

Royal Contract 1121

Chapter 1121 A healthy baby in her tummy

Somewhat, Haley was glad that he was around. There were a few things she wished to discuss with him. Specifically, she wanted to talk to him about her leaving arrangement.

She could not stay here forever. Of course, she would need a place of her own. But she would need help. But she would discuss that later when Imelda left.

She did not want her to overhear their conversation. As far as the cook was concerned, she was Mike's cousin who was visiting him. She still could not trust anyone else with her secrets.

"I see that you are doing well with your cooking lesson. I can smell it all over the yard." Mike moved toward the pot and sniffed the smoke coming from it. "The smell alone is already mouthwatering."

"I only helped Imelda." She said, but somehow, she knew she could recreate the dish. Maybe, in time, she could put some twist of her own to it.

"You still did most of the job," Imelda said as she tapped her hand to praise her.

Then, the older woman started moving around the kitchen, putting things on the sink and wiping the mess they created. Mostly, she made. Then, she turned the stove off, saying the dish was complete.

"Thanks again for teaching me." She knew some chefs would not show their secrets to other cooks, but Imelda was kind and accommodating, teaching her everything she knew.

"I am happy that you learned. Now, I will leave the two of you to finish your breakfast while I do some cleaning. Just leave the dishes, and I will clear them later." Imelda told them as she walked away from them.

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Then, Imelda moved to the living room carrying her cleaning materials and supplies, leaving her to finish her muffin. She decided to offer him one since he looked like he needed it.

"I already had breakfast earlier, but I can have one more." He said as he grabbed the piece from her hand. "Thanks." Eventually, they fell into a comfortable silence as they munched on the sweet-tasting, fruity bread.

She knew she should be watching the calories and her sweet intake, but she could not stop herself. She was always hungry and enjoyed eating anything that looked appetizing.

"But you should be watching what you eat. I think I read something about that." Mike reminded her as he watched her finish another muffin.

"I am trying to control it, but I am always hungry." She complained.

However, she suddenly realized that maybe she was using food to compensate for her depression. She was diverting her attention from her thoughts by indulging herself with sweet delights.

Emotional eating was also a psychological issue she used to have when she was young. But she found a way to battle it out. Maybe she should try a healthier way to do it, for her baby's sake.

"Maybe I can help you with that." He suddenly grabbed the last piece and ate it. "Now, you have nothing else to eat." He said with his mouth still full.

She guessed that was one way to help her. Then, she suddenly laughed at him when he gasped for air. He grabbed his almost empty water and chugged it down.

She could only conclude that the bread must have stuck in his esophagus when he spoke. She quickly grabbed another bottle from the fridge and handed it to him.

"That should teach you not to take a pregnant woman's food." She jokingly said as he also finally chuckled when he could breathe easily.

But she appreciated what he was doing. Somehow, he had made her stay in his house not as awkward as she had initially thought. He welcomed her with open arms and without judgment, not expecting much.

She could only wonder how she could repay his generosity. He might be a friend of Gerald. Still, she was not his obligation. He did not have to sacrifice his lifestyle for her.

"Anyway, I wish to talk to you later if you have time." She finally told him. She did not know if he had plans later. Perhaps, a date or something else. "But I can wait if you are busy." She hastily added, not wanting to sound demanding.

But he cleared his throat first and drank a few more gulps of water before turning to her. "Of course, we can talk later. I might go out for an hour or so, but I will be back soon."

That was good enough for her. Her concern might be urgent, but it could wait a few hours or a day. But she would still need to settle her situation as soon as possible.

"Anyway, I arranged for a doctor to look at you tomorrow." Mike interrupted her thoughts, making her look up at him with concern. "Don't worry. She is a family friend." He tried to reassure her.

"I only want to guarantee that you are taken care of while you are under my watch. Besides, we don't know if the baby is affected by all the trauma that you went through." He reminded her of the day she ran away from her father's house.

It seemed that he did not only try to help her escape, but he ensured her escape. That night, instead of going to the park, he decided to go straight to her home.

But he hid his car away from their security. So when she left the house, he started following her, but he was behind the car of her father's security. So, he also witnessed what had happened to her since he was there.

Then, he called one of his men to intercept the other car, stopping them from following her. That explained why she suddenly lost them. And why he was late to their meeting place.

But he did not want to take any chances, so he was in a hurry to take her away from that place because her car still had its GPS on, and the security could track it down.

“Thanks again. I know you don’t have to do this, but I appreciate it.” She had no choice but to accept his help.

Besides, she also wanted to reassure herself that her baby was still safe inside her womb. After her last check-up, the day she discovered Gerald’s death. She had not returned to her doctor for another follow-up check-up.

Therefore, having a doctor come here to see her would be a relief. It was still a long way to go, but she could not wait to see her child in her arms. But for now, she would settle for a healthy baby in her tummy.

Chapter 1122 For keeps

It was a Saturday. The day that he had been waiting for since the last time he was with her. He knew he had promised her dinner but doubted he could last long without seeing her.

He quickly stopped by the flower shop and purchased the most expensive set he found. But, of course, he had already bought the most important one a few days ago, safely secured in his jacket pocket.

Then, he was off to her apartment to surprise her and her son. But it seemed he was the one caught unaware, seeing a familiar man standing outside her door, knocking.

“Hey!” He greeted the man, who turned his back when he noticed him walking toward him.

“Hi!” The other man greeted him as he turned and offered his hand. “Zach, right?”

Of course, the man remembered him. He recalled that he worked for an investigation company as a detective. Therefore, it was his job to snoop around.

He wondered if he was here because he was reuniting with his old friend. Or was he here because of another matter? It seemed odd that he would suddenly appear in her apartment after many years of not seeing her.

“Yeah, and you are...” He was unsure if he should call him by his nickname, taking his firm handshake.

It seemed inappropriate to continue calling him that, seeing that he was not fat anymore. Besides, he wished to know his full name. He did not feel right to ask Ria about it, knowing he intended to have him investigated.

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“Just Tabby. Everybody seemed to call me that. And I could not change it anymore.” He explained, just in time for the doors to open.

He noticed that Ria’s eyes widened as she saw them at her doorstep. He knew she did not expect him this morning. Of course, he did not call because it would ruin the surprise.

But what about him? What was he doing here? But he did remember hearing that he would come back to visit. He thought that was just rhetorical. But he did not mean it.

“Hi!” Both of them simultaneously greeted her.

But he quickly handed her the flowers he had bought for her. But the other man also had something in his hand, a box wrapped with a silver cover.

"This is also for you," Tabby said, handing his gift to her.

Then, Edison suddenly showed up on the lower side of the doorframe. "Hey, Champ." He quickly greeted the young man with a wide grin.

That was his new nickname after they played wrestling the last time, and their little champion won. Since then, he enjoyed it when he had branded him the Champ.

Then, of course, the man beside him also greeted him. "Hi, Edison. I hope you still remember me. Your Uncle Tabby." He heard him say. "This is for you." He also brought him a gift. But the boy did not take it, probably thinking he was still a stranger.

