

Royal Contract 911

Chapter 911: Troubling time

He heard she had stopped by his office the other day, but he was out with a client. So, he did not have the chance to talk to her. However, he was not surprised that she kept him out of the loop about her current life.

His relationship with her was not exactly close. Not that he could blame her for staying away from them, her family. He admitted that he prejudged her unfairly, calling her career a joke.

At that moment, he stood outside her hotel door, staring at his younger sister he had not seen for a while. At least not in person. But he had watched her several times on the news. "You look like shit, my little sister."

He could see the surprise in her eyes when she opened the door. Of course, she was not expecting that he would show up at her doorstep. But it was nothing compared to the shock on his face, looking at her physical state.

She was in her lousy sweat clothes, a robe carelessly draped on her body and the look stating she had not gone out of bed for days. The bruises were more prominent on her skin now that she was not wearing makeup on her face.

He suddenly wanted to beat the crap of the man she had been seeing, who did this to her. After all, he was still her brother, and despite their misunderstandings, he still loved her. And no one deserved to be treated like a punching bag.

"You don't look bad yourself, my big brother." She answered him sarcastically. "How did you find me anyway?" She abruptly asked. "Don't answer that, David. I think I know."

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She walked away from the door and proceeded to the small sofa on the other side of the hotel room. She slumped back on the couch, watching an old rerun with some chips she grabbed from the coffee table.

"He is a good friend, Serena. He meant well and only wished to help you." David understood what Adam did, although it was ill-advised to discuss a case with another person, even a relative.

"Maybe it was a mistake to hire him," Serena spoke up after swallowing the chips in her mouth. "Maybe I should fire him and sue his ass for breaking privilege."

She pretended to watch the movie, ignoring her brother, who sat on the lone chair across from her. But she noticed his eyes never left her face as if he was studying her.

But she was serious. She did not like when people ignored what she wanted and believed they knew what was best for her. She had fought this stigma all her life, but she always fell into the same pattern, time and time again.

Was she that weak of mind and as a person?

"He is the best choice to handle your case, Serena. Don't let your hatred of me cloud your judgment." David knew that Adam would only do what was best for his client.

Adam would take care of his sister's interest in this case. He also agreed with Adam. Serena would need emotional support through these trying times. It would not be easy, especially when the press started getting involved.

He would have taken the case or one of his best litigators, but he doubted his sister would accept his help. He believed he had burned the bridge that connected them when he turned his back on her in the past.

"Can you blame me?" She asked angrily at the one person she thought would defend her when she needed him the most. "I am surprised you are not saying I told you so." Waiting for him to rub it in.

She went to him the other day, thinking that maybe they could bury the hatchet and start over again. But seeing her brother in person had opened old wounds, refreshing the pain she felt in her heart.

"I know I was a jerk. I don't deserve to be called your brother because I never protected you. But I have changed." David could tell that it would not be easy for his sister to forgive him. "I am sorry, Serena. Let me make it up to you." But this was his opportunity to try,

He knew it would take more than just his words to make his sister trust him again. But the fact that she tried to see him might be a start. He knew they could not stay civil because they shared the same blood.

She was his sister.

They were family. They should start acting like one.

"Who are you, and what have you done with my brother?" She dropped the chips in her hands and turned the television off.

Her eyes focused on the man before her, suspicious of his intention. But what would he want from her? She had practically renounced her family and their wealth when she started her career in the movie industry.

"As I said, I made many mistakes, and one of my biggest regrets was not being there for you." David looked down at his hands entwined before him.

His youth had not been his finest moments in life. He was the traditional bully, womanizer, the spoiled brat that one would expect from a young man coming from a wealthy and influential family.

But her sister was different. Her diverse and distinct outlook had made her the odd man in the family. His father did not like that she defied most of his orders, creating a large wedge in their relationship.

Eventually, she packed up and left.

"You mean that." Serena felt torn between wanting to believe her brother and keeping the grudge in her heart.

But she had enough of the pain as tears finally dripped out of her eyes. She was tired of being alone. She had tried desperately to find someone to share her life with, but only to end up in disastrous relationships.

In an instant, she felt warm arms enveloping her body. It had been a long time since someone genuinely cared for her. And this felt like that. Maybe it was time to give her brother a chance.

Who else could she turn to in a troubling time like this?

Chapter 912: The trigger

It was paradise.

Honestly, she felt like she was dreaming as she gazed at the majestic view of the ocean before her. She wished she would not wake up from this enchanting dream.

If only she could stay like this forever and forget the world she had left behind, forget the pain. But that was wishful thinking.

"How are you feeling today?" A hand held her by the shoulder. Immediately, she was not alone anymore.

However, she welcomed his presence. He only added to the allure of the place. He had brought colors and life to her empty soul. Yes! She was on the brink of death, but he would not let her go.

He kept pulling her back even when she had finally given up. He fought for her when she stopped fighting for herself. It was not fair to him, but she admitted he was stronger between them.

"I am much better." She would admit that the battle had just begun, but her ammunitions were almost empty. "Thanks, Marcus." She turned to her husband and kissed him on the cheek.

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She wanted to act tough, but it seemed her old self had abandoned her and left her alone in this fight. She wished to stop crying at night, but the tears kept coming without warning. She had no way of stopping them.

"That is good, Jacky." But he could tell she was lying. All the signs pointed out that she was still suffering. She was showing a good front. But at night, he could hear her silently crying.

But he was not giving up. He believed that they could recover from this. It would just need time and patience. He just had to be strong for them. He could not give up on her.

"So, do you want lunch?" She quickly stood from her seat on the patio and walked towards the kitchen of their villa.

It was nice of their friends to arrange this vacation for them. She appreciated that they would like to help, but she could not help but wonder if it would do her much good.

Nothing had changed since she had arrived in this beautiful, magical place. Although it did distract her occasionally from her thoughts a few times, she still came back to the problem. She lost her child, and she could not bring her back.

