

Royal Contract 781

Chapter 781: Today

Laura did not wish to leave her husband's side even for a second, but she also understood that her body needed some rest. Besides, Dani would not allow her to stay a minute longer until she had her rest.

She was glad that she also followed her daughter's advice, feeling so much rejuvenated from the relaxing and peaceful sleep she had. Seeing Ethan smiling somehow gave her a bit of hope. It was the only thing she could hold on to that made her leave his side for a while.

Presently, she had just finished taking a shower. Her wet hair hung loosely on her shoulders as she stared at herself in the full-length mirror in their room.

She looked like she had aged by a decade since Ethan had been in the hospital. Her eyes were still slightly puffy from crying and the sleepless nights. Her cheeks had a hollow in the center since she hardly ate anything.

"Oh my!" She gushed as her fingers ran through her frizzled hair.

No wonder her husband looked at her with so much concern. She looked pitiful. What should she expect? She hardly combed her hair after showering, messily tying the long strands in a bun on top of her head.

She prided herself on always looking her best around her husband. Not because she would like the attention from everyone around her, but because she did not want him to look at someone else.

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Although he did not show any signs that he cheated or would cheat on her, she still wanted to look good for him. But only for him.

"Rachel," Laura called to her assistant to enter her room. "Has anyone called?" She asked, but deep inside, she hoped no one did.

Because if Dani had tried to contact her, it could only mean one thing while the rest of the other calls were not important to her at the moment.

Thankfully, her assistant told her everything had been quiet since she had arrived at the mansion. This time, she opted to go home instead of checking into the hotel.

"Ok." She felt relieved that all had been silent. "Have the car ready in twenty minutes. I am going back to the hospital?"

Laura instructed before walking into her massive cabinet of clothes to choose what she would wear. She had to hurry because she also wanted to do her hair and makeup.

She had to look beautiful for her husband and show him she was ok. It was him they should be worrying about and not her. For some reason, she wanted her husband to feel that she would be fine even without him.

"Ms. Laura, are you ok?" Suddenly, she staggered, feeling her heart squeezed with unbearable pain. Her hands automatically clutched her chest, wanting to ease the ache consuming her.

It was not a heart attack but the realization that she was preparing herself for his imminent death. It was too painful to accept, even if she had conditioned herself that nothing last forever.

She thought it would be easy, but it seemed it was impossible. She could not even imagine waking up in the morning without Ethan constantly by her side.

"No," Laura answered her assistant as tears rushed down her cheeks. She swore never to cry again in front of Ethan, but he was not here, so technically, she was not breaking her promise.

Rachel quickly moved to her side and assisted her to a chair, where she sat down, drowning in misery. She allowed herself to release the pain she had bottled up inside while in the presence of her husband.

Pretending that she was smiling, laughing, and happy before his presence was not an easy task, but it was necessary. If her husband was about to leave them in this world, she did not want his last remaining memories of her and his family in sorrow.

She wanted to remember the smile that curved on his lips as he gazed at her and their children. But to do that, she had to control her emotions. She had to be stronger than this.

"I am ok now." She uttered in between her sobs, pulling the towel her assistant gave her and wiping her tears away. "Just have the car ready."

She straightened her shoulders, standing up to prepare herself. She could see that her assistant was reluctant to leave her, but she only waved her hand. Her assistant finally vanished behind her door.

Now, she was alone again, staring at herself in the mirror, looking at her puffy eyes again. This time, she swore she would not cry anymore. She had done enough crying for them.

Staring at her eyes through her reflection, she only saw him and his unconditional love since she met him. "I swear I will be strong for the two of us. It is my turn to bear the pain and burden so you can finally rest peacefully."

She always knew how much Ethan had sacrificed himself for her and Dani. She wished she could continue to do that, including Alex and Gerald in her wings.

They said behind a man was a strong woman, but in her case, it was the other way around. Ethan had carried them through all the bad times. And he had continued to lift them through all their happiest moments.

He was the strongest person she knew, and now she had to carry the torch for him. As she emerged from her room, looking and feeling like her old self.

"You look beautiful, Ms. Laura." Rachel complimented as she assisted her into the car. "I do hope that Mr. Ethan gets well soon."

She turned to the young girl who had been serving her for a couple of years. She could feel her genuine concern as well as the rest of the staff.

They had been quiet since she had arrived, and now that she was leaving again. But she sensed their anxiousness for the man of this house to return home.

"We all wish that." But she could not promise them anything as she rode in the car on her way to her husband, waiting for her.

She would make the best of what was available to them. If there was no forever, they still had today.

Chapter 782: Perfectly content

Dani was working on a case when Ethan woke up. Her Mom had not arrived yet, back from her rest, so she attended to his needs which was not much since the hospital staff had been very efficient in their duties.

Instead, her father asked her about her job, not having anything else to talk about in the meantime. If Alex had been here, they would probably discuss the company.

Besides, she believed he was avoiding the topic of his health condition. She could tell he was not in denial about the severity of his illness. Still, he had no plans to show or discuss that with them.

"How is Gerald as a boss?" Suddenly, Ethan changed the topic and stared at her. She could tell he was studying her reaction to the question.

She closed the files she was discussing with him and faced her father. She wondered where this discussion was going, but she planned to weigh her answers according to what would be best for everyone.

"Gerald, just like David and Evan, has been a great boss. I have learned many things from him." Dani only spoke the truth based on their working status.

She had admired Gerald from the start, seeing his work ethic and how he handled his cases. She had patterned her career based on him, helping him with many of his pro bono cases.

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She also had wondered why Gerald had stayed on as just a Senior Partner when he could have competently established his firm. But it appeared there was a simple explanation for it.

He had used the firm as a cover-up in his underground activities. He used his position to build connections with the big fish in the vast sea of businesses surrounding them. It was the perfect setup, a subtle disguise to cover his tracks.