"Thanks, both of you. I will give this later to Edison." Ria said to Tabby.

Thankfully, the boy came to him, hugging him instead of the man beside him. "Zachy, you came." The boy excitedly said in his small adorable voice. At least the boy had finally warmed up to him.

Zach was not threatened by the man beside him, at least not due to his size. But he could not stop thinking about his intention, returning to Ria's life after all these years.

Ria said that they met at the orphanage. Tabby was the brother she never had. But was that the same with him? Did he think of her as his little sister, or did he want something else from her?

"Of course. Did you miss me?" He directed his attention to Edison as he carried the little boy into the living room as Ria ushered them inside.

"I miss, Zachy." The boy uttered as he played with his face with his soft, little fingers.

"Aren't you a bit too early? I thought that we were supposed to have dinner." Ria turned to him and whispered near his ears. Of course, he was. It was just breakfast.

He knew the plan. But he thought he could take Ria and Edison to the park. Then, they could probably watch a movie or do something fun with him. And he already had a few ideas that he would like to suggest to Ria.

"They say the early bird catches the worm." He jokingly said, hoping to see her smile. But it seemed he was the second one to arrive, he realized.

Did it mean that he lost his chance for the day? No, he was not giving up that easily.

"I like... bird..." Edison said, interrupting their adult conversation.

"Yes, we do like birds. Do you want to see one?" He asked the little boy. Then, Edison nodded his head repeatedly and enthusiastically.

"Great!" Zach told Edison. "You see, Edison likes to see some birds. Maybe we can go to the park or the zoo." He suggested, looking at Ria, who had a disapproving look on her face. "Before we go to dinner later."

“As you can see, I have a guest.” Ria pointed to Tabby. “I am looking forward to seeing him after a long time. Therefore, I am not leaving.” She told him.

“I am sorry, Tabby, about that.” Ria addressed the other man in the room. Of course, the other man heard their conversation.

“I can always come back another time if you have other plans.” Tabby suddenly said.

He would like that, but Ria’s face said differently.

“No. Zach could play with Edison in his room while we catch up with what has been happening with your life.” Zach heard Ria tell her friend.

It seemed that his plans had backfired against him.

He was benched in Edison’s room while Ria entertained her friend. But would he give up that easily? Of course not. He still had a few tricks on his sleeve.

“Why don’t we bring along Tabby with us? In that way, Tabby could also spend some time playing with Edison at the park. I believe I have more than enough food in my picnic basket.” He offered instead.

He did not mind if he tagged along with them. At least he could observe him with Ria and Edison. He was good at assessing people. He could tell if his intention was purely for the benefit of Ria and Edison and not something that would put the two in danger.

If he discovered that Tabby was here to use Ria in any way, he would guarantee that this man would return to war where he belonged. And he would stay in there for the rest of his miserable life.

In less than ten minutes, he had the three inside his car. Fortunately, he brought a bigger car, and not his sports car. Or else, he would not know how to fit the big guy in the back seat.

Of course, he would not want him in the front with him. But now,

Tabby and Edison sat comfortably at the back of his SUV while Ria sat at the front with him.

“First, I thought we should have a nice picnic and a game of catch. I want to teach Edison how to catch some ball.” Although Ria’s apartment was spacious, he did not think that playing catch would not sit quite nicely with her.

Then, she did not have a lawn where he and Edison could play. So, the most he could do was take them to the park, which was not far from her apartment.

“That sounds great. Tabby and I can also join.” Ria declared, finally warming up with his plans.

At first, he thought that she would shut down his proposal. Fortunately, Tabby supported him, saying that it was a good idea. He also wanted a chance to play with Edison.

“Ok. So, are you ready to play catch, Edison?” He asked as he looked in his rearview mirror.

He could hear him say yes and see him bouncing up and down on his seat. That was a good enough response. He was glad he had thought of this when he woke up this morning.

“I am sorry again for showing up without calling. I only want to surprise you.” He finally turned to Ria, looking apologetic.

He did not want this to be an issue that would cause them problems. He realized that Ria thought of Tabby as someone special to her. Maybe he should tone down his suspicions against him and try to know the guy.

But he would still check on him, just to be sure. He did not want anything about Ria’s past to catch up with her and then ruin what she had already built for herself. She seemed happy now, and he would keep it that way.

From now on, he would protect her from anything or anyone trying to hurt her. Whatever happened to her in the past was over. From now on, he would guarantee that she and her son would be happy with him. That was a promise.

“That is ok. I know you are just excited about tonight.” The glint in her eyes seemed to promise him more.

Truthfully, that was one more thing he looked forward to after dinner. But, of course, that was just the bonus. What mattered to him was this woman who had already possessed his heart in just a short span of time.

This time, he finally realized that he wanted her for keeps.

Chapter 1123 To dig up her secrets

The sun was finally at its full strength as it dominated the sky and everywhere its rays touched, but they were still having a great time. They decided to get out of the park and find somewhere else cooler.

He suggested bringing Edison to the zoo, so the boy could see the different animals he only saw in books and the movies. He thought of many things they could do together, but some were inappropriate for his age. He might have to wait till he was older and much taller.

Funnily, a year ago, he might have run from such responsibility. But after meeting Ria, he finally realized that this was what he wanted. Now, he could not imagine a life without her and Edison.

“That is a big tiger.” He pointed to the one enclosed on a large pen, resting on the enormous rock formations. Edison clapped his hands above his head in excitement. The little boy currently sat on his shoulders while Ria and Tabby talked not far behind him.

He did not mind spending time with Edison while Ria talked to her friend. Everybody needed a family, and she considered the big man like a brother. Therefore, he was giving him the benefit of the doubt.

“Show me more, Zachy.” The boy shouted, pointing to the other cages that surrounded them.

Somehow, he imagined the boy calling him Daddy, not Zachy, and it felt great. Maybe someday, when he had proven himself to Ria and her son, he could finally ask him to consider him as his new father. He would like that so much.

“Ok. Your wish is my command, my Prince..” He said, using a line they read in a children’s storybook. Another activity that he started to enjoy.

He could hear the laughter of the little boy sitting on top of him. He could not see his face, but he could picture how his eyes lit up from the new things he had seen.

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He already thought of another activity they could enjoy together. But that would be for next time. For now, he would let the boy enjoy this one. From the look on Ria's face when he glanced at them, she was happy to see her son having a great time.

"Wow!" The boy shouted when he saw the monstrous bear, showing off his magnificence. The beast had similarities with the stuffed toy that Edison slept with at night. Except for the size and missing ribbon around its neck. "Teddy." The boy said.

He recognized him, but of course, that was not his bear. The one on his bed was cuddly and adorable. The one circling in the cage was deadly and dangerous.

"I want Teddy," Edison said as he held on to the metallic railing. It was still safe to be on this other side of the fence. But he still pried his little fingers away from the cage, concerned about his safety.

"Sorry, Champ, but that is not a toy or a pet." He said, trying to explain to the boy that they could not take the bear home.

Then, the boy started to cry. That was new.

