

## Royal Contract 891

### Chapter 891: A little nudge

She woke up with a beautiful dream but an aching back. She fell asleep on the rocking chair, waiting for their little angel to cry. She did not want Eida to wake up when she started wailing again.

But the engine brooming continuously through the night seemed to be music to her ears as she slept soundly. Amelia could not help but think that maybe she was comforted subconsciously by his father's favorite hobby.

"Sleep tight, our little princess." She mumbled sleepily, turning the tablet off and returning to her room to lie down for a few more minutes before the sun was up.

She tried to return to sleep as she closed her eyes tightly. She even placed a pillow over her head to block the light from her window. But it was a losing battle as her thoughts remained wide awake.

She pulled the covers off her body and proceeded to get some water. Once in the kitchen, she ended up making coffee too. It was already morning. There was no more point in sleeping as she peeked outside the window to watch the sun come out from behind a building.

It was majestic scenery until.

"What a beautiful sight." A familiar voice startled her, not expecting anyone would be up this early morning. She almost jumped out of her skin in fright. Luckily, she was not holding a glass, or she might have dropped it.

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However, it was not just anybody. The man behind her was not supposed to be there. When she turned around, she could not believe he was standing before her with more flowers in his hand, just like he had promised.

What was he doing here this early? It did help that he owned his plane. So, flying might be convenient for him. But still, it was too early for him for their dinner date.

Besides, she could not remember accepting to go out with him since she only decided last night. She did not have the time to reply to him, not yet. She was contemplating going around texting him during breakfast about it.

"Evan, what are you doing here?" She blurted out of surprise, holding on to her chest as her pulsed quickened. But it slowed down quickly, seeing that he was not a threat.

"I am sorry. I did not mean to startle you. I thought you might have heard the door open when I entered." Evan quickly dropped the flowers on the kitchen counter, grabbed a glass of water, and handed it to her.

"I could not sleep last night, so I decided to catch an early flight. You did not respond to any of my messages, so I thought of asking you personally, hoping you would take pity on me." Evan stated, hopeful.

He stood before her, just a couple of feet away, staring down at her face as she took a few sips of water to calm her nerves down. It was not his intention to surprise her. He expected that everyone would still be asleep when he arrived.

However, he was not sorry to be standing in the same room as her. He would do anything and even everything to win her back, even if he had to take a few flights a week to be with her, not minding waiting until she was ready to forgive him, no matter how long it would take.

"That is ok. You just caught me by surprise." Amelia responded, stepping away from him. She hastily went to the coffee maker, seeing it was about ready. "Do you like some coffee?" She offered, needing some excuse to busy herself and distract her from his presence.

"Sure." He accepted the coffee, thinking he had to take this slow. He did not want to scare her away again. He should be glad she was still talking to him. He sat on the counter, content to watch her as he waited for his coffee.

It did not take long before she approached him with two steaming cups. He did notice that she was still slightly shaken, but she was trying hard not to show it. He doubted it had anything to do with the shock from earlier but more about his presence.

"I got two tickets for an opera show, a gift from some clients." He started, taking a sip of his hot coffee while watching her reaction from his peripheral vision. "I thought we should see it first before going to dinner if you are up for it."

He knew he was assuming that she was going out with him, but he would not have been successful in life without being bold and taking risks. At the moment, it was the only thing that he had going. If she shut him down, he would have to try again with another tactic, but he was not giving up.

"I..." She had no idea what to say. She wanted to say no, feeling that he was going too fast again, but at the same time, she also liked the idea of spending time with him.

"Why don't you say yes to the show and the dinner?" Eida suddenly walked into the room, feeling refreshed. "Thanks for letting me sleep last night." She walked over to her friend and gave her a gentle hug on her shoulders.

Then, she moved on to grab herself some coffee. "Good morning, Evan. And you can both thank me later."

"What is going on in here?" Angela also joined them, with Bea following close behind. Goliath was also not far, barking when he saw Evan in the room.

Evan picked him up and cradled him in his arms, playing with the dog as if he had missed him. "Good morning, Grandmama. I am sorry for barging in early and unannounced." Evan let go of Goliath and kissed his grandmother while helping her with a seat.

"Evan just invited Amelia to an opera show, plus dinner," Eida answered Angela with a wink. "And Amelia is just about to accept." She turned to Amelia, raising her brows, remembering what her friend said last night.

Before Amelia could say anything, Angela also seconded Eida's suggestion. "That is a good idea. You need some fresh air and different scenery." She pointed to Amelia, making it hard for her to say no.

"I guess that is a yes." Amelia reluctantly answered him, feeling ambushed by her two friends. But, of course, she also wished to go out with him, not that her friends could force her if she did not want it. She just needed a little nudge.

Chapter 892: The five stages of grief

"Still, thanks, man, for bailing me out." He dropped the phone back into his pocket after taking the call from his friend, David. Then, he let his eyes wander around him, looking at the sun as it rose from the east.

He had to deal with Jacky as soon as he was out of that cell, seeing how distraught she was. He did not have time to deal with his friends or thank them for their help. So, he quickly called them as soon as he was up.

At the moment, he watched his sleeping wife inside their bedroom as he stood outside the balcony. Honestly, he wanted to smack himself hard for putting Jacky through all that.

Last night, he was lucky that Jacky stopped him before he seriously injured the other guy. Or, he might be spending the rest of his life behind bars, rotting for a senseless crime he had no intention of committing.

"Hey, baby. Are you alright?" He quickly moved over to her side, pushing the hair away from her face, when he saw her stir on their bed and open her eyes.

He had asked that question repeatedly since he held her in his arms last night. Although she said she was ok, he still could not shake the feeling that he had hurt her more than she was already going through.

"I am not ok. What about you?" She mournfully mumbled as she moved to a sitting position, and tears formed in her eyes. "Are you?" She focused her eyes on him, trying to read what he must be feeling.

