

Royal Contract 931

Chapter 931: Learn to be a good husband

"When is the wedding?" Angela asked excitedly as soon as they entered the kitchen, searching for a cup of coffee and some nutrition. They were both starving after their long trip.

As the couple had requested, they would like to rest before the inquisition. So, after spilling the beans earlier that day, they ran off to her room and barricaded the door.

Despite the complaints outside her bedroom, they ignored them and lay on the bed. Contrary to what the others might think, they were asleep, snoring as soon as their backs hit the soft mattress.

"Good morning, Grandmama." Evan walked into the kitchen with Amelia in his arms. "Can you, at least, let us eat breakfast in peace before we sit in the interrogation chair?" He sweetly asked his grandmother as he assisted Amelia on an available seat.

Afterward, he proceeded to the counter to pour two cups of coffee and pick up two plates for his bride. Then, he returned to the table, sat on a chair beside Amelia, and faced Angela, who sat on the opposite side.

"Fine, but I am anxiously waiting." Angela filed her protest, appearing impatient to know more. "Not that I am complaining, but how are you two end up getting married when I hardly noticed you were dating."

She had foreseen that they were a match made in heaven from the first day she had introduced them. But they had made it clear to her that they were both uninterested.

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Then, when she thought they were finally making her dreams come true, his grandson had to mess it up. She seriously believed that Amelia would never forgive him after that.

But she was happy to see that her grandson had made the effort of correcting his mistake and mending it with Amelia. She still felt that they should end up together. It was a grandmother's instinct to believe they were soul mates.

"We..." Amelia was about to answer her when someone else joined them.

First, the dog barked at the newcomer, trying to catch everyone's attention, then they all shifted their eyes at the entrance to the kitchen.

"Good morning! Angela. I see that everyone is late at the breakfast table." Eida dragged herself into the room and hugged her friend, Amelia, who she had not seen for a few days. "Hello, Goliath!" Patting the dog to appease him before she sat right next to Evan. "Hi! Evan." She added as an afterthought.

"How is Luisa?" Amelia asked, seeing that her friend was alone and there was no sign of their little angel. She had missed her so much, even if she had just been gone for a few days.

It would appear her friend had also overslept. Eida seemed exhausted despite just waking up, looking at her dark eyebags and haggard face. Her friend grabbed a cup of coffee and sat right next to her.

"She is a nightmare," Eida grumbled like a woman about to lose her sanity. She almost looked the part with her messy hair and clothes that were out of place.

"How come?" Evan was the one to react to her description of her child. Amelia could tell that Evan had never had a chance to deal with a child in his life. "She could not be that bad." He continued, confused.

"I hardly had a good night's sleep, and this is all your fault." She pointed at Amelia and then Evan. "You and you."

Although it was not right to blame others for her shortcoming as a new mother, she was tired and desperate. She realized that it was not easy to be a single parent. Blame it on postnatal depression and temporary insanity.

And in her friend's absence, Eida discovered that since her baby was born, she had depended on Amelia for more than just moral support. But in actually taking care of her baby in many ways than one.

"Why don't I take care of her while you take a good, long nap." Amelia offered, knowing how hard it was to care for an infant with very erratic sleeping habits. And Luisa was quite a crybaby.

She had been helping Eida by babysitting for her when she was at her work. But since she was away for several days, her friend must be going crazy juggling between her responsibility for her job and their very demanding princess.

But now that she was getting married, she wondered how Eida and Luisa would manage without her. Although Angela stayed with them, they could not impose on her to take care of a baby.

Angela could hardly manage herself nowadays. Luckily, she had Bea following her around, working on her beck and call. If not for her, she would have been another person they would have to worry about, not that they would mind. It would just have been more challenging.

"Oh, you are a lifesaver." Eida mellowed down, drinking her energy booster and munching on her breakfast. "But I think I heard wedding bells before I passed out earlier. What was that all about anyway? We need details."

Now, she was back, and the reporter in her had finally kicked in with the caffeine boost as she rattled questions after another faster than anyone could answer.

"I already explained and apologized for all the misunderstanding." Evan was the first to speak. "Yes, it is all a big misunderstanding." Pointing to the other people in the room that he was not the biggest scumbag they thought he was.

"Yes, he is not. And I have accepted his explanation and promised he would not hurt me again." Amelia interjected, helping Evan to convince her two friends who were scrunching their noses at him.

"Then, that is good news." Angela turned her frown into a smile, tapping Eida in her hands for her to be more supportive of the two. "Don't you think so, Eida? So, how did you propose?"

Although she was happy about the turn of events between her grandson and Amelia, she still could not help but be worried that they might be jumping the gun.

Suddenly, why were they in a rush to get married? First, they could not even stand to be alone in the same room. Now, they thought they could not leave without each other.

"It is a long story." Evan was in no mood to recount how everything happened. Well, it was not the whirlwind romance he had initially intended, but at least it got her to say yes.

"Don't be such a killjoy, Evan," Eida complained when he did not offer the details. She wanted the entire story, every gory detail of it.

She was not sourgraping that Amelia was getting the ring that she could only dream of, but she would like to be supportive of her friends. Eida wanted to hear their story even if it would make her cry tonight, thinking about it.

"Well..." Angela and Eida simultaneously said as they turned to Amelia for some answers. They were not letting her off the hook that easily.

Angela only wished they were not in a hurry to marry because a bundle of joy was already cooking in her belly. Although she would still love to have a grandchild, she was old-fashioned. It would be preferable if they could still wait to get married before having a baby.

"Are you pregnant? Is this why the sudden news?" It was Eida who voiced Angela's concern.

"No!" This time, it was Evan and Amelia who answered at the same time.

"She is not pregnant."

"I am not pregnant."

They could not blame them for thinking that since they were barely dating and here they were planning to plunge into the unknown. Was it love at first sight? They had no idea.

But they seemed drawn together by a strong connection. No matter how much each one had tried to stay away, the two kept coming back to each other's arms.

"Fine, but I will tell you the short version of his romantic proposal. Are you ready to hear it?" Amelia looked at the two as they anticipated her story.

She could already tell they were making up their story about how he had proposed, but they would never guess what had happened.

"What? Spill it out." Eida was the first to complain as she looked like a paparazzi, starving for a juicy gossip story.

"Ok. I am sure you will love it." Evan nonchalantly mumbled as he rubbed his face, unsure how he should feel about it.

"When he finally decided to propose, I was drunk and fell asleep. I thought it was a dream when I woke up the next day." Amelia could see the confusion in their faces. Not exactly the kind of reaction one would expect.

"Well, that is anticlimactic," Angela answered, but she was happy that Evan had managed to recover the next day. But she was also glad that Amelia had helped him through it. She hoped it was a good sign.

As his grandmother, she only hoped that her grandson would end up with a good woman to stand by his side and build a good family. She still believed that Amelia was the perfect choice for him.

But as a friend of Amelia, she could only guide her grandson to be a better man because her friend deserved more than he had done so far. Her grandson needed to be more.