"I know this is too early to ask, but from the short time you have known that he is your brother, what did you feel about him?" Her father continued to ask.

She hinted that her father wanted something from her but had been beating around the bush. It was the first time they had discussed her brother with just the two of them, so he was probably seizing the moment.

"Honestly, Dad. I am in between hating him, accepting him, and forgiving him. I do want to give him a chance. I hope he will change, but doubt makes me question if he was beyond saving."

Her eyes searched his father's face, eventually focusing on his eyes. Hurt was etched deeply in his expression. She could not determine if it was physical pain or something else, but she knew it greatly affected him.

"As a father, it is hard for me to see that one of my children had gone astray. I have failed to guide him to the right path because I was a coward to face him." He had no tears in his eyes, but she could feel how much this weighed on him.

She had no idea of what his father felt about his brother. She was not a parent yet, but somehow, she believed she understood his sentiment.

She dropped the files on her lap on the center table where she had been working since she arrived that afternoon and walked toward her father to comfort him.

She did not want her father to feel that he was alone in this fight. Although she still doubted her brother's intention toward their family, she would give him an extra chance to prove that he wanted to belong to their world.

"We all make mistakes, and you already paid for yours. The ball is now at Gerald's corner." Dani sat on the head of the bed, leaning closer to her father. So she could wrap her arms around him. "Stop beating yourself up, Dad." She uttered as silence enveloped them for a few minutes.

"But honestly, Dad. I think Gerald would eventually turn around." Giving her father some hope, which she believed he badly needed. She pulled her father tighter in her body, transferring her warmth into him.

"Am I missing something in here?" Her mother suddenly entered the room, catching them in their solemn moment.

At least they were not crying, something she did not wish her mother would witness again. Her Mom had been through a lot. She deserved some moment of reprieve from the pain.

"Wow, my darling, you look so lovely." Ethan voiced his astonishment upon seeing her mother stride inside the room, looking like she had just come out of a magazine.

She was expecting her mother to barge in the room, looking like she had hardly slept, not this person who had been so in control of her emotion. She could only hope this was not just a phase. Then eventually, she would suddenly hit rock bottom.

"Now, I feel underdressed." Her father continued to tease her mother, just like they used to do whenever they were together.

Those simple things were what she witnessed that made their relationship stronger through the years. It was something she had watched and wished to have in her marriage.

Luckily, she married someone who seemingly had the same traits as her father. Somehow, she could look forward to great years ahead of their married life.

"Of course, I have not forgotten about you." Laura stood beside her husband before kissing him gently on the lips.

After a few minutes, a knock on the door made them look in the opposite direction. When Laura permitted them to enter, her assistant, Rachel, walked into the room, carrying a black tuxedo that was perfect for her father.

It was soon followed by several of their staff, carrying an entree of food that looked like a small feast, setting it up on the vacant corner, together with some decorations to brighten the room.

“What is this, Mom?” Dani had to raise her brows at the surprise her mother had brought with her.

She walked next to her, giving her a questioning look. But her smile showed her nothing that would tell her anything was amiss. Her mother seemed genuinely happy, or she had just learned how to act.

Still, she was glad that her mother made all this effort for her father’s benefit. Her father looked so happy to see them together like this, not distraught and making a big deal of his condition.

“Help me get your father dressed. We are having a small family gathering. I missed this, and I am sure your father had been looking forward to this.” Dani did not want to ruin her parade, so she just nodded and went on with her plans.

“Don’t you worry, I already called Alex and Gerald. They are coming to join us for dinner.” Her mother said as they assisted her father into the suit. Not an easy task, but seeing her father’s excitement was all worth it.

As they waited for the rest to arrive, Dani returned to the sofa on the other side of the room. Then, her mother sat next to her father, talking to him about her day.

She still watched the two with concern, but they seemed happy, chatting about nothing and everything. They looked perfectly content to be just holding their hands.

Chapter 783: Just a wife

Dinner was like the other times they had been together, except this time, Gerald was part of the family affair. She had no idea if that would even matter to him. But at least, for the most portion, she could see that her father was genuinely happy from his smiles.

Dani guessed that her father’s happiness was more important at the moment. She had to consider what was best for him than what was happening outside this room.

She could still feel the antagonism between Alex and Gerald, but she could see that they attempted to control themselves before Ethan. At least, they were pretending that nothing was amiss.

“You are simply the best,” Ethan stated as he directly looked at her mother with pride.

As always, her mother never failed to create magic. With one swish of her hands and a few spells, she could conjure an enchanting experience that could charm anyone.

“Well, I am only the best because you make me feel I can do no wrong.” Her mother responded, walking towards her father, still confined in his hospital bed.

They had set up the small table near his bed. So, he could join the conversation even if he could not eat the food. His presence was more valuable than anything else.

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But to her father, he seemed satisfied to be there smiling with them as they talked about her mother, who was now in the hot seat, talking about her younger days.

She was also observing Gerald if he seemed uncomfortable about the topic. However, his smile looked genuine as he had also teased her mother about it.

She had no idea if that was just a show for her father's benefit or if he genuinely liked her mother, who he had been comfortable talking to since they had met.

But she hoped it was not just a game with him because she did not want her mother to get hurt at the end of his schemes. If that happened, she would forget that they shared the same blood.

"We better go. It is getting late." Dani finally said goodbye to her parents, enjoying the long dinner with them.

Alex also expressed his delight with the food Laura had prepared for all of them. But he still avoided interacting with Gerald directly.

"I also better be on my way." Gerald walked closer to their father. "I am happy to be included in this dinner." He said, looking at Ethan. "Thanks again, Laura, for inviting me."

She was unsure of what she saw in his eyes. Was it authentic appreciation? But she hoped that was what her father read during their short interaction.

