

Royal Contract 871

Chapter 871: Foolish heart

Her heart almost burst out of her chest upon hearing those words come from his lips. She had longed for this moment to happen, for him to admit that he had feelings for her.

Each night she had dreamt of him saying how much he loved her, only for her dream to end in a nightmare with him suddenly disappearing. Then, waking up to the sad reality that she was alone. He had left her for another woman.

But this time, could she have a different ending?

A fool.

Her mind shouted, holding her back, telling her not to believe a liar.

"I don't know if I can trust you." It was the first thing that came out of her mouth as fear gripped her tightly, reminding her of the pain she had gone through these past months.

Losing Lance was different since he never led her to believe that he cared for her more than as a friend. Her situation with him was easier to accept. She was hurt but not in the same way she felt by Evan's betrayal.

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Evan nearly destroyed her faith in finding true love. With Eida's experience and hers with Evan, she almost had given up on happiness. Luckily, Angela and Luisa had restored her faith that there was a grand plan for her. She only had to wait.

"I know it is hard to put your trust in me again, but I will prove it to you." Evan kept her hands close to his heart, not letting her go. "I will do everything and anything until you forgive and accept me back into your life."

He knew it would take time and all his effort to convince Amelia that he had changed. Saying how he felt would not be enough. As they said, actions spoke louder than words. So, he would show her.

How? He had no idea, but he would figure it out, even if take him his entire lifetime. He would do it in many ways than one.

"I don't know..." Amelia hesitated, torn between her feelings for him and her fear that he might hurt her again if she allowed him back into her life.

How long before he realized again that being with her was not for him? Would he stick around when the going got tough? Did he fully understand the meaning of commitment?

She could think of many questions to ask him, solidifying her doubt about his intentions. But he might have an answer for all of them, but the reality would still be the same. He might think he wanted this now but changed his mind later.

"I love you, Amelia," Evan repeated. "I am not just saying that to get into your pants again. This time, I mean it." That was how he felt.

He pulled her hand away from his heart and placed them on his lips. "I will worship you, adore you, love you and only you till the day I die." He continued, convinced that he would do and say anything to get her back.

What did he know about wooing a woman? Nothing. He had never tried to get a woman's affection before. But he would say even the cheesiest line in the book if it meant winning her over.

"I don't..." She never finished her sentence as he interrupted her.

"Wait!" He told her abruptly. "Please, give me a few minutes." He pleaded with her. When she nodded, he finally let go of her hands and got out of the car. "I'll be back. I promise." Then, he closed the door and ran.

She watched him move away from her vehicle until he was out of sight. She had no idea what he had planned, but she patiently waited, tapping her fingers on the steering wheel.

In the meantime, she thought of all the things he said. Her heart had readily forgiven him. But her mind still said to think thoroughly before taking him back.

Finally, she saw him coming back to the car, carrying a small paper bag in his hand.

"I am sorry it took me longer than I anticipated. The line at the counter was slow." Evan reasoned as he climbed on the passenger seat and turned to her. "All they had was this, but I will make it up to you next time."

He unloaded the contents of the brown bag. It was a single stem rose and a chocolate bar. As he had promised himself earlier, he would do everything, even if he had to court her.

He handed her the plastic flower and sweet candy bar, scratching the back of his neck as sweat gathered on his skin. He had never been this nervous before, but when it came to her, he felt like he was about to have a heart attack.

"You did not need to buy me this." She could not help but smile at the effort. She placed the gifts on her lap and stared at him.

Damn! He was good. She would give him that.

"I have to. This time, I want to do this right." He would have kneeled before her, but the small car lacked enough space. "Please, will you go out with me for dinner tonight?" Looking at her with those soulful eyes.

He hoped he was not moving too fast, not wanting to scare her away, but he had to try. Once again, he took her hands and held them in his. Luckily, she did not pull away.

"I appreciate what you are doing, but..." She thought carefully of what she wanted to say to him. "I think I can forgive you, but for me to trust you again..." She looked down at their entwined hands, wishing it was that simple. "It might take time."

She wished she could readily shut her mind from the images of that girl in his arms or how he could easily discard her and throw her together with the trash. But she was not built that way.

"I only ask for a chance. Nothing more." Evan begged her because he was not giving up on her. Not this time. It might take forever, but he was willing to wait.

"Ok. We can have dinner, but that is it." She made it clear to him. She was taking this slow.

She was willing to risk her heart again to this man despite the warning bells ringing in her head. But the heart wanted what it wanted.

Foolish heart.

Chapter 872: Another devil in disguise

Once again, he found himself inside one of the extravagant mansions he had seen. The Rosley family did come from old money. And the present man of the house had tripled the family's fortune through his clever business sense.

With the help of her talented daughter, they had created one of the most successful business empires in the world. They had dominated the construction and design industry among their other business.

Haley Rosley, the sole heir of her father's business empire, was one of the most sought bachelorettes in the world. Now, she stood beside him, entangled in his arms.

"Hi! Dad." She called out, capturing her father's attention, who was already entertaining some guests.

Her father quickly excused himself from the group and walked to them, meeting them halfway in the grand hallway. He was a big man in an expensive suit. A man who looked like he did not take crap from anyone.

"Haley, my sweetheart." The man of the hour greeted them as soon as they entered the grand hallway. He hugged and kissed his daughter before turning to him. "I am glad that you can make it, Mr. Brown." He directed his attention to him this time.

He noticed his eyes, scanning him from head to toe as if he was studying him. But he did not expect less from the man. He knew he had run several background checks on his identity.

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However, he doubted this old gentleman would find anything he had not intentionally given his investigators. He had been careful in his movements. No one would know about his involvement in the underground until he declared it was time.

"I would not miss it, Mr. Rosley." He responded with a big smile. Dealing with wealthy and influential people was part of his job. Charming them was one of his skills. "Thank you for inviting me."

He knew how he would deal with this man and win him over. And this was his perfect opportunity. It was the moment he had been waiting for since he had embarked on a relationship with his daughter.