She was not referring to becoming the knight in shining, shimmering armor who would constantly save the day. Contradictorily, her grandson had to remember to work less and learn to be a good husband.

Chapter 932: A death threat

Ria was at her office precisely on the dot, not late, but just on time, not for lack of trying to be early. However, she had to be honest. It had been such a struggle to get out of bed after having a long night.

Truthfully, she did not have a hangover since she hardly drank much. But she did stay up later than she wanted. She could not sleep. Unfortunately, it was not Edison that bothered her last night but some guy she did not even know.

“Good morning!” She greeted most of her colleagues as she made her way to her table. But she blankly gazed at her still empty desk as she sat on her chair, hardly moving much.

She was between dozing off and daydreaming as her eyelids drooped down and her shoulders slumped on the backrest. “Wake up!” She said to herself internally. “You have to stop this.”

But she could not take his eyes out of her mind. She could remember how he looked at her last night. It was like he was out there to get her. But that was crazy.

He could not be that mad at her just because she spilled a cup of coffee on his shirt. Maybe it was his only good shirt, and she just ruined it. After all, he was only working in the mail room. She could only assume he was just like her, crawling his way out of the bottom.

Nevertheless, it did not add up, and she believed something was off with him. Still, it did not give him the right to be rude to her. And he should not be stalking her no matter what she did wrong.

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“Ria, I know it is not a requirement to be early, but if you want to get ahead in this business, you have to make more effort than needed.” Brenda dropped some files on her table with her piece of advice, slightly snapping her back to reality.

Ria wanted to say that it was her boss’s fault that she was almost late, but she knew it was not. After her two drinks, if she would count the half of the content that spilled on the floor, her bosses did not stop her from leaving early.

She was home just an hour later than usual. Still, she considered it early and had nothing to do with her current state of mind. Besides, she could not blame them if she felt like crap this morning.

It was not their fault that she bumped into that guy that she now realized was working at the mail department of their company. At least she discovered that he was not her boss. That was a relief.

"Of course, I will try harder," Ria answered her supervisor, understanding that her boss meant well. After all the praises she received yesterday, it was not the time to slack down. Now, she had more to prove to meet their higher expectations.

"By the way, we had a great time last night. I hope you will be free sometime so we can go out again." Brenda informed her. It sounded like a notification rather than a suggestion.

Honestly, she had enjoyed being out with her boss and some new friends. She had never felt more alive and free. Truthfully, she had been working her ass to school and then Edison, that having a life had taken a backseat in her priorities.

It was a welcome change to feel young again, which she still was, even for a couple of hours. She would love to do more of it, but reality would not allow it. She had a responsibility that she could not ignore.

"I also enjoyed it. But let us see if I am available." She could not outright say no to her boss when trying to impress her.

She heard they could hire one or two interns after the program and offered a good compensation package. She had to get the job because it was a rat race outside the real world. It would be hard for her to get another opportunity like this.

She grabbed the papers she needed to work on today and opened the first folder. However, she had been staring at it for a few minutes but only saw lines as her eyes were still slightly blurry. It was hard to stay awake when she did not even have time to get her coffee.

She knew another way to wake her up, but it might require extreme measures. She usually used this when she needed to stay awake while caring for Edison during untimely hours.

She quickly stood up from her seat and looked at her left and right. She was not crossing the street but only wanted assurance that the coast was clear. She did not need a witness to what she was about to do.

"One, two, three..." She started counting as she stretched her body and exercised. Sitting down was not working. She needed to make her blood pumping, or she would be staring into blank space all morning and accomplishing nothing.

Luckily, her table was in the far corner of the entire floor, hidden from the view of the other employees. Nobody would notice her unless they came to see her, which she doubted. Nobody usually came looking for her except her boss.

"... nine, ten." Then, she lowered her body, bending on her waistline until her fingers could touch her toes. One thing she liked about her little hideout was the window at the side of her desk.

It was a small space, but it gave her a good view of their beautiful city. At that moment, she enjoyed the scenery outside as she bent a little more to reach the floor.

Finally, she could feel her blood flowing, making her believe it was working. After a few more stretches and movements, she sensed the energy flowing in her body. She could finally perform her task.

Maybe she could grab a coffee during her break time and some snack. She could hear her stomach grumbling, lacking any food from earlier. She needed to fix her schedule because she could not end up in a situation like this again.

“That is certainly a nice view.” A manly voice startled her, making her jump to her feet. If the exercise was not enough to make her heart pumping, the shock certainly did. “It gave me a broader perspective of things.”

She hurriedly straightened up and pulled her skirt down since it slightly lifted when she bent down and abruptly turned to face her unwanted visitor.

She did not expect anyone else to bother her except her boss because nobody usually looked for an intern. However, seeing the man eyeing her ass and then shifting to her breast was insulting and humiliating.

“So, this is what interns do on the top floors.” The man continued his snide remark. “Ms. Ria Barbara. Right?” He asked as one of his brows rose in question as if he was confirming his suspicion.

He looked at the white envelope in his hand and read the name on top of it. Then, he stepped closer to her table but stopped when he was a foot away from the edge. “I believe this is for you.” He pointed, still waiting for her to respond.

“What are you doing here?” She felt like her heart had exploded into bits, but she was trying to recover from the shock as she stayed calm.

She was not expecting to see him in her tiny room. She could not even call it an office. If it had a door and shelves, she might as well say it was a closet.

“I am here to deliver a letter.” He showed her the white envelope in his hand and placed it on her desk. “Special delivery.” He added for good measure. “It is nice to know you are working here as well. You just made my job here more interesting.”

Then, there was a glint in his eyes that she did not like. It was like a challenge that he was looking forward to accepting. Was he thinking of getting back at her? Was that it?

“Hey, what do you mean by that?” Ria could not believe this man was still holding a grudge against her. She would buy him a new pair of a shirt if that meant taking him off her back. But from the look on his face, it was not what he had in mind.

“You will soon find out.” That was all he said as he walked away from her room without saying another word.

But the smile on her lips and the whistling she heard as he moved away gave her the creeps. He did look like he was not over their little incident. Then, her eyes landed on the envelope with no stamp on it.

She wondered where it came from since she had never registered this place as her official address. So where could it come from, and why would they send it here?

“Don’t be paranoid?” She took the sealed paper and held it in her fingers. It could have come from anyone and could be anything or nothing at all.

Unless it came from him and he delivered it personally. But what could it be? Seriously! Different things were going through her mind. And it was not all good.

It could be a demand letter.

Was he suing her? For a shirt? She looked at the envelope incredulously, imagining the man doing that. She could not tell if she should laugh or cry.

That was just absurd. But it could also be something more cynical or life-threatening.

A death threat.

Chapter 933: Swim back to the surface

After waking up late, her husband had been acting strange around her. No matter how she tried to convince him that he should go to work, he would not budge from her side and leave her alone.

He had attended to her every need, breakfast in bed, even almost spoon-feeding her if she did not complain. Then, a warm bath had already waiting for her in the bathroom, with fresh rose petals and a lavender scent.