"Yeah, I am starving." Marcus could only follow her lead. "But we have an appointment with the in-house therapist in an hour." He reminded her.

It was part of the package of staying in this vacation place. It was for couples with marital problems and other issues involving their relationship.

At that moment, it was not yet a problem, but he could not wait for their situation to eat up their relationship until there was nothing left. Dani was right. They had to address the problem now while the pain was still raw.

"Oh! Is that today?" Jacky acted surprised. Marcus had discussed it with her, but she forgot that the appointment was a bit later.

In truth, her mind was not interested in anything much these days. Her mind and body could only focus on a few things. To do her mundane task, cook, eat, drink and sleep. The last one was still debatable.

Even if she managed to get some sleep, she would still end with a nightmare. She had tried hard not to think about it. But her waking hours were worse than what her mind conjured when unconscious.

"Yes, Jacky. You know we have to talk to someone." He could see her hesitation.

His wife was someone who could not trust anyone easily. She did not open up about her life to strangers, not even to friends or even to him. He could tell that she still had some deep dark secrets she had buried deep in her mind. Something that only she knew and nobody else.

He could not blame her. She had to brave the street when she was young by doing what she had to do to survive the horrors of her past. It was one of the things that he respected about her.

So, he had never tried to pry about her secrets. He believed when she was ready to tell him. She would do it of her own volition. Therefore, talking to a shrink must be terrifying for her. But he would be there for her every step of the way.

"Ok. I understand." She answered him as she sat beside him, playing with her food.

"You have to eat, Jacky." Marcus noticed how she would twirl her fork in her plate, but she barely put much into her mouth. "Please, at least try harder."

He was also concerned for her health. He supposed she was punishing herself too much because she kept blaming herself for losing their child. But the fault did not lie only with her. He believed he was equally to blame for not being there for her.

"I am trying." She responded by putting a piece of potato into her mouth, but he could tell it was a struggle.

He knew they badly needed help because he had already lost his child. He could not afford to lose his wife too.

It was just not an option.

He loved Jacky so much.

“Don’t worry. I am here to help. I am not leaving.” Marcus knew she needed constant reassurance that she was not alone in this battle. “We are in this together, even if it would take us forever.”

He pulled her closer to him as they prepared for their first therapy session as a couple. There was no guarantee that this would work, but it was a start.

He just hoped that Jacky would open up and finally let go of all the baggage holding her back. Honestly, he could not help but assume that losing their child was not the only issue.

Something else in her past had resurfaced and was now adding up to her burden. This latest incident had just been the trigger that detonated the bomb, causing the massive explosion inside her.

Chapter 913: A dollar sign

He was about to have dinner with some friends in one of his favorite restaurants when his eyes landed on two familiar faces. He was not expecting to see them here, but he was not passing up the chance to come over and meet them.

He readily walked towards them, saying his excuses to his companions to go ahead while he made a quick stopover on another table. Besides, he did not plan to stay long. He just wanted a brief word with them.

“Dad, it is nice to see you here.” Haley immediately greeted him when she saw him approach their table. Although, she was not surprised since her father frequented this place.

He quickly walked to her side and kissed her cheeks as a form of respect. Then, he faced the man his daughter was dating. Her date seemed to take his time to stand up and acknowledge his presence.

He sensed something different about him. Most men would be thrilled to catch his attention, but not this man. But it quickly changed in an instant. This man abruptly masked his expression with a friendly smile.

“Mr. Rosley.” He extended his hand, finally showing some courtesy, but still, he seemed to be acting strange compared to their last meeting.

He remembered him as a man who did not take crap from anyone. It was the reason he liked him for his daughter and the position. But he thought they were on the same page. What had changed?

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But in the world of wealth, power, and politics, he could never show his entire cards to his allies, and especially his opponents. They had to maintain a poker face all the time, even when one was stubbing the other on the back.

“If you are seriously contemplating running for Governor, I think you should consider putting a ring on my daughter’s finger.” Mr. Rosley hated it when he had to spell out what was supposed to be obvious enough.

He had been gracious with his dealing with this man. Although he approved of his relationship with his daughter, he did not like that Gerald had ignored his summons to meet with him.

“Dad, what are you doing?” Haley finally joined the conversation, slightly embarrassed with how her father was behaving. “You don’t force anybody to marry me.” She heatedly spoke directly to her father.

Ignoring his daughter, he continued speaking about his displeasure with the man before him. “And not because my daughter likes you. You can reschedule me when it is convenient for you.”

He was not just anybody, and his words were not mere words. When he wanted something to happen, it would happen because he said it would. And now, this man seemed not to know who he was dealing with when he put him aside.

“Dad, you...” But Haley failed to continue again when Gerald held his hands out.

Haley could not understand why her father was acting out. It was like he was putting Gerald on the spot. She had nothing against marrying him. After all, she loved him. But she would prefer that it would not be a shotgun wedding.

Haley had discovered that Gerald was not the Casanova romantic type. But he had ways of showing that he could be sweet and romantic, too. But in his way.

If he was going to propose to her, she wanted him to be sure of himself and ready for the commitment. Not because her father forced him to make the grand gesture.

“I am sorry, Mr. Rosley. I did not mean to disrespect you, but my schedule had been hectic since our last meeting.” He stared at the man who had interrupted his dinner with his date, even if she was his daughter.

Between his legitimate career as a trial lawyer and his underground activities, freeing his time for the whim of this man was not exactly his priority.

But now that he had broached the subject of marriage and the state position in one sentence, he believed he had no more choice but to decide on it.

“Gerald, you don’t have to answer my father. He must have forgotten to take his pills. That is why he was acting crazy and mumbling words.” Haley narrowed her eyes to her father to stop it.

