adjusting to the lights. A vision of a slightly older man appeared in his view, but his mind could not identify him from his list of names.

Who was this man standing before him? But after a while, he recognized the white coat he wore and the apparatus wrapped around his neck. Now, what was he doing in this place?

"Do you remember what happened to you?" The doctor asked again, probably trying to jar his memories.

He thought hard as fragments of memories started to come back to him. At first, it seemed to be just random pictures. Then, somehow it formed a better scenario in his mind, reminding him of some of the things that happened most recently.

"I am not sure." He finally found his voice, although it was still more of a whisper. He tried to clear his throat, which was hoarse from not being used for a long time.

"Do you at least remember your name?" The doctor tried again, which he could only assume was a test of his cognitive skills.

Suddenly, his eyes roamed around the room, hearing the beeping sound of some machines before seeing where it was coming from, and then he saw several other people behind the doctor.

"Yes, my name is Lance. But why am I in the hospital?" He asked as he searched his brain for the answer.

His mind remembered a bright light. Then, he remembered seeing Eida. And then, he was at work. But suddenly, he was driving fast. Nothing about it made sense.

"Don't you remember that you had a car accident?" The doctor reminded him as if that would help him piece the puzzle in his mind.

Car accident?

Did he hit his car on the tracks? Forcing his mind to recall.

If he was in one, he should remember it. He blinked his eyes twice, finally moving his hand toward his face to rub them off the haze that seemed to cover this whole mystery.

Then, it finally clicked as the sequence of events aligned, revealing to him the actual occurrence. It seemed that it was not just a dream.

"Where is Eida?" Suddenly, she was the first thought that came to his mind. He wanted to see her and be sure that she was ok.

"You were alone in the car when you had the accident. I don't think Eida was with you." The doctor looked confused, but he explained the absence of the woman. "But your father is already on his way to see you."

The prospect of seeing his father was not appealing to him. But what he wanted was to see Eida. Where was she? Did she know that he was in an accident?

He finally remembered that he was on his way back to see her. But something happened. He remembered hearing her voice, then the blinding light. Now, he understood.

"What is wrong with me?" Lance finally asked because he needed to see her. He had to get out of this hospital and talk to her.

He had to ask what was going on with her. He did not believe a single word that she said to him. And he intended to get to the bottom of it. He refused to believe that they were over.

The doctor explained to him the extent of his injuries. Thankfully, nothing had a lasting impact except the scars on his skin. That was good news, but that would mean he would have to undergo months or years of therapy before fully recovering.

Still, it was better than having a permanent disability, paralysis, or far worse consequence, death. He would take rehabilitation as long as it would give him more time to spend with the woman he loved.

Yes! He loved Eida. He would do anything to get her back. He could not lose her because that was not in his options. He finally learned that he wanted to spend the rest of his life with her.

"I just need to see Eida." He mumbled, but the doctor only nodded, probably unable to understand what he was talking about as he started checking for his vitals.

Suddenly, he remembered hearing her voice, but it sounded like a dream. Unfortunately, he could not remember anything that she said.

All he knew was that it had soothed him. It pushed him to come back from wherever darkness he resided during his unconsciousness. He badly needed to hear Eida's voice again.

"We will let you get some rest. We will be back after a while to check on you again." The doctor and his colleagues or staff excused themselves as they exited his room.

Several doctors seemed interested in his case because he was the prince. But that was the least of his concern. He wanted to see familiar faces who he believed could help him find Eida.

After a few more minutes, someone arrived to visit him, but his guest was the last person he wanted to see. His father walked into the room, looking like he hardly had a moment's sleep.

"I am happy to see that you are awake." Count Thomas smiled at him, seemingly glad to see him.

As much as he wanted to hate his father for forcing on him the marriage he had arranged and wanting him to take the throne, he knew that his father loved him.

His father's visions always meant well to him and their family, but sometimes his method could be extreme. Most of the time, he also did not agree with him.

"I am also glad that I am alive," Lance answered his father as he tried to move his body.

His father immediately stepped closer as he tried to assist him. But he could only adjust a little since the cast and tubes connected to his body limited his capability to move.

"Amelia was here, checking on you." His father mentioned as he settled on a more comfortable position.

He liked to hear that since Amelia was a very close friend. But that was all she was. He could not understand why he could not love her the way she loved him, but that was the fact.