Then, he coerced her out of their apartment, asking her to go with him. When she asked where they were going, he only said they were visiting a place. But he would not tell her more.

"What are we doing here again?" Jacky glanced at her husband as she gaped at the beautiful home in front of them.

It was not that big, but not small either. Then, the architecture was not that old, so it might still be relatively new with the modern design and large, tinted glass windows surrounding the upper floors.

But not just that.

She could not stop staring at the lovely lawn and the manicured garden around the perimeter. She always wondered what it would be like to live in a house surrounded by greeneries, looking at an imposing tree not far from the main structure.

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It was a home that she had usually seen in a magazine. A white picket fence that most orphans liked her who had lived in the dirty street half their lives would dream about but could never imagine having.

She remembered how she had slept on a cardboard box in a dirty alley alongside the dumpster. Then, how she and her friends used the back of the building as their playground.

But that was how she had survived between foster homes until she found her luck. It had not been an easy journey, but she had made it out of that place. But was she in a better place?

"We are meeting with a friend," Marcus answered her as they walked into the front door. But before he could say anything else or she could ask another question, the front door opened as if someone was expecting them.

“Thank you for meeting us on such short notice.” Marcus quickly said to the woman who opened the door.

Thankfully, Dani had thought of this last night as he discussed his situation with his friend, making the necessary arrangement for him. He would not have thought of this if not for her suggestion.

“Rosella, what are you doing here?” Jacky was surprised to see a familiar face on the other side of the door.

She was not expecting to find one of her friends in this place. She did not hear any news that she had transferred into the suburban homes. Not that she had updated herself with most of her friends’ lives nowadays.

She suddenly felt guilty that she had been drowning in her misery. She had neglected her friends and failed to comprehend what had been going on in their lives.

Yes! She constantly communicated with her friends. But they had been walking on eggshells around her, afraid to add to her pain. Now, she could only wonder what was on their minds, especially Dani, who must be worried about her.

She remembered she could not even ask her best friend about her pregnancy, afraid it would set her back to a crying frenzy. But was it fair to her friend who had always been there for her?

But was she ready to face her demons, recalling what happened to her last night?

“Of course, I am always here to help, Marcus.” Rosella first addressed Marcus, giving him a solid handshake and treating him as a friend and, at the same time, a client. “Jacky, it is nice to see you again. You look great.” She turned her attention to her friend.

She had been friends with Jacky since she became seriously involved with David. Her fiancé finally felt it was time he introduced her to his family and friends. She did not mind the wait since she did not want David to feel she had forced him to tie the knots.

She would marry him when she had assurance that he was ready to lose his bachelor’s life. She did not want him to fall off the wagon when they were already deeply committed to each other because she was not ready to commit to one woman for the rest of his life.

“Thanks.” Jacky appreciated that her friend did not ask if she was ok. It was tiring to tell everyone she was ok. Instead of helping, they were more likely hurting her by reminding her constantly of her loss.

“Shall we come in?” Rosella offered, standing aside to widen the door for them to pass through. “Let me show you around.”

Rosella stepped aside, giving them a better view of the interior decorations before walking before them to guide them along the short hallway until they reached the receiving area.

The entire room was full of stylish furniture, trendy decor, and paintings that looked like they belonged to a museum. It was beautiful indeed and looked very classy.

“You have a beautiful home,” Jacky commented as her eyes roamed every inch of the room. Still, she speculated why Marcus brought her to Rosella’s home.

“Oh! Thanks, Jacky, but this is not mine.” Rosella looked at her as if she was also confused. “I am under the impression that you two are looking for a new place.” She tried to clarify the matter, glancing at Marcus and then at her friend.

“Yes, we are.” Marcus immediately interjected as he turned to her wife, who he knew would be surprised by the news. “I think it is time that we consider buying a house.”

He had not told him intentionally of his plans, wanting to see how she would react to it once she learned about it. From the expression on her face, he could not tell what was going through her mind. He feared she might reject his proposal even before seeing what he had to offer.

He figured that staying in their apartment where the memory of their loss would continue to remind his wife of the tragic incident was not such a good idea. “I feel it can be our new start.”

He took his wife’s hand and cradled it firmly in his hands, feeling the coldness of her skin against his warm palms. He still could not determine what she might be thinking as her eyes remained blank as she looked into his eyes.

“Would you like to see the rest of the house?” Rosella had no idea that Jacky was clueless about Marcus’s plans.

She was suddenly standing in the middle of an awkward situation. Fortunately, her phone rang, giving her an excuse to step away from the couple for a second.

She moved to the open doorway to the backyard, giving her friends some privacy to discuss this matter while she attended to a call. It must be another client finding an unknown caller on her screen. But she still heard some of their conversations before their voices faded away.

“Why did you not tell me?” Jacky asked her husband, not angry but a little perplexed. She was not expecting they would be house hunting when they had left their apartment.

“Because I want this to be my surprise to you,” Marcus said as she stared into her eyes.

He could see that Rosella did a great job finding them this place. It looked like what he had imagined Jacky might want in a house. It was not too imposing but not small for a starting family.

Although the decorations might not be what Jacky might desire for their home, she could easily replace them. But the backyard was what had caught his attention as well.

He liked the idea of the big tree with a swing under its shade. It made the place look like a home rather than a house. He could have a small pool in the backyard, and it would be great when they finally had a child again.

“But we should talk about these things. You can’t decide on matters this big on your own.” Jacky could not understand how she felt about it.

“I did not decide on anything yet.” Marcus could not understand the slight hostility in her voice. “I am merely suggesting that we should check out a new place where we can build a family.” He tried hard to lower his voice, not wanting to aggregate the situation.

Suddenly, she abruptly snatched her hands out of his and stepped back away from him. "What family? We lost our child. We are not building a family." She raised her voice a little higher, looking at him as if he was spilling nonsense.

"Yes, we lost our first child. But we can still have more. We can still try again and start a family." Marcus tried to reason with her, remaining relaxed, not to escalate her already agitated state.

The doctors had assured them that despite the miscarriage, Jacky would still be able to bear another child. Although, the doctors could not guarantee that it would all go well the next time since no one could. Pregnancy would always have risks.

But instead of calming her down, she moved a few more steps back as she looked at him with fury in her teary eyes. "You wish me to go through that again." Suddenly, something in her snapped.

She could not even imagine herself having a baby and losing it again. That was one incident that she could not relive again. It was such a painful experience.

"I don't know what you want, Jacky, because you won't talk to me." Marcus moved closer to her. "You are shutting me out." Like her, he could not contain his emotions anymore as his voice rose an octave higher.

He was as lost as she was. He was also drowning in their situation, but unlike her, he was trying to swim back to the surface.

Chapter 934: Kiss the ground

Rosella was supposed to wait at their apartment. After the heart-wrenching scene she had witnessed earlier, she did not want to be alone tonight. So, she called her fiancé, asking him to take her out, so she could distract herself.