He had been in many of his extravagant parties but not in this close social private event. It meant Haley's father was starting to trust him, giving him the chance to prove himself.

"I think dating my daughter had earned you the right to call me Alfred." The other man tapped him on the shoulder, which was a sign that he approved of his relationship with his daughter. Exactly what he wanted.

"If that is the case, then call me Gerald." He genuinely smiled this time, happy that his plans were in place. "You have a very nice place." He told him, complimenting his home, hoping to get more involved in this family.

"You have to commend Haley here. She designed it." Alfred put his hand on his daughter, praising her for her accomplishment.

He could see the close relationship between father and daughter, meaning that one wrong move against Haley and he would face this man's wrath.

Not that he was afraid of the man, but he preferred not to piss him off until he had what he wanted from him. So, if he had to play as the perfect boyfriend, he would.

"You taught me everything I know," Haley responded, not wanting to take all the credit.

Her father might not be the perfect father, remembering her brother, Marcus. But for her, he had been the best. He had always been there for her in all her ups and downs.

"As you might have noticed, she never likes taking the glory." Her father teased her, gripping her hands firmer before letting her go. "But she is the jewel of this family."

He would always be proud of his daughter. He loved her more than anything in this world because she was his most prize possession. He would protect her with his life, even if it meant losing everything he owned.

So, if this man standing before him hurt her daughter, he would bury him alive until he realized who he was dealing with was not just any man. He would be the devil, passing judgment for his crimes.

"Dad is very excited to get to know you more. Isn't that right, Dad?" Haley changed the topic, not wanting to talk about her. She draped her arms around both men and guided them inside the massive living area.

"Yes, of course, my sweetheart." Her father answered her before directing his statement at him. "We would be dining with some of my close friends and family. I want you to meet some of them."

"I would love to meet them all," Gerald responded enthusiastically as his eyes roamed around the spacious room.

A few guests were already waiting in the room. Gerald knew some of them, but his eyes stayed glued on one person he was not expecting to see. Soon, he was also looking in his direction.

"But I guess you might know some of them since I heard you are gaining popularity nowadays," Alfred moved along the first group, introducing him to some of their family members, especially Haley's mother, Patricia.

"Please forgive my husband if he thinks family gatherings are the same as business meetings." Patricia interrupted their conversation. "Anyway, dinner is about to start. Will you all please follow me to the other room?"

Soon, they were all seated and enjoying a bountiful, delicious feast. Of course, the Rosley family hosted a beautiful dinner, as everyone enjoyed the meal and the conversation.

"I heard from my good friend here, Governor Stanley, that he is recommending you as his successor." Alfred opened up one of their conversations while they had coffee at the parlor.

He was busy conversing with Haley and her cousins that he did not notice the Governor and Alfred had approached him from behind. Although, he was not surprised by what he said.

He had already expected that the Governor might have mentioned it to him when he saw him earlier. He was only waiting for Alfred to broach the subject.

"Well, he had asked me about it, but as I said, I still have to think about it." Since the Governor told him about it, he had decided to weigh the pros and cons of accepting the position before committing to anything.

So far, he had an even match between whether he should accept the endorsement or not. But now that even Alfred seemed interested in it, he wondered what the other man had in mind.

Was Haley's father interested in the position? Or was he thinking of supporting him in the candidacy?

"What is there to think about?" Alfred wrapped his arm around his shoulders. "Stanley vouched that you will be a good candidate for the office. I think you should consider it." He could hear the double meaning in his words.

The man was not just giving him his support in his running for office. He was also blessing his relationship with his daughter. Meaning he wanted him in office and their lives.

Maybe he was wrong about him. He seemed not to be the man he thought he was. Could he be dealing with another devil in disguise?

Chapter 873: Magic was not real

You did it again.

Stupid heart!

A fool!

What happened to her promise to take it slow? She just threw it out the window as she had allowed her heart to perform the thinking while she silenced her mind.

Once again, she found herself naked on the bed, alone as her hands felt the bed beside her empty, just like before, he was gone. Again. When she opened her eyes, there were no signs of him, not his clothes, not a sound of anyone moving inside the room.

"Damnit, way to go again, Amelia." She sighed, disappointed again with herself."

Again, she had allowed him to make a fool of her. But funnily, she could not feel any tears running down her face. It seemed like her heart had learned her lesson.

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She stared at the ceiling of the expensive hotel room, but she hardly saw the beautiful decorations around her. She was trying to recall everything from the previous night, hoping to get some explanation why he had run away again.

Dinner had been awkward at first, given their history. But as the night progressed, they had started talking about familiar things, conversations smoothened out, and waves of laughter filled the air.

She did not doubt that Evan could make the dullest gathering into a lively celebration. She had always known that Evan could be charming if he wanted to, and he had it in full blast last night. She never knew what hit her.

As they returned to her car, he stopped her before she could open the door, taking the keys in her hand. "I think we had too much to drink. I don't think anyone of us should drive. Let me arrange a car."

She could not argue with that, waiting with him for the hired car. Then, as they stood on the side of the door of the fancy restaurant, another couple coming out accidentally bumped into her, making her lean into his body for support.

He quickly took her in his arms, not allowing her to fall to the floor. But as they held each other for a few seconds, she felt their connection. It was still strong despite how she felt about him.

As if time had stopped and the past did not seem to matter, his lips claimed hers. It was like he had every right to do that, allowing him to take what was his.

They only stopped when the car arrived to take them to their destination. But before entering the vehicle, he leaned over and whispered something in her ear.

"I love you, Amelia. Spend the night with me." His voice tickled her ears, teasing her heart, making her believe they had a future together.

With a heart longing for him and alcohol in her system, she had the perfect recipe for disaster. Without hesitation, she said yes. She entered the vehicle with him and made out with him in the backseat of the car until they had checked into a hotel.

He was attacking her lips even before they came out of the elevator. Then, they took turns removing each other's clothes as soon as the door closed as if they could not wait to be together.