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Last night, she realized she had been selfish, only thinking about her feelings. Grief had consumed her that she never stopped to think he had also lost a child just like her. He was also in tremendous pain.

What happened to them was a wake-up call not only for him but for her as well. She was not going through this alone. He was with her all step of the way. She just had to acknowledge they needed each other to get through this.

"I am not," Marcus admitted, closing his eyes and letting the tears finally fall from his eyes, down on his cheeks. It was the first time he would be grieving for their lost child.

She pulled him closer, cradling his muscular form into her petite body. She had only seen him cry once. It would be the second one. So, she knew it was a big deal with him. He was not taking the loss of their child lightly as she had thought before.

"I think you are right. We should both go to therapy." She finally conceded, knowing they would need all the help to pull through this horrible situation.

Then, she grabbed his hand and checked the wound on his knuckles. Her fingers gently slid through the bruises as if willing to heal. She should never have ignored his feelings. Then maybe they would not have ended up in this situation.

She pulled his face until his eyes were directly looking into her eyes. "We will find a way to get through this." She whispered into his ears as she pulled him into another hug.

She allowed him to rest his head on her bosom, absorbing his pain the way he had been her strength all this time. It would not be an easy road ahead of them, but she believed that now they had opened to each other, they might make it easier.

After a while, he heard a buzzing sound coming from outside their room, waking him up. They must have dozed off after the earlier incident, checking on his sleeping beside him.

He hastily slid off the bed and walked out of the room, hoping not to wake Jacky, who looked so peaceful. She hardly got enough rest, having sleepless nights and a few occasional nightmares.

"Hey, Alex." He greeted his friend upon opening the front door. "What is it?" He suddenly thought that there might be some emergency.

He wondered if it was work-related. He had been working on several negotiations. Any one of those might require his attention. Or, it could be about last night's incident.

"Sorry, Marcus, to bother you..." But before Alex could say more, a very round, pregnant woman appeared beside him.

"Hi, Marcus! How are you? Where is Jacky? How is she?" Dani greeted him and fired away her questions.

He responded with monosyllable words as he opened his door wider for them to pass, letting the couple inside the apartment where they were staying while in the city.

He had bought Jacky a beautiful house in the suburban area, but without a child, it was too big for just the two of them. Jacky felt more comfortable in this apartment. Well, until the miscarriage.

He learned earlier that she did not want to stay in this house because it haunted her. It constantly reminded her of losing her child. Now, he contemplated whether they should move to another place.

"I think you two should go pack and leave. Take my friend on a long vacation." Dani suggested as they sat in the kitchen, where he offered them some refreshments.

"I am in a middle of a big merger. I could not just leave Alex alone." Marcus scrubbed his face, unable to think straight, torn by the idea of taking his wife out of this place or leaving his friend to deal with the problems in their company.

"I think I can manage with David and Evan while you take care of yourself and your wife. I need you a hundred percent on your A game." Alex agreed with his wife, believing that Marcus would be no use with his current emotional state.

He would be constantly distracted by the pressure of dealing with his loss and his wife, who also needed emotional support. He did not doubt that what happened last night would be an isolated case if he continued on his downward path.

It was better to deal with this now before the problem escalated to something that would be harder to manage. "But as of now, I need you to get all the help for you and Jacky."

"I already arrange a vacation spot for the two of you. It is where Alex had taken me when we were also going through a difficult situation." Dani informed her friend, wanting him to worry about anything else.

"Are you sure about this?" Marcus still asked Alex, but he acknowledged that he and his wife needed this trip. It might be what the doctor ordered for them to heal.

"We only want what is best for you and Jacky," Alex answered, greatly concerned about the couple's wellbeing, tapping him on the shoulders for assurance. "You can leave any time you are ready. Everything is already on standby."

"Thanks. I appreciate all of this." Marcus shook their hands and showed them the way out. They did not want to bother Jacky from her nap.

Now, it was up to him to convince her that it was time for their second chance in life. But first, they had to go through the five stages of grief.

#### Chapter 893: Justice has a price

He tapped his foot on the tiled floor as he sat in the coffee shop, waiting for a woman who was bringing his files. She was already late by half an hour. Was she still coming?

He could only wonder as he sipped on his coffee that had turned cold. He noticed two young girls giggling on the other side of the table, enjoying their lattes. Another older couple was enjoying their breakfast after probably a leisurely walk at the nearby park.

But there was no sign of the woman Serena had said would come to meet with him. "Where are you?" He silently mumbled as he scanned again for the tenth time. He did not have time to wait for her the whole day. He also had other things he had to be in an hour.

However, Serena did not give him a description of the woman or a name. She only said that the girl would approach him. How would he know which one she was?

Suddenly, he regretted not insisting on getting the files yesterday from her. But with her condition, he felt he should give her some space. So, he only called her this morning, asking about his files.

"Would you like something else with your coffee?" The waitress walked closer to him with a friendly smile and a pen and paper in her hands.

She was probably wondering how long he was still going to wait since he kept looking at his watch. Many customers had already entered and exited the shop, yet he was still sitting with just one cup of coffee on his table.

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"Can you just give me a fresh cup of coffee?" It was the only thing he wanted at the moment, handing the cold cup to the woman with a smile.

Then, he was alone again, looking outside the window, searching for a sign that someone was coming. But when all he saw was people and cars passing by, he grabbed his phone, ready to call her again.

"Hey, are you Mr. Adam Mason?" Somebody stood beside his chair, asking him before he could hear the first ring on his phone.

"Whose asking?" He immediately asked before he could tilt his head to look at the person dressed in denim pants, a shirt, and a leather jacket.

"I have the papers you needed." Then, the girl sat opposite him, holding a brown envelope, but he could not see her face since she concealed it with a dark sunglass and a wide cap lowered onto her face. It was like she was covering it purposely.