He could not force marriage on her when he knew it would only make them both miserable. Besides, there was only one woman he wanted to marry. But he could already see the difficulty they would face as he stared at his father.

"How is she?" He was still concerned about her. After she discovered his affair with Eida, they never had the chance to talk yet. But he was happy and relieved to hear that she was ok.

"She looks good." His father said as he moved to sit on the chair next to his bed, but his eyes kept observing him. "Many of your other friends and family had come to visit, but you were still unconscious. But they are happy that you are on your way to recovery."

As much as he liked to converse about the mundane things, there was only one thing he wished to discuss with his father at the moment.

"Did Eida come to visit?" He finally asked, not caring if his father would get mad. He did not care anymore if his father would disown him.

"Why don't you concentrate on getting better?" His father avoided answering his question as he stood up from the chair. "I think the doctors said you needed plenty of rest so you can recover much earlier."

He moved to his side and dropped a quick kiss on his forehead. Then, he turned his back on him, ready to leave.

"Dad. I know you don't like her. But I need to see her." He called his father's attention before he could walk out of the door. "I love her."

He could tell that anger was brewing within his father with his words as his shoulders stiffened. But when he turned around, he was smiling. "Let me see what I can do." Before he nodded and walked away.

Lance was left speechless, unsure if he understood his father. Was his father going to help him see Eida? He could only hope.

He needed to see Eida and make the most of this second life given to him.

Chapter 770: The perfect timing

Count Ashthorne had been called to the Council meeting that morning regarding the issue of their next heir. As the head of the committee handling the succession on the throne, the Council would like to know what would be his recommendation.

He paced in his office, holding the report that he had personally written last night. But he was not sure if he had done the right thing. He once again opened the file and reread his words.

He knew he should have consulted his team of experts on the matter but what he discovered was a sensitive matter. He could not simply share such significant information just to anyone.

"Sir, your car is already waiting for you." His secretary called his attention when she knocked at his door.

He quickly looked up at her and smiled. "Just give me another fifteen minutes." The Count spoke gently at his secretary.

He was currently dealing with a dilemma between telling the Council about his discovery or keeping it to himself for future use. He had to weigh the impact of this news on the Kingdom.

The King was ready to step down anytime. King Edward already expressed his wish to retire and enjoy the rest of his life as an ordinary nobleman.

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But before he could do that, it was better if he already had a viable substitute. The King needed an heir to name as the next in line to the throne so that the transition would be easier.

"Alexander is still the best choice." He tapped his fingers on the table, looking at his report. "But he still had not claimed the throne." He mumbled to himself in his empty office, shaking his head in frustration.

"My next choice would be..." He stopped and fired up his computer. Soon, he walked out of his office and to the waiting car.

Not a moment too soon, he stood in front of the entire Council, ready to share what he had in his file. The whole members of the Council were present, except for Count Wellington, who had to attend to his son.

King Edward also attended the meeting, wanting to be part of the selection process. Although he had no voting powers in the matter, his opinion still mattered to the Council.

"Since we have dealt with all other matters, should we proceed with the main discussion." The Duke presided over the meeting and turned to him, asking if he was ready to continue.

Count Ashthorne nodded, acknowledging the King, the Duke, and the rest of his colleagues. He stood before them, carrying his report, still debating if he would tell them the truth or just half of it.

"Regarding your investigation, what would be your final recommendation?" King Edward finally asked, looking anxious to know the result.

"I still submit that Prince Alexander would be our best bet. If he would accept that throne, then we have no more issues to discuss." Count Ashthorne spoke, always believing that Alex had the making of a true king.

"However, if my son does not take the throne, do you think Prince Lance is still a suitable replacement as heir to the throne?" Duke Frederick asked, staring at him for confirmation.

It was the moment that he dreaded, but he had no choice but to decide. He knew he had to consider not only the people involved. But what would be excellent for the Kingdom?

If he wanted the Kingdom to himself, he would suggest making his son a King, but just like Prince Edward, he was not qualified to take the crown. He would only drive the Kingdom to the ground.

"I still believed Prince Lance would be a good substitute for our King. I would still recommend him as the next heir to the throne." He finally decided to put Lance's name on the forefront of the list.