But it was like her day had gone from bad to worse as she received a text from her date that he might not make it. He was still in a meeting and could not even call.

I AM VERY SORRY! That was his last text.

Sadly, she could not be mad at him. She had known who he was when she first met him. She loved him despite his shortcomings. However, it was still something that held her from fully committing to him.

It was why she could not give him a date for their wedding. He might have given up on his bachelor life, forgetting the girls he had dated in the past. However, he was already married to his work.

She refused to be the mistress, wrecking his relationship with his first love and his career. It would be hard to compete with his obligation to the company he had worked hard to build.

"What about..." She tapped her chin with her finger, trying to think of a friend she could invite out instead, but everyone seemed to be unavailable.

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She tried calling those she believed might go out with her, but she had no luck. She looked around the apartment, but she felt so empty. It was depressing to eat alone again, especially after what happened earlier.

David had come home late the last several nights. He had to work overtime due to Evan's absence. She had learned that Evan had finally proposed to Amelia and had decided to visit his grandmother to break the news. Unfortunately, he had not returned until now.

"That is ok, Haley. Maybe some other time." She could not find one single soul who might not be busy tonight.

She quickly hung up the phone and grabbed her bag. She knew she could not stand to be inside their apartment a minute longer. She locked the door behind her and was on her way out of the building.

A few minutes later.

"David, I thought we were going out tonight." Rosella strode to his office, walking straight to his lap. Then, her arms wrapped around his neck, forcing him to stop working and look at her.

Luckily, she found him in his office, working alone and not in a conference room with his partners or associates. She never liked dropping at his office like this, interrupting his job, but tonight was an exception.

After witnessing how Jacky had broken down with Marcus trying hard to calm her down, for some reason, she knew that she was greatly affected by it. She did not want to be alone.

"I am sorry, but I still have tons of papers and cases that need my immediate attention," David said after, giving her a proper kiss on her awaiting lips.

"I know you are going to say that." She smiled at him happily, not at all bothered that he was blowing her off. If the date would not come to her, then she would do something about it than moped in the apartment.

"What are you thinking?" David could see the mischievous smile covering her lips. She might be thinking of something.

"I still think that you will require to eat so..." As if she had willed it to happen, his secretary showed up by the door and held her hand.

"The food you ordered had arrived." She moved further inside the room, placing the paper bags on the table at the corner of his office and excusing herself from the room.

"I took the liberty of ordering some take-outs and sent them here. I hope you will not mind if we eat together first before returning to work." Rosella sweetly muttered in her most adorable accent.

"How could I say no to that?" David answered, but instead of letting her walk, he carried her to the other table and sat her on the other chair while he worked on their meal.

Soon, they were laughing about some silly story David had experienced that morning with one of his clients. It was nothing about the case but more about what happened during the meeting.

"I enjoyed the meal." She said when she pushed the last bite on his mouth. "But I think you should return to work and let me clean this up."

She had already dismissed his secretary, giving her a free pass for tonight. Besides, David said he would not need her services anymore.

"Are you sure?" He asked, but she pushed him away, back to his desk. "Thanks for dinner." He felt so lucky to have her in his life. Not just for what she did tonight but ever since he had met her.

She had managed to change many things about him. At least the bad things he did not like about himself. She made him realize many things about himself. Now, he could say that he was a better man than before.

However, he still could not figure out what was lacking in their relationship since she would not say it. She said she would only set the date when she was ready. But he was still clueless as to what he was doing wrong.

"Do you mind if I wait for you here? I only took the cab, but I can sit and wait for you on the sofa." Pointing her fingers to the other side of the room.

"Sure. I will not take long now." He promised as he watched her stretch her legs before she tried to make herself comfortable on the large soft cushion. He immediately went back to work, hoping he could finish it in a few minutes.

If he did not need these files first thing in the morning, he would leave them and go home with her instead. But with Evan away, he had dumped many of his friend's workloads on his shoulders.

He worked as fast as he could. But it still took him almost an hour before he could finish. Then, when he finally closed the files and set them aside, he realized that Rosella had fallen asleep on the couch.

Quickly, he walked closer to her until he could kneel before her. He had never worshipped any woman before, but he would kiss the ground that this woman walked on. That was how much he loved her.

Chapter 935: Greatest failure

It was another busy day for all the staff of the Palace as the wedding approached. The entire Kingdom expected this event would end up etched in their history.

The entire Kingdom was excited about the union of two powerful and influential houses. The Wellington Clan, who used to hold the throne before the Blackstone took over, could finally reclaim the crown that once belonged to their generation.

The McKinley Family possessed a high political position in the Country and owned many businesses in key cities in different parts of the world, making them one formidable ally of the crown.

But were the groom and the bride as excited as everyone else for this upcoming union? But it made less significance because their interest did not matter to the crown. Their obligation to the Kingdom and their families trumped their desires.

"King Edward is here to see you, Prince Lance." His secretary announced and opened the double doors wide when she entered his office and then stepped aside to make way for the King.

The King immediately entered the room together with his assistant and security. The King continued until he stopped at the center while the others stood by the door.

Prince Lance immediately dropped his pen and stood from his seat to welcome the King, bowing low to show his respect to the highest leader of the land.

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"You should have sent for me, and I would have come to your office to see you, Your Highness," Lance said as he stood straight before the King, staring him in the eyes. "You did not need to come here." He quickly added.

He was not expecting that the King needed him or would be visiting him because King Edward did not send words of his intention. However, it was not unusual for the King to personally call on his Councils and members without notice.

"I am here now, so there is no need for forewarning." The King candidly said as he firmly tapped him on the shoulders, squeezing him tightly as an assurance that it was fine.

"Shall we sit down, my King?" Lance offered the couch on the side of his office, ringing the bell for his assistant to bring them something to drink. "Will you like some tea or something stronger?"

"Something strong should do fine." King Edward told his secretary as they waited for their drinks and for her to exit the room, including the King's entourage to wait outside.

"I am sure Your Highness did not come here just for a social call." Prince Lance addressed the King as he swirled the drink in his hand. He watched the amber liquid as he waited for the King to speak about the purpose of his unexpected visit.

"Shall we forego the titles?" The King said, taking a large sip of his drink before sighing a loud gasp of satisfaction, liking the aged scotch the Prince offered. "Soon enough, it would be me who would be bowing to you." Pointing the glass in the Prince's direction.

It was the truth, and he had to learn to accept his impending fate. He had tried to be the best King he could be during his reign. So far, the Kingdom did survive extinction compared to other Kingdoms that had perished due to modernization.

"You are still my King and my Uncle. I will never ask you to bow to me when I take the throne." Lance could never even imagine that his King would lower himself to him. "But I will settle to call you Uncle Edward if that is what you wish but let us wait till I wear the crown, Your Highness."

He knew that the Council members and the other member of the courts would disapprove if he abruptly changed many protocols of the Royal tradition.

"That is all I ask." The King raised his glass to him, drinking another mouthful of the delicious liquor.

"Anyway, I am here out of tradition. As expected, the King should somehow pass his counsel to his successor."