"Then, give it to me." He was already running thin with impatience since he was already late for his next meeting. He never liked showing up late, so he expected others would also show the same courtesy.

He did not care if this girl, whoever she was, did not want him to recognize her. It was not his business anyway. He only wanted his files so he could leave and attend to his other priorities.

"Not so fast." She pulled the envelope away from him when he tried to reach for it. "First, I need your help." She withheld the file, using it as a bargaining chip.

She must be insane to do this. But she did not want to go to her brother for help. At the moment, he was the only person she could trust. For whatever reason, she felt comfortable around him.

Maybe it had something to do with the way he treated her. It was like he did not care that she was a celebrity. Then, of course, how he had defended her yesterday.

Suddenly, he discovered she was not just anybody, finally remembering her voice. "What do you mean?" He asked, confused and curious as he gazed into her sunglasses. However, he could barely read her expression as she kept her head down. "What help?"

He finally realized Serena did not send her assistant but came by herself, disguised in some casual clothes so no one could recognize her. But what was she doing here, looking like that? Why would she bring the papers to him herself?

And what was wrong with her?

"I need your legal counsel." Serena looked left and right, determining whether anybody had figured out who she was. Thankfully, no one seemed to so much as look in her direction.

"I am sorry, but I could not help you. Anyway, you have David. If he could not help you, I am sure he knows many top-notch lawyers who could represent your interest." Adam was surprised she considered him, but he did not represent a rich, spoiled superstar.

"That is true. But I want to hire you." She insisted, pulling out her checkbook in front of him. "How much?" In her experience, everybody had a price.

She had been represented by her agent's lawyers before, but it seemed they did not have her interest fully in mind. All they could think about was the company's image and what profit they would earn from her or how much they could save from a lawsuit. She believed they would sacrifice her in a heartbeat, always putting her as the last priority.

David and her family were different in a sense. But they were not helpful as well. They had belittled her profession, belonging to a family of four generations of lawyers. She was the odd man out.

She loved David and her family. But she would rather hang herself first before asking for their help. She never liked hearing the words, I told you so. Overall, she never enjoyed coming to their rescue.

"I am sorry, but I only do pro bono cases." Adam did not like how these rich people believed money could solve all their problems.

He only devoted most of his time to those who deserved his help. He could not waste his time on the petty whims of those clients who believed the law was flexible according to their wills because they could afford it.

"I know justice has a price, and I am willing to pay for it." She pulled her sunglasses off her eyes and stared directly at him. "But would you take pity on someone like me?"

Chapter 894: First and last gamble

Her fingers kept fidgeting on her lap as she sat right next to him, quietly musing about her choices in life. Her nerves were on the edge of her seat, expecting that this magical feeling would suddenly burst and the nightmare would show its ugly face.

She still could not simply eliminate the suspicion she felt about him. He did not exactly have a clean record when it came to women. Then, his track record with her was anything but pristine. Still, she was here, giving him a little benefit of the doubt.

"Where exactly is this show?" Amelia asked as they sat in the backseat of an expensive black car, driving on the busy street towards an unknown destination. Her eyes watched the view outside, trying to figure out his plans since he would not share them with her.

She could see that they were exiting the freeway, so they were not exactly going to the city, but on the contrary, they seemed to be going to the outskirts of town.

But when they turned again in another direction, she corrected herself. It was not the way to the airport, but they drove on the path to a private airfield, away from the traffic and the honking cars.

"Somewhere special. And we have to hurry because the show closes its doors on time." Evan responded with a boyish grin as if he believed she would easily fall for his charms.

He pulled out his phone from his inside pocket as it started ringing, placing it immediately into his ears. "Yes, we are almost there." He informed the person on the other line.

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"You are not going to tell me." She stated, accepting that she had no choice but to wait until he revealed his surprise.

She could think of several places with theaters that offered this show this season. But which one was Evan referring to was the question as she watched them enter the private airstrip. Where were they going?

Soon, she was seated on the aircraft, served a glass of cold champagne, and surrounded by beautiful flowers. Eventually, she watched from the window as they soared higher and higher above the clouds.

“Honestly, how many women have you courted this way just to get into her pants?” She lifted the champagne flute to her lips, sipping the delicious, probably expensive alcoholic drink in her hands.

She could not help but notice how the flight stewardess was batting her eyelashes at him and how she put an extra sway on her hips for his benefit.

“Like, how many girls had you showered with dozens of flowers, flew them on your impressive airplane, treated them on a Broadway show, and dined in a three-star Michelin restaurant.” She asked as her tongue extended outside her mouth, licking the parchedness of her lips.

She saw that he had made an extreme effort to plan all of this. She could not help but wonder if he had made this kind of effort for someone else. If so, how many?

“Other girls? None.” He answered without blinking an eye as he leaned closer to her seat, taking her other hand into his. “Only you.” He uttered as his eyes followed the movement of her tongue.

“I hope I am doing it right because I have zero experienced in this...” He paused as he leaned closer to her ears. “Courting ritual.”

He could not help himself as he was once again possessed to be near her. No matter how he tried to keep his distance, he found himself drawn to her like a moth to a flame.

He knew he promised to take this slow, not to scare her away, but every minute of being with her without touching her was torture. He would give his soul to hold her in his arms again. But for now, he had to settle with her hands.

“I would not know. I have not experienced anything remotely similar to this.” She uttered in a raspy voice, as the air seemed trapped inside her throat. “But I think you are on the right track.” As she looked away, pretending to gaze at the view outside her window.

She could feel the tension building inside her body with his nearness. But she knew she could not let her desire overtake her reasoning. She would not be weak and give in easily, not this time.

But in some way, she believed him. She could tell that this was not his usual handiwork. He was not the flower, dine, and courting kind of guy. It had made sense that he did not need to go through all this trouble if he was going to dump the girl the next day.

Did it mean she was special? Could she believe that she was? But what exactly did it mean to him?

