

Royal Contract 161

Chapter 161 - Not Such A Good Idea

"First shots are on me," Marcus shouted as they were seated in one of the best areas in the place. He did plan to get wasted and end up with a gorgeous babe on his side.

He was already eyeing the two girls, batting their eyelashes on them as soon as they entered the establishment. He knew that once he signaled for them to come over, they would be rushing to sit on his lap.

"You seem to be in a hurry to get wasted, my friend," David commented as they had barely warmed up on their seat, and Marcus was already thinking of scoring some women.

He had observed how Marcus looked at those girls, and he already knew what he was thinking. Among the three of them, not including Alex, Marcus was the worse of them. But he was not saying that he did not have his share. He was no saint either.

"Nah, just don't want to waste precious time," Marcus answered him as he took the alcohol served immediately at their table and gulped it in one go.

He was seriously contemplating if he should beckon them on their table or try to look for something better. Although, he was not saying that the two girls were not packing the right stuff.

They were here for the sole reason of unwinding, so he certainly planned to do that. But for now, he would spend a few minutes with his friends and deal with the girls a bit later. They have the entire night for fun anyway.

"I agree with Marcus here. It had been a long time that we did this, so it is time to enjoy our night out." Evan raised his glass to his friends and drank it bottoms up. "Drink up, Alex." He said when he noticed that he only took a sip.

"I'm here to spend some time with you but not to get drunk." Alex raised his glass and drank the remaining of his drink to please his friend.

But after that, he usually did not plan to consume more than he could handle. He always had control of his intake of alcohol.

He only did get drunk once in his life back when they were still back in college, and he did not plan to experience that again. He never liked not being in control of his situation.

"You are no fun at all, Alex," Marcus shouted over the noise of the club as people were starting to crowd out the place.

"I think we are getting too old for this shit." Alex pointed out to his friends, who seemed not to notice their age.

Although, he did say in the past that he did not want commitment yet. It was not because he was immature enough to take responsibility for a committed relationship. He only thought that a relationship would be a distraction and a hindrance to his plans.

But meeting Dani and being in a relationship with her changed everything about his way of thinking. He suddenly saw her as an inspiration for achieving his goal. And a possible partner in his endeavor.

He only wished that his friends would also realize what he was now enjoying in his life. That being in a relationship did not mean a death sentence for them.

"What's happening to you, man? Lately, we noticed many changes in you." David said as he held his second drink.

Since they came back from the trip, he noticed that Alex was acting slightly strange, especially around Dani. Although they were expecting that he would be doting on her in public, he felt that the way he was doing it was a bit extreme just for show.

"And what was that I witnessed in Dani's room earlier?" Evan suddenly remembered what he was about to ask him since he saw that scene.

He still could not believe what he witnessed in that room. They were acting out as if they were a couple, but then again, he could not figure out why since there was no audience to see them. The only logical conclusion that he could think of was that they were in a real relationship.

"Don't you know that our friend here had already decided to make the arrangement real?" Marcus interrupted the conversation.

That certainly made the two other audiences stopped on their tracks. David placed down the glass he was holding, unsure if he should believe what Marcus said.

But then again, they could expect that from Alex. He always had the gentlest heart among them. He could easily fall in love with Dani.

Evan could not help but spit his drink as he realized that his earlier conclusion was correct. Alex and Dani were now in an authentic relationship.

"Yes, I was going to tell you about that. I decided to court Dani during our trip, and she accepted to be my girlfriend." He admitted to his friends, who were silently waiting for his explanation.

"What about your arrangement?" David was the first one to ask the question.

He was glad for his friend because he seemed to be happy with his decision. But he had to think of his welfare as his friend and personal lawyer.

"It is still in place. Nothing has changed. Although we are now in a relationship, it still doesn't mean we will end up married. I still am working on finding a solution to my situation." Alex explained to his friend.

When it came to his business, Marcus was in charge of his legal affairs. But when it came to his dealings personally, he had David to deal with it. Evan only came as an additional sounding board when there were issues they could not resolve.

"Are you sure that is such a good idea? Does she know that you are not offering her marriage at the end of this?" David, who always had the most reasonable mind among the three, asked. One thing that he liked about David was, they were almost on the same wavelength. Well, almost except for his reason for not wanting a commitment.

"We are both aware of what we had agreed on when we entered this affair. We want to take it slow and see where it would lead us. If we reached that point when we both believe that we want to get married, then we will." He elaborated to his friends.

They all looked at him like he was speaking a foreign language. He knew they never believe in true love or marriage, but what he was saying was quite simple. He liked Dani, and someday if they fell in love, he would eventually marry her.

"I hope you know what you have entered, my friend. To me, that is still a very tight spot you had placed yourself in. There are several things that I could already see that might go wrong. But that is just my opinion." David said as the other two remained quiet, so far.

"If you could only find someone as great as Dani in your life, you would know what I mean." Alex proudly stated to his friend.

He was not about to doubt what he and Dani had because his friend said it was not such a good idea.