Honestly, she was well aware of what she was doing. She could not blame the alcohol in her system because she chose to be with Evan that night.

"I have dreamed of this every day. To be with you." She remembered him saying as he peppered her body with kisses, making her writhe underneath his touch.

Even if she wanted him to stop, she knew she did not have the will to do it. It only made sense because she had yearned for him to return to her life. The only thing that had her hesitating was fear.

But how could she live if she allowed fear to take over her life? If she did not take a risk, she would be stuck in a lonely life, driven by what-ifs and regrets. She would not experience this happiness in his arms again.

Would it last? She had no idea, but at least she had tonight. But maybe, just maybe. He would do the right thing this time. He would make good on his promise that he loved her.

He did not promise her forever, but he at least said that he loved her. That was enough to give her hope. She was not expecting a hundred percent happy ending but at least a chance.

"Now, it is not a dream anymore. I am yours." She opened her eyes and jumped into this with the full knowledge of what she was risking.

Her heart.

She felt him push her onto the bed. Then, he lay on top of her. At that moment, he did not take long to warm her up because she was already burning for him.

"I can't take it anymore." He kissed her one more time, hard, with so much passion, even biting her lips before he let her go. "I need you now." She could see the longing in his eyes.

He had lost all his control as he looked into her eyes. Then, she felt him enter her. He thrust his hard body against hers, binding themselves in one twisted union that created harmony.

"Aaagggghh!" Moans of passion escaped her lips as she felt her body soar higher and higher. She honestly believed it was so much better than before. Not that her first time was not great, it was just that this was different.

Maybe this time, he was not holding himself back from taking her. There was no more fear of hurting her. Or it could be making up for the lost time that they had been away. The yearning for satisfaction had intensified.

It could be several factors, but in the end, she wanted more of it as he drove all her doubts away. He pushed himself until she shouted his name, releasing the most pent-up energy she could have never imagined.

But not long, he was also coming, groaning her name in the huskiest and sexiest tone she had ever heard from him. However, the night did not end just yet, as their desire for each other kept burning. It drove them to continue enjoying their entanglement in the sheets.

How long, she lost count.

It was not just sex to her. It was the most magical thing she had ever experienced in her life.

Well.

Until she woke up to the reality that magic was not real.

Chapter 874: The King of Kings

Lance had been awake since the break of dawn, busy with one meeting after another. He had met with the Council to discuss the succession of the crown.

King Edward had been pressing for his retirement, and now the Council was pressuring him to marry his bride so they could proceed with the crown turnover.

Many would have jumped at the chance to be in his shoes. He was marrying a beautiful girl from a reputable family. Then, he would soon become King of this freaking Kingdom. But why did he still feel like it was his doom?

“Sir, your father wished to remind you about your lunch meeting with him in an hour. Then, your dinner date with Ms. McKinley.” His secretary notified him as she placed some papers on his table.

Sometimes he wished that her secretary was not so efficient and would mess up with his schedule from time to time, just like today. Therefore, he would have an excuse not to spend a minute longer with his bride-to-be.

Who said he was not having second thoughts about all this?

Agreeing to this arrangement was easy, but committing to the act was not as simple as he thought it would be. But he guessed he had to get used to Ms. McKinley’s company since he would be sharing his life with this woman soon.

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“Send flowers to her office. Dozens of what you think she might like.” He instructed her secretary, not giving any particular effort to thinking about it. Besides, he was only doing this for public appearance, not that he cared about her feelings.

He always thought that when the time came that he would have to marry, he would be ready. He would have found the woman he wished to spend the rest of his life with, forever and ever.

But he did find her. He had planned to marry her and build a family with her, no question asked, no doubt about it. But fate had something against him as it cruelly destroyed all his dreams.

At the moment, he faced life as a prisoner, sentenced to a lifetime of a loveless marriage. His heart already beat for one person. Now it was dead, incapable of loving anyone again.

“Ok, Sir. But there is something else. Prince Edward is outside, requesting a five minutes meeting with you.” His secretary said reluctantly, knowing he had a full schedule.

Besides, it was no secret that he was never close to Edward compared to his other cousin, Alex. Honestly, he had never liked the stunts Edward used in his dealings. His cousin usually worked on the gray lines, using his influence and position to escape being punished for most of his mischief.

Men like Edward were the precise reason Lance had accepted the position as their next ruler because he never wanted someone like his cousin to hold on to such power and abuse it for his interest.

“Give me a minute before sending him in.” He was not afraid of a lowlife like this prince, but he never said he liked to talk to him.

After a short while, Edward waltzed into his office like he owned the place. One thing he would commend his cousin was his ability to hold his head high despite the disgrace he had brought to their family.

He knew the King's adamant wish to relinquish his hold on the crown had nothing to do with retirement. He was still a young and capable leader. He could have led this Kingdom to greatness for another decade or more.

However, the shame that the younger Edward had attached to their family name had forced the King to step down. It was the only way he could save their honor and be able to face the people he had sworn to serve.

"Edward, I am busy today, so please state your business and leave." Lance did not want to be rude, but that was the only way to deal with this man, or else he would step all over you.

He thought that Edward might have changed after the scandal of his association with Nick, but after the issue died down, he seemed to be back in his old ways.

"It is nice to see you, too, my dear cousin." Edward mockingly said. "But that is not how you should be thanking me for what I did for you." He sat on the chair near his desk, slumping on it and crossing his legs as if he was in no hurry.

That caught his attention as he stared at his cousin long and hard. He had no idea why his cousin was here to see him or what he was talking about, but he seemed to have no choice but to entertain whatever foolish notion he had in that brain of his.

"Ok. Why should I be thankful to you? What exactly did you do for me?" Lance definitely could not think of one as he leaned back on his chair to study his cousin, who seemed delusional to believe he owed him anything.

"I thought you were smart, but fine, let me point it out to you." Edward stood up from his seat and moved in front of the large window. He stared at the blank space fuming in anger, but he smiled when he looked back at the future King.