“I think your guests are getting bored, Dad.” She added before any of the two men could say anything else. She had enjoyed the evening so far. She hoped her father had not ruined it completely.

“Don’t worry, Mr. Rosley. I will make sure to include you tomorrow on my schedule.” Gerald informed the older man.

He had intentionally set aside his plans of meeting with Haley’s father. It was a carefully designed tactic to get what he wanted from the man. As far as he could tell, it might be working.

Now, he would proceed with the next phase of his project. But he had to be careful that no one learned about it because it might backfire on him. However, it paid that he was a few steps ahead of his opponents.

“I am counting on that.” Mr. Rosley showed signs of satisfaction. He might have thought that he had won. But the battle had not yet even started.

Gerald waved his hand to the retreating man before facing his date again, who seemed quite embarrassed at what his father had done.

"I am sorry about what Dad said. He did not mean any of it. At least about you marrying me." Haley could not even look at him.

She might be getting old, not that old, but most of her friends were married now. Some already had kids, while others were expecting. Yet, she was still single. She had no clue if she would ever tie the knot.

"Hey darling, look at me." Gerald extended his hand on the table and tilted her chin until she looked at him. "What do you think is happening here?" he pointed between them. "I am not playing games with you." He assured her.

He could see the doubt in her eyes as if she had given up on the notion that someone would even take her seriously. He wondered why nobody had captured her heart and married her until now.

She was beautiful, intelligent, successful in her career, and passionate about life. Because most men saw her as a dollar sign due to her father's wealth and power, his mind answered him. He included.

Chapter 914: A temptress wanting to break free

She could not believe that she was sitting with him on the balcony of his apartment, staring at the mystical moon in the dark sky. The grayish sprinkles of clouds partially covered the horizon, slightly dimming the night sky.

But she still found it enchanting as his arms wrapped around her body, protecting her from the slightly cold breeze. "What did you think of Tony?" He suddenly asked out of the blue. Suddenly, her mind returned to the earlier events, recalling what had happened that afternoon.

Amelia had woken up later than usual, feeling a little bit sore. Or maybe just a bit more. However, she was not surprised to wake alone in bed this time, seeing the time on the clock. She could not believe it was already way past lunch.

Nonetheless, she was not anxious not to see him immediately. She trusted that he would not make the same mistake he did before. After all, she could not expect him to lie all day beside her, waiting for her to open her eyes.

She could only guess that he had better things to do with his time. "Evan!" She called his name, just loud enough for her voice to reach the next room. But he did not respond. She guessed he was not in the bathroom.

She swiftly rolled out of bed, grabbed a clean shirt and shorts, neatly placed on the bottom of the bed, and wore them. She supposed Evan had prepared those clothes for her.

Still, she wondered where he was, so she opted to explore his place and walked barefoot down the steps toward the bottom floor. The apartment seemed empty, sensing no movement in the room.

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"Evan," Amelia tried again, hoping this time he might hear her. But she still received zero responses.

She continued her exploration of his apartment, not worried that he might have left. Of course, if he did, he had no choice but to return. It was his apartment. He had to come home at some time.

Her eyes caught the frame that was in the living room. It was several photo frames of Evan with Angela. There were also some of what seemed to be his younger self with two young couples. Those would be his parents, she presumed.

Then, a movement caught her attention. "Evan?" She asked, hoping he was back from wherever he had gone, but he still did not answer.

On the contrary, something else responded to her call as a big, black furry beast attacked her from her left side. At least she did not see it coming since it happened so fast.

She stumbled back and landed on her ass, caught off guard. She was momentarily shocked, but before she could shout for help, she realized she had nothing to worry about since it was a harmless, sweet dog.

"You scared me." She chastised the adorable beast. It was big but cuddly as its tongue started licking her on the face. She grabbed the dog by its collar and started petting him, rubbing it on its cheeks and head.

"Tony?" What an odd name! She thought as she checked his tag, learning that the dog was a male.

"Well, Tony, I am Amelia." She introduced herself to the friendly canine. "By the way, where is your owner?" She asked, still not seeing the man in question anywhere.

Wait a minute!

She did not remember seeing him last night when they were, but she could not finish her thought, remembering all the things she did with him in this room besides the kitchen.

Now, she could feel her face burning from embarrassment. As if the dog could sense she had been naughty all night and until the wee hours of the morning.

"Why don't you accompany me to the kitchen?" She could feel that her stomach was starting to protest. After all her activities last night, she could not blame if her stomach demanded replenishment.

Once in the kitchen with Tony following behind, she found the table set with assorted food. When she came closer to the table, she finally saw a note underneath a single pink rose.

Of course, that reminded her again of what she wore last night. Now, she was curious as to where her clothes were. It was not in the room, nor here laying on the kitchen floor where she had left it.

I AM AT MY OFFICE. GET ME ONCE YOU WAKE UP.

It was what the note said. Did Evan mean his workplace? Did he want her to go back to his office? It made sense since she snatched him from his obligation yesterday.

She sat down on the chair, feeling disappointed that he was not there while she was alone. It would have been nice if they could share all this delicious food before her.

"I guess it is just the two of us." She mumbled to her only companion. However, Tony suddenly jumped up and ran in a hurry.

Then, "I thought I said to get me once you are up. I hope you have not started without me." The man she had been looking for stood at the doorway, with the dog jumping beside him.

"I thought you were in the office." She was slightly startled, not expecting that he would suddenly show up, convinced that he had left.

"Yes, at the end of that hall. I guess I still need to orient you about every room in this place." Evan pointed to a hallway just on the left of the kitchen.

"But I called your name several times. But you did not respond." She stated, but she remembered that her voice might not be that loud to reach the other rooms.

"I must be on the phone, so I did not notice. Anyway, shall we eat? I am starving." Evan helped her back to her seat and sat right next to her. "I am sorry if I was away for a while. I knew I promised not to work, but it was an emergency."