On the other hand, seeing the twinkling in his father's eyes, the glow on his cheeks, and the wide grin on his lips, she knew they all had made him happy. She was more than content with that.

Soon, she and Alex were on their way home. So was Gerald, who took his car in the opposite direction. She never knew where he was staying. But she recently learned that he owned many homes.

"Alex, tell me the truth." Dani knew she did not need to specify her question. She could already see it in his eyes, his hesitation.

But she still waited, hoping that he would share whatever it was that bothered him. She could feel it in the stiffness of his shoulders even if he was laughing with them. He had a burden he was not sharing with her.

"I think Ethan would not make it." Finally, he uttered the truth that nobody would dare say out loud. "Gerald is attacking the company from different angles."

That last part was news to her. She had no idea that her brother had continued with his plans. Alex had made sure to keep that information from her. But she guessed she could not blame him since he had been protecting her from the start.

"Ok. What else?" She had to know everything that he had in his mind so that she could find a way to help him.

If he kept putting her in the dark, thinking that was helping her, then that would only worsen the gap between them. "You promised to share with me everything, for better or worse. Remember?"

She had to remind him what they had sworn on their wedding day and the day they had declared their love to one another. They should not keep secrets unless necessary.

But today, it was not necessary because she could take it. She could handle whatever Alex would tell her. She believed she could even help him.

"I think I need to step up in Ethan's position." Alex exasperatedly said as he ran his hands through his hair. A habit he liked to do when he was under a lot of stress.

She was slightly confused by his statement since he had already stepped up in her father's position for the longest time. What else was he saying?

"I temporarily held the position for him because I hoped he would eventually return to take over. But he asked me the other day to permanently take the role." Her husband explained to her.

She was not aware of this condition. All the while, she thought that her father had already given him that position. But it appeared they had kept this bargain from her.

"But what will change?" She still did not understand. It was just a formality as far as she could tell.

"What seems to be the problem?" She again asked, still confused.

She extended her hand to his face, making him look up until his eyes directly looked at hers. She could see the conflict in them, the uncertainty of his decision.

She wanted to help him, but she could only do that if he would share everything with her. She had to stop protecting her from the world and allow her to join him in his battles.

"I love my family and my country. But you are my family now, and this has been my country for some time. He began to share with her. "Where you are is where my home will always be." He continued, pulling her closer as his fingers nestled on her waist.

Somehow, she believed she might have a clue of what he was about to say next. But whatever it was, she would support her husband in whatever he decided.

"But I think I would rather be your King and rule this place than go home and take over our Kingdom." He finally resolved with finality. "Do you think that is ok with you?"

She could tell it had not been an easy decision for him. He would have weighed every pro and con of that two options before coming up with that conclusion.

She had already told him once that she would stand by him with whatever he decided. If she had to be the Queen of the nation or just their home, she would gladly step up to the plate.

She leaned closer to him, almost feeling his heavy breath on her face, thinking of the best answer she could give him. "I am happy to be just a wife, your wife."

Chapter 784: Match made in heaven

As soon as they reached home, Alex took two glasses of wine, not to celebrate but to calm his nerves. He could still feel the tension of the things going around them. But at least he had Dani to support him.

He was pleased to know that Dani had no desire for the title. Just like him, she was more than content for them to live in the tiny Kingdom they would build together.

"All I need is you." He whispered in the air, glancing at the moon outside, shining upon them all who were still awake. But his plea referred to the woman sleeping peacefully on the bed behind him.

Their home was the only castle they needed. It did not need to occupy acres of land. All it required was them and their future kids. Then, it was the only Kingdom he now desired.

It was not even to rule what Ethan had built, but he would surely safeguard it for his future kids. He would try to protect his father-in-law's legacy.

"Hey, why are you still up?" Dani tapped him on the shoulder as he sat on the edge of their bed, staring at the window outside with his feet fully planted on the floor.

He slowly turned around to gaze at her sleepy face, smiling, hoping she would not make a big deal of this. She was already through a lot. Reloading his burdens on her would not be fair.

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He felt most of the things that weighed on his shoulders had subsided. Still, he knew that the fight was far from over. On the other hand, it was just beginning.

In truth, life was a never-ending battle, a different field, various times, numerous enemies, and an assortment of struggles with only one finish line.

Death.

The first to give up would undoubtedly lose.

"Just could not sleep." He reasoned without giving his emotions away.

But in truth, he could not explain how he felt because he was a man built to keep his emotion hidden. It was just that all his life, he had to grow up strong, always in control of everything around him.

Although his parents never expected much, still the entire nation watched him. Even the present King anticipated much from him, constantly comparing him to the Crown Prince.

But he always knew that no matter how much he had worked hard and excelled, he would not be King. For simply not being the son of the present crowned King.

"What is bothering you still?" She asked, already reading his expression. He could not get away that easily with her. Not that he wished to lie to her.

"Just some memories of the past." He finally confided in her. Telling about the old days, his childhood that he never liked discussing. A past that he just felt was old news.

There was a time.

He hated his father because the Duke had the chance to be King, but he gave it up. He, as his son, would have been King if that was the case.

They only considered him, King, as a replacement, that was, if the Crown Prince died or had gone astray. He was only the second choice.

"Well, we all have to go through them whether we like it or not," Dani assured him that he was not alone in this situation. "But I think you did quite well for yourself."

Considering the things he had gone through, his wife was right. He had achieved most things that others could only dream of, not because he initially had power, wealth, or privilege handed to him, but because of his perseverance.

He had worked through where he was today through sheer determination. Build his name not through his family's connection but by using his credentials.

"I guess you are right," Alex answered his wife, slightly glancing at his back as he stared at his wife, who had crawled closer to him. "But I fear that I will fail you." The only thing that scared him the most.

Somehow, he found himself in this strange land, different from his hometown. He found a new Kingdom to dominate, to show why he was the best. In this place, race or blood did not matter. Anybody could become King.