He did not know what to do. He tried to think if he had said something or done something to make him cry. He only said that the bear was off-limits. It seemed that Edison did not like it.

"What is going on?" Ria was automatically on their side. "Edison, are you alright?" She asked, concerned about her son's condition.

"I am sorry, but I said he could not take the Teddy home." He pointed to the bear in the cage. Then, Ria started laughing. It was adorable, but Edison's crying was not. It was scandalous as he kept going.

"I am sorry, baby. But that is not Teddy. That bear is his father. If he saw Teddy, he would take Teddy away. Do you want that to happen?" Ria said, but the way she said it made him think.

Was Ria hiding Edison from his biological father? That was why she was so hesitant to talk about him. Even Edison seemed to have no clue who he was.

Was Ria running away from him? He remembered that night that she called him, sounding distraught. She said she had a bad dream. Was she dreaming about that man that had ruined her life?

"No. I don't want Daddy to take him." The boy worriedly told his mother, but it sounded like he did not want his father to take him away.

He could be right about his new suspicion. But also, he could be overthinking this and adding two and two, resulting in ten. But, somehow, it made sense. But he would think more about that later.

"Good. Now, be a good boy and let us see more animals. Would you like that?" Ria asked as the boy finally calmed down and stopped crying.

He was, once again, amazed at how calmly Ria had dealt with Edison's tantrums. He guessed he still had much to learn about raising a child. He realized that it was not all fun and games.

But it was a challenge he intended to learn along the way because that would not be enough to drive him away from her. It would take more than that to scare him out of their lives.

"Since you are such a good boy. I will treat you to some ice cream later." Tabby ruffled the boy's hair, making the boy smile. "You like that. Great!" Tabby laughed at the boy's reaction.

"Now, would you like to continue looking at the other animals?" He asked Edison as they continued to walk.

And the little boy said, "Yes," enthusiastically, like the incident earlier did not even happen.

They looked at several slithering snakes, colorful birds, playful monkeys, and the King of the jungle as it roared for the crowd. By the time they finished, they were all starving and tired.

He took them to a nearby fast-food restaurant, knowing they had to feed the boy before he fell asleep. His eyes were almost droopy when he finished half of his food. But Tabby bought him an ice cream he ate before dropping like a log on his lap.

It seemed that Edison was growing quite attached to him. Something he relished because he knew that to get to the mother, he also had to fall in love with her son and vice versa.

"I am just going to the bathroom." Ria excused herself, leaving him and Tabby on the table.

The man seemed to be watching him. He had noticed that since they bumped into each other at Ria's door. He could see in his eyes that he was studying him, probably trying to read what was in his mind.

"What have you learned about me?" He finally asked when Ria was out of earshot. "I am sure you have many questions, just like I do." He faced the man, looking him in the eyes. "But I will let you go first."

"Ok. But I will expect an honest answer because if you are lying, I will know about it. And if you hurt Ria, I will hunt you down. I don't care who your father is. That will not stop me." The man said in his threatening voice.

"I am not threatened that easily. And I also don't care who my father is. But if you are not here solely for the interest of Ria. Then, I won't hesitate to use my father's influence to make your life miserable." Zach answered back.

"Is that a threat?" Tabby asked, looking at him with those eyes that had seen too much death and hardship. "Because I don't respond well to threats."

He looked down at the boy, that mildly moved. But Edison was quietly and peacefully sleeping in his lap. Then Zach said in a quiet tone. "That is not a threat but a promise." He did not lose his focus as they stared at each other in a battle of will.

He had no intention of losing to this man because he could not afford to lose Ria and Edison from his life. But he was surprised that he was the one who finally looked away.

"I think I might be wrong about you. But I am only protecting Ria. I don't want her to get hurt." Tabby said as he drank his soda.

Somehow, he felt that there was something he was not telling him. He could sense that he was not referring to him. He believed he overheard something in their conversation that did not make sense.

But it was just tidbits that he could not fully understand. But now, he could conclude that their conversation should concern him. His instincts told him that he had to dig deeper.

"Protecting her from me, or something else?" He finally asked, watching the man's reaction to his question. "Please tell me if you discover something because I think we are on the same side here." Seeing that he might be hiding something.

"Ok. Let me ask you if we are on the same side." Tabby crossed his muscular arms across his chest as he looked at him. "Are you having Ria investigated?" He said without going around the bush.

But before he could answer him. Ria finally appeared and walked toward their table. But his mind was now working overtime after hearing his question.

Of course, not.

He answered his question silently in his mind. But if it was not him, who was it? Who wanted information about her? Now, he could not help but want to discover her past. He had to dig up her secrets to protect her.

Chapter 1124 Who is this man?

He could not believe that his sister would run away again. Just when he thought that she had finally learned her lesson. But it seemed that she was back in her old ways.

"Serena, tell me where you are, and I will come and get you," David said, trying to convince his sister as he held the phone in his hand. "Whatever the problem is, I will help you fix it."

This time, instead of letting her go, he took what he thought would be Rosella's advice. He should never neglect his family. And he believed Serena needed him more than ever.

"I appreciate what you are trying to do. For the first time, I truly feel that I have a family." Serena said on the other line. "But for the first time, I feel like I am doing something right. So, don't worry. I am ok."

His sister sounded much better than before, convincing him that maybe she was telling the truth. "Ok, if you are sure. Still, call me if you need any help. Any time you are in trouble or need any help." He reiterated.

"Yes, brother. I will. I promise." She said. "I will call you again. And I am praying that Rosella recovers soon. I think she is good for you." He could see her smile as she giggled on the phone. "I love you, David."

He was surprised because it was the first time she had said that to him. It was not like they were throwing the L word at home. Truthfully, they were not that kind of people.

But it was nice to hear that from her. "I love you, too, Serena." He answered back, this time, without hesitation.

He believed that Rosella was good for him. She had taught him many things about life that he would not have given a damn about if not for her. That included saying his feelings without feeling awkward about it.

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"As I said, Rosella is a God send," Serena said before finally terminating the call.

He finally looked at his watch and realized it was almost time to leave. He still had a few minutes to finish his work. Then, he could go and visit Rosella at the hospital.

A father from the other room asked him if he would ever get tired of waiting for her to wake up. It would seem his son was also in a coma for three days.

He only had one answer for him. "Never." That was the truth. He could live in the hospital forever if that meant being with her for as long as possible. He would wait for her until there was hope.

An hour later, he greeted all the nurses that had taken great care of Rosella. As a thank you, he brought with him two boxes of donuts for whoever wanted them and left them at the nurse station.

"How is she today?" David asked the nurse who was in charge to check on her tonight.

He quickly moved toward her side, holding her hand to make her feel his presence. "Hi, baby. Did you miss me?" He teased her, hoping she could hear him.

"She is doing quite well. The doctor said that her brain activity continued to increase." The nurse told her instead since he did not have time to come in the morning to see the doctors.

Besides, once he saw Roseann, she would fill him with all the details. But for now, he would settle for the information the nurse could give him. "Thanks. That is great news." He told her as she left, giving him some privacy.