"No, that is ok. I am also sorry if I overslept. I don't usually do that..." But she did not get the chance to finish as he planted a soft kiss on her lips.

She had no objection to that as she savored the feeling of being near him again. She believed she could get used to his kisses or even be addicted to them. But she did not want them to end.

"That is ok." He answered her when he reluctantly pulled away from her lips. "I wanted to do that since I woke up, but you looked so exhausted from last night. I did not want to wake you up."

It was his main reason for going to his office. The only reason he had picked up his phone and had answered a call.

"So, I had to get out of bed and distract myself with work." He added, expecting she would be disappointed with him.

Instead, he saw how her eyes lit up with desire while her cheeks and nose turned pink with embarrassment. She looked so adorable that all he wanted to do was cradle her in his arms.

She appeared like a pure, naive, trusting angel that could do no wrong, but underneath all her innocence was a temptress wanting to break free.

But was that enough for him to make this a lasting relationship, or would he want something more?

Chapter 915: Hide and seek

"What did I think of Tony?" She suddenly laughed at the question, finding it odd.

Frankly, someone else's face popped into her mind when she thought of the name. But, of course, she knew he was not referring to the man in her head. Still, she could not help but wonder about the coincidence.

"What is so funny?" He innocently asked, staring at the top of her head, under the dim radiance of the moonlight. But he still did not let go of her, enjoying the feeling of her cradled in his arms.

Since she woke up, he had ignored all his calls, proving that he could devote all his time to her. They watched movies, ate a lot, drank expensive wine, and discussed varying topics.

He discovered that she might not be a lawyer, but she could argue her case convincingly. Other than that, she also had an adorable sense of humor.

"I think Tony here..." She patted the dog that had been lying next to her. "... seems to be a wonderful dog. How long have you had him?"

She could not see herself caring for a dog because of her schedule, but she always liked having one around. It was a responsibility that would require a steady owner who stays in one place.

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Her living situation had not been permanent since leaving her father's estate. Her work in the different foundations she organized had her moving around from one place to another.

"Actually..." He also played with the dog's ears. "He just landed on my lap recently. His last owner, who lives just a few floors below my apartment, had died."

He had known the dog for some time, having played with him in the past. When he learned that the dog would go to the shelter, he quickly acted on adopting him.

"That is a nice thing to do. Tony seems to be happy here." She commented as she looked at him.

"Honestly, I never thought of you as someone who would want a responsibility."

It was why she was surprised to see him with a dog. She could not picture him caring for another life with his current lifestyle, not that she was judging him, but unlike her excuse, he had a busier workload.

"I thought so too. I always shied away from a responsibility that I thought I could not do it. But after having Tony around, caring for him, I learned that I like it." It was the truth.

He had enjoyed having to think of someone else besides himself. He had lived alone for so long that he believed depending on someone or having someone need him would be a hassle in his life. But he was happy he was proven wrong.

"So, you plan to have him around permanently." She asked, finding the new Evan before her intriguing.

The only place she could call home was when she stayed with Amelia and Angela. They welcomed her into their lives and treated her like family. If not for them, she would still be traveling, trying to find her place in the world.

Anyway, it would be nice if Tony could have a permanent home. She had seen many dogs who lost their initial owner and had difficulty finding a new home.

"I am. I wish to keep Tony. Besides, I think he likes it here." Evan answered her, moving to the small table to refill their drinks.

But instead of sitting down, he handed her glass to her and started pacing around the small space as if he had some troubling thoughts. It took him more or less a minute before he returned to his seat.

"Then, what is stopping you?" She could not see any reason why he could not keep the dog. Tony seemed to like him.

From her observation, it seemed he had taken good care of Tony since he had stayed with him. Therefore, she could not see why he would hesitate to help this poor homeless dog.

"You." He said almost in a whisper that she barely picked up. She wondered if he even said it to her.

But if she heard him right, what did she have to do with the dog staying with him? It just did not make any sense to her. "What?" She wanted some clarification on what he said.

"I said, Tony..." But he did not finish when the dog reacted to hearing his name and jumped into his lap without warning.

Imagine a seventy-pound dog with its golden hair forcefully wanting to hug and lick its owner. It was an adorable sight. However, it also created a lot of mess.

"Tony," Evan exasperatedly said as the wine he held in his hand spilled all over his shirt. He held his glass up in the air, avoiding spilling the few remaining contents. But the dog only barked and continued to give Evan his full attention.

Amelia could not help as she laughed loudly at the slightly comical scene she had witnessed. But she quickly stifled her laughter, seeing the admonishing look in Evan's expression.

"You think this is funny." He said with a frown on his forehead and a gleam in his eyes. But when his scowl turned into a sinister smile, it was too late to realize what he had planned in his mind.

Her hair was suddenly dripping with red liquid as he poured his wine on her head. "Oops! It is Tony's fault." She heard him say, blaming the dog that had not stopped playing with him.

"Oh!" She wiped her face with her hands of the few wines that dripped down her face. "You two are going to pay for that." She declared but before she could react.

"Run, Tony, before she catches with us." Evan jumped out of his seat while Tony followed him as if he was still playing with him. She ended up spilling her drink on the floor instead of him.

She followed them inside the room with wine-soaked hair and clothes. At least it was not her dress, or the stain would have ruined it. However, she could not run on the smooth tiled floors with her slippery bare feet.

By the time she made it to the living room, the two had hidden somewhere in the apartment. But she could see a few droplets of the wine, giving her a hint of where they could have gone.

She shook her head at the absurdity of their situation. They were acting like kids, which was not bad at all. Frankly, she was enjoying it. She had missed her childhood, and it was nice to play hide and seek again.

Chapter 916: Was that even a yes?

It was like reliving the Hansel and Gretel story. But instead of chasing the bread crumbs trail, she tracked down the reddish paw prints. She tiptoed into the living room, careful not to trip on the floor.