He still firmly believed that he had the qualities of a good King despite the accident and the things he discovered about him. But if his colleagues learned about the Prince's secret, chances were, he would not qualify by their very high standard.



But who else would they choose as King. If only Alex would accept it soon, he did not have to face this situation. He could forget everything he had discovered about his friend's son.

"So, the accident did not affect his body functions?" One of the Lords asked. "And his ability to make decisions?"

He could understand their concern. Choosing a King that would rule them was not an easy task. Once they placed him in power, it would be hard to take it back.

"Not at all. The doctors are very hopeful of his full recoveries." He assured them after getting all the facts about the Prince's condition.

"What about the rumors that he was involved with a famous reporter?" Lord Fordshire questioned since he was the one who told him about that issue.

Suddenly, his mind returned to the moment in the hospital where he accidentally heard Prince Lance's situation. He was supposed to leave after visiting his friend and the Prince.

But he forgot something and decided to return to retrieve it. Then, when he was about to enter the room, he heard the unexpected news.

The girl was pregnant with Lance's son. He knew if that kind of news would come out in public, then Lance's chances would disappear, and for the good of this Kingdom, he would keep it if necessary.

He still believed compared to the other options. It was Alex or Lance that he would support, no one else. As long as Lance and his friend, Thomas, keep the news from spreading, then Lance could still become King.

"Count Wellington assured me it was just a fling and nothing more. He guaranteed that Prince Lance already considered a woman from a good reputable family to be his bride." That was it. He finally decided, and he could not turn his back on this.

He knew it was a necessary lie that he had to make, not because Count Thomas was his friend. But because he believed that Prince Lance would be a good King.

He moved from his seat to conclude that if the King would like to retire soon, they would have to finalize Alex's answer about the position.

"The last time I spoke to my son, he was considering it." The Duke admitted. "But due to recent events with his father-in-law, I would have to verify his answer again."

It was his issue with Prince Alex from the start. Although he believed in Alex's capability to lead, his heart did not belong to this Kingdom.

He knew Alex would take the throne in greatness, but he would not be the best King for the role if he did not start to love his position. He would only feel obligated but not passionate about his role in this Kingdom.

"We hope that you can speak to him again at the soonest possible time. Although we understand his current position, you must also realize the urgency of our situation." King Edward told his brother, the Duke.

If only the King's son had been a good candidate, they would not be facing this dilemma. It would have been an easy transition from one King to another.

"Of course. Just give Alex some time to deal with his current issue, and we will discuss this further. Besides, Lance is still recovering." The Duke assured everyone in the room.

That was good enough for him at the moment. He still had to investigate Lance's condition further before making his final recommendations when the time came for the heir to be announced in public.

After an hour, he returned to his residence, wanting to relax in the comfort of his home. He had been working non-stop because of his obligation and had barely spent time with his family.

"Where is Prince Philip?" He asked one of the maids who brought him tea in his study room.

"Your son is not home yet, Sir." The maid responded with a nod.

He quickly dismissed the maid and wished only to be alone for a little while. If only his son had been just like Alex or Lance, he would have recommended him as King, but not being a direct descendant of the Royal family, they did not qualify for the crown.

Besides that, his son had not exactly lived an exemplary life. He turned out to be a drunkard and a gambler. Something that he could never be proud of, but he was still his son.

"Grandpapa!" A small voice suddenly shouted as he gazed outside his window.

"Liam, how are you?" He asked, seeing his handsome grandson run toward him.

He believed this boy was the only good thing that his son had created in his life. The only thing that gave him hope for the future.

Looking at the little boy, he knew he was the last hope he had for fulfilling what his family had failed in the past, to bring back the throne in their legacy.

"I learned how to ride my bike today," Liam said proudly to his grandfather, smiling with a missing tooth.

"That is excellent. Well, make sure you do well in everything you do. And it will take you far." Count Julius tapped his grandson on the shoulders, encouraging him.

He would do everything in his power to make this boy great. Where he failed with his son, he would guarantee that this boy would excel in everything. He would gain what they lost back to their family.

His family used to have the Kingdom under their family, but centuries of a power shift displaced them from their position. But now, he could see a future for this young boy.

It was a chance for his grandson to sit on the throne and for their family to regain their former glory, and all he needed was the perfect timing to execute his plans.