He pulled up the chair and moved it closer to her bed. He wanted to be constantly near her just in case she could sense his presence. He read in a scientific journal that it helped coma patients to recover faster when they were around the people they loved.

He knew that her family also visited her during the day. Therefore, he took nightshifts and weekends when he did not have to work. But it was nice when they were all together, talking and bonding.

He was beginning to learn more about her family. Truthfully, he loved each of them, especially her mother, who was such a sweetheart. Her father was a kindhearted soul who had been down on his luck since they migrated to this country.

Her father tried his best to provide for their needs, but it was just not enough. But David had never seen a father who boasted that his wealth was not the material things money could buy, but her three daughters and his youngest son who continued to make him proud.

“Hey, I told you I could take this night since I am not busy.” Roseann appeared by the doorway, checking on her sister.

She quickly moved inside and started looking at the monitors as if double-checking everything the nurses and other doctors had repeatedly done.

“I also told you I have nothing better to do at home.” He said to the young doctor, who settled on the sofa not far from the bed.

“I am sure that you can do something else with your time. Like, go out with your friends. Go to the bar. Or clean your house, take a long bath, watch baseball with a bottle of beer.” She pointed out, remembering that it was the baseball championship finals.

“I can say the same thing with you,” David said as he looked at her. “Until now, I have not seen you with a man. Are you into girls or something?” He teased her.

“I just had a fantastic night the other day at a bar. And I was out with my friends. But I still had to clean my apartment. Yeah! It is a mess.” She answered him.

Truthfully, they had grown close, as if they came from the same mother. He considered himself part of the family, so that would make her his younger sister.

“And...” He asked her to keep going, knowing there was more.

“I am not into girls. I like a man, at least a responsible man. He did not have to be handsome, but if he is, then maybe it is ok. Tall is good too.” She said as if she was describing someone.

“And who is this man? Is he working in this hospital?” If he was, he could easily find out from her co-workers. It seemed that hospital gossip easily spread in this place like wildfire.

Chapter 1125 A long and lasting love

She stood up from the couch and looked at him. “Clever. You almost got me there.” She said. “But I will tell you more about it if you treat me to a nice dinner.”

She enjoyed having David around. It was like having a big brother, always protecting her back. She might have a brother, but he was more a bully than a protector. Besides, he was still too young to keep his sisters safe.

“Ok. You got a deal, but you have to tell me everything.” David said as he pulled out his card.

She knew she could buy anything she wanted with that card, but that was not her style. Her parents told them never to depend on anyone else, with regard, to their needs. They had to work for every penny they earned.

But this dinner did not count.

Besides, it was not like she would dent his wealth with one sumptuous meal. She immediately took the card and ordered their specialty in the fine dining restaurant near the hospital.

She was curious about that place but could not afford it. She would want to visit and have the dining experience, but she had no date. Truthfully, she did not want to date. Not yet, anyway.

She was still in her residency and then her fellowship. She had no time for relationships. Nevertheless, she had some short flings, nothing serious. And the feelings were mutual.

“Ok. So tell me.” David asked as soon as she dropped the phone back into her pocket.

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“Not so fast. The meal is not here yet.” She said as she calculated that it might take a few minutes to prepare and deliver it. “I will check on a patient for a few minutes and be back before the meal arrives.”

She handed his card back to him and exited the door. She remembered that she had promised one of the patients to check on her before she left. But she forgot because her mind seemed to be thinking of nonsense.

Fortunately, she did not take long since the patient was stable and sleeping soundly. At least she delivered on her promise as she returned to her sister’s room.

As she said, she was back in the room just in time for the arrival of their food. Soon, they were enjoying the delicious treat, laughing at a joke she had said.

“Wait! I think you forgot our deal.” David finally reminded her as he pulled the lamb that was supposed to go inside her mouth. “Remember... story in exchange for food...” He said, still holding onto her arm.

“Oh, yeah! I forgot about that because of all this damn delicious food.” She told him. “Wait! Let me have this one bite.” She told him as she pried her hands free from him.

Of course, he let her go and had a piece of his own as he waited for her to tell him her story. Or about this man that she accidentally met at the bar. She could not see anything wrong with fantasizing about him because she knew the likelihood of seeing him again was nil.

But yeah, she could not forget about him. Nothing happened to them except for kissing and a little making-out session on his couch. But he expired before anything more could transpire.

“He fell on the couch, snoring and all.” She admitted to him, not at all embarrassed about sharing her life with him.

Of course, she could not talk to her mother about this, nor her younger sister or brother. But Rosella was her bestfriend, and she somehow knew she could hear her story while she told them to her fiance.

She thought of him as the extension of her sister. She usually told Rosella about these things since she was the older one. And she was usually more sensible than her. But now, she only had David.

“And you think that he could be the one that got away. That is why you are hangup on him.” He concluded, giving her his opinion on the matter. “You could not stop thinking of him because he was such a good kisser.”

“You could be right.” She admitted, also thinking the same thing. “I am probably wondering if he was a good fuck.” She finished as she took another piece of meat into her mouth.

“You know you could use a little filter with your mouth,” David said, finding her personality so different from her sister’s. But he enjoyed it, liking her honesty.

Most women would never show their characters until it was too late. But she never pretended to be someone that she was not. She was candid with her findings, not afraid to say what she meant. She was true to herself.

“Don’t worry. I try to be a little subtle when talking to others. But I truly need your advice, so I had to tell you everything.” She had never confided with him about men before, but she was not sorry that she did.

Besides, if anyone knew about men, it was him. She heard from her sister that he was quite a Casanova before he met her sister. Luckily, he had changed his ways, or she would be the first to kick his ass if he hurt her sister.

“So, do you think I should call him?” Unfortunately, as much as she wanted him to be a fantasy, still, a part of her dreamed he could be real.

“Do you at least know the name of that guy? I want to have him investigated first just to be sure that he was not some serial killer.” David said, slightly concerned with her plans.

“There is no need for that.” She told him, shaking her head at the idea. “Of course, I know his name and a few things about him. I think that is enough.” Shamefully, she googled him and believed she read enough to like him more.

“I don’t think you should chase after this guy,” David hesitantly said. “If he remembered any of what happened to you and this guy liked you, I think he would come and look for you, despite what you said.”

Maybe David was right. After all, he had chased her sister to the end of the world to be with her. Until now, he was waiting for her sister to return. Maybe she should wait for something like that, a long and lasting love.

Chapter 1126 An old flame

She looked at the beautiful chandeliers that glittered on the ceilings, making the entire spacious room sparkle with brilliance. She had never been to one of these places. Honestly, it was a lot intimidating.

She felt like her ass was on fire as she sat restlessly in her seat. Not because it was uncomfortable but because she could sense that she did not belong in this place.

“Ria, have you decided on what you want? Or would you prefer if I order for both of us?” He asked, as he never bothered with the menu, putting it down without looking and gazing at her across the table.

She could only guess that he must have seen her uneasiness as she gave up looking at the menu. She was intelligent, but she never bothered to learn the french language.