She could feel a slight swirling in her eyesight and slow coordination with her motor skills. A sign that she might be a little drunk. But as she moved further, she had to hold on to the furniture for support.

Maybe she was drunker than she thought, losing track of her alcohol intake since they started drinking. It appeared the effect might be kicking faster as she continued her movements.

Amelia stopped by the staircase, seeing that the clues led to the second floor. "I can do this." She was a lightweight when it involved consuming alcohol as she slowed down each step.

She held tightly to the handrail to prevent herself from falling. Yet, somehow, she had successfully reached the top landing without causing an accident, such a great accomplishment, patting herself on the back.

She could not help the chuckle that escaped her lips when she heard Tony barking. It was coming from the other side of the hallway, not Evan's room.

That was easy, she thought.

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She would have her revenge when she caught him. But first, she had to make it to the room before she passed out as her head spun faster. Why again did she drink too much? Because she was enjoying so much time with Evan.

Finally, she reached the room in question. Then, she heard something inside. "You have to be a good boy and stay quiet." It was so cute, asking a dog not to make a noise. It was like asking a baby not to cry. If only they had a switch button, but they did not.

She was not mad, but she would like to get even. Slowly, she tiptoed closer to the door. At least she tried not to make too much noise. She doubted she had succeeded in her task as she giggled at her effort.

Still, she opened the door gently, trying to peek inside, but the door swung open, finding herself more imbalanced than she thought. That wine was kicking in her system, and she could not do anything about it.

Maybe she should drink more so she would not be such a lightweight.

"What?" Amelia was barely a few steps inside the room when she noticed the red rose petals that scattered the floor. She wondered if she also had impaired eyesight as she started to see things.

She knelt on the floor to double-check her vision. Fortunately, when she touched the petals, they were real. The red paw prints did not magically turn into red rose petals.

Then, Tony showed up before her, licking her face as if he was glad she had found him. He barked a few times, trying to gain her attention. Of course, who could ignore an adorable dog like him?

"Tony, you are such a good boy." She complimented the dog for revealing himself. Yet, she wondered where the owner was.

She tapped the dog on his head, letting her fingers skim across his furry back. Then, her fingers stumbled on something on his neck. It felt like it did not belong on his collar.

Slowly, she strode inside the room with the dog following, wondering why he was alone. Then, she saw the bed that was also full of petals. It certainly looked romantic as she sat on the edge of the bed with Tony still by her side.

“What do you have here?” She curiously asked, taking a closer look, but Tony only barked at her. Of course, what other response was she expecting from the dog?

With her uncoordinated eye and hand movement, it took her a minute before she untied the object knotted to Tony’s collar. She stared at the capsule-like casing and wondered what it was.

But before she could figure out how to open it, the lights suddenly shut off, but the darkness did not entirely envelop the room as flickered lights came from all angles, enveloping her. When she scrutinized, it seemed like candles surrounded her.

“What is going on here?” She questioned, asking the dog as if he could answer her. “Evan, is that you?” She could see a shadow moving toward her, but she could hardly see his face.

“Yes, it is just me.” Evan quickly answered, not wanting her to be frightened. “Do you like the roses and the candles?” He continued until he stood closer to her. “It is the best I can do on short notice.”

Even in the dim light, he could see how beautiful she was, especially surrounded by flowers. Tonight she looked like a Goddess, except for the slightly reddish stain on her skin and clothes.

“It is lovely. You did not have to go to such trouble.” She mumbled, slightly in awe of his sweet gesture.

She appreciated that he again put a tremendous effort into making this night special. It was again one night that she would never forget.

“What is this?” Suddenly, she remembered the object in her hand, showing it to the man who stayed standing, just staring at her face. But his attention immediately shifted to the small container she was dangling in her hand.

“You asked me earlier why I am hesitating about adopting Tony,” Evan spoke up to her. This time, he knelt before her, staring into her eyes, seeking her full attention.

“Yes,” Amelia remembered that. But what did it have to do with this? She was confused because her mind was refusing to process the situation. She must be getting drunker by the minute.

“It is about you,” Evan answered, but in her mind, he might as well be speaking in riddles as she looked at him more confused.

“Me? What about me?” She asked, still unable to piece the puzzle, looking down at the man with glazed eyes. She believed she was starting to see doubles as she blinked her eyes twice.

“I think I will need your permission if I should keep Tony,” Evan said as he took the container in her hand.

He did notice that Amelia was a bit out of it. He did not intentionally plan to intoxicate her, but they were having so much fun that he lost track of the wine they were drinking.

He was nervous, too, just like her, so he also needed the boost. Regrettably, he did not consider that she was not a drinker. Now, he wondered how drunk she was.

"Of course, you can have Tony, silly. Why do you need my permission?" She could not understand the logic of the question.

"Because I want you to marry me," Evan said, pulling the ring out of the capsule and placing it between them.

"Of course, you can marry me, silly. Why do you need my permission?" But before she could say more. "I think I am drunk." She announced, dropping on the bed as she closed her eyes.

Now, what?

As he stared at the woman who had just accepted his proposal but did she? It seemed it was debatable. Would she remember any of this by tomorrow, or would the alcohol block out her memory of this night?

Was that even a yes?

Chapter 917: Find the right one

The bar was a bit crowded and loud. There was a party on the other side, but he was not there to join the fun. He was out with a friend for a drink and some conversation.

Ever since he came back, work had bombarded his tiny office. Thanks to Dani, who had helped him with new clients. He did not have enough workforce and financial capacity to pursue his cases, but Dani had provided some relief.

"Thanks, Alex, for meeting me tonight." Adam waved his hand to the bartender to get his attention. "Can you also thank Dani for me? I wish I could thank her in person, but I don't want to disturb her when she should be resting."