The King leaned on his seat, resting his back on the soft backrest of the couch while he crossed his legs to a more comfortable position. Then, he glanced at the office the Prince occupied and landed on the portrait of him and his parents.

"I know the Kingdom is forcing you to marry, an arranged marriage to I am sure to be a beautiful and deserving lady." He lowered his glass to the table beside him and leaned forward to stare the younger man directly in his eyes.

"Yes, it is already set." Prince Lance had also accepted his fate in this regard. "We have a date of the wedding." He thought that might be the reason for the King's visit.

"Good." King Edward looked like he approved of this news. "I am sure that you understand the necessity of this arrangement."

He knew that marrying out of love had been their tradition passed through different generations. Their ancestors used this method to forge an allegiance with another influential and wealthy house to protect the Kingdom.

"I am well aware of my obligation to the crown." Lance had known about this since he had learned of their tradition. Although, he had never thought that he would have to go through it.

"I know this is a big sacrifice, but once you hold your son in your arms. Everything else would seem so insignificant. All you did for the Kingdom would be all worth it." The King could still remember holding his son in his arms the first time he saw him.

It was the happiest day of his life. He might not have loved his wife, but he adored his son. His only regret was not raising him as the King he should have been.

He only wished that Prince Lance would do better than he did once he had an heir. A Crown Prince that would be worthy of the crown in the future to continue the legacy of their Kingdom.

He had been a good King.

Unfortunately, in doing so, he failed to be a father to his only son. He had devoted his life to the crown, forgetting that he also had a son who needed his guidance. Prince Edward was his only son, the Crown Prince, but now a disinherited heir.

It would always be his greatest failure.

Chapter 936: One big disappointment

He had a long day. The Council had been on his back about the progress of his daily duties. As the future heir, he had to get updated with all his responsibilities. It was not an easy task since the King had thousands of obligations to the crown.

But his wedding was fast coming. Soon, his coronation would follow next. He had no time to waste. Unlike Edward and Alex, his training was less comprehensive when he was growing up since it had never been his birthright to rule. So now, he had to catch up.

"I'm sorry, but I am busy. Besides, I don't need a bachelor's party." He spoke on the phone when Alex called earlier and informed him they were visiting to celebrate his upcoming marriage.

He would prefer to work than be reminded of something he would rather forget. Busying himself with work distracted him from thinking about his impending wedding. It was something he preferred not to dwell on unless he had to deal with it.

Not only that, it stopped him from reminiscing about his past. He knew he should forget about the woman that broke his heart. But how when all his mind could think about was her face every time he closed his eyes?

He heard a knock on his door, expecting that it was his secretary needing something. "Come in."

He did not bother to look up at her as he continued to peruse the papers before him. He was used to her coming and going to his office when she needed to get or drop off some documents.

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But his secretary would never interrupt him unless it was urgent. Otherwise, she would do her task in silence, avoiding disrupting him from his work and leaving.

"Do you need anything..." He said, noticing someone approaching him closer. But he did not finish his words as a cloth bag covered his face while another grabbed his hands. "Alex?" He quickly questioned when he saw a glimpse of the other man's face before the black material completely covered his head.

"I know this is a dumb idea." A familiar voice said as a man stood beside him. Then, a bright light temporarily blinded him as someone lifted off the cover around his face.

"What are you guys doing?" His vision immediately cleared when he blinked a couple of times, showing him the culprits behind this failed plan to abduct him. "Have you gone mad?"

Then, the man behind him let go of his wrist, freeing him from his bound. "Sorry, this is David's idea." Alex was the first to speak.

"Wait! Don't blame this on me. You both agreed that this was a good idea." David complained, not liking that the other two were pinning the rap on him.

"What is the meaning of this?" Lance was still dumbfounded by the whole thing, having no clue what stupidity filled his friend's head by doing this.

"It is just a joke. Alex could not convince you to come with us, so we plan to force you." David said as they all settled on the seat, feeling slightly foolish.

"Where are Evan and Marcus?" Lance asked, seeing that the two were missing.

"Evan already went ahead to the location of the party. However, Marcus would not be able to make it." Alex informed their friend.

"Yeah, I heard what happened to them." Lance could not even imagine the pain of losing a child. He could not blame Marcus if he could not come to commemorate his false marriage.

In truth, he could not even imagine having a child in a loveless marriage. However, it was part of his obligation to produce an heir. He shook his head to dispel his unwanted thoughts. It was not the time to think about it.

"Anyway, we need you to come with us. We did not fly here to come empty-handed. I do not want to leave Dani, but she insisted that I support you in your time of need." Alex looked at his cousin pleadingly. "I need to tell her I have given you a good time."

He knew he was using his wife to convince his cousin to go with them and have fun as he was about to tie the knot soon. But he did not know if this should be a celebration or a memorial for his upcoming union, judging from his face.

It was precisely why he never liked to take on the crown. He never believed in their tradition. But he never thought he would be unburdening himself at the expense of his cousin.

"I appreciate that you came all this way, but I think you wasted your time." Lance still did not feel like being with their company, even if they were his closest friends.

"You know you can still back out of this." Alex felt obligated to try to talk his cousin out of committing to a lifetime of misery.

He almost did that when they offered the crown to him. Luckily, he met Dani. He still believed that Lance could still find the right person for him if he would only open his heart again.

He also lost Tyra then, but it was not the end for him after meeting Dani. Maybe there was another person for Lance. He wanted to believe that his cousin could still end up happy even after Eida broke his heart.

"Don't worry. I already decided that the Kingdom needs me." It was a sacrifice that Lance had accepted. He would not back out of this, even if his friends thought he was making a mistake.

"Then, come with us. Let us have some fun like the old times." David encouraged his friend. It had been a while since they were together like this. Even if Marcus was missing, the group could still enjoy a good time together.

"Ok. As if I even had a choice." Lance finally gave up, knowing his friends would not stop harassing him if he declined their request. "Where are we going?" He asked, vaguely guessing what Evan might have prepared for him.

"Just come with us," David said as he pulled him out of his chair and dragged him out of his office. Soon, they were traveling to the city business district and entering a posh establishment.

It was not as loud and crowded as he had made his way inside the brightly lit room. Honestly, it was not the place he was expecting. It was too tamed for this occasion, at least if Evan set it up.

"Should we congratulate you or send you a crown of thorns?" David asked as they all sat in the club that Evan had arranged for their private event.

The music gently blared in the distance as they ordered drinks and sat comfortably in the VIP lounge. He wondered which one he would prefer in his situation, but the latter seemed more appropriate.

"That is hilarious," Lance answered as he sat in the center of the table, facing his friends. "But honestly, I expected more from you guys. Is this the best that you can do?"

He thought his friends would take him to a livelier club where there would be girls in their skimpy dresses serving them drinks, and then some sexy girl would entertain him on the stage.

Funnily, there were no such girls around. The place had a few patrons who seemed to be happily drinking silently or with a few friends. It was far from a bar, where wild parties transpired.