“I think I will trust your judgment.” She finally answered, finding it hard to choose from a menu that was in a foreign language.

Her eyes, once again, roamed around the room, finding the place packed with wealthy people dressed to the nines. Nobody seemed to be looking at her, but still, she felt like a fraud sitting among them.

Then, she heard Zach order in what sounded to be fluent french. She did not even know that he could speak french. But most of all, she had no idea how wealthy he was.

Judging from the crowd, only someone rich could afford to eat in a place like this. Besides, Zach appeared to frequent this place as he communicated with the staff as if they were familiar with him.

"I assure you they had the best steak in the city." He said as the waiter left to fix their orders.

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She only smiled, but she thought they could have gone to the steak house near her place. They served a mean slice of beef chunk roasted to perfection. And it would probably not cost much compared to the highly costing price of a single meal in a restaurant like this.

"Ok. I can't wait to taste it." Instead, she said, not wanting to hurt his feelings since she could tell he had given much thought about this and planned for this night to be perfect.

She still remembered the smiles he brought to her son's lips this morning with his surprise. It seemed that she was more than lucky to have met him. It was like she had won the lottery with him. He seemed to be the complete package.

"Anyway, I am sorry about how I behaved with Tabby earlier. But I think he is cool." Zach told her as the waiter served their bubbly wine.

She was glad that he had changed his mind about her childhood friend. She noticed that he was slightly protective of her and her son when Tabby was around, but he slowly relaxed around him by the time they returned home.

Honestly, she believed that Tabby had hardly changed, at least, his personality. Maybe, physically, she almost did not recognize him, but his heart was still the same.

"I assure you that he meant no harm. Tabby is the same boy that had protected me when we were young. And he is still the same man who only wanted to reunite with his family." Ria explained to him.

But something about what Tabby said still nagged at her. It had something to do with the investigation. He had information that it was about her and Edison.

Someone wanted their company to dig into all information they could find about her. It seemed someone was paying a large amount of money to find dirt about her. But Tabby still had no idea who.

She might have. She still thought it was Ryan. She must be looking for dirt that he could use against her. If he could not get what he wanted from her, she knew he would resort to blackmail.

"I think I am beginning to realize that now." He confided with her. "Just like him. I only want to keep you safe." He said as he extended his hand across the table and held hers.

But before they could talk more, the first course arrived at their table. They stopped, not wanting a stranger to hear their conversation. But she could sense that he seemed to be looking at her strangely.

"Anyway, thanks for this morning. I had never seen Edison laughing that loud." She gaily said, remembering how happy his son was with all their activities.

Now, Edison was with Sasha's family. Not surprisingly, Lourdes and Ronnie invited him to join them for dinner, wanting to meet the boy she grew up with in the orphanage.

Of course, Tabby said he could not decline a free meal as he joined them while she and Zach left for their appointed dinner date. She was happy for her friend, who was still single with no kids.

At least now, he had someone to call his family again.

“Hey, there is no need to thank me. You know I will do anything for Edison.” He said when they started eating their delicious food.

She would admit that the food was indeed sumptuous and worthy of praise. It was different from what her tastebuds used to eat, but it was mouthwatering. Still, she could not afford to eat in a place like this.

Soon, she talked about their adventures this morning, laughing as they recollected each blooper and funny moments. She guessed everyone had a few. But no one could beat the tantrum that Edison had when he wanted to take home the bear.

“Honestly, I believe that is the best moment of the day, seeing how you calmly handle Edison just like that.” He smiled as he said this. “Suddenly, I could not wait to have more kids.” He looked at her as if there was more to what he was saying.

Was he saying that he was ready to have a family with her? Did she hear him correctly? Did she not misinterpret his words? Her heart abruptly sped up, feeling the excitement cruising through her body.

But she remained calm, thinking she might be jumping the gun with his words. He might be saying that but in the future and not necessarily not having his kids with her.

“I can already see that you will be a good father.” She said, but the conversation had to stop again when the server served their last course, which was a very appealing chocolate combination. She had no idea what to call it. But it seemed fattening but delicious.

But who cared about how she looked? She never minded her figure since she had Edison or even before having him. Still, she was thankful that her body returned to almost the same size as before she gave birth.

“What about a good husband?” He asked with his dazzling smile. “Do you think I am husband material?” He followed up his question as he continued to study her face.

She could only stare at him as she thought of the answer to his question. But what was there to think when she had already known the answer? It was a no-brainer.

“I think any woman would be lucky to be your wife.” She responded, genuinely meaning her words.

She believed anyone who could catch his heart and have his ring would have a great life with him. It had nothing to do with how much was in his pocket but how much his heart could give.

She had seen firsthand how he cared for her and her son without expecting or demanding anything in return. He was a man who just kept giving and giving without waiting for anything in exchange.

“What about...” But he did not finish his sentence when a shadow stopped over their table.

She was the first to look at the stunning girl standing behind Zach. It appeared that she might know him as she tried to surprise him with her fingers, tapping him on the shoulders.

“Hey, stranger.” The new girl said, making Zach quickly turn around to look at her. Then, his eyes registered recognition as he finally greeted her, but he never stood up.

“Hey, Blaire.” He said as he looked at her, but his eyes seemed to change. But he still maintained a smile as if he was forcing it on his lips.

“I hope I am not disturbing, but I saw you, and I know I should come over. It has been a while since we last saw each other.” The woman named Blair said.

“I am sure we had seen each other not so long ago.” He indifferently said as if it was not his concern.

She had never seen Zach in this mood. It was like she was watching a lover’s quarrel as the girl pursued her lost love. She could not help but wonder if he loved her too. Or if he still loved her.

“I miss you, Zach.” She quickly added with her hands extending to his biceps flirtatiously. “When are you coming to my apartment to visit me?”

She wondered if the women even noticed she was sitting there as she watched them interact. She looked familiar with his boyfriend and the same with Zach. But she sensed Zach’s hostility over her.

“As you can see, I am on a date with my girlfriend,” Zach said, but he had never bothered to introduce her. The other woman seemed uninterested either as she continued to ignore her existence.

From her observation, it would seem that they had a history. That was the only conclusion she could derive from what she had seen so far as Zach gently removed her hand from his arm.

Was she an old flame that had gone bad?

Chapter 1127 Neglecting his obligation

He knew, eventually, he had to see her. It was their honeymoon, yet he was hiding in his office, burying himself in work. Most men would be happy to have a wife as perfect as her, but she was still not the woman that he loved.

But as her husband, it was part of his obligation to make his wife happy. Would sleeping with her make her happy? He doubted that as he slept on his side of the bed, same with her.

Nonetheless, he would have to sleep with her, sooner or later, since a King is required to have an heir. Besides, she married him, accepting that she had to bear his children.

“Damnit! Be a man.” Lance could already hear what his father would say if he learned he was not consummating his marriage. But would Camille reveal to anyone about their marital affairs?

He doubted that, but still, she was a woman. And from what he had learned from women, they loved to share things with their bestfriends, and somehow, secrets found themselves in the grapevine.

It was late.