“Good, because I am only just beginning. I hope the rest of our date will be the best experience of your life.” He pulled her hand into his lips and landed a single kiss before letting it go.

Then, he took his glass and moved to the other seat on the other side of the plane. He knew he had to put a space between them before he lost control.



As he promised, he would wait until she was willing to accept him back into her life. From her reaction earlier, she was not yet ready. He just had to wait and be more patient.

"We will find out soon enough." She mumbled to herself, unsure if he heard her. She could only hope he told her the truth because she could not take another heartbreak.

She closed her eyes, not wanting to see him watching her anymore. It was just too much to take at the moment. But how could she keep her hands to herself all night if the few minutes with him in this small space was almost enough to break her defense?

"I will prove it to you." He responded upon hearing her low voice. It was a challenge that he had no plan of backing away from, no matter how difficult it got.

She pretended not to hear his reply, surprised that he even heard her rumbling. But she could not wait for him to prove to her that he had changed.

She never liked betting or taking a risk, but this would be her first and last gamble in her entire life. She was putting her life and future in his hands. She just hoped he would not mess it the last time.

#### Chapter 895: An abusive relationship

He sat in his car, debating with himself if he should help her. He kept looking at her, weighing his options. But he could not help but admire her courage for finally coming forward and admitting that there was a problem.

She certainly looked like she needed assistance. But she could hire other lawyers, more experienced ones. Why him? Why would she want him to represent her?

"So, tell me, Serena, what happened." Adam had to hear her story first before deciding on his next move. But he could not outright turn her away after seeing the extent of her situation.

Now that he had a better look at her face, she did have a slight cut on her lower lip, probably a few more bruising concealed by the thick foundation and makeup applied on her skin.

As far as he remembered, he left her last night with only a slight mark on her cheek. How did she end up with a dark patch on her eyes? And did she have other injuries besides the damage on her face?

"After you had left, he returned to my apartment." She removed the cap covering her head and held it in her fingers. "I forgot that he still had the keys to my front door." Then, her eyes glazed as she recounted what happened that night.

She remembered she stayed on the couch, wishing she would wise up and not end up with a loser again and again. But how could she distinguish the bad guy from the good ones?

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It was not like they had a sign on their foreheads telling her which was which. But most of them lured her with the perfect gentleman act until she was too deep in the relationship. Then they showed their true colors.

When she heard the door open and close, she opened her eyes, and he was already walking toward her with an angry expression. It was unmistakable her former boyfriend was not happy with what occurred earlier.

"Elliot, what are you doing here?" She panicked upon seeing him. "I think you should leave." She calmly said.

She wanted to fight, but experienced had taught her that it was futile. She only ended up more hurt than if she remained passive and cooperative. As she said, this was not her first abusive relationship. But she was hoping it would be her last.

"I think we should talk." He insisted as he stopped before her. "I think you were just under a lot of stress. I am going to let go of what happened earlier."

She could not believe what she was hearing. Her arrogant son of a bitch ex-boyfriend was not even apologizing and making it sound that everything was her fault.

"Get out of my house before I call the police." She threatened him. Not particularly interested in having any further conversation with him. But it seemed he did not like her response as his eyes narrowed at her and his expression suddenly changed.

"You bitch!" He grabbed her from the couch before she could do anything else, dragging her to her feet. "You think you can get rid of me that easily." He shouted on her face as his fist landed on her stomach.

The impact caused her to land back on the couch with a thud. "Please, stop!" She cried out, crouching in pain. "Or else..." But she could not finish her sentence as she felt his fingers buried into her hair, yanking her again until her scalp hurt from the tension.

"Or else what?" He pulled her to her feet until she was face to face with him. "You are going to call your new boyfriend." He ran his finger along her swollen cheeks before grabbing her chin tightly until it hurt badly.

"Where is he now? I don't see him anywhere." He looked around the room to make his point. "He is not here, but I am." He rambled on as his breath reeked of alcohol.

"Did you let him fuck you while I am not looking, you fucking, cheating whore?" Elliot furiously exclaimed as he captured her lips in a punishing kiss. But she bit him off, making him retract his lips away.

"I am not the whore, you are. You are the one who cheated on me. Besides, I already broke up with you." Serena snapped at him, not liking that he was reversing the situation.

But he also did not like that she answered back. "You don't get to say we are through until I say it is over between us. Do you understand?" Then, his hand swung in the air and landed on her other cheek.

"You can't dictate what I can and can't do." She argued back, unable to believe that he would not accept that they were over.

"I said you are mine until I am through with you." His hand smacked her across her face. "I think you need to understand that I own you. I can ruin you just as easily as I made you a star again."

She knew he was right. Her career was dying after her last scandal with her other ex-boyfriend. Then, he helped her get back on her feet and put her on the pedestal again. But with his connection, he could easily take that all back.

But at this point, she was past caring about her career. "I don't care. I don't want to see you again. Get out of my house." She shouted at the top of her lungs.

He struck her again with his hands across the face, making her stumbled on the side table. From there, she grabbed the first thing her hand could get hold of and used it against him.

She swung it with all her might, letting the lamp crash strongly on his head. He swayed on his feet and fell to the floor. She knew it was her only chance to escape, so she hurriedly bolted out of her apartment.

"I should not have stayed at my apartment that night after you left," Serena told Adam. "I have driven to my assistant's apartment and stayed there until this morning." Ending her story.

She had no one else to blame but herself in this situation. She had already seen the telltale sign that their relationship was not healthy anymore, but she still stuck around, hoping they could recover.

Like before, she was a fool.

"I seem to have a talent of attracting the wrong men out of a good batch." She jokingly said, chuckling but lacking the humor in it. "I swear I have enough of men. I only want to be alone after this."

"I am sorry about what happened, but do you want to file a case against him?" Adam stared at her, waiting for a response. "If you really want my help, I think you should."