Chapter 162 - Skipped A Beat

An hour earlier, at Dani's apartment. As she was still applying light makeup on her face, Jacky entered her room without knocking. She was used to that. She also did the same sometimes.

"Are you seriously wearing that?" Jacky asked incredulously. "We are going on a club, not inside a courtroom." She blurted out upon seeing Dani's clothes.

She knew that Dani was not a conservative person. She used to dress more sluttier than her when she was young. But to look like a nerd about to go to a party was not something unacceptable. Well, she was exaggerating, but the point was, Dani's dress would not do.

"What's wrong with my dress?" She asked as she stared at herself in the mirror.

After a few more minutes of staring at herself in the mirror, she finally realized what Jacky had seen. In the past time that she had gone out with Jacky, she would not be caught wearing a dress like this in a club.

But she was trying to consider what Alex would think if she wore something more provocative. So, she chose something that was what exactly Jacky was thinking, conservative.

"I think this is better if you don't want to look like you are looking for a hookup, but did not say that I am a loser." Jacky handed her a glamorous dress that she had not worn for ages, forgotten in her closet.

"Fine." She took the dress and hurriedly changed into it. She once again in front of the mirror, checking her reflection. It was more sexy than slutty, so she could not complain about Jacky's taste.

She suddenly realized something. She should not bend too much her ways to please Alex. He should also learn to like her for what she was. She should find a way to balance her adjustment, not changing too much of her identity and personality to make this relationship work.

"That's better." Jacky expressed with a sigh, then whistled to indicate that she loved it.

In thirty minutes after leaving the house, they arrived at an unfamiliar establishment. Dani had not been here before. But from the look of it outside, she believed that she would not like it inside.

"Are you sure this is the place you want to try?" Dani asked her friend, who already unbuckled her belt and opened her door.

"Yes. Come on." Jacky was out of the car before she could stop her.

She quickly followed her. "Wait, we need to talk about..." But she barely finished her sentence when Jacky interrupted her.

"Are those guys going to keep on following us?" Jacky pointed to the other car that parked on the other side of the street.

"Yes, Alex would not have it any other way." She answered. A small concession that Alex extended was to cut down the bodyguards into two instead of the four he originally put on her. "But don't worry, I already told them to remain outside."

She would prefer zero, but Alex was right. There was no harm in being cautious.

Jacky could only shake her head as she ushered Dani inside the structure. Jacky only showed a card to the bouncer, and they were immediately allowed entry. As they proceeded inside, the lights got dimmer, and the crowd was starting to get wilder.

"What was that?" Dani whispered to Jacky, but the noise only swallowed her words as Jacky continued to walk further inside the massive room. She had no idea that Jacky had any connection to this kind of club.

As the noise got louder, she decided to pull Jacky to the side. She never agreed to this. As far as she knew, Jacky was bringing her to a regular bar. Somewhat the same as the usual place, they hang out to drink.

"What's wrong?" Jacky played the innocent card on her as she looked at her as if she had no idea why she was upset.

"Really? Nothing about this rang a bell in that brain of yours." This time she made sure to shout it out so she would hear her. She did not care if the other people around them looked at them. But nobody seemed to mind as they went on with their business.

"Ok, fine. Just this once. Can you enjoy this with me? We always do it your way, so I figured that maybe we could do it my way this time." Jacky pleaded with her, pouting her lips at her.

"But you know I don't like places like this." She once again looked at her surroundings and knew that it was not her scene.

"One time. That is all I ask. After this, you might get married to Alex, and you will not have time with me." Jacky started with the dramatics that she knew would make Dani melt in the palm of her hands.

"First, this is not the last time we will be together, even if I ever get married. Last, I am not getting married to Alex. Not anytime soon, and I am not sure if I will ever will." She made certain that her friend heard her. If the noise were not loud enough, the entire crowd would have heard her.

"Still, can we enjoy this? We are here anyways." Jacky knew that it was wrong for her to trick her friend into coming here. But she would like to enjoy this night with her, even for once in their life.

"Ok. I will only agree to this just this once." She reiterated to her.

There was a time in her life that she did enjoy this crowd, the never-ending parties. But she was so young then, she thought that being part of this crowd was the coolest thing in the world. However, she did grow up and learn that there was more to her life than this.

She still did not have any qualms for those who like these things. Everybody had their preferences. She and Jacky might be different in so many ways, but she loved her just the same.

They made their way to the bar to get their first drink when somebody shouted at her.

"Dani, I never thought I would see you here." A man suddenly appeared behind them. The voice was familiar, and it did make her heart skipped a beat.

Chapter 163 - Wonderful Surprise

As the night went on, the boys enjoyed their drinks and banter, not minding the time and the people around them.

"Anyway, any of you guys want a date tonight?" Marcus asked as they all had their fourth drink or fifth, except for Alex, who was still in his second one.

"If you want one or two, no one is stopping you." Evan eyed the two girls that kept on flirting with them, just waiting for the opportunity to join them.