Therefore, he closed his files and turned off the lights. It was time to return to their room and hopefully catch some sleep. It had been a long day of smiling for the press as they pretended to be a happy couple when they were outside.

When he entered the bedroom, the lights were off, except for the nightlight on her bedside lamp. He could see that she was still reading a book, but she quickly put it down as she looked at him.

“Are you already going to sleep?” Camille asked. “I can turn off the lights if you don’t want them.” She offered immediately.

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The last few days, she was already asleep when he came to the room. He guessed he was earlier today than before, finding her still awake. But he wondered if she would ever get tired of him and their situation.

“No, not yet. I still need to shower. But you can keep the lights on if you wish to continue reading.” He told her, not wanting to bother her.

Then, he went straight to the bathroom and took a long hot shower. He hoped his wife would be asleep by the time he went to bed. So they did not need to have another awkward conversation.

Truthfully, he enjoyed some of their conversations. But there were times when they hit a pause. Then they could not think of anything to say to each other. He considered bedroom talks would be one of those things that would be awkward to handle.

When he came out, the room was already dark. The only light came from outside the window. “Good.” He silently mumbled to himself. He guessed that was better.

He could see her silhouette lying motionlessly on the bed, concluding that she might be already sleeping. Slowly, he walked toward the bed and carefully lay beside her. He did not want to wake her up.

He tried to even his breathing, slowing it down as he waited for sleep to take over his consciousness. But he ended up staring at the ceiling, sighing as frustration set in, knowing he would not be resting soon.

“I am sorry, but can we talk?” She suddenly shifted, turning on her back until she faced the ceiling. “I can’t sleep either.” She explained.

He was not expecting that she would still be awake, but it was dark, and she had been silent on her side of the bed. Nevertheless, he could not see any harm if they talked. Maybe that would kill the idle time until they both fell into a deep slumber.

“Sure. What do you have in mind?” He asked as he also moved into a comfortable position, facing the same white area on top of them.

But she remained silent beside her, making her glance her way. He noticed that she seemed to be thinking. As if she was debating with herself. He felt that was partly his fault.

She was uncomfortable with him because he had been aloof. He had been keeping his distance and avoiding talking about personal things. At least the ones that he kept for himself.

“I am wondering if you will ever touch me. If you think I am not ready. I assure you that I am more than ready to bear your children.” She finally said. “That is what I signed up for when I married you.”

“But if you find me hideous and unattractive, I will understand. I will not take that against you if you don’t wish to sleep with me.” She hastily added.

Then she abruptly covered her face with her hands, hiding her face from him. She appeared embarrassed for saying all those things. Although he could not blame her, he had done everything he could to make her feel that way.

“Hey, look at me, Camille.” He finally moved closer to her, hearing that she was crying. Then, he slid his arms around her shoulders and pulled her to his body, letting her petit body lay on his chest.

“I am sorry. I don’t know why I am crying.” She mildly stammered as she wiped her face with the back of her hand. “Don’t mind me.” She said as she tried to move away from her embrace.

But he stopped her from moving away, holding her firmly against his body. Truthfully, it was not so bad to have her in his arms. They had kissed a couple of times in public, and he believed it was not terrible either.

Honestly, he was still a hot-blooded male who had needs. This time, she seemed to be offering him what he badly needed, release. Truthfully, he had not sworn a vow of celibacy. Therefore, should he take advantage of his situation?

“No. I think you are right to be upset with me.” He admitted, knowing he had been neglecting his obligation as her husband. “But are you sure this is also what you want?” He asked, not wanting to force himself on her.

Chapter 1128 A second chance to love

She stopped crying, but he could still see her face glistening from her tears. He slowly moved, letting her go, but only to remove his shirt and gently wipe the moisture in her eyes.

Then, he saw her nod. “I know you will never love me. You already said that over and over. And I will never ask you to nor expect it from you.” Then, she finally looked into his eyes and allowed him a preview of what she felt for him. At least, he believed that was what he could interpret from how she looked at him.

“And I also don’t expect you to do the same.” He answered her, not wanting to break her heart. The last thing he wanted was to hurt her.

“I wish I could do that, but it is too late, at least for me.” She said as if she was confessing something. “I liked you since the day I met you. It was a long time ago, which I don’t think you remembered, but you were kind to me.”

In truth, he had no idea what she was talking about, but in fairness, he always tried to help anyone who needed it. So, she could be one of those many that he had done some good deed.

She said that it was one of his father’s parties. Her father took her with him and introduced her to the Count. She was still younger then. Then, her heels accidentally broke just the same time he passed by. He helped her fix it.

“I am sorry if I could not recall any of it.” He said as he tried to recall that particular event in his mind. “Wait!” He suddenly said. “I think I remember now.” He could recall a girl that might look like her.

His memory might be slightly blurry, but he believed it might be her. But she had grown into this fine woman. Therefore, it was hard to recognize her with all the changes.

"That was me." She timidly smiled. "Now, I am mortified. I still have my horrible braces back then." She buried her face into his chest, hiding her embarrassment from her past.

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"I think you were beautiful then. But not as beautiful as now." He told her as his fingers moved to her chin and mildly forced her to look at him.

"I know you are just saying that but thank you anyway." She said, still looking like she was not used to people saying that to her.

"But you are." He insisted as his eyes searched her eyes. He saw a woman both afraid and fierce, at the same time, beautiful inside and out.

Then, she slowly moved on top of him until she was face-to-face with him. Without saying another word, she lowered her lips to his. It was a quick peck before she closed her eyes and tried again.

Her kisses were hesitant, seemingly unsure of herself. But she never gave up as she tried again. This time, she stayed longer. It was as if she was letting her lips explore what she could do.

He gathered that she was more innocent than he had thought as he finally gave in and took over her efforts. His fingers automatically moved to the side of her face, holding her in place as he deepened the kiss.

Then, one of his hands moved to the side of her body, exploring what it could touch. After a while, he left her lips to move onto her exposed neck, letting his lips savor her soft, supple skin.

"Are you sure about this?" He asked one last time, knowing he did not want to take her against her will. But they were married, and everybody expected this from them.

He would stop if she said she was not ready. Or if she said that this was a mistake. They could always try again when they were both ready. But was he prepared to do this? Could he even call this making love when he doubted love was in the mix?

No.

Maybe he should say sleeping together was the better word. But he did not want to call it just sex since he believed it was more than that.

"Yes," She answered him with her raspy voice. "I want you so much." She finally moaned as she wrapped her arms around him. "What about you? Do you want me?" She asked as her eyes looked at him.

He noticed her inhibitions had finally disappeared as her fingers moved around to play with his naked chest. Then, she felt her hand glided down lower into his abdomen as if she intended to explore downward.

He knew he should not stop now because they needed to do this. But he still somehow questioned if it was the right thing. He was still in love with another woman, but Camille was his wife now. His obligation was to her and not the ghost that he had to forget.

“Yes, I am sure that I also want you.” He finally accepted his fate and his obligation.

Without another second thought, he shoved her memory out of his mind and concentrated on being the husband he had signed up for when he married Camille.