A man who could hurt a defenseless woman like Elliot was an insecure, coward, and spineless prick. They could only hurt those people who could not retaliate back.

Adam could not discount that there were many men like this Elliot guy. But many were still decent, but he could not blame a victim of an abusive relationship if she thought otherwise.

Chapter 896: Fair share of mistakes

He escorted her to the grand, magnificent theater where the show was about to take place. Of course, everyone had donned their best black tie and elegant gowns for the exclusive event. It was not, after all, just any show.

As they passed the entrance, he escorted his date to the grand hall, where they would wait for the signal of the start of the performance. For the moment, servers in a black bow ties served refreshments and finger foods for the guests.

"Evan, fancy seeing you here. I never thought of you as someone who appreciates the arts." A stunning woman in an elegant and expensive gown approached them. "I thought of you as someone who likes basketball and baseball more."

When Evan came closer, the gorgeous lady placed her hands on his shoulders, pulling him into a kiss. Not a friendly kiss by the usual standard. It was indeed a passionate one, at least on her part.

"Anna, it is nice to see you too," Evan quickly pulled away from the kiss and stepped back away from her. Then, he possessively placed his arm around his date, gluing himself to her side, making the other girl realize he had a date.

He was not expecting his former lover would act impulsively like that in front of Amelia. Was that karma biting him in the ass for all his wrong deeds just when he least expected it?

He remembered that Anna was one of the first women he got involved with when he was younger. But in his defense, he had been transparently clear to her that he was not into a relationship.

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However, she did not like it when he abruptly ended it, seeing the sign that she was becoming clingy. She had been chasing him since then, claiming they were in a deep relationship and he had impregnated her.

Unfortunately, she had a miscarriage because of traumatic stress since he would not take responsibility, meaning he would not admit that he was the father or agree to marry her.

But, of course, he did not believe a word of what she claimed. He knew she had made all that story up. Since then, he had stopped entering any form of relationship, limiting his affair to a short one, mostly a one-night stand.

Of course, he used protection religiously to avoid false claims again.

"And who is this?" Anna looked at Amelia from head to toe, sizing her up. It was like it was the first time she had seen her, ignoring her earlier even if she had arrived with him and had been at his side all this time.

"She is my date." Evan quickly informed her, but before he could introduce her, Anna interrupted him.

"It is nice to meet a new friend. I'm Anna." She extended her hand, seemingly looking friendly, but something was off with her smile.

Amelia could sense the hostility underneath her facade of a smile, but she seemed caught in the middle of something. She never liked drama, but at that moment, she had no choice but to play a role in the middle of it.

"I am Amelia." She accepted her hand only to feel a tug on her arms as Anna pulled her into a hug. But once she was close enough, Anna whispered something in her ears.

"I guess you are the new flavor of the month. Enjoy it while it last." Then, the other woman pulled away from Amelia with a lovely smile on her lips as she faced all the people that had joined their small group.

"Amelia, this is our friends." She introduced them to her, one by one, playing as the good hostess.

"It was nice seeing everyone, but I believe the show is about to start." Evan could not do anything else unless he wanted to make a splash and

ruin the rest of the evening. The last thing he wanted was a scandal to taint their night.

He pulled Amelia away from his former friends, hoping he could still salvage what remained of the evening. He did not expect something like this would happen, but it did.

Even the most carefully arranged plan could suddenly turn the other way around without a warning and reason. All it just needed was for fate to step into the picture then all hell would break loose.

He still hoped fate was still working in his favor despite what happened. "I am sorry about that." He knew it did not look good. It confirmed that he had more to prove about himself if he would win her affection again.

"Why are you sorry?" Amelia looked at him with a smirk and amusement in her eyes. "Did you plan this to happen?" She was more amused than enraged about the incident.

"Of course not." Evan quickly reacted, studying whether she was offended by the event. But he was more confused by her expression.

"Should I expect more of that same stunt for the rest of the night from her or some other girls you had a previous association with?" She asked as she stopped in her tracks to look directly into his eyes.

"I hope not." He answered truthfully, knowing that he had no control over the girls he had dated in the past. Besides, he had brought this to himself for being a womanizer in the past. Now, it was coming to haunt him.

"Then, I don't think we have no problem unless you have one." Amelia countered, enjoying the obvious discomfort he was experiencing. "Now, can we just enjoy the show?" She walked again towards the theater, excited for the rest of the night.

She truly loved opera, ballet, and art shows. She always found it fascinating how an art form could transcend a story to another level. It was like telling a narrative but not through words, leaving it open to many interpretations.

"Yes, of course," Evan enthusiastically answered, slightly relieved to see that she was not taking the earlier incident personally.

He hoped it was not just an act because they were in a public place, but she truly understood that it was his past and nothing more. That what he did was over and done with, now he was a changed man.

"Shall we?" Amelia offered her hand to him, sensing that he was overthinking things. "Don't worry too much. You just made the rest of my night more intriguing." She hooked her arm in his, ready to take a chance with him, just like she had promised earlier.

Honestly, she enjoyed the little encounter with his past. At least she knew now what to expect if she would proceed forward with him in this relationship. She could probably expect more of those kinds of women.

After all, he was not unattractive and undesirable. On the contrary, he was one of the hottest, most successful bachelors available in the city. Many would want to have a man like him. Was she one of them? Maybe?

Moreover, she believed it would not have been fair to him if she kept judging him from his past actions. She might have been a good girl by social standards, but still no saint. She had her fair share of mistakes in her past, so who was she to judge?

Chapter 897: Money, power, and influence

He was already at the abandoned warehouse before the appointed time. He wanted to be ready for anything, especially when something crucial was going down. And tonight was one of the most expensive and lucrative shipments of contrabands under his watch.

He could not allow anything to mess up this transaction because millions were at stake in this. As the new leader of the underground gang, he still had a lot to prove to the organization. Many eyes were watching his success, but most especially his failure.