He found a new home in this place, a land that welcomed him. More than that, he found his Queen. And a Kingdom far different from what he had in his mind. But the Kingdom that had fulfilled almost all his dream.

This beautiful woman, inside and out, kneeling at his back, wrapping his skinny arms around his shoulders to comfort him, had given him everything he needed in this lifetime.

But like everyone else, he was still a man, subject to human emotions. As much as he wanted to appear as the most resilient man alive, he could not. He still felt pain. He was no superhero.

"Don't be too hard on yourself. I don't need you to save me all the time. I can be the hero next time." She hugged him from behind, tighter.

He could tell she was trying her best to lighten the mood, and he appreciated it since he could already feel the stiffness in his body disappear.

It was not easy to live alone and carry all the burdens.

He was lucky that he had found a terrific partner, willing to share them with him. His wife was correct again. He did not have to fight his battles alone.

"That is also true. Maybe next time, you should wear a cape." His eyes sparkled with a bit of mischief. Finally, showing signs of life. "And a nice sexy outfit to match." He pulled her until she was lying on his lap, covered by his body.

She was about to protest at the suddenness of his movements. But his lips silenced her with a deep kiss, rendering her immobile in his arms.

He believed fate had orchestrated their meeting, and when the first time failed. Again, destiny intervened in their lives, knowing they were a match made in heaven.

Chapter 785: Welcoming the light

Last night had been one of the best family moments of his life. Ethan did not expect his wife to surprise him with a feast together with his entire family.

But he was thankful for her thoughtfulness, always thinking about what would be best for everyone. She had always been the most selfless person he had met in his entire life.

His eyes turned to the woman peacefully sleeping on the chair, not minding if her position was uncomfortable. The fact was, she never wanted to be far away from him.

“Laura Hamilton.” His wife. The woman who had never left his side during their ups and downs. The mother of his only daughter, who had been his greatest treasure in this world.

How did he become so lucky to live this long and have a great life? A loving family who had never left him, to which he had devoted his entire life with his every breath.

Yes, he would not reach a century, but the years he had stayed in this lifetime had been more than enough compared to the others who had lived longer but never had experienced the kind of life he had.

Definitely, without a doubt, he was indeed a lucky man.

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A person who almost had a perfect life if not for death looming over his head. But nobody could live forever. That was just in fantasy stories conjured by imaginative minds.

If only money could buy a fountain of youth, he would give all he had to have more time with his family. He would not mind living in poverty as long as he could continue to gaze at the smile on his wife’s face and hear the laughter coming from his daughter’s lips.

“I love you so much, Laura!” He whispered silently in the wind, unable to tell his wife up close. If only he could stand up from this bed and wrap his arms around her, this day would have been ideal.

Yes! He had wished for perfection. Nevertheless, he had learned the hard way that nothing in this world was flawless. It was an illusion that he had given up pursuing a long time ago.

He was lucky not to obsess about it, but some died, not knowing they already had enough to last a lifetime. Not him. He knew he had already achieved what he needed.

He had loved and felt loved. That was more than enough.

Now, everything else was a bonus he wished to maximize in the limited time he had left. But today, he was not afraid to leave this world, knowing he was ready to meet his creator.

“You will be just fine, Laura. Even when I am gone.” Ethan uttered in his mildest tone, wishing that subconsciously his words would register in her mind. Once she woke up, she would be ready to accept his departure.

Like it or not, he could feel his imminent death. His body would not respond to him the way he wished it would. His mind was not as determined as before, as if it also accepted that his time was up.

It was not giving up.

Throughout his entire life, he had never known the word surrender. But he had accepted defeat in some battles, only to win the entirety of the war.

Would this be the same? That remained to be a question in everyone's mind. What would happen next?

If only he could stand up to hold her one last time, he had to settle with just staring at her from afar. Maybe he could do that by closing his eyes. But before he did, his eyes again looked at her, staring closely at her sleeping face.

"You look so beautiful." He uttered with no regret, just a tinge of sadness that he might not see her again for a long time.

His eyes scanned her face, memorizing every contour, remembering memories that made their life great. So many, yet it felt like they could have added more.

Finally, he closed his eyes, allowing her face to linger in the forefront of his mind, letting his memories mix with the present and the past.

Still, he wished for the future, even if it was only a distant dream, allowing himself to get lost in the labyrinth of his mind. At this moment, nothing seemed impossible.

He held her in his arms, surrounded by their families, clapping and cheering for them as he swayed her to a beautiful tune playing in the background.

It was their song.

It was a piece of music that had touched their lives and a part of their history together. With the sweet melody playing around the background, they moved along the center of the room, showing their spectators how to live a life full of love.

"You never lost your touch." He heard the melodic voice of his darling wife as she complimented his movement.

Not to brag, but he was indeed a great dancer. But to create a great harmony, his partner must also stay in sync with his movements.

Like a well-oiled machine, the two twirled, swayed, and moved like they had been dancing all their lives. But they had, just like their married life.

"Because you always kept me on my toes," Ethan answered Laura with a smile as he pulled her even closer.

Suddenly, he was staring at his wife, back when he first held her close to his body. It was the first time he had seen her and asked her to dance. Luckily, he ended up marrying her.

Then, he gazed at her teary eyes as he first held their baby in his arms. He felt the greatest, wondrous feeling, knowing he created life out of love.

"You are the only treasure that we wish to cherish." He smiled sweetly at their child while he had held her soft, little fingers in his hands. "Daniella Hamilton." He whispered, not wanting her to get startled by his loud, booming voice.

He watched his past and present play in his mind, reminding him of why he had lived in this world. But it never showed anything about the things he had accomplished in his life.

They said at the point before dying, everything important in his life would flash in his eyes. Was this it? Was this the moment? He smiled, welcoming the light that flickered in his eyes.