He grabbed her decent satin nightgown and pulled it off her body, revealing to him for the first time what was hiding underneath it. He could already tell she also had a beautiful body underneath those clothes, but she was not the type to flaunt them with a sexy, tight-fitting dress.

She always wore respectable but fashionable clothes that just showed enough curves and left the rest to the imagination. But Lance did not mind how conservative she was with her choices. To him, she was the perfect wife.

He just hoped he could learn to love her because she deserved it too. But he was not making any promises that he could not keep. Still, he would not close his heart to her and keep an open mind.

Who knew if fate would give him a second chance to love again?

Chapter 1129 My home

She looked at the almost empty room as she wiped another dirty table. It had been a hard day, but despite being exhausting. She felt it was all worth it. She would probably do it again.

She had volunteered to help in a charity event in an orphanage as a helper for the nuns who organized the celebration. They commemorated their twelfth anniversary since the first founder established the house that had been a home for thousands of children.

“My child, I think you already had done enough. Let the others finish this.” Sister Nenita told her with her gentle voice and a kind smile.

She met Sister Nenita at one of the Charity events she attended some time ago. The Sister had shared a few intriguing things with her in one of their conversations that had stuck in her mind.

From then on, she communicated with the Sister for more than a year. Therefore, when she decided that she needed time to think and be away from everything else in her life. She called her and asked for help.

“I am fine, Sister. Don’t worry about me.” She cheerfully responded, finding herself smiling despite the aching muscles.

She hardly did much compared to the others, but admittedly, she had never worked this hard in her previous job. Acting work was a difficult job, but she believed this was harder.

Waking up before the break of dawn was not a difficult task, but mopping the floor, wiping the tables, serving food, running around with the children, and entertaining the guests had been more taxing than whatever she had done in the past.

“Thank you for helping. Not just with the money. But for giving us your time and your effort.” Sister Nenita said as she put one hand on her shoulder. “You are truly a Godsend.”

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“I think you help me more than I could ever repay.” She said to the nun who did not close her door when she came for her help.

She immediately gave her a place to stay. It was not a luxury hotel with a beautiful suite or a large condominium in some first-class residential building. But it was a room where she could feel safe and at peace.

It was more than any of her money could buy. Yes, she donated money to their foundation, but it was nothing compared to the joy she felt when she saw the smiles on the people around her.

“God doesn’t need payment. But he sees the effort you put into helping all those kids.” Sister Nenita said. “You were a tremendous help in the success of this night. That is more than enough.”

Many attended the event, but most guests were former orphans who had lived in this house and found a new home and a great life. The head nun wished to inspire the young kids still seeking a new home and family that would help them toward their future.

But thankfully, the nuns had made the event private. They invited only the people that mattered and did not make a spectacle of the occasion by seeking the media’s attention. The last thing she wanted was her face on the front page of a tabloid magazine.

“Sister, I am sorry to bother you, but could you come and help us? There seems to be a situation in the kitchen.” One of the helpers interrupted their conversation, excusing herself.

It helped that she had been working with the organizers for a few days. Therefore, her presence was not such a big deal to them anymore. They tried to take her pictures.

But with the help of Sister Nenita’s request, they never posted them online. At least she had not seen any paparazzi around, snooping on her business. Or maybe the media had enough of her and was not interested anymore. That would be great if that should be the case.

She was tired of hiding from them anyway. She just wanted some time for herself without someone bugging her with questions. Was that too much to ask? However, for the media who thought there was a story. It was.

“You have to excuse me. If you need anything, don’t hesitate to ask for help.” Sister Nenita said before she left her back to what she had been doing, wiping the table clean.

But she only said to the Sister that she had everything under control. All she needed to do was several more tables. Then she had to put the chairs on top of the table so the others could finish mopping the floors.

After that, she could walk back to her room, not far from the hallway where they conducted the event. She could finally hit the hay and allow her body to rest and enjoy a peaceful sleep.

“Hey, Serena. Why don’t you let me finish here?” A voice walked behind her, making her turn around.

She was surprised to see him. She thought he had already left since it was late. Honestly, she had seen him with one of the guests and thought he had gone, with her, when she left.

“Doc, I can finish up here,” Serena said, talking to one of the volunteers who also aided in the event. “Why don’t you try to help the others?” She said, thinking that someone out there might still need his assistance.

Besides, she only had a few things to do. Then she was ready to retire for the day. But she promised Sister Eloisa that she would help with tomorrow’s chores around the orphanage.

“Ok. But if you need any help, call me.” He said, taking a few steps away from her. But before he could go far, he turned and looked at her again. “I don’t want to look creepy, but do you think you can grab a drink with me after we finish here.”

She did not see him as creepy. On the contrary, she thought he looked sweet and kind from how he had handled the kids earlier. But she hardly knew him since he only saw her this morning when the nuns introduced them.

All she knew was that he was a doctor that specialized in bones. He was here because he also volunteered to help. Then, she heard that he worked at the nearby hospital. At least, that was what she gathered.

“I guess you are also not from around here.” She answered him as she shook her head at his offer. Suddenly, he looked at her with a frown. “No bar around here is still open at this time.” She looked at her watch to confirm it. “Trust me, Sebastian. I already check.”

She remembered her first night in her room. Honestly, she felt like she was detoxifying herself from her addiction as she stared at the four corners and walls surrounding her.

The only pieces of modern equipment she saw in her tiny room were the electric bulb that lit the small space and the fan that circulated the air. Then, there was nothing else except the bed, a table, a chair, and a small cabinet where she could put her few things.

She thought she was going crazy, so she went out to find a bar. But as the nuns had told her, it closed early. She suddenly understood that she was far away from the city. And this place was far from the life she had. But she had learned to adjust in a few days, finding something else she could do with her time.

“Oh. I did not know. I only arrived late last night.” Sebastian informed her, confirming her assumption. “Then, can I at least take you home?” He still offered, as if he genuinely wanted to get to know her.

She looked at him, trying to gauge her situation and wondering if she should trust him. She had seen many men who looked like him. They were handsome with cute smiles, kind and gentle when people were watching, but in the end, they were monsters hiding with their fake facades.

But then again, Sister Nenita said she should not give up on life. Despite what happened to her, life should still go on. She should never stop meeting people and lose hope in humanity.

“I guess there is no harm in that.” She finally accepted, agreeing to wait for him when she finished. He would help the people who still had to mop the floors.

She finished putting the chairs on top of the table when she saw him mopping the last portion of the hallway. She could guess it would not take him more than several more minutes to finish.

She walked over to Sister Eloisa and confirmed with her their activity in the morning. She did not want to be late. She knew that their time was valuable. She should not waste it.

“Hey! I am sorry. But I think we can go now.” Sebastian finally came up to her and told her that he was ready to leave if she was. “My car is already parked outside.” He informed her.

She slightly chuckled, knowing that they would not need it. “I guess we should get going then.” She said as she said goodnight to the rest of the people in the hallway. “This way.” She told him when he was about to escort her to the exit.