"I am unsure if celebrating was your thing," Evan admitted to his friend. Until now, he still felt guilty for hiding the truth from Lance. But could he break his promise with Eida?

However, he still wondered if he could save these two from eternal misery if he meddled in their affairs. Would things get better if he told Lance about Eida and their child? Or would he create more problems for them in the end?

He still felt conflicted about his situation, being in the middle of his friend's condition. He knew he had the power to divulge all their secrets but was that the best thing for everybody?

"Yeah! I think this is better." Lance looked at the depressing mood of the club. It was one of those places where he could think while he drank.

"Maybe we can talk later," Evan suggested, whispering it to his friend's ears. "Just the two of us."

He felt he needed to see whether there was a way he could convince Eida to change her mind. But first, he had to talk to Lance and know what he was thinking.

"Sure." He wondered what Evan wanted to say in private. But he heard that he also recently just got engaged. Maybe it had something to do with that. "Thanks, guys, for coming all this way." He addressed it to everyone.

He knew he could not ask for better friends than these men surrounding him. He raised his glass to his friends and made a toast. "This is for the Kingdom." Well, he was getting married because of the people who needed him.

That was the only thing he could be merry about, nothing else, but he was glad that his friends raised their glasses as support. In his moment of doubt, he felt his friends were the only thing he could depend on because family and love had failed him.

One would think that drinking would make him forget, but it only placed him in a worse situation. In his inebriated state, he fantasized about her. He completely lost control of his mind as it conjured images of her.

He would be again under her mercy, dreaming that she would come back to him. But the next day would be one big disappointment, learning that it was all an illusion.

Chapter 937: Deep association

It was a dream that had no likelihood of coming true.

Lance looked around the room, realizing that this was his reality now. He could never return to what it was before and become a professional race car driver. He could not build his business as Alex did.

He could never marry the only woman he would like to spend the rest of his life with, no matter how much he wished for it. His life was not his anymore, but it now belonged to the Kingdom.

"I have missed this." He raised another glass of expensive whiskey to his lips and gulped it in one go. "Why did we take so long to do this again?" Lance asked his friends even though he knew the answer. Their different lives took them in different directions.

It had been a while since he had been out with his friends. Since the accident, all he had done was hasten his recovery. After accepting the responsibility of the crown, he had been busy preparing for the coronation and becoming King.

It would be his first night to feel alive again, laughing with his cousin and friends as they reminisced their youth after a long time. "I could still remember Lance running in his underwear," Alex said when he remembered an incident in the palace when they were young.

"If I remember correctly, you also did the same." Lance countered as the alcohol in his system kicked in, enjoying its effect on his state of mind.

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He thought he should do this again, feeling liberated from the pressure imposed on his shoulders. He wished to be free from the world he had lived in, even for one night.

"Where are you two going?" Evan asked, noticing that David and Alex stood up simultaneously from their seat.

"I have to go to the bathroom and make some call," David said, slightly buzzed but still capable of walking on his own, although in a slightly staggered line.

But he knew he missed Rosella, knowing he would not be coming to see her tonight. He had to reassure her that she was the only thing in his mind before she started wondering what he was doing in a club.

"I am just going to the other table for a minute." Alex pointed to a group that was beckoning him over.

Lance recognized them as his cousin's old friends. Although he also knew them, he was in no mood to socialize with them. Besides, he did not want to leave Evan unaccompanied.

"I guess it is just you and me." Lance pointed to Evan for emphasis as he raised his hand to the server to bring them some more drinks. "I think you mentioned wanting to talk to me. What do you have in mind?"

He vaguely remembered Evan whispering something to him, but his mind was a little fussy with all the drinks he had already consumed. Still, he believed he could still think clearly.

"Yes, I did," Evan said, but he suddenly found it hard to start the conversation, not knowing what to say first.

"Excuse me, Sir, but those lovely girls sent these complimentary drinks." The server interrupted them, placing two glasses on the table while pointing to the pair of stunning, elegantly dressed ladies on their left, drinking their sherries.

"It appeared that you have a twin admirer." Lance jokingly said when he glanced in the two ladies' direction. "That would surely be a twin trouble." He continued jesting, looking like he was drunker than he thought.

"Kindly return the drinks..." Evan instructed the waiter, but Lance stopped him.

"No," Lance said to the man standing hesitantly beside them. "Just tell them thanks." He told the waiter before dismissing him. He took one of the glasses and raised it to the lady smiling in his direction.

"I think you are drunk," Evan said, finding his friend's behavior odd. The old Lance would never flirt openly in a bar like this. It was his style but not his friend. It was like he was watching himself in his condition.

"And I think the rumors are correct." Lance countered, taking his away from the girl and back to his friend. "I heard you finally found a girl that had tamed your wild side. Is that what you wanted to tell me?"

Lance continued to consume his free drink while waiting for his friend to tell him the gory details. He had never expected that the rumors would be true about his friend. He knew how much Evan had avoided commitment.

"Yes, I met her when I last visited Grandmama," Evan told his friend. He wondered how Lance would take the news that he was marrying his childhood friend.

"Oh! How is sweet Grandmama Angela?" Lance asked, missing the sweet, old lady who had been kind to him when he met her a few times. "Where is she now? I do hope I can visit her soon."

"She is great and on a long vacation." Evan quickly responded. "But I will tell her that you are looking for her." Of course, he could not reveal her location to him.

"Anyway, have you proposed to her? And who is this woman, by the way? I like to meet her. I hope you will bring her to my wedding as your plus one." Lance rattled on, clearly drunk, as he slightly slurred his words.

He wanted to show that he was happy for his friends. But deep inside, he envied them because they lived the life they wanted. They were marrying the women they had chosen.

He was the one who would become King and one of the most powerful men in the world. But yet, he felt like the world had stripped him of the right to be happy.

"Actually..." Evan slightly hesitated. But then again, it was better to get it over and done. "You know her very well." He continued, catching the Prince's attention. "Yes, I plan to marry Amelia Stewart."

He could see Lance's eyes changed. He could sense that his mind was turning, thinking of the connection between Amelia and Eida. He wondered if his friend would grill him again about Eida, realizing his deep association with Amelia and possibly with the woman he had been searching for a long time.

Chapter 938: A crappy thing to say

It was the first time that she would be alone after a long time. Alex did not want to go, but she forced him, thinking Lance would need a friend, especially with his impending marriage and coronation.

After all, she had a nurse who would keep her company. But Lance was about to enter a situation that felt more than anyone could ever handle alone. So, as much as she hated to be away from her loving husband, she knew she had to lend him to her good friend.

"Ms. Dani, you have guests outside. Mr. Marcus and Ms. Jacky." Her nurse appeared in the kitchen, informing her of her unexpected visitors.

Then, her bestfriend and her husband followed close behind, walking into the kitchen, carrying a box of pizza and a bottle of apple juice. It would have been a wine if not for her condition.