Chapter 786: To say goodbye

"Laura." She thought someone was calling her, hearing a voice in her mind. At first, she felt disoriented, unsure if it was a dream. Then, she realized it was a familiar tone.

She searched for him, but her vision seemed impaired, only seeing a mixture of black and white hazes covering what was in front of her.

"Laura." It repeated. His voice sounded like he was beckoning her, asking her to come closer. But where? When she could hardly see anything.

She wished to shout back to him, also to call his name. But no words came out of her mouth. It was just mumblings that she could not understand. What was wrong with her?

Then, alarming bells echoed in her head.

What was that? What does it mean? She had no idea as her confusion grew, feeling her frustration as beads of sweat formed on her skin.

"Mrs. Hamilton?" A different voice penetrated her subconsciousness. Suddenly, she was being pulled from her deep sleep as her eyes opened to bright lights.

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It was morning based on the rays of the sun coming from the windows. But that was not all. People crowded the bed as voices echoed in the spacious room.

"Code blue." The speakers hidden in the walls kept blaring into the entire floor.

What did it mean? She did not understand as she finally looked at the woman before her. The uniformed woman was talking to her, but she could hardly understand her with all the noise.

As if everyone was fussing around.

Then.

"Ethan?" She called him, but he did not respond. She wanted to see him, but people surrounded his bed. "Ethan? What is going on?"

She immediately stood up from the chair she had slept on, not minding the aching muscles from her uncomfortable position. But she was unable to pass the hospital staff already blocking her way.

"Mrs. Hamilton, we need you to come with us while we work on your husband." The woman who had woken her up spoke to her again.

She finally heard her, but she still did not understand what was happening to her husband. Why was he not responding to her call? Why were there so many people in the room?

But tears were already running down her cheeks because deep inside, she knew the answers to her questions. She just refused to acknowledge it yet.

"Ethan," Laura finally pushed through, pushing herself between the man and woman, hindering her from reaching her husband.

Finally, she had a glimpse of him, but what she saw tore her heart. He was struggling in his bed, seemingly laboring in his breathing, his eyes were closed, but she could still see his pain.

The machines filled her ears with noise as they echoed its harsh warnings. It sounded not good. Even she had no idea what it was supposed to mean.

She grabbed her chance to hold him, squeezing his arm to make him know she was there. She believed he would recognize her touch even if he could not see her.

"Ethan, I am here." She repeated, hoping he would hear her. But he did not respond to her voice. But she did not say anything else. She just stared at him for as long as she could.

"Mrs. Hamilton?" Another manly voice came to her side, but she refused to focus on him. Her eyes were on the man lying on the bed. "I need you to come with me."

She suddenly felt too weak. She could feel that her knees were about to buckle in. Luckily, the man wrapped his arms around her, guiding her outside the room.

She did not want to leave him, but she had no strength anymore to protest, to stop the man from dragging her away from him. As much as she wished to stay by his side while he fought to survive, she knew they would not let her.

What would happen now?

She had no answer to that. All she knew. Her heart was slowly breaking into pieces, seeing the scene before her. She knew this was different since the doctors looked frustrated as they shouted orders around them.

Other staff, the nurses, seemed to be running around, doing their best to keep up. Machines entered the room, and people came and went in the little span of a few minutes.

"How is Ethan?" She finally dared to ask, but nobody heard her because she stood alone by the door, looking at the chaotic scene right before her eyes.

She was all by herself.

The people who asked her to step out were now busy saving her husband. She stood by the door, wondering if he would come out of this alive.

Should she go back inside? She wanted so, so, so much to hold his hand and whisper to him that she was here. But the doctor said she had to stay out of the way while they worked to save him.

She felt torn between her want and his need.

“Ethan, I am here.” Her voice almost cracked, but she managed to control it, saying it louder so it would cross the room and reach his ears.

Another nurse came to her side, encouraging her to sit in the waiting area, but she would never leave him. Not now. She had to be here no matter what.

He had to know that no matter what happened, he was not alone because she never left him. Just like she was not alone right now. He would always be in her heart and mind.

“I love you, Ethan.” Her heart only hoped it could send waves that would tell his heart how much. “I love you so much, now and forever.” It was a whisper, a promise, hoping there would come a time they would meet again.

She never failed to say it to him, every day and every chance she had, but today more than ever, she had to say it to him. He had to hear her, especially if this was the last time.

She had to say goodbye if that was her only choice.

Chapter 787: Last goodbye

Dani prepared for the morning. Although they had slept late last night, she still woke up early, readying herself for a long day. She could feel in her guts that something was about to happen, but she hoped it had nothing to do with her father.

“Hey, are you not dropping by the office before going to the hospital?” Alex looked at her questioningly, noticing her dress which was not her usual business attire.

She tied her hair in a neat ponytail before turning to face Alex, who already had his shirt buttoned. She quickly moved closer to him and took his tie from the bed, wrapping her arms around his shoulders.

“I still have a few files I can work on, so I think I would rather go straight to the hospital and drop by later at the office if they needed me,” Dani informed him, then she encircled her hands around his neck and worked on securing the tie.

Once she had knotted the necktie, she tapped him on his chest, planted a kiss on his cheeks, and walked back to the vanity mirror to finish her makeup.

“Do you want me to drop you off? I also want to see Ethan before going to the office.” Alex offered.
“Then, I can pick you up later before going home.”

She smiled at her husband’s thoughtfulness, prioritizing what she needed before his. She knew he had to circle back only to drop her off at the hospital before going to the office. But he did not mind getting late to ensure she was ok.

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How did her life suddenly turn almost perfect? Despite her bitter experience in the past, having Alex in her life eventually changed everything about her.

He managed to reunite her with her father, teaching her how to forgive him for his mistakes. He saved her from the lifelong misery Nick had done to her.

Alex gave her a new goal in life. Love and family and not just her career.