“Where we are going would not require a car?” She said, which showed a puzzled look on his face. “Come on, trust me.” She said as she continued to walk at the backdoor until they were outside the beautiful garden, which the nuns had been working on for years.

“Where are we going?” He asked as his eyes darted around him as she leisurely walked along the pathway, enjoying the magnificent view.

“My home.” She answered. At least her home until she was ready to return to the real world.

Chapter 1130 With no pressure

She stopped at a fountain near the middle of the courtyard and gazed at the sparkling water caused by the moon and the stars’ brilliance. It was like glittering gems in the middle of the darkness since there was hardly light around the place.

She discovered that this area was usually very dark at night. She noticed that two outside lamps were not functioning, and the nuns still had to fix them. Luckily, the moon had not shown up tonight, giving the place a bright glow.

But paying for the place’s upkeep was the least of their priorities, as they focused on catering first to the children’s needs. However, that alone was already over their budget, making it hard for them to maintain the place.

“Do you mean to say? You live here.” Doc Sebastian finally concluded as he also stared at the view before them.

She turned to him, staring at his stunned face. She could not blame him for acting surprised. She could afford to stay in a luxury hotel, resort, or prestigious residence. She did not have to sleep in this place.

But the last thing she needed was to attract attention. In here, she could be herself. Of course, the people knew who she was. But after the hype, her new friends finally treated her like them. For the first time, after a long time, she felt normal.

“Bingo,” Serena answered as she moved along the circular path until she stopped on a wooden bench in front of the fountain. “Would you like to join me?” She offered, patting the space beside her as she sat on the other side.

She could hear the steady splash of the flowing water as it cascaded down and landed on the stagnant surface. It was what she discovered on her first night in this place, the beauty of the sound of silence.

All she could hear was the multiple droplets of water that steadily created a calming pattern that soothed her soul. Nothing compared to the chaos in her mind and her real world.

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“Sure.” He followed her and sat at a comfortable distance from her as they both stared at the three tiny baby angels blowing water out of their mouths. “That is interesting.” He said, probably wondering what she was doing here.

She guessed many might have an idea or something if they had read the tabloids or watched the gossip news. At least her disappearance from the movie industry did not make it to the headlines.

They were just some sleazy blind items and gossips that she had a nervous breakdown and had to take a break from the limelight. Of course, she could already tell who spread those rumors.

“I guess you want to know why.” She stated as she did not bother to look at him. She had seen the stares from the other people. Only one person knew her story, at least most of it. That was Sister Nenita.

The rest were curious, but they held themselves from asking her. Thankfully, they gave her space and her peace of mind. But no doubt, there would be someone who would try to snoop around for answers eventually.

She would not be surprised if today’s event reached the social media platforms. Many did take pictures of her with the kids and when she performed a solo song for the guests.

“Not really. But if I could help, why not.” He shrugged his shoulder as if that was not that big a deal.

“But let me clarify. Some think just because I am a doctor...” He paused, looking quite serious. “...I can treat everything. But just to be clear. I am a doctor that treats broken bones. Not a shrink.” He finished with emphasis.

The line was not funny, but the way he said it and his facial expression did make her chuckle. “I think you perfectly explained that. Bone doctor, not shrink.”

She nodded in agreement with him, appreciating that he seemed to know something about her but did not try to pry. Instead, he made light of her situation.

“Well, they said laughter is still the best medicine. So, I think I will prescribe that to you.” He ordered as he mimicked the act of writing in thin air, ripping the paper, and handing the imaginary prescription to her. “Besides, you are more beautiful when you laugh.” He added.

“Hey, now Doc, slow down. You might hurt your leg.” She teased him, finding him adorable with his old and corny jokes. “Are you sure you are a doctor and not a comedian?” She finally stared at him.

Doctors were brilliant for a reason. They were usually not funny. But somehow, he made her laugh, which she believed was what she needed. He was right. It did help to laugh, which she had been doing a lot since she came to this place.

“Yeah! I wish I could be funnier. But I am working on it.” He said as he joined her with a chuckle. “But really. My patient said that I have to learn to deliver my punch lines. And maybe work on my jokes.”

For the first time, she finally looked at him. Of course, she had seen him earlier but never noticed his overall appearance. Now, she could see that he was physically attractive, with a handsome face and a nice sculptured body.

“Yeah! Your patient might be correct, but you still have potential.” She told him as she leaned on the bench backrest and looked at the stars. “We all deserve our second chances.” She truly believed that.

She felt him move beside her, and when she glanced his way, she saw in her peripheral vision that he had imitated her action. He was also looking at the stars above them.

“Then, I guess there is still hope for me.” He sighed like he was about to get lost in his thoughts, just like her. “... And you.” He added in a whisper as they temporarily fell into silence.

But at least, in the last few days, she had found some clarity in her life. That not everything was about her. Sometimes, it was also better to think of what she could do for the other people around her.

This time, she would not be thinking of what would only make her happy, but if there was a way she could make other people happy too. Thanks to Sister Nenita, she also learned how to pray.

And she first dedicated her first prayer to his brother and soon-to-be sister-in-law. She believed that they needed it more than she did. They needed a miracle.

She wished she would have the chance to meet her. She heard that her brother’s fiancée was such a great girl. She did not doubt that since Rosella managed to change her brother for the better.

She had seen it firsthand. She could not be happier for David. Now, all she could wish for him was the best wife to stand by his side and give him a family. And she hoped it would be Rosella when she finally recovered and woke up.

“Do you want to ask me on a date?” She finally uttered in the stillness of the night as she returned to reality.

So far, she had not seen people passing by anymore. They could be hiding in the dark corners, or the guests had gone home, and the nuns had retired to their quarters. But at the moment, they seemed to be alone.

But she could not help but ask him. Why else would he insist that he walked her home if not for that reason? Besides, she encountered many men who were intimidated by her status. Therefore, she was only helping him out if that was the case.

He suddenly smiled. “I am still trying to decide on that.” He answered without looking at her. “It will probably depend if you will say yes.” He said, wanting some guarantee.

“But you have to ask first before I can decide,” Serena said with a frown.

But honestly, she never thought of going out on a date again. At least in the foreseeable future.

After what happened with Elliot, she thought she would swear off men from her life. But she met Adam. A sweet man who had shown her that not all men were like Elliot or the past men in her life.

But was she in love with Adam? She knew she was attractive to him, but would she say they had something more than a mere physical attraction? She had no idea. Maybe if they had more time together, she might have fallen hard for him.

But she knew she could not love him, not the way he deserved to be loved, not if she could not even find herself in the middle of the chaos of her life. She knew she had to live and rediscover herself, even if it meant losing him for good.

“I think we should hold on to that thought until we are both ready. For now, do you mind if I offer you my friendship?” Sebastian said as he finally turned to face her and offered his hand.

She also shifted in her seat and shook his hand. “I think that is a great idea.” She accepted his suggestion, liking that she could have friends.

She did not feel a spark when she touched his hand, but she felt comforted. She thought it was nice to have someone she did not have to please so he would like her, where she could finally be herself, with no pressure.