"What are you guys doing here?" Dani greeted her friends, surprised to see them. Not because they had not seen each other for a while but because she knew how hard it was for Jacky to see her in her pregnant state.

She always wondered when Jacky would recover from her traumatic experience. She could not even imagine being in the same situation as her. Losing her child might make her lose her mind. So, she saluted her friend for her strength.

"Well, Alex called and asked if we could keep you company," Jacky answered with a smile as she gave her a hug and warm kiss, but she noticed it was not the same as before.

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Her friend might be happy to see her, but it was visible that she had some hesitation as well. But could she blame her friend for feeling that way? However, she was still glad to see her.

"I guessed I am here to babysit you and act as your bodyguard," Marcus said as he moved closer to her to give her a friendly kiss on the cheeks.

Alex had suggested that maybe he should take Jacky to visit Dani. He was unsure if that was a good idea after what had happened the other time in the house hunting.

He felt sorry for Rosella, who had to witness the entire thing. He knew that Rosella would like to help, but it was not easy as giving some comforting words.

However, Alex was right. He had to try. Maybe Dani could help in their situation. He could use all the help he could get. He knew that he and Jacky were struggling to keep it together, but he was afraid to lose her in this fight.

"Are you sure that you are ok to babysit me?" Dani looked at Marcus before glancing at her best friend and tossing a popcorn pack into the oven.

She did not expect any guests would come and visit her tonight. She was planning to sit in front of her flat screen and binge-watch a movie. A bowl of popcorn and a tub of ice cream seemed a great idea.

But sharing it with friends was far better. She could certainly use some company. She just hoped that Jacky was up for it. She wished to help her.

"Of course, I am here at your service." Marcus bowed to her and kissed his wife. "Hey, what are we cooking in here?" Noticing the oven popping.

"Well, I am making popcorn and thinking of taking some ice cream out of the fridge," Dani informed them about what she was thinking.

"That seems to be a plan." Jacky agreed, but she noticed that her friend avoided looking at her for too long. It must still be hard to see her pregnant and be a constant reminder of losing her child.

"Maybe I should finish cooking while you two prepare the living room." He suggested, seeing that he could easily handle taking over the kitchen. Besides, Dani should not be exhausting herself.

But he knew Dani because she was like Jacky, as both girls were as stubborn as an ox. He just wished he could see Jacky fighting again to survive because lately, she seemed to be giving up more and more.

Maybe Dani understood his cue as she moved out of the way and allowed Marcus to take over. "Come on, Jacky. I think Marcus got this." Then, she pulled her friend out of the kitchen as fast as her feet would allow her.

He noticed that Dani had some difficulty in her movements, as expected in a pregnant woman like her. Now, he understood why Alex was so concerned about leaving her unattended by friends.

"How are you?" Dani asked as Jacky helped her on the soft cushion before sitting beside her. "I miss you." She told her, expressing her feelings to her dear friend.

Ever since they had become friends, they never felt a barrier between them like what they had now. They had never really fought, causing a rift in their relationship.

But today, she could feel a wall separating them even if they sat close, just a foot apart. They talked while physically apart, but she realized they never connected. At least not like before.

"I am here, and we have been talking." Jacky reasoned, not wanting their situation to feel awkward, but it was. She could not deny it to herself.

She wanted what Dani had. She had never been envious of her friend, but tonight, she felt like the world had been unfair to her. She never wanted Dani's life, but she wanted her child.

"I know, but I miss us. I want to help Jacky. Please let me." Dani wished her friend would let her into whatever was going on in her head.

She was not a psychologist, but it did not need the genius to know that Jacky was still going through the pain of losing her child, and being with her at this moment might not be helping.

"How?" Jacky said as tears rolled down her face. "Why did I have to lose my baby, but you get to keep yours?"

She knew it was such a crappy thing to say to her best friend, who had only been good to her, but she could not take the injustice of losing her child.

Chapter 939: On the road to recovery

A deep wail filled the air, making him stop moving around the kitchen to rush into the other room. He knew the sound was familiar, having heard it several times before.

Once he was by the room, Marcus found his wife in the arms of her best friend, sobbing her heart out. He stopped in his tracks as he observed the interaction between his beloved wife and her dear friend, cautious not to interfere.

"I am sorry." He heard Jacky utter, in between her broken cries, as he stood on the corner, away from their sight.

He could see once again the struggle that his wife was going through. He could feel her pain even in the distance, but still, he was clueless about how to help her.

He tried everything possible, their friend's suggestions and the expert. But it seemed they kept going back to where they started. She was still in misery. Could things ever get better between them? He still hoped so.

"You have nothing to be sorry about." He heard Dani speak to his wife, consoling her as her fingers ran through her hair.

He could only hope that Dani could somehow get through to her. She was the closest thing to a family to Jacky. If anyone could help her, it might be her. He also thought of Andy, but he was so young to get involved in adult situations.

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He knew Dani had it under control when her woes slowly died down. Maybe Alex was right about putting these two in the same room. He hoped it would help.

"But..." Jacky was about to say something, but Dani stopped her, wrapping her arms tighter around her.

"I know this is hard to accept this time, but I want to believe that there is something beyond this trial that you have to go through." Dani softly spoke in her ears. "I always know you are strong. Stronger than this."

She gently pushed Jacky away from her so she could look her directly in the eyes. "Don't let this unfortunate loss define your life and future. I still believe you will become a great mother, just like how you have cared for Andy."

Marcus knew it was time to allow them some time to be alone. He understood when his presence was unnecessary, but the kitchen did. He could smell the burning popcorn he had left in the oven.

He rushed out of the room, dashing to the smoke slowly building up in the kitchen. Then, taking the burned corn out of the oven, he quickly threw it at the waste bin. He guessed that was that.

He rummaged the cabinets for more of those dried kernels, hoping to cook a new batch. Finally, he found it in the last one. Then, he set a new one inside the heated furnace.

Then, he took the ice cream from the freezer and arranged it on a tray. He took the pizza and was ready to brave the world outside. Hopefully, the coast was clear, and Dani had calmed the waters.

But judging from the lack of crying, replaced by the sound of a movie playing, he guessed things were better. He slowly walked out of the kitchen carrying the tray of delicious treats.

"Anyone up for some snacks?" Marcus announced as he moved closer to the two ladies who sat comfortably beside each other with a smile on their faces. "I am sorry if I took so long. I burned the first batch, so I have to try again."

He pretended that he was not privy to what happened earlier. He occupied the other seat beside his wife and sat comfortably, letting his back relax, and his body slumped on the cushion.

"That is ok, but we had to start the movie without you." Dani notified him, but they knew they were avoiding the awkward topic. "But this is a good movie. Alex highly recommended this."

She missed hanging out with her friend on a leisure day where they would sit like this in front of the screen and munch on all the junk foods they could find in the kitchen.

They would usually pick a witty and comedic movie that made them laugh despite whatever was going through their lives. It was a perfect way to relax and forget their worries.

"If Alex picked it, then I doubt it would be any good." Marcus jested, making them all laugh as the movie progressed.