“What are you doing, Gerald?” A man shouted at the door of the empty warehouse. “Are you trying to ruin your life and get killed?” The voice was more pissed than concerned about his situation.

The man strode into the dimly lit room, looking like he was about to go to a fight. But Gerald had known his friend to overreact. So, he could only conclude that he had heard the news.

“Don’t be overly dramatic, Mike.” He answered his friend, pushing himself away from the only table in the center of the massive empty room.

He stood up and turned away from his friend, facing several of his men who were waiting for his instructions. “Give us a few minutes. We will discuss the rest of the plans later. For now, make sure that everything is going as scheduled.”

His head of security turned around, pulling his men out of the building, leaving him and his partner to talk in private. There were things he would like to discuss with his friend that did not need his entire team to hear.

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“Me? Gerald? Dramatic...” Mike sounded annoyed as he stood before him with his hands balling in his pockets. “I am just looking after your interest. At this point, I think you are not seeing the big picture.”

He just confirmed that his friend was not talking about the deal that was about to go down tonight. He was referring to another topic that had no relevance to their current situation.

Still, he could not blame his friend for feeling ignored. He had kept him in the dark about his plans long enough. It was not that he did not trust him, but he knew he would disagree with him. It appeared he was right, judging by his reaction now. But.

“This is not the time and the place, Mike. We can discuss this over a drink later. But I need your focus on the job.” Gerald placed his hand on his younger friend.

He did not need his friend acting distracted when the shipment arrived. But he believed it was time to include him in his plans, even if he disagreed with him or not.

“But I think you are going over your head with your relationship with this woman.” Mike finally voiced out what was on his mind. “What about running for public office? Are you also considering doing that?”

He had known his friend since he started his career as his assistant. The two of them had helped build their career as great lawyers. Moreover, they had also worked together in his underground trade.

He had always looked after his interest and helped him in many situations. He did not want all of what they had worked for to go down the drain because he was letting his libido run the show and do the thinking.

"As I said, we will discuss that later. But right now, we have to see through the shipment. It is our top foremost priority at the moment." Gerald glanced at his watch, noticing that it was almost time.

"Fine," Mike also realized that his friend was right. "But I am not through with this discussion." He might have conceded now, but it did not mean that he had agreed with his friend about his plans.

He had noticed Gerald was acting strange the more he spent time with this Haley chick. Then, he had recently heard about the rumor of his candidacy.

Usually, he was the first to learn about these things, but now, he had to hear it from somebody else's mouth. He did not like that he had no say on the matter since he had always been his right-hand man.

"Excuse me, Sir, you have a phone call." His head of security approached him, carrying one of their burner phones.

He quickly took it, ending the discussion with his friend and handling the call. It was the captain of the ship. He just informed him that they had secured the package and were on their way.

Now, they had to wait for the package and the buyers to arrive. It should be a quick exchange if everything worked out just as planned. Then, it would be an easy million bucks.

"Are we good?" Gerald looked at his friend, knowing he needed him to be in his A game.

"We are," Mike responded with a nod, taking his gun out of his side and inspecting it before returning to its holster. He could not go on a deal without a loaded arm.

After less than an hour of planning and waiting, the exchange went smoothly, without a hitch. The contrabands were out of their hands. On the other hand, the money was safely in their swiss account, out of the reach of the authorities.

It was a clean transaction with no paper trails and no evidence linking any of them to the crime. No one would ever suspect a well-respected man like him would be involved in this underground crime.

"Congratulations." Mike applauded him for a job well done. "But, you still owe me a drink." Mike reminded him as they packed up to leave.

"Then, I guess we should be going." He grabbed his coat and strode out of the warehouse, going straight to his car with his friend closed behind him. He could tell that his friend could not wait to confront him about his plans.

The mafia world, the business sector, and the political arena were not so different based on his opinion. It had many similarities as far as he was concerned. It was something that Mike still had to understand.

For him, the only thing that mattered in this world were money, power, and influence. There was no room for anything else.

Chapter 898: A means to an end

A few minutes after the meeting, they entered one of the underground clubs he owned. The organization ran several clubs that catered to their different illegitimate businesses.

Of course, he could not put it on his name. That would put a question on his reputation. After all, it was not an establishment that many would accept as a fair and honorable trade.

“Good evening, Sir. Your table is already waiting for you.” The hostess at the front guided them to his designated table when he came to visit this place.

Girls dressed in sexy costumes to almost naked circulated the room, either serving drinks or entertaining their patrons, including wealthy entrepreneurs, successful executives, powerful politicians, royalties, and members of the elite society.

It was one of the high-end clubs that only catered to the ones with money to spend. Aside from the bar, the club offered other activities behind the scenes but only for the selected patrons who could afford it.

“Bring us some drinks,” Gerald instructed as the woman clapped his hand to signal the bartender to prepare his order. They did not wait long as the server immediately brought them some drinks.

“So, how serious are you with Haley?” Mike was direct to the point as they sat at a secluded part of the club. “Are you in love with her?”

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He had to know if his friend had fallen to the charms of his so-called girlfriend. And if he had any intention of marrying her. Rumors of their growing affair had been circulating, and it was becoming alarming.

“No. I am not in love with her. But I am serious about our relationship.” Gerald admitted to his friend. “I need her at my side if I will continue with my plans.”

At least, that was what he wanted to believe. He did not do love. He had never loved anyone except for his mother. He could not even say that he had loved his fathers, the one who raised him and the one who gave life to him.

Therefore, love was not part of the equation. At this point, he needed Haley in his plans, especially her father. So far, she fitted perfectly in his life. If he would choose a wife, she might be it.

“Then, what is your plan? What are you not telling me?” Mike was still pissed, but he liked to hear what he had to say. He needed a reason for his friend’s actions.