“Ok.” Dani would not like it the other way. If they could spend their life together every minute of every second of their entire lifetime, she would do that. But she would settle for the few minutes they had.

She smiled at him through the mirror as he walked behind her, settling his hands on her shoulders. His eyes fixed on her face. His fingers squeezed her shoulders, assuring her he would always be there for her.

“Let me fix us some quick breakfast.” He smiled at her, kissing her on the top of her head, but his eyes never wavered as they continued to hold her stare. “Follow me to the kitchen.” He soon walked out of their room, carrying his jacket with him.

She only looked away when the door closed behind him. Then, her eyes focused again on the mirror before her, looking at her reflection. She immediately dropped her makeup, thinking she did not need it anyway.

“What do you have in there?” Her eyes scanned the kitchen as her husband moved along the kitchen counter with precision.

She could see a hot coffee brewing on the side, so she automatically moved toward that direction, getting two mugs from the shelves on the top cabinet.

Soon, she had two hot brewed coffee in her hands, placing them on the table as she waited for the rest of what he cooked on the pan.

“Some toast, eggs, and bacon. I would have prepared more, but we are in a hurry.” Besides, he knew she loved this meal for breakfast. She could probably eat this every morning for the rest of their lives.

She forked a piece of the egg and held the bacon in her fingers, shoving them in her mouth, laughing at his morning jokes. Some of them were not funny, but seeing his face as he delivered them was enough to make her giggle out of control.

She had to appreciate the effort at least since he could probably sense that she was not at ease. But somehow, it helped, just knowing that she was not alone.

“Finish those.” Dani pointed out the piece of bacon left on the plate. “I will clean up the table.” She offered since he had already cooked.

Then, her phone rang, but she had her hands full.

“I will get it for you.” Alex offered as he rummaged her bag on the kitchen counter, looking for her phone. Then, he answered it.

She picked up the plates and glasses from the table and placed them on the sink. Then, she wiped the table. She was about to drink some water only to realize that her glass was empty.

She quickly moved to the fridge to refill her glass, but something caught her attention. It was Alex, talking in monosyllabic words. As if he was choosing his words, careful not to say anything he did not want her to hear.

That sounded very suspicious.

The last time he did that, he had her mother on the other side of the line, talking about her father's attack. Suddenly, she could feel her heart thundering inside her chest.

"What is it?" She could not help but ask, even though he was still on the phone. She moved closer to him, studying his expression.

His face remained calm as if nothing was amiss, but his eyes were telling her something else. Should she dare hope this was nothing more than a problem in the office?

But instinct insisted that it was more than that.

Her mind urged her to prepare herself for the worse, but her heart still wished it could be something else rather than her father's condition.

Finally, Alex brought his hands down, ending the call to whoever he was talking to, but his expression changed. Nothing about those eyes showed that it was anything good.

"It is about your Dad." Those few words were enough to shatter her heart into tiny pieces as her fingers loosened their grip, losing their strength, letting the glass on her hands slip, smashing on the white tiled floors.

She did not even hear it crash or feel the pain as the tiny shards flew in the air and broke her skin. All her mind could focus on were those words and what they meant.

Her mind was sending different instructions and alarming bells that could mean many things. Her first thought, she discarded on the spot. Her father did not recover because his face did not match that news.

Then, it could mean that he had worsened, but to what extent. Was he now in ventilation, coma, or a vegetative state? In the worse scenario, did he die?

"Then, we have to go." She finally answered, not wanting to hear what he had to say. "Please." She had no idea what she was asking him. "I just want to see him." She added.

Then, she grabbed her bag and walked out of the room, not minding the tiny cuts that made her slightly bleed on the floor. Alex tried to tell her they should tend to her wounds, but she did not stop. Then, he just followed her, understanding her as always.

Those will not kill her, but not seeing her father alive might. Not being able to say her last goodbye would deeply hurt her more than any physical pain inflicted in her body.

Chapter 788: Just not fair

“Fuck!” Gerald mumbled, throwing the files in the air, letting those papers crash on the wall and splatter on the floor.

Nothing made sense.

He had been working since last night since he could not sleep after leaving the hospital. The scene in that room kept replaying in his mind when he closed his eyes.

Honestly, nothing about it should bother him. He had countless dinners with his parents when they were alive. He made several memorable memories with his mother he would cherish for the rest of his life.

However, he had never been part of such a happy family. He had never had a chance to bond with his biological father and sister until last night. He never had a stepmother or a brother-in-law.

Somehow last night affected him, no matter how much he wanted to deny it. His father seemed to crawl into his heart. However, that sounded ridiculous, hearing it in his mind.

But did he still have that muscle in the center of his chest? Did he still have the ability to love?

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“This entire situation is hilarious.” He said to himself, standing up from his seat and pacing the floor, knowing that his father, who raised him, made sure that love was the last thing he would feel.

His father had planted so much hatred in him that doing good was just an act he played for the sole benefit of his audience. Not because he had a pure heart.

He was the devil in disguise as an angel in a white robe with all his horrible intentions and selfish reasons. So, how could he suddenly change overnight, just because he was laughing with them?

“No. That is not simply possible.” Gerald shouted angrily, refusing to believe that Ethan could affect him this much.

He would not allow that man. His biological father had abandoned him and left him to fend for himself and the same man who had destroyed his mother’s life.

“Yes, Ethan, I blame you for my misery.” He shouted again as the man’s face flashed before his eyes.

In truth, it would have been easy to hate him if he had been the same as his father, Joaquin. But the more he had known his father, the more he wished he had been the one who had raised him.

It was the reason that had angered him more and more.

But honestly, was it the only basis of his fury? His mind nagged at him.

“What else was there?” He inquired, uncertain what his mind was getting at with the question. But he refused to dig deeper because he might not like the answer.