"Please, enlighten me." Lance challenged his cousin, encouraging him to continue so he could finish what he came here to do and get rid of his presence.

"First, if I did not denounce my birthright, you would never have the chance to be King. You and your family should be grateful to me." Prince Edward arrogantly announced, convinced of his words.

Edward thought that if his enemies, like Alex and Dani, did not set him up. He would not be in this situation. His father would not strip him of his birthright as the next heir to the crown.

So, he believed that Lance should be thankful to him because he suddenly had a shot at the crown. Lance and his family were nobody. He luckily landed the position due to technicality.

"Let me set things straight. You never gave it to me, but the King took it from you." Lance corrected him, stripping him off the smug smile on his face. He could see that the other prince was not happy with his words.

"You might have won now, but I will be taking my rightful place someday." Edward proclaimed with a mocking laugh. "And you will be thanking me for it. This entire Kingdom would be glad to see me back to where I belong."

He would be King someday. It was just taking him a while to get there, but his time would come when the people would have no other option but to accept him as their future King.

"As usual, Edward, you are delusional. Why don't you accept the position I am giving you and retire happily? Find a wife and have kids." Lance suggested, feeling slightly sorry for his cousin.

He pitied him for feeling the way he did. But he could only blame him for all the terrible choices that led him to this situation. Still, he would like to offer him a chance to redeem himself.

"That position is a joke to my name. I am King, not your lapdog." Edward shouted angrily at him.

"Someday, I promise you. My name will be lining along with the Kings. I will be declared the King of Kings."

Chapter 875: Saved by the bell [Bonus chapter]

Amelia quickly grabbed her clothes from the floor, picking up each piece as if it was a piece of her heart that she could not leave behind. Then, she quickly ran to the bathroom, dressed up, fixed her hair, and washed her face of any traces of last night.

She would have taken a shower, but that would mean staying in this place a minute longer than necessary. A few minutes later, she was ready to bolt through the door, leave everything behind, take the walk of shame and never look back.

"You deserve better." She mumbled like a mantra that she would not stop saying until her mind and heart agreed that she was better off without him.

However, she caught her reflection in the mirror, her crumpled clothes from last night, her barely fixed hair, and her face bare of any makeup. She looked like a woman who had suffered enough.

He had duped her for the last time. She squared her shoulders and lifted her chin, unafraid of what the future held for her. She would put this under her experience but would never let it define who she was.

She grabbed her bag that was on the floor nearby the door. It must be where she had dropped it last night in their haste, but she quickly closed her eyes, suppressing the memories from coming back.

"Get your shoes and leave." She reminded herself. Unfortunately, she only found one as the other pair seemed missing. "Where is it?" She frustratedly asked as she searched the carpeted floor.

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It was taking her long, but she did not have a choice, thinking she could not run away from this place with just one shoe on her feet. She was not Cinderella, and her prince charming was not likely to search for the owner of the other pair of shoes to find her again.

That usually only did happen in fairy tales, while in the real world, only bastards, who broke hearts and destroyed happy endings, existed. All the few good men left were rare, hard to find, and mostly taken.

"Stupid shoe!" She breathed exasperatedly just when she was in a hurry. This situation would happen. It was like she was the unluckiest person alive, and whoever had fate in their hands was laughing at her misfortune.

She bent her body low on the carpet, hoping to check under the bed. Maybe her shoes had found their way underneath the sheets when they were busy undressing each other last night. It could happen.

As she peeked underneath the mattress, she heard the door open as the hinges creaked as if someone had entered the room. She felt fear clasp her heart tightly.

She knew she was not expecting anybody else. That could not be the hotel staff since she had not checked out from the room yet, nor ordered any room service.

She prepared herself for whatever could happen, firmly gripping her single stiletto shoe in her hand. Holding her breath, she tried to move when she felt the intruder stand behind her.

She swiftly stood and raised her hand with her shoe and was about to attack the man with it on the head when her hand stopped mid-air. Her shoe never made contact with her assailant.

"Let go of me." She thrashed against the hands that tried to hold her still. "I already called the police." She had to say something to scare him off. But she could not see him since she unconsciously had closed her eyes.

"I doubted that unless your phone is under the bed or on your shoes." A recognizable voice responded to her threat with a slight chuckle. "Open your eyes, Amelia. It is me."

She calmed down, realizing she was not in any form of danger with this man. She gradually blinked her eyes until she could see his familiar face. Honestly, she was not expecting to see him, assuming he should have been long gone.

"What...? Where...?" She seemed unable to come up with a valid question as she felt her tongue a little twisted inside.

"What am I doing here? Where have I been?" He looked at her, still holding her tightly by her arms as if he was afraid she would suddenly run. "Is that what you were about to ask?"

Yes! But no words came out of her mouth, so she only nodded while he smiled, seemingly amused by her discomfort. But he did not laugh, only widened his lips as he pulled her into his body, letting her head rest on his broad hard chest as his hands wrapped around her.

"First, I only left because I bought you those." He pointed to a bouquet of red roses he placed on the table by the door. "I knew I should never have left without saying a word, but you look so peaceful in your sleep, I could not wake you up."

Her heart was pounding underneath her chest as a spring of hope came rushing back to her, making her believe that, just this time, it might be different. Still, she had to hear his entire explanation.

"I left you a message, but when you did not respond, I figured you still might be sleeping," Evan explained, making her recall that she had never checked on her phone.

"Wait!" She suddenly pushed him back. She had to check if he was telling the truth. He had hurt her too many times for her to blindly believe him again.

She hurriedly checked on her bag and pulled her phone out. It was in vibrate mode, so she would not have heard if someone tried to call or text her. When she opened her screen, it was all there, several messages from Evan.

He was not lying about that.

I ONLY WENT OUT TO BUY SOMETHING, BE BACK SOON.

I LOVE YOU, AMELIA... EVAN

"I am sorry. I did not see all this." She responded with trembling hands as she felt ashamed for not trusting him.