He heard about her condition. He would agree with the doctors that she should take it slow. He had not seen a more hardworking and dedicated woman in their field than Dani was. But her baby should be her priority for now.

"This is on me," Adam told his friend since he was the one who invited him over.

It had been a while since he had time to drink with his college friends, not because of a lack of trying but because his previous job took him from one place to another.

Unlike his friends, he did not come from money, and he did not own a big law firm or a business empire. Then, most of his work did not earn him much money. But he did not mind. It was more of his choice than anything else.

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But recently, he established his first permanent office space. It was a start, hoping to create a more established legal firm that could cater both to the wealthy innocent clients and his pro bono cases.

He had to admit that he could not survive on principles alone. He would still need money if he would like to help those who could not afford free representation.

"I heard from David that you are taking his sister's case." Alex drank his scotch while scanning the buzzing place. Usually, it was not this loud and chaotic, but the private party of some executives had caused the loud commotion.

"Yes, I have considered taking it. But I am still waiting for Serena to take the next step." Adam informed his friend.

He had updated her this morning of what possible cases they could charge his ex-boyfriend, but she was still reluctant to file a lawsuit against that scumbag.

However, he could not blame her. If he had a choice, he would like to keep this on the negotiation table, away from the prying eyes of the press. But he could not answer for the opposing team.

He could already see a messy trial once the media learned of the lawsuit. Serena was right to be afraid. It could become one giant circus where her life would be the butt of all jokes again.

His initial investigation showed how the actress had to endure the press' cruelty and the fans' judgment in her first scandal. The masses crucified her without even giving her a chance to defend herself.

Eventually, she had to give up and rescind her case against her ex-husband. In the end, she lost almost everything from their divorce. At least, that was what he had uncovered from his initial inquiry.

"I am glad that he came to you. Serena had refused any help, coming from David and me, thinking we are the bad guys." Alex could still remember offering any form of help to her without David knowing.

But she still declined to take it. Then, Alex heard that she had lost her case. But he had already guessed she would lose, learning who represented her interest.

Many corporate lawyers helped their employees or talents, but when it came to priorities, they would save their skin. They abandoned her when the trial became too much.

"But I am glad he had you, now," Alex added. "Anything you need in this case, don't hesitate to ask. Serena might not think it, but she is like a sister to me."

He did not know her that much, but since she was the sister of one of his best friends, she would always be family to him. He knew that once Dani met her, they would become good friends.

"How much do you know about Serena and her past?" He did not exactly have a steady investigator to conduct his inquiries. Most of the time, he had to go to the field to check on the backstories of his clients.

Alex was the closest to David and had more information about his family, especially his sister, Serena. He needed a background check before he could formulate a plan on how to handle this case.

The last thing he wanted was for the defense to blindside him with something he was unaware of about Serena. His client was not exactly forthcoming about her life.

Her public life might be all over the news, the tabloids, and the internet. But he believed she still had a few or more skeletons she was hiding somewhere. He had to know as much so that he could prepare for it.

“Not much, but I can lend you one of my investigators,” Alex told him, wishing he could do more. Then, he looked at his watch, seeing the time. “As much as I want to stay and chat, my beautiful pregnant wife would not be so kind if I was late.”

He did not finish his last drink and said goodbye. Although Dani would never mind if he stayed a bit later, he did not want to, thinking she might need him, especially in her condition.

“Sure, don’t let me keep you.” Adam understood his friend. In truth, he was a bit envious. He had been so busy with his work that he hardly had time to date.

He had past relationships, but they did not work out for some reason or another. Anyway, he just hoped that someday he would also find the right one for him.

Chapter 918: Dead meat

“Damn it!” He furiously hissed between his teeth, feeling the hot liquid spread across his chest. “Are you stupid or something?” He angrily added as he pulled the hot sticky shirt away from his skin.

Zach stopped by the nearby coffee shop on his way to work. The coffee provided to them in his department tasted like shit. If he would survive two months in this place, he, at least, needed a decent coffee.

“I am sorry! It was an accident.” A feminine voice anxiously said as he saw a hand, in his peripheral, waving before him. “Let me help you with that.” Then, she dabbed a piece of tissue in his soiled shirt and coat.

“Stop it! You are just making it worse.” He irritably swiped her hands away from him, not appreciating her effort to help.

“I will pay for the dry cleaning. Please, you can send me the bill.” Then, the girl started rummaging through her bag. She took a piece of paper and a pen and started scribbling something. “This is my number.” She offered, handing the crappy paper to him.

“I don’t need your number.” He ignored the paper and continued to check on his clothes. “Do you know how much this suit cost?” Then, he looked at her from head to toe. “I don’t think you can even afford my tie.”

He was angry, frustrated, and disappointed at how his day had started. It was like it was still about to get worse, seeing the time on his watch. He was late.

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Well, he went to his father to discuss his situation with Alex. In truth, he met with him to complain. But instead of listening to his sentiment, his father sided with his boss.

He even threatened to disown him if Alex complained about his performance. Even his mother agreed with his father on this. His mother said that it was an election year. They could not afford to lose Alex’s support for his father’s candidacy.

Now, he was stuck. He could not afford to lose the lifestyle he had enjoyed all his life if he disobeyed his father’s wishes.

“Hey, I said I am sorry. You don’t have to be mean.” She responded with an equally high pitch. She knew it was her fault. That was why she was apologizing. But it did not give him the right to ridicule her.

She was not wearing signature brand clothing, but it was decent and respectable. This arrogant piece of shit, this man, had no right to judge her just because his tie might be worth more than her entire salary for a month.

She grabbed a twenty-dollar bill from her bag and shoved it in his chest. She believed it was more than enough to cover the dry cleaning of his clothes, but she was not buying him a new pair.

“Here, buy yourself some good manners.” She turned around, not caring if he would pick up the bill or not. As far as she was concerned, she had already apologized and paid for the damages.