"I guess you are right," Dani acknowledged, not finding the movie amusing enough. It was more on the intellectual rather than the entertaining side. "You have any other suggestion." She asked.

"Let me see," Marcus said, leaning forward and taking the remote from the table.

He scanned the movie selection, finding something more fun than what was playing. "What about this?" He proposed, looking at the two ladies beside him.

"That seems fine with me." Jacky finally answered as he played the movie and offered them the food he had prepared. Soon, they were all laughing and eating to their heart's content.

Marcus could not help but glance at his peripheral vision, with a heart full of love, at the woman beside him. He could only hope that the smile and the laughter coming from her lips were not just temporary.

"Oh! I don't think this is a good idea." Suddenly all of them stopped laughing as they looked at Dani, who had tears in her eyes.

"Hey! Is something wrong?" Jacky asked as her eyes scanned her friend from head to toe, worried Dani might be in pain.

"Are you about to give birth?" Marcus was also alarmed as he quickly stood from his seat and fussed over their pregnant friend. He had never been in a situation like this, and after what had happened to Jacky, he could not help but panic.

"No, I think I just peed in my pants." Dani raised her hands to her friend to calm them down as she continued to laugh and, at the same time, cry.

She could only blame the hormones for her silly behavior and the baby pushing through her bladder as she laughed harder. But she was not sorry for enjoying this night even if Alex was not around. She welcomed her friends as a distraction from her longing to have Alex by her side.

"You have us worried for a minute there." Marcus felt relieved upon hearing that she was not about to give birth.

Soon, he heard Jacky laughing as she stared at him. "You should have seen your face, Darling." His wife jokingly said as she continued giggling.

He would give anything to hear her laugh like that again and again. It felt like it had been an eternity since she genuinely looked happy.

"Yeah! I agree." Dani looked happy and in pain as she tried to stifle her laughter. "But I better go to the bathroom." She struggled to stand up with her bulging belly, so Jacky helped her and assisted her toward the private room, leaving him to gaze at their backs.

"I am glad that I can be the cause of your amusement," Marcus complained, but he knew he would gladly volunteer to do this again if it would bring back the smile on his wife's face.

He could only wish that his wife was on the road to recovery.

Chapter 940: Special treatment

Alex was back in his business early that morning. After checking on Dani in their apartment, who was still fast asleep, he left. He did not want to bother her, learning that she slept late because of her guests.

He went straight to the office to attend an early meeting. He hoped he could be back home before Dani woke up by mid-morning. He had no plan to work the entire day, wanting to devote the rest of the day to his wife.

Then, he received word that one of his interns requested an appointment with him. He almost forgot about him, but, of course, like everyone else, he also deserved his time.

"Sir, Mr. Zachary Andrews is here to see you." Alona walked into his office, dropping several papers on his desk. "Should I send him in now?" She raised her eyebrows when she saw him rushing his work on his table.

"You know Dani would be furious at me if she wakes up that I am not at her side." He reasoned to his secretary, answering her unspoken question.

"Then, you should be home and not here working." Alona knew Dani would never be mad at him, but she envied her for having a devoted husband. "Anyway, about the kid?" She reminded him about the young man waiting outside his office.

"Fine, let him in." He knew he had to deal with the spoilt son of the Senator sooner or later. He wondered what kind of trouble or complaint he would hear from this man.

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If not for his agreement with his father, he would have fired him the first day he had entered his company. But, he was a man of his word. He promised his father that he would give him a shot.

"Good morning, Sir Alex." The young man entered his office, dressed like all the employees who worked in the mailroom. It seemed he fitted in just fine in that department, at least this time.

He was not underdressed like the first time he came to work nor overdressed in the few times he had seen him around the office. Then, of course, he also noticed that he had toned down his voice as he greeted him with respect.

“What can I do for you today, Mr. Andrews?” He asked, looking at his watch, knowing that every minute counted. He wanted this meeting over in just a few minutes. He did not ever offer the boy a seat, not wanting him to feel comfortable.

“First thing, let me thank you for giving me this chance to learn from you,” Zach calmly spoke, behaving far from the demanding man he had argued with last time.

Suddenly, he was curious about what the man had been concocting in his head with this new tactic. He could not believe that he suddenly had a change of heart. That was not likely from a man like him.

“But I barely thought you anything.” Alex looked at him, suspicious of the young man’s intention.

“Anyway, why are you here? I am a little bit pressed for time.”

He had no time for some silly game. Every time he looked at this young man, he reminded him of his cousin, Edward, who did not take anything seriously.

“I understand the need for me to start at the bottom. Honestly, I learned about working hard while I am among my peers.” Zach chose his words carefully, hoping to catch the attention of his boss.

He could see that Alex’s eyes sharpened as he looked at him but continued on his path. He needed to convince his boss to agree to what he was about to say next.

“But I promised that I have learned my lesson. If you give me a chance to work for you as your intern, I promise to do my best. After a week, if I fail to work to your satisfaction, consider your deal with my father paid.” Zach proposed, hoping that Alex would take the bait.

Alex looked at the young man, wondering if he had an interior motive for this proposal. It was indeed tempting. The spoiled brat gave him a way to dissolve his obligation to his father.

“If you believe you are ready to work under me, I will accept your offer.” Alex tapped his chin, thinking before finalizing their new deal. “But if you fail, you are prepared to honor our agreement.” He clarified.

“Of course, I am still a man of my word despite what others might think,” Zach said as he offered his hand for a handshake. “I will do my best to impress you with the new me.”

He learned that Alex was not a man he could easily fool. So, he had to do better in impressing him to get the attention of his high and mighty father. If he could make Alex believe in his capabilities, maybe his father would finally accept that he was more than just his son, carrying his name.

He had worked hard to get high grades and excel in extracurricular activities. But everybody thought he gained them by being the son of one of the most influential leaders in the land.

Of course, he would not deny that he had his fair share of mischief and embarrassing moments. But that was just part of his teenage and young life. Being under constant pressure was not easy for someone like him.

His life had been scrutinized under a microscope by the people around him. Everything he did had to conform to a certain standard, higher than most of his friends. It was a life not suited for a man who would like to live his life the way he wanted it.

“Then, we have a deal.” Alex shook his hand, sealing their arrangement. He believed he had nothing to lose in this new agreement but hoped that this young man was serious about learning because he did not want to waste his time on a loser.

“Last thing, if you will indulge me.” His young intern said as he let go of his hand. “If you don’t mind, please call me Zach Gregory and avoid calling me by my last name.”

“Why?” Suddenly, Alex could not help the curiosity from showing in his voice. “That is a very odd request.”

“I wish to remain anonymous among my working peers. I have already established a good relationship with many of these people.” Zach reasoned, making sure that his explanation sounded believable.

“I don’t want them to feel awkward if they learn I am a Senator’s son.” Contrary to what most people thought of him. He only acted out because of his circumstances. He was ready to change into the man he wished to be.

After working in the mailroom with his hard-working co-employees, he learned the value of life. Now, he did not want any more special treatment.