He quickly walked to the side of his home office, grabbing a bottle of scotch. A glass should do the trick to calm himself down.

He had a few cases to work on today. Important one. He needed his mind on the game and not going on haywire. He had to stop thinking about him and his impending death.

“Aaahhh!” He shouted, wanting to release the tension his mind created in his body.

Taking a deep breath, he walked to the wall where he had thrown the papers and started picking them up. One of the things he also learned in life. He always had to clean up his messes if he wanted things done right on the first try.

So far, lately, he had created many messes but only managed to sort some of them. He had to work harder on them before they could come back to bite him in the ass.

He had to stop making excuses and focus on his goals. All these lies and revelations had diverted him enough, already wasting his valuable time.

The phone on his table rang, snapping him back to the present. “Yes,” Gerald answered automatically, seeing who was on the other side of the line.

There were only two reasons why she would call. It was either about work or Ethan. But the former seemed more probable because she never contacted him about their father.

“I need you to come to the hospital immediately.” She said without any introduction or greetings. The urgency in her voice told him it was not a social call.

“Why, Dani? Did something happen to Ethan?” Once he heard his question, he could tell he sounded stupid even in his ears.

Of course, his sister would not have called him if this was not a life and death situation. He had figured out his sister had not warmed up to his presence in their lives, unlike Ethan and Laura. Not yet anyway.

Although he could feel she tried, it had not been easy. Not even if he had apologized to her. But should that even bother him when he was not through with his plans with all of them? When his revenge was still underway.

“I am not sure if your interest with our father was purely to get to know him or take revenge. I don’t even know if I should be calling you. But this is what Dad would want.” Dani said with indifference.

“He would want you to be there.” Dani took a deep breath as if she was controlling herself. From shouting or crying, he could not distinguish, but he could sense her emotions were on edge.

“So, come if you want to or not. It is up to you.” Suddenly, Dani sounded like their father when Ethan gave him a choice to acknowledge him or not.

Then, before he could respond, the line went dead. Dani did not wait for his answer. Maybe she could predict that she would be waiting for a long time.

Because he stood in the middle of the room, staring at the air before him. They were invisible in his eyes, but he seemed to see numerous images before him.

The father that he might not see ever again.

Eventually, he grabbed his things and his coat, hanging on the back of his chair, and moved towards the exit of his massive house. He had no more time to waste.

He needed to see him one more time if this was the last. He had to tell him how much he hated him. How much he loathed him for being his father.

Because all his childhood life, he had dreamed that Joaquin was not his father. He wanted a father just like him, Ethan.

But why did he have to meet his real biological father when he was about to leave him again. Why did he have to know him if they would not have more time together? It was just not fair.

Chapter 789: Last days, hours, minutes, or even seconds

Dani was devastated by the news that her father had another cardiac arrest. But she already expected that from the warnings of the doctors.

The transplant did not work since he was rejecting the heart. But waiting for another match would be impossible. There was just not enough time.

Now it seemed he had finally given up as he succumbed to a deep coma with low brain activity. The doctors were not very hopeful for another recovery.

"What did the doctors say?" She asked her husband, who handled dealing with her father's care.

She had to stay with her mother, who silently wept on the side, watching her husband fight for his last breath. It would seem the machine had been keeping him alive, but for how long, the doctors could not say.

But would he be able to live without the apparatus breathing for him? The doctors were honest. It was not likely. So, it would seem it was just a matter of time until they could decide if they should prolong his agony or end it by pulling the plug.

"There had not been any improvement." Alex wrapped his arm around her shoulders, giving her the support she needed as they stood by the door, away from her mother's hearing range.

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She turned to look at her mother, who had been calm as tiny drops of tears ran down her eyes. Her mother had been silent. As if she was afraid to let his father hear her woes.

"That would mean we have to decide." Dani had witnessed these things happen in the past with her clients. But not with someone who owns part of her heart.

She always questioned how those families handled letting go of someone that had been a part of their lives since they were born until that day they had to part.

She marveled at their bravery and the ability of those families to cope with the pain of losing someone they loved. Presently, she could only hope that she, her mother, and the rest of their family could do the same.

Because like it or not, they would eventually have to decide if her father's chances of survival further dropped down later on. If the decision had to be hers alone, she would not want her father to go on living just to suffer living on a vent.

However, her mother had the sole and only right to choose what would be best for her husband. She could only give her support to whatever she wished to do unless her mother would ask her opinion.

"Eventually, yes," Alex responded without hesitation. She appreciated that he was not sugarcoating the situation. Telling her what it was instead of going around in circles.

In this way, it was easier to be logical about the decision they had to make, which was the best route to take. But honestly, no matter how much she tried to leave emotions out of the equation, she still found herself grieving inside.

But her mother did not need to see her breakdown because she would be taking her down with her on the dark, narrow path. At the moment, they could not afford to be there.

Her father was still breathing. She firmly believed that the sickness only affected his body, not his mind and soul. He was still here with them, listening, observing even if he could not respond to them.

She did not want him to see that the people he had prepared to be stronger than him would have broken down just like that when he most needed them to be there for him in his final need.

"How is he?" Another voice interrupted them when he entered the room.

She could not understand, but she felt glad and relieved that he showed up. Maybe it was because she wanted to fulfill her father's last wish, to see his whole family in one place.

She knew she still had not forgiven him. It was not an easy task to do when she could not find sincerity in it. But she was willing to call it a truce for her father's sake.

At least he showed up, looking slightly concerned. Was it real? She would not know because of one thing she learned about her big brother. He was not just a great lawyer. But he was a better actor.

He had played a perfect role in their lives without them realizing or figuring out who he was. He had strung them along with his lies, believing he was a good man.

"He might not make it this time." Dani finally voiced what she found hard to accept, but she wanted to see him rejoice with the news. She observed him like a hawk, not wanting to miss anything from his response.