Besides, she could not care less what he thought. She doubted that she would see that man again. People like him did not usually cross paths with people like her. But good riddance. She did not like dealing with him anyway.

She continued on her way, knowing that she was late. She was only supposed to pick up a coffee for her boss. But now, she had wasted her time with this egotistical and narcissistic fool.

With hurried steps, she made her way to her office, located on the top floor, where she worked as an intern. It was her first day at work, and she would like to make a good impression, not ruin it by an unfortunate accident.

“Please hold the elevator.” She shouted once she was on the lobby floor, but it was too late. The doors closed before she could even reach halfway through.

Damn!

It would cause her several more minutes to wait for another lift to open. She tapped her feet on the floor, staring at the numbers as they continued their way up.

Then, she repeatedly pressed the button, hoping it would dramatically speed up the motion. She looked at the other elevators, but this one seemed the fastest.

Then, finally, her long wait, which was a few minutes, had arrived. The elevator doors opened. She immediately rode with the others and stood at the back since she would be going down last.

The doors were about to close when someone shouted. “Wait!” So, someone held the doors for whoever it was.

She looked at her watch, hating the waiting game. It might be minutes or seconds, but it counted in her book. Late was late, even if it was just a millisecond.

Then, the agonizing torture of stopping at almost every floor when someone went out and someone else entered. It was like fate was playing with her. The more she prayed for the metallic cart to speed up, the more it seemed to slow down.

She almost wanted to jump out of the lift and run on the stairwell. But it was still a long way up. She kept looking at her phone, but there was no signal inside the box. All she could do was wait.

Then, "Shit!" she expressed out loud, making the people turn around and look at her. She hastily ducked, hiding behind a tall man standing before her.

She just saw the man she had an unpleasant encounter with by the door. She was surprised that he was also going to this building. Was he also working in this place?

Wait! Could he be one of her bosses? Shit! That would be awkward. She might get fired on her first day.

"Please, don't let it be." She mumbled to herself silently.

She peeked again behind the man, hoping that the man would exit on the lower floors so he would not see her. But every time the door opened, he remained by the door until there were just four left inside the small box.

Fortunately, he was too preoccupied with himself that he never cared to look at his back. There was one more floor left. Either he would go down to the next floor, or he was on his way to the same floor as hers.

She closed her eyes, but only two went down, leaving him and her. Now, she knew that it was the end of her career. She was dead meat.

Chapter 919: Throw a surprise party

She woke up late again.

She opened her eyes with the sun shining brightly on her face. She could hardly see anything, squinting her eyes away from the sunlight. When she managed to focus her eyes on her surrounding, she suddenly remembered that she was in Evan's apartment.

Just like before, Amelia found the other side of the bed empty. Then, she felt a slight throbbing in her head as she moved. As she turned to her side, she also noticed the glass of water on the bedside table on her side.

She had learned that Evan was an early riser. He did not like staying late in bed. "Honestly, it was a forced habit. I do not like staying over and waking up in another woman's bed." Remembering Evan admitting that to her.

Of course, he did not elaborate on it, but she understood what he meant. However, she was not about to punish him for his past actions. She had no problem as long as they stayed in the past.

Then, she noticed the card beside the glass. She took it and read its content. I DID NOT GO TO WORK, BUT I AM IN MY OFFICE DOWN THE HALLWAY. PLEASE GET ME WHEN YOU WAKE UP.

PS. I LEFT A PAIN RELIEVER BESIDE THE NOTE. DRINK IT. IT MIGHT HELP WITH THE HANGOVER.

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At least, this time, he left a note with detailed instructions for her. She could not help the smile that grazed her lips, finding his little gestures romantic and sweet, making her fall in love with him more.

Could she ever tell him that? That she was deeply in love with him. Someday, maybe. Shaking her head, she took the tablet and drank it with water. Hopefully, the pain in her head would go away in a few minutes.

Barking sounds filled the air, making her realize she was not alone in the room. Suddenly, Tony appeared by the door, ran, and jumped onto the bed, laying beside her.

“Good morning, Tony.” She assumed that the dog was waiting for her to wake up. It might be mid-morning, but at least it was still morning. Then, he rewarded her with a series of friendly barks and a lick on her face.

Tony was indeed a well-trained dog. She learned that he was a guide dog for the blind. But since the dog was already old, they would not recommend him to another blind master. So, Evan took him temporarily until he could find a permanent home.

“Shit!” Then, she covered her mouth. She was not a vulgar person. She rarely swore, but she was human, so sometimes, the words slipped into her tongue without intending it.

“What happened last night?” She tapped on her head, forcing herself to remember between her still throbbing temples and her memories.

She remembered drinking too much, as evident by her hangover. But what else happened? She sensed something did, but she was still a little groggy from the alcohol.

She closed her eyes, squeezing her brain to cough up the memory. She raised her hand to her head, letting her fingers pull her hair from its roots, hoping it would jog her memory. It was like losing a key. She knew she had dropped it somewhere but could not find it.

Eventually, her eyes caught something shimmering in the bright light. Then something seemed to entangle in her hair. She dragged her hands in front of her eyes, making her eyes go wild.

She extended her fingers before her, wondering how she ended up with a beautiful diamond ring on her finger. Then, memories of the last night flooded her mind like a tidal wave, finally reminding her of the entire event.

“He proposed.” She mumbled disbelievingly, seemingly trapped in a trance as she stared at the big rock on her finger.

She thought it was just a nice dream. Something that she was hoping would come true eventually. But did it happen last night? Was she just too drunk to remember much?

“Way to go, Amelia.” In the most crucial moment of her life. She was too wasted to remember most of it. “Did you see the whole thing?” She asked Tony, who only barked in response.