He had known that Gerald did not do things without considering everything first. He did not do things impulsively. He must be up to something big.

“You already heard that they offered me the Governor’s position.” Gerald opened up to his friend.

“Haley’s father wishes to back me up to the position.”



"Are you planning to accept it?" Mike asked, considering the implications of him sitting in the position.

He could already think of several pros and cons of his friend accepting a political title. However, it would also create complications in the group. The group might see it as advantageous, but some might take it differently.

"I am still thinking about it." Gerald had not yet decided on it, still weighing his options.

"How does Haley fit in it?" Mike had to consider all the angles, including the woman who always stood by his side. She could be an asset to them, but she could also become a liability in the very end.

"If I do run for Governor, I would need to marry her. She would look great at my side." That was one of his plans.

"You understand that your continuous relationship with her had put her life at risk. Are you sure you don't mind her becoming collateral damage?" Mike reminded him, pointing out the obvious in their line of work.

"Why would it bother me? As I said, I need her, but I do not love her." He reiterated, not wanting Mike to think he was emotionally involved with Haley.

"Excuse me, Sir." One of his security came closer to him and whispered something.

"Bring him over," Gerald responded to the bulky man in a black suit. "Don Lorenzo is here and would like to join us." He informed Mike of their new guest.

Don Lorenzo was one of his father's biggest supporters. He also helped Gerald obtain his position today. So, he owed him a load of gratitude that he intended to pay in time.

"Gerald, I hope I was not intruding." Don smiled at them as he took a sit opposite him. "I was in the neighborhood and thought of dropping by."

"You are always welcome to visit any of my clubs." Gerald welcomed him, offering him drinks. "You know my friend, Mike."

Gerald snapped his fingers in the air, and a server immediately came to his side. He whispered something to her ears, instructing her to do something for him.

"Of course, he had helped me in some of my old cases." Don raised his glass to Mike, thanking him. Then, he lit a cigarette and puffed up a few clouds of smoke before making himself comfortable.

Then, four ladies in their sexy costumes joined them at their table.

Two of the ladies sat on either side of their new guest, one on Mike's side while the other sat on Gerald's lap, linking her hands around his shoulders.

Gerald knew he had to keep up with his appearances. He had to eliminate Mike's suspicion that he was in love with Haley because he was not. It was just a political move, a power play on his part.

He grabbed the woman by her neck and guided her to his lips, showing his friend that Haley meant nothing to him.

"Oh, and who are you?" Don asked the woman, pulling her to his lap as he nuzzled his nose on her neck.

"I am whoever you want me to be for the night." The girl answered him, putting her fingers along his jawline seductively.

"I like the sound of that," Don answered her. Then, he shifted his attention back to Gerald. "I heard you are running for office. Is that true?"

"If it is true, would you support my candidacy?" Gerald knew that word traveled fast, so he was not surprised if many had already heard about it.

"Of course! I will. I think that is a good idea." Don agreed with him. "What about the daughter of Alfred Rosley? What is she to you?" He looked at him, studying his reaction.

"She is a means to an end." He candidly answered as he continued to play with the girl on his lap to make his point.

Chapter 899: Take it or leave it

Alex glanced at his watch, wondering where was his new intern. Senator Andrews had informed him that his son would report to him early that morning but was still a no-show.

But from the look of things, he might as well stop expecting he would be coming. He had better things to do than to train a brat and probably be a waste of his time.

"Alona, please can you..." He was about to instruct his secretary to call the Senator but stopped when she suddenly stood by his office door with a man in tow.

He recognized the man as his new intern, who did not seem bothered that he was a few hours late and not in his office dress code. The spoiled young man looked hungover.

As much as he owed his father a favor, he would not tolerate insubordination or disrespect under his watch. Now, should he send him home back to his father and declare this deal null and void?

"Sir, Mr. Andrews is now here to see you." Alona showed the younger man into his office, looking smug, just like the last time he had seen him.

It seemed that his new apprentice still believed that he held the cards in this scenario. Mr. Andrews needed to think again because he would not think twice about dismissing him if he had probable cause, even if he had an agreement with his father.

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So far, he was seriously contemplating firing him on the spot. Of course, he was also considering the consequence. Marcus needed his help, and he owed his friend.

Besides, would it be fun to bring this little prick down from his pedestal and make him kiss the ground he stood on and realize that he was no better than the rest of the society? That was another thought.

"It is about time that you showed up, Mr. Andrews." Alex closed the file before him, thinking of what he would do to the young man to teach him a lesson he would never forget.

After all, the Senator had sent his son to him to learn a valuable life lesson. He would be neglecting his obligation if he should let this little mishap slip without having a consequence.

At the same time, he believed he would do the world a lot of good if he could tone down the arrogance of this young man. However, he contemplated if this man was even worth his time.

"I am sorry if I am slightly late. My car had a slight incident, but I am sure you understand." Mr. Andrews stated without going into details. "But I don't mind if you call me Zach since we will be working closely together."

He immediately took the vacant seat in front of his desk without waiting for his approval. Then, he sat as if he was a client, slouching with his legs crossed and staring at his phone.

"By the way, I hope you don't mind if I call you Alex." His intern stated without even looking at him as his focus remained on his phone as he continued acting like he was the boss and not his intern.

"Excuse me, Sir Alex, but a man is here, looking for Mr. Andrews." His secretary interrupted them, standing again by the door.

"Send him in, Alona. You are a sweetheart." Zach charmingly answered without bothering to wait for his boss to respond.

"Mr. Andrews, here is your coffee." Another man quickly entered his office, carrying two paper cups in a cup holder. He gave one to Zach and placed the other cup on the table near Alex.

"I hope you don't mind if I order us a coffee. My hangover is killing me." Zach addressed it to Alex before turning to his driver. "Go, wait for me in the car. I don't think we will take long."

Then, Zach continued googling on his phone as he drank his coffee. He disagreed with his father that he needed to work for this man. First, it seemed like this was punishment when he had done nothing wrong.