"No need to be sorry. I deserved it. After what I have put you through." He moved toward the door and grabbed the flowers, giving them to her. "I hope you like them. I still have no idea of what kind of flowers you like."

"I like this one and anything you will give me in the future." She pulled the flowers into her body, smelling its fresh, sweet aroma as she sat down on the edge of the bed.

"But why did you take so long if all you did was buy some flowers?" She could not hide her curiosity, wondering if he had fled the scene only to realize that he had to return.

"I was on my way back when I stumbled into something." He stopped and knelt before her. He took her hand and held it close to his heart. "I was not running away if that was what you were thinking. I will not do that to you again."

He ran his fingers across her cheek, feeling its softness. Then he buried them in her hair, pulling her closer until their lips touched. "I love you so much, Amelia. I will never hurt you again."

He was about to say something else when they were interrupted. "That is room service. I also took the liberty of ordering breakfast." He stood up and grabbed the door.

He took a deep breath, thinking he had almost slipped. Luckily, he had held his tongue.

Cling, cling, cling, and saved by the bell.

Chapter 876: Not even fate

Her eyes followed him when he moved to the door and returned carrying the tray of food he ordered for breakfast. His explanation seemed valid, and the way he had said them appeared genuine.

Did she believe him?

Her heart did.

Truthfully, Amelia wanted this to be real.

She slightly pinched her skin, feeling the pain, relieved to know she was wide awake. It was not a dream. He came back and did not run away as she initially thought. He was here and was not just her imagination.

“Would you like to join me for breakfast?” Evan asked as he arranged the table before the window with the beautiful view of the city outside.

He almost punched himself in the face when he walked into the room, seeing her all dressed up and ready to leave. The reaction on her face upon seeing him had told him that she was not expecting him to return.

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He did not plan to go out that early morning and leave her alone. But watching her delicate face, her closed eyes, feeling her steady breathing against his face, all he could think about was how much he wanted to kiss and ravage her again and again.

He had to leave before he woke her up, believing she needed rest. He had to walk his sexual frustration for a few minutes because a shower would not do the trick. But he did leave a message on her phone.

“Do you like cream on your coffee or sugar?” He asked as she joined him at the table, still slightly hesitant. She was not afraid or livid, but she was still wary.

He could not blame her for all the stupid things he had done. Now, he almost lost her again. He suddenly wished he had listened to his friends about how to treat a woman right.

He guessed he still had a lot to learn. Like how she took her coffee in the morning? Or what flowers could put a smile on her lips? From this point on, he promised to do better. He just hoped she would give him a chance to get to know her for the rest of their lives.

“Just black,” Amelia responded as she settled across from him on the small round table.

They initially ate in silence, just looking outside the window, sensing what the other was thinking and feeling. After a few comments about the weather, the conversation shifted from one topic that led to another.

Then, she suddenly stopped when she mentioned something about the party that triggered a memory. “It was Tony who sent me those pictures. He made me believe that you were cheating on me.”

She guessed he deserved to know who tried to ruin his name. Tony could be vindictive when he did not get what he wanted. So far, Tony had continued to express that he was not giving up on her.

“You know he is a scumbag. Why did you believe him over me?” Evan could not help but feel his anger burn inside him upon hearing that man’s name.

“Don’t answer that.” He clenched his fist on his side, ready to beat the hell out of that man.

However, he could not pin all the blame on her suitor. He started the fire. Tony only fueled the flame. It was still his fault that Amelia had easily believed his lies.

“I am sorry for hurting you.” Evan took her hand from across the table, enveloping them in his warm hands. “I know saying sorry is not enough, but if you would give me a chance, I want to prove to you that I have changed.”

He could still see the conflict in her eyes as she stared at him. He believed that a part of her wanted to forgive him, to give him that chance. He doubted she would have come with him last night if she did not feel anything for him.

He could only hope that somehow he could convince her that he was still worth the risk. That despite his past actions, he was capable of doing things right this time.

But whatever she thought of him now, he would spend the rest of his life proving himself to her. He loved her and would do anything to win her back. This time, he was not giving up.

"I want to, but..." She could not explain what she felt. She wished it was that simple, but something still held her back. She looked at their entwined hands, hoping she could take away her doubt, but sadly, it was still nagging at her to take this slow.

"I understand. A chance is all I ask." As much as he wished to proclaim to the world that she was his, it would seem that it would not be today. "I am willing to wait until you are ready."

"I think I should go." She pulled her hands away from him. "I have a lovely night." She smiled at him before standing up from her seat. "But I would love to see you again."

"Ok. Let me take you home." He offered, but she declined. She stood at his side and leaned over, giving him a quick kiss on the lips before she grabbed her bag and walked away from him.

He would have insisted, but he did not want to push his luck because it might backfire. He watched the woman he loved exit the room, leaving him to stare at the door as it closed, satisfied with his small victory.

"I am not giving up on you, Amelia." He whispered in the air as he shifted his eyes to the table before him. "I will never stop." He promised.

He took the barely touched coffee that he prepared for Amelia. He took a teaspoon and scooped a shining metallic object from the bottom of the cup. With the towel, he wiped it clean and stared at it.

It might not be today.

But the time would come, and nothing could stop him.

Not even fate.

Chapter 877: Now, tomorrow, or never

He was running late for his dinner arrangement with his fiancée. So instead of picking her up at her place, he had asked her to meet him at the restaurant. But honestly, he had intentionally overbooked himself with work. So he did not have to spend more time with her than necessary.

Now, he was driving from his office to meet her as if he was in no hurry, deliberately being careful on the road. He kept telling himself that he did not need another accident, but he knew better. He did not want to arrive on time.

However, he was not surprised to see the reporters and cameras already waiting for him at the entrance of the fancy restaurant. He did not doubt that they were there because of his dinner date with his future wife.

"Prince Lance, was it love at first sight?" A reporter asked as he left his car and walked toward the door.

He could not blame the press for thinking that. It was a fast relationship that suddenly led to a hasty proposal and an announcement of an upcoming wedding.