Quickly, she slid out of bed, rushing to the bathroom. She fixed herself up before grabbing the clothes Evan must have left for her again. She needed her clothes. She could not keep using his things, but honestly, she was comfortable wearing what was his, looking again at her ring.

Then, she hurriedly made her way to the kitchen to get another glass of water, needing to quench her thirst before deciding to look for him in his office. Slowly, she strode along the hallway, finding the last door open.

“Evan?” She softly called when she walked through the door. But nobody answered her. She looked around the room, entering it for the first time, and just like the rest of his apartment, it was masculine in its design.

She worked further inside his office, seeing the large desk by the clear glass windows. Her eyes roamed around the room, seeing his different accomplishments hanging on one wall.

As she moved further, she peeked around the chair facing the window and found Evan sleeping. He was slightly snoring, which was adorable. Somehow, she felt guilty that she might be the reason for his exhaustion.

He must be working hard on his cases while she slept so that he could give his time to her when she woke up. That would mean it gave him barely enough time to sleep.

She stood before him, carefully running her fingers across his cheeks down on his chin. Maybe she should go home and let him work. But before she did that, she still had to wait for him to wake up and clarify the ring on her fingers.

“I love you, Evan.” She whispered, knowing that he would not hear that. Then, she slowly stepped away from him, walking back the way she came in toward the kitchen.

She decided that if she had missed his proposal, maybe she could do it again later. Finally, she remembered the petals that scattered around the room. She could not help but giggle internally at the idea of spending a romantic lunch with him.

For now, she would let him rest, returning the favor. But later, it was her turn to throw a surprise party for two.

Chapter 920: Quality time

Fortunately, that arrogant man did not even look at his surrounding as he proceeded to the other side of the floor. Immediately she also left the elevator, walking in the opposite hallway. But she hid in the corner, watching the other guy.

But he marched in the direction of the offices of the management heads as if he owned the building. He could not be the CEO since he looked too young to be one. But what did she know about the rich people?

Anyway, maybe he was just a relative, visiting and nothing else. He would be out of this building soon. At least, that was what she hoped was the scenario.

“Hey, Ria. Where have you been?” Her immediate supervisor asked her. She handled her internship in this place. Luckily, Dani had helped her get the job.

Although Dani kept denying it, she believed her friend had pulled some strings. Dani had always been there for her, feeling that she was more than knee-deep in debt with her friend. But Dani would not take anything from her.

Now, she had offered this internship she would be forever thankful for because it was an opportunity of a lifetime. But, of course, Dani denied it. Her friend kept telling her that she got the job because of merit.

"I am sorry. I had a bit of an accident, but it was nothing." She never liked making an excuse. If it was her fault, then she had to own it. "But I will not be late again." She promised.

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She quickly moved toward the office of her new boss, bringing the coffee that she successfully saved from bumping with that man. Then, she placed it on the table, thankful he was on the phone, not looking at her.

She quickly moved out of the room, giving her boss some privacy. Then, she discussed with her supervisor the rest of her obligation while she worked in this office.

"But we are glad that you came on board. I think you have a lot of potentials, so don't be afraid to ask questions and do your best." Her supervisor told her as she escorted her back to the table assigned to her.

It was not much, but at least her position would look good on her resume once she finished her internship. The company even offered to absorb her if she would show good job performance.

"I will do my best not to let you down." And, of course, the one person who had always believed in her.

The rest of the day had been relatively easy. Her boss and supervisor did not want to overwhelm her on her first day. But they warned her that it would not be like this most of the time.

She had faced tough times, far more challenging than this. Hard work and pressure did not frighten her. It only motivated her to do better. If others learned what she had gone through, they would understand how tough she was.

"I think that is it for your first day." Her boss told her. She was lucky to intern for the COO of the company.

Although it would have been nice to work closely with the CEO, somebody had beaten her to the position. But for someone also on the top of the food chain, it was not bad anymore. Besides, this was one of the best companies in the world.

What else could she ask for, considering that she was a nobody and her situation?

"Oh! I did not realize that it was already time." She was so engrossed with her work. She hardly looked at the time.

But, of course, she was not the type who would work herself to death. She also had other priorities other than working and earning some money. Quickly, she packed up her things and was ready to leave.

She knew that there would be a time that she would have to work beyond the working hours. Still, she was grabbing the opportunity when she could go home early.

"Well, it is a slow day today. So, you better take advantage of it. Go out tonight with your friends and celebrate." Her supervisor suggested as she went back to work. It seemed her immediate boss was not ready to leave just yet.

But she would not feel guilty about it because there were other more important things in life other than earning money and getting recognition in her job.

She quickly rode the elevator before her boss changed her mind, but she doubted it would. Then, she was out of the building and in her second-hand car, driving toward her next destination.

As soon as she parked her car on the curve, she immediately walked toward a house. She knocked on the door and waited excitedly. It was her first time being away from him for this long. It was mixed feelings.

“Edison!” She shrilled in excitement upon seeing her little boy. She quickly grabbed him from her nanny and peppered him with kisses. “How was he, Sasha? Did he give you a hard time?”

She was lucky that her landlord had a young daughter who liked to babysit. Fortunately for her, her babysitter did not cost much too. But she intended to give her some extra if her internship paid well.

She was lucky to be offered a nice allowance for working in the company. Although she was not short of cash for her child, she did not want to overspend it or use it on frivolous things. It was for his future, and she would keep it that way.

“Edison is such a sweet kid, Ms. Ria. I would never mind tending to him when I am not busy with school. Besides, Mom likes him when he is around.”

Sasha’s mother was a bit loud but kind and caring, just like her daughter. She always felt safe leaving her kid in their hands because she knew they would not let anything terrible happen to him.

“Thanks again, Sasha. Tell your Mom I appreciate the help.” She took several bills in her wallet and paid the young teenager.

Then, she took her boy back to her apartment, which was just on the upper floor of the landlord’s place. It was time to spend some quality time with his young son.