However, he had no choice because his father threatened to cut his allowance and inheritance if he would not obey his order. At that moment, he had no choice but to work for two months until he had learned a few things from this Prince.

How hard could that be?

"So, what deal could we work on here?" Zach asked the man behind the desk, believing he could haggle an arrangement with the man. "What do you want for you to tell my Dad that I am one of your best interns?"

Maybe if this man could put in a good word about him to his Dad, then all of this would go away, and he could go back to his life of partying and enjoying his life. His friends just texted him about a party later on.

"First, sit up straight when you are in my office." Alex finally broke his silence after observing the man before him. "Next, there is only one deal on the table. The one I have with your Dad."

He stood from his chair and walked closer to the young man, staring him down. "I have only one rule." He did not continue until his intern tilted his head to him.

“What is that?” Zach asked, just curious more than anything else. He did not believe that this man would not bend his rules for him.

He had worked for several companies before. This scenario was not his first rodeo. Those companies eventually changed their minds because they needed something from him and his father. He believed this man was no different.

“You do all I say. If you don’t, you are out of here.” Alex explained, making it as simple as possible. “You understand, Mr. Andrews?” Emphasizing his name. “By the way, it is Mr. Blackstone for you. You have to earn your right to call me by my first name.”

Alex returned to his chair when the young man remained speechless, but he could see what his trainee was thinking. Maybe he was planning how he could get out of this situation.

“Anyway, since your clothes are unsuitable for the part of my assistant, I will put you where you would fit in for the day,” Alex called Alona back into the room, giving instructions.

He could already tell the young man would not like what he had planned for him today. But he could either take it or leave it. It was all up to him.

Chapter 900: The talk of the town

The morning started with a big case blowing on his face. The entire firm was in chaos, and he had been working to salvage what he could of the case. He was glad that his partner was back from his weekend. Somehow he had been a big help.

He looked at his watch, and it was barely mid-morning. He had already canceled many of his not-so-urgent appointments. Yet, he still had numerous issues to deal with, and he felt he was running out of time.

“Mr. Adam Mason is here to see you, but he had no appointment.” His secretary informed him. “I know you are busy, Sir David, but he insists on speaking with you.”

He never bothered to glance at his secretary as his eyes focused on the papers before him. He was curious why his friend was looking for him. But he also had limited time, and socializing with his friend was not his priority.

He knew Adam had been working on a pro bono case with one of his junior associates under the recommendation of Dani. But he had no involvement with that case. So, what did Adam need from him?

“Fine, send him in.” He informed his secretary, unable to turn his friend away. He would ask what he needed and set another appointment with him at another time.

After several seconds, his old-time friend came walking into his office. Although they were not as close as his other friends back in college, he still liked the man. He had high respect for what he did with his career.

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“Adam, it has been a long time. I thought of inviting you to lunch, but my schedule was tight these past weeks.” He proffered his friend into a seat and a drink. His friend took the first one and refused the latter.

He would have offered him a position in his firm as one of his partners, but he knew he would decline it. Although they were friends, they never saw eye to eye about several things.

He knew that his friend would not be a good fit in his company, just like his friend would never accept anything he would offer. It was a mutual understanding between them.

“David, thanks for seeing me. I am sorry that my timing seems to be off. Your secretary told me that you are on a tight schedule. So, I will make this brief.” Adam heard from some attorney about issues with a client, but he was not privy to the rest of the information.

“Yeah, but if this can wait. We can reschedule our meeting first thing tomorrow.” David suggested as he studied his friend, which he had not seen for quite some time.

“Actually...” Adam slightly hesitated, knowing the sensitivity of what he had to say. “It could not wait. I am here to inform you that I am planning to take a case.”

He began explaining who his client would be and who he would be suing. It was not that simple because his possible client was his friend’s sister. He knew he had to inform him about the case, but only the pertinent ones.

He could see that his friend was a bit surprised but not completely clueless. As his client had explained, this was not the first time this had happened to her.

“So, how is she? Where is my sister?” David asked worriedly. As much as his sister believed he was not concerned about her, he loved her.

She was too stubborn to accept that sometimes she had to listen to him and their parents. She was so set on being independent that she always took their opinion as an insult to her character and career.

But he only wanted what was best for her. It was a misunderstanding that had gone too far. It was time that he acted upon it, just like his fiancée had suggested several times in the past.

“I set her up in a private hotel under a false name so nobody could track her. We had been in the hospital for her medical examination. Now, I am preparing to file a case against her ex-boyfriend.” Adam informed his friend of his current actions on his sister’s case.

“Then, what is stopping you? What is the problem?” David could sense there was a problem. Adam already did the preliminaries. “Why was the case still sitting on your desk when it should be already in court yesterday?”

“Because your sister is still having second thoughts,” Adam informed him as he stood from his seat, knowing he already had used his time.

“Why are you telling me this? Are you not bound by attorney and client privilege?” David looked at his friend, hoping to read between the lines.

"I am just concerned about her. Besides, she had asked me to represent her, but I still have to accept her as a client." Adam knew he was getting out of this through a technicality.

He knew he should not talk about his client's situation to another entity. But David was not anybody. If he decided to take this case, his client would require a family to back her up. She would need moral support.

He doubted she would bother taking him to court for breaching confidentiality. However, he could not keep something this big from his friend. Besides, he believed that David could help in the situation.

"But you are taking her case?" David asked his friend, believing he would be a perfect choice to handle the situation. "Please, she trusts you. I hope you will help her."

He doubted that his sister would accept him or any of his recommendations. He had history to back that up. But he believed Adam would do everything he could to represent her interest.

"I will if she would pursue the case." Adam had already decided to take the case. But he needed her to be ready.

If the case proceeded, he could already see the press having a field day on this. He could already foresee that this would be the talk of the town.