Many had speculated about their love affair. But they had been vague about the real story. Precisely, there was no story except the lies their publicist had released to the masses.

"Is she pregnant?" He heard another say. "Is that why you are both in a hurry to marry?" Another reporter added.

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Of course, he did not dignify the question with a response. But he could only laugh at the idea. He maintained his stoic expression and continued to walk inside the establishment, ignoring the rest of the questions.

But the thought stuck to his mind, thinking of how much he wanted to have a child. He did not care if he had a boy or a girl. He would be happy to have a healthy baby, but not with her.

Until now, he could only think of one woman he wanted to be the only mother of his children. Yes, he was pathetic. The woman had already broken his heart. And yet, she still owned every shattered piece of it.

"Prince Lance, right this way." The hostess immediately escorted him inside.

He could already see the woman that would soon share his bed and be pregnant with his child. He wondered if he could do it. Make love to a woman who did not mean anything to him.

But he reminded himself that right now was not the time to think about those things. They had to make an appearance. He had agreed to this, so he had no choice but to honor his part of the bargain.

"Thanks for the flowers. I love it." She stood up from her seat once he arrived at their reserved table.

She seemed unbothered by his lateness, smiling like she was glad to see him. But he could see in her facade. It was all just a show for the people who might be watching their future King and Queen fall madly in love.

For him, this was all a farce to fool the people, but he had no choice if he wanted to rule instead of Edward. His people deserved better than to have Edward as their King.

If he had to lie to them about this arrangement, so be it. Because he believed it was the lesser evil than Edward becoming crowned King. He guessed it was what he had to sacrifice to do something good for his community.

"Thank my secretary. She has good taste." Lance leaned down to plant a quick kiss on her cheeks just in case cameras were angling to take their pictures.

He could see the disappointment in her eyes, despite the constant smile fixed on her lips. It was better that she understood her role in this grand scheme of things instead of giving her false hope of something that would never happen.

He would never love again. That was the end of his story.

By now, he hoped she had better learn it before she dreamed of a happy ending. Their relationship was a fake fairy tale love story, and love would never be in the mix. She would wait a lifetime, but he would never feel anything for her except his obligation written on their agreement.

But he would promise to be faithful to her. She would be the only mother of his child. However, if it had been only up to him, he would rather not have kids in a loveless marriage, but their law required him to produce an heir.

A tradition that he had to uphold when he accepted this cursed life.

He knew he was condemning his life to hell, but he was already living in one since that faithful day of his accident. So there was not much difference anyway.

"Ok. Please thank your secretary for me." She irritably answered before regaining her composure. She sat straight on her seat and smiled gracefully at the other guests who greeted them as they passed their table.

"But, please try harder." She whispered closer into his ears as she leaned towards him.

She certainly knew how to act, pretending they were a lovely couple as she forced her hand on his, putting him on the spot to entwine their hands for everyone to see.

"Anyway, why are we here? We could have had our dinner at the palace." Lance asked, knowing that the answer was mere publicity.

He could only think of one person who could have orchestrated all of this. His father would do all he could to facilitate this massive media circus outside, creating a story worthy of the front page.

"Your father told me we would be discussing the wedding date. So, he thought it would be a cause of celebration." Then, she paused on whatever else she was about to say when the waiter stood by their table to attend to their order.

Once they were alone again, all he could imagine was taking a dart and throwing it on a calendar hung by the wall and letting fate decide. He could care less if they were married now, tomorrow, or never.

Chapter 878: Finding a needle in a haystack

"Another late night." Dani looked at the source of the voice and was surprised to see the man by the door.

She automatically glanced at her watch and realized that it was indeed late. But this time, she had an excuse, she was waiting for Alex to pick her up, but it seemed he was also running late.

Her husband had called her an hour ago to inform her that he might be late because his meeting had an extension. He suggested that Ben take her home, but she insisted on waiting for him.

"What are you doing here, Adam?" She asked as she turned away from the computer screen to face her unexpected visitor. "I thought that you had already left."

Adam started to work for her as one of her outside counselors. He would be helping as her legal counsel and working closely with her on her pro bono cases.

He had been reviewing some of the legal issues he would be handling for the company since this early morning, so she assumed he had already gone home just like the other staff a moment ago.

"I was on my way out when I saw your secretary working outside. So, I gathered that you might still be here." Adam stated as he continued to stand by the door. "Since I am here, do you mind if I discuss something with you?"

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"That is if you are not on your way home yet." He quickly added, but he doubted that she was, based on her secretary and judging from the files still spread on her table.

He could tell that she was still busy with work and was no way on her way out of the office anytime soon. But he wondered why she was still here when she should be resting at home in her condition.

"As it happened, I am still waiting for Alex, so please come in. Let us discuss now what you have in mind." Dani beckoned her friend and new legal counsel to the room.

"Would you like some coffee?" She offered, thinking that he might want one.

"No. I am good." He responded as he took the extra chair next to her desk. "But I have a few concerns about the files you sent me and would like some clarifications." He told her.

He would admit that he had always admired this young woman since he had first laid eyes on her. Her beauty automatically captured his attention. It was not perfect, but she had this aura that could easily charm any man.

Unfortunately, he had learned that the one woman he thought would be perfect for him already belonged to someone else. He was happy for them but disappointed in himself.

Now, he was more fascinated about her dedication to her work but a bit concerned about her condition. Alex should be prioritizing her and not making he wait in this almost empty office.

"Ok. Show me." Dani set aside her work so she could help Adam with his concerns. She could always work on her materialize later.

Soon, they worked on several questions Adam had, clarifying the issues one at a time. Then, she remembered the case she handed him about one of her employees.

"My team was still interviewing all the witnesses involved. I also asked my investigator to check on the evidence and to gather more if possible." He updated her about the case.

Then, her secretary suddenly knocked on her door, excusing herself for interrupting the discussion. It would seem that she had an urgent emergency at home that she had to check on.