She needed to see his eyes light up, sensing his victory. She wanted a glimpse of the tinge of a smile on his lips. But instead, she did not expect a different reaction.

His gaze dropped to the floor, and his shoulders slouched as if he had just lost a fight. He was not a man who would easily give up a battle, not even when they were losing a case.

She had never seen him like this before. But now, his range of emotions showed on his face. As if he could not control it as his eyes formed tears in the corner.

Was this another of his act?

She could not be sure, but she had not seen him this emotional before. However, what would he gain if he showed he did care for their father?

Sympathy. Forgiveness.

And a chance to make a fool of them again.

She wished she could easily accept this act he had displayed for everyone as he walked passed her toward her mother's waiting arms.

Her mother had been a great judge of character. She had sensed that Nick would not be the best choice for her, warning her about her relationship with him. But she refused to believe her then.

Now, seeing her mother welcoming Gerald into their family just like that. She could only wonder what her mother saw in him to think he was not just using them to expand his plot against them.

"Are you ok?" Alex asked, bringing her back to the present, making her shift her head in his direction. She was unaware that she had been staring at her brother since he had arrived.

"I am." She admitted, not feeling threatened at the moment by Gerald's presence.

For now, this day was all about Ethan. Everything that would make her father happy. Nothing else was more valuable but to make his last days, hours, minutes, or even seconds the best of his life.

Chapter 790: Untimely death

She looked at the best father and the most wondrous man she ever knew in her entire life. The man who raised her to be the person she was today. Taught her most of the things she would need to survive.

He might be breathing through the vent, a machine helping him continue to live for a few more moments, but his soul was still very much alive. At least, that was what she would like to believe.

"Hi, Dad." She finally held his fingers in her hands, massaging every single one with gentle strokes. "Remember the time you first held my hand." Her eyes stared at his face, hoping against hope that she would see some sign that he could hear her.

But alas, she was still disappointed.

Miracles did happen to her a few times. She believed it did. She only failed to recognize it. But this time, she had not been fortunate.

Her father had no such luck as she realized she might not see his eyes again, how they sparkled when he looked at her mother. And the way they brightened every time she smiled at him.

She looked behind her, finally seeing the woman who had stood by his side most of his life, crashing on the sofa, too exhausted to cry.

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Alex had left the room to discuss the options with the doctors. While Gerald. Well, she had no idea where he went. But at the moment, she did not care about him.

All she knew was she had this moment, a small window to be alone with her father. She was grabbing it because it might be the last time he would hear her voice.

"I wish I did, but Mom said that was the first time she saw you cry." She continued, holding her breath to control the tears threatening to fall from her eyes. Instead, she laughed.

She promised never to cry in front of her father. Not if the cause of those tears was terrible pain and sadness. When her father wept upon seeing her, it was because of incredible happiness, not because he was sad to see her for the first time.

"I wish I had seen that because that is, literally, the only thing I had never seen you do." She smiled at her father. "I never saw you once cry."

Then, she felt it. A single drop touched her cheeks in a split second. Quickly, her fingers wiped the wetness, hoping to stop it before it became a full-blown sob.

"You always had to be strong, pulling us through all our dark days, showing us your tough love if we required a slight wake-up call. But you also wrapped us in your gentle care when we badly needed it, which was, in our case, almost all the time.

You never did give up on me, even when I did give up on you. You kept fighting for me, loving your prodigal daughter, taking all my blame, accusations, and hatred without complaint because..."

Another tear followed the first one, but she held the rest from falling. "you simply, undeniably, unquestionably... love me." Her lips curved when a smile formed again on her lips.

But his only response was the continuous beeping of the machines. And the steady movements of the apparatus, making his chest go up and down.

But that would not stop her.

"I love you, Mr. Ethan Hamilton, King of this city and the best King of our home." Speaking his name as her sign of respect to the man who had chosen to give her life and devoted his life to raising her to be the best person she could be.

"Now, let me hold your hand as I finally say goodbye if this is my last chance." Her fingers caressed his skin, letting her warmth seep through his cold hands.

"You have done your part and left a tremendous mark on this world." She softly uttered, leaning a bit closer until one of her hands touched his cheek, which had lost most of its colors.

"Go if you must." Whispering near his ears, avoiding letting her mother hear her words. "I got Mom. I promise."

Suddenly, she appreciated Alex's decision to stay because she had no idea if she could leave her mother under this condition. She might act tough, but deep inside. Her Mom would be dying.

Her mother would need her now, more than ever. Once her father moved on to the other side, wherever that was. She had to stay and be there for the only woman who never stopped loving and believing in her, not even in her worse times.

“Don’t stay just because of us. You already suffered enough. It is time to rest, Dad.” She let her lips touch his forehead. “Let me take over.”

Suddenly, it sounded so evident in her mind what her father was trying to teach her all this time. What he always wanted for her. It was not just his legacy but for her to create her own, not Alex, but her mark on the world.

It was what Alex told her the other time he talked to her, but she did not want to listen. Ethan did not leave his Empire to Alex. Her husband was only safeguarding it for her. Until the time came that she would step into the plate.

It suddenly all made sense to her.

Then, the doctors came, entering the room with Alex. Soon, Gerald also followed. From the look on their face, she could tell it was time.

She walked toward her mother, knowing they had to deal with the inevitable. Her mother had a hard decision of pulling the plugs, but she would be there every step of the way.

“Mom,” Dani tapped her mother gently on the shoulders, which caused her to jerk a bit, unexpected the sudden intrusion in her deep sleep.

She opened her eyes with confusion. But as soon as her eyes focused on her, realization flashed in their depths. She understood what was about to happen as her eyes scanned the other people inside the room.

“It is time.” How many times had she heard those words?

How many times she, herself, had uttered them so casually?

But at this very moment, it felt like they were heading to the electric chair, about to sentence an innocent man to his untimely death.