"Go on, check on your child. Update me if there is something I can do to help." Dani informed her secretary.

She could not force her to stay, knowing her secretary would not make up a story like that to go home early. She could tell she was genuinely worried, seeing the anxiety in her eyes.

"Thanks, Ms. Dani. I will." Her secretary was about to leave when she turned around again. "Should I send Ben upstairs to keep you company until Sir Alex arrives?" Her secretary asked her, concerned, not wanting to leave her alone on the floor, especially in her condition.

If something happened to her boss, she could not be able to forgive herself because she had left her alone.

"No need to send your bodyguard. If you don't mind, I can wait with you until Alex arrives." Adam offered, shrugging his shoulders, showing that he did not mind.

"If you are sure." Dani did not see any point in having Ben in the room if Adam was already there.

Besides, she trusted Adam, having worked with him in several cases in the past. And, of course, he was Alex's friend. She could not see any harm in having him as a company.

Then, they were alone again, discussing the case of Magda's son. After a while, some topics became personal as they talked about her relationship with Alex. Then, she started asking him if he was involved with anyone.

"I am married to my work," Adam answered her truthfully. After several failed relationships, he had not found the right woman yet.

Not really.

He found her, but he was not the one for her.

"You are not getting any younger. Maybe you would like me to set you up on a date with one of my friends." She offered, thinking she might have someone in mind, just perfect for him.

"If you plan to set me up on a blind date, you are wasting your time." Adam almost laughed at the idea, making him smile at the absurdity of his situation.

"Why not? I think she will be perfect for you." Dani insisted, not wishing to give up on her plan.

"What is going in here?" Another voice joined the conversation. "Who is perfect for my friend?" Of course, she knew who had joined them.

"Alex, nice to see you, man." Adam stood up from his seat and greeted his friend.

"I was just telling Adam that I might know someone who would be happy to meet him," Dani explained to her husband as he stood by her side, planting a long kiss on her lips.

"First, thanks for keeping my wife company and entertaining her." Alex turned to his friend.

"It was my pleasure," Adam answered, smiling at the couple.

“As for you...” Alex focused his attention on his wife. “My friends don’t need your help finding a woman for them. They are grown men and more capable of getting one for themselves.” He reminded her.

“Fine. But thanks for keeping me company. Anyway, if you have any more questions, we can continue discussing them tomorrow.” Dani suggested to Adam.

All she wanted to do now was spend the rest of the night with her husband. She could not wait to be pampered and treated like a queen once they had arrived home.

“Ok. I will see you tomorrow then.” Adam finally bade farewell to the couple, leaving the office before them.

As he walked to the elevator, he thought of what she said. Maybe it was time for him to open her options again. She was right. He was not getting any younger.

He had to find a partner to share his life with, envying the couple he had left behind. Maybe there was still one out there just for him. But it would be like finding a needle in a haystack.

Chapter 879: Until

“Dani, you know what I mean.” Alex sighed frustratedly upon learning what his wife was planning. “This would only end up badly.” He insisted, not agreeing with her suggestion.

He glanced at his wife from the other side of the car as he drove them home. She was still busy thinking about her plan, and he could tell she was not ready to give it up. Not yet.

One thing that he loved and hated about her was her stubbornness. Once she had her mind set on something, she would not just let it go that easily. She would fight for it until she had achieved her goal.

“I have to try. I think my friend is better off with Adam.” Dani would not give up on her friend. She still believed she could do something to open her eyes to the truth. Haley did not deserve a man like Gerald.

She turned her head at the view outside, finding the darkness eerie. She used to look at nighttime as something mysterious. She always thought the cold breeze carried magic in the air.

But now, the shadows gave her the creeps. It reminded her of all the terrible things that could happen in the dark. And what would happen to her friend if she continued a relationship with her brother?

She did not want that for her friend. She would like to save her friend from herself and her terrible decisions if her friend would only let her. So far, her friend had not listened to reason, not to her, their friends, or her brother, Marcus.

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Her friend had allowed her heart to dictate her life, blinding her from the terrible possibilities of associating herself with a dangerous man. He might seem to be a good man, but he was not. He would only hurt her friend and put her life in danger.

“You could not force her to like someone. She already told you that she is in love with him.” Alex could see that his wife only had good intentions, but he felt she was fighting a losing battle.

As much as he wanted to help his wife in her crusade to protect every troubled soul in this world, they could not. They could only rescue those who were willing to save themselves.

In the case of their friend, there was nothing they could do. She had already decided to stick with him, no matter what they had told her. Alex believed there was nothing else they could do.

"I am not forcing her. I am just showing her that she has options." Dani turned to her husband and studied his face.

Compared to her friend, she was lucky to end up with a decent man. She could tell the world with a head held high that she had a good man by her side.

Dani doubted her friend could do that when the truth finally revealed itself. She would not trust him with her life even if she shared the same blood as her brother. Haley would soon realize the same thing.

"And you think that Adam is a better option. But what do you know about the man?" Alex asked her. "For all we know, he had a secret as long as the Nile river." He could not help the skepticism in his voice, but Dani had to listen to him.

He slowed down the car once they had parked and turned to his wife. He could see that she was thinking about what he had said. He hoped that she would finally take his unsolicited advice.

"I know that he used to be my friend. But that was a long time ago. Many might have changed during those times I have not seen him." Alex continued.

He was not discouraging his wife from pursuing to help her friend. But he wanted her to tread lightly. He feared Dani might be pushing something that was not her concern anymore.

"I guess you are right." Dani sighed as they entered their apartment, feeling defeated.

She could see Alex's point of view. Thinking about it, she could see why it would seem like she was obsessing about Haley's relationship with Gerald.

But honestly, she felt guilty because she was the one who introduced them. But in her defense, she did not know at the time that Gerald was her brother and the devil himself.

"You know I am right." Alex went straight to the kitchen while she sat on the couch, resting her head on the backrest. "Would you like some light snack?" Alex offered as he handed her a glass of water.

She touched her belly, feeling the heaviness of her body. She had her dinner at the office, so she was still full. She declined her husband's offer and just closed her eyes to relax.

"I think I know what you want." Alex took the glass from her hands and sat right next to her.

Soon, he arranged her in a lying position, putting a throw pillow on her head and then letting her feet lay across his lap. Afterward, his fingers worked on her feet, starting with her toes, as he pressed gently on her tightened skin.

"That feels so good." She uttered in satisfaction, following with several moans, biting her lips to stop herself from making more noises.

After a long day of sitting and standing in the office, she badly needed these relaxing massages. And Alex knew what the doctor had ordered as he worked his magic fingers on relieving her of her stressful day.

She made a mental note to return the favor once she had given birth. But for now, she was taking advantage of her situation, enjoying every minute Alex treated her like a Queen.

"I can do more than just make you feel good." He muttered suggestively, teasing her with his touch and his seductive voice.

"What are you waiting for?" She challenged him, forgetting everything that had happened today but only concentrating on the now.

His hands started crawling upward, massaging her calf until it reached her legs. Then, he pulled her back into a sitting position, letting her straddle him on the sofa.

Soon, he had allowed her to take the lead, giving her the reins as she pushed herself on top of him. Pregnancy might have some disadvantages, but the pros more than compensate for its flaws.

Soon, she was moaning to her heart's content, giving everything she could while taking what he offered. She could not wait for the culmination of their climax, exhilarated by the height of their lovemaking.

Until.

Chapter 880: Unborn child

She woke up feeling empty.

It was like something was missing, but she was not sure what. But she sure felt a lot of pain in the lower part of her body. She blinked her eyes several times, realizing she was not in her room.

It was not her house.

The lights were bright, and the walls and ceilings were white, but she did not recognize the place until she had seen her surroundings. Rotating her head, she saw the machines around her.

"Anybody out there." She whispered, trying to make sense of her surrounding. She needed answers as she searched her memories for an explanation.

She closed her eyes for a second, hoping to clear her mind. Then, she opened it again to see her husband walking toward her with a smile. But there was something wrong.

She had noticed it in his eyes as he approached closer. Embedded deep in those orbs, she could see the sadness. Despite the smile on his lips, something was bothering him.

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But what?

Then, a man on a coat followed him inside the room, wearing an expression she could not understand. Her husband looked at him as if begging, but the doctor maintained his stoic look, neither happy nor sad.

"Hi, baby. I am glad that you are finally awake." He held her hand, gripping it tightly in his hands and pulling it upwards until it rested on his cheek. He caressed her as if he had almost lost her. Did he?

She could feel his warmth radiating into her skin from the tiny contact, feeling the love and concern overflowing from him. However, she was still clueless until something popped up in her head.

It was a weird memory. Was it a dream? Whatever it was, she did not like it. It was an image that could only mean horrible things. Correction, it was not a dream, but a nightmare.

"What is going on?" She finally asked as she heard her voice float in the air. "What am I doing here?" Then, she noticed the dark circles in his eyes. It looked like he had been lacking sleep and crying.

But why?

He still had not answered her question, but it seemed that his eyes would like to shed some tears again. Was she dying? Was that it? But she could not remember if she was even sick.

"Ms. Kenley, I am Dr. Wyett, assigned with your condition." The doctor stood on the other side of her bed, introducing herself. It seemed the doctor was also assessing her state as she held herself from divulging her health situation.

Did she dare to guess what was in her husband's and the doctor's mind? If she had a choice, she would want to be clueless because she could already foresee that it would not be something good.

Still, she hoped against hope that she might be wrong. "What is wrong with me? Will you explain what happened?" She was afraid to ask, but she knew she needed an answer as she alternated between looking at her husband and the doctor.

"First, do you remember your name?" The doctor conducted several tests to check her mental capacity and body movements.

"What are you not telling me?" She was tired of responding to all the doctor's questions. It was now time that they answered hers.

She looked at her husband, wanting to hear what was going on. She could not bear the waiting anymore, impatient to know what was wrong with her.

"Marcus, what is it?" She could see it in his eyes. He had something big to tell her, but he seemed hesitant, afraid of what her reaction would be.

Honestly, she was afraid too, but she had to know.

"I am sorry, Jacky." He finally responded, looking directly into her eyes. "But we lost... our baby" Then, he halted, unable to continue anymore. He did not shed tears, but his eyes were filled with them, threatening to fall.

Then, it came flooding into her mind, the last memory that she could remember. She went home early to surprise him with a special dinner because she had something remarkable to tell him.

She was cooking his favorite dish and even picked his favorite wine. She had almost finished her preparation when her phone rang. She ran to get it, thinking it might be him, then her feet slipped.

She was falling.

Yes, she probably landed on the floor hard, knocked the wind out of her, then the last thing she remembered was the lights turning black. She concluded that she had an accident.

And she lost their baby.

“Marcus!” That was all that came out of her lips as the memories came back, rushing like a tidal wave.

Tears automatically filled her eyes, and then they flowed down her cheeks. There was no stopping it as the pain of losing her child had finally sunk into her mind and soul.

“Jacky!” She heard his voice, but she ignored him. She could only feel the pain of what she had done.

She killed her baby.

Then, her mind returned to that night when she took the pregnancy test as soon as she had arrived home. She had asked her secretary to buy it for her, suspecting that she might be pregnant because of the delay in her period and the unusual symptoms she had been experiencing.

She could not believe it when the stick turned positive. Although they had been careful, there were times that, during the heat of passion, they had unprotected sex. So, it was no surprise that she might get knocked up.

Although it was not yet in their plans to have a baby, they would still accept if fate would bless them with one. Last night, after seeing the result, she knew it was a sign that they were ready to have children.

“I am sorry.” Jacky finally uttered in between her sobs. “I am sorry, Marcus, for killing our child.” She had no one else to blame but herself.

She cried.

She whined against the cruelty of their fate.

She blamed herself for the terrible fate of her unborn child.