"I think he is just heartbroken, so we should let him deal with that in his way." Alex taunted his friend, who still seemed to be dealing with his loss. Although, he did not realize it yet.

Alex believed that his friend was hiding behind his mask of masculinity, not wanting to face the fact that his breakup with Jacky affected him as much as Jacky did.

"No, I am not. What gave you that idea? Jacky and I are over, and I am glad because she turned out to be like the other girls. Clingy and demanding." Marcus said in disgust.

In his opinion, Jacky was not the girl that would tie him down. He only had a lapse of judgment when he thought that he wanted her back. Now, he was completely over her.

"Are you sure that is what you truly feel?" Alex kept taunting him, wanting to get the genuine reaction from him and not the scripted monologues he kept telling them.

"You know how much I hated when those girls started to feel that my world will revolve around them." Marcus reiterated that he knew what he was saying.

"Fine." Alex gave up, knowing that Marcus was not drunk enough to admit his true feelings. But it would be hard for him to get wasted because he knew how to handle his alcohol.

"What about you, David? Any plans of finding the right girl." Alex asked, hoping that his two other friends had found the correct path.

"I am still dating Rosella, but I doubt if we are going anywhere," David admitted since he was not into a committed type of relationship. Although he seldom went astray compared to the other two.

"Why not? She is the longest relationship you have. Maybe she is different compared to the others." Alex pointed out. But David only shrugged his shoulder as if he could not answer his question.

"What about you, Evan? Have you considered getting serious with a woman?" Alex turned to his other friend.

"Wait a minute, is this a dating game or a therapy session? What are you doing, man? Not because you turned into a 'yes, Maam,' you want us also to follow your lead. I don't know about these two clowns, but I am still young to consider that." Evan shoved his drink into his mouth and ordered some more.

"What about our bet? Is it still on?" Evan suddenly remembered the contract that they all signed.

If Alex was serious about his relationship with Dani, should they terminate the contract as null and void? He questioned in his mind.

"Of course, the bet is still on. It will only get terminated when the time is up." David interjected since he was the, who drew up the contract. "Well, unless everyone would agree to end it without declaring the winner."

"About the bet, I am willing to pay each one of you what I owe if I lose the bet. But I wish to nullify the contract and for all of us to forget it ever happened. I don't want this stupid idea to get back to Dani." Alex asked his friends.

"As the by-laws said, everyone must agree. Here is my answer. No." Marcus said as he took a sip of his drink. "You will thank me later, my friend, when things did not work out with you and Dani."

"I guess that concludes the question. The bet will remain in place." David stated since there was no other way to nullify the agreement without everyone's vote. They had lived with this rule, and they could not change it now just for one.

"I understand," Alex said, knowing that there was no way he could convince his friend to change their mind.

If he would put himself in their situation, he would probably do the same. He would not want them to coerce his decision. It was a rule for a reason. So that everybody's opinion would matter. Until there was a consensus to change it, then the agreement would apply.

"So, are we done being girls and chitchatting? Can we start the party?" Marcus shouted as he ordered another set of drinks, and this time, signaled for the two girls to join them.

"What are your names, ladies?" Marcus asked when they stood in front of them with their skimpy, sexy dress. The first girl who answered was the brunette named Ester. The other girl was Ruby with jet black hair.

"Would you like to join us?" Evan asked, making a space beside him.

"Sure." The black hair sat beside Evan while the brunette sat on Marcus' lap.

David and Alex could only look at each other with their friends' antics. But for Alex, he believed that his friends' womanizing days were about to end.

One by one, they would eventually find their match, and they would not get away that easily, just like what happened to him. But he believed that David already had his match. He just had not realized it yet.

"So, what about another shot?" Evan ordered more before excusing himself to go to the bathroom.

"What about a dance?" The girl next to Evan asked Alex.

He had been avoiding her gaze since they entered the room, but he knew that the girl's real target was him from the very beginning.

"I'm sorry, but I am not interested." Alex smiled at her but politely declined her offer. He was only here to take care of his friends. After this, he was out of here.

He suddenly regretted telling Dani not to wait up for him. He wished that he could go to her after this. But then again, he remembered that she was also out with Jacky. He suddenly wondered where they went.

Maybe he could pick them up. That would be a wonderful surprise.

Chapter 164 - Heart's Content

She never had to turn around to know who it was. The sliminess of that voice was enough to send a chill in her spine. "If I had known that hell transferred here and the demon is here, I would never have entered this place." She retorted back at the only man she despised the most in her life.

"Aren't that too harsh for someone you loved so dearly?" He spoke again. Unfortunately, the noise was not loud enough to drown his voice away.

Hearing him say that made her skin crawl. It was a reminder of a past that she seriously regretted and would rather forget.

"Hey, Nick, or was it a dick. Better yet, dickhead. Well, whatever your name is, can you scram and leave us alone." Jacky interrupted their conversation, not liking the way this egomaniacal jerk was saying to her friend.

"Jacky, let's get some drinks. He is not worth it." Dani pulled Jacky away from him.

She believed that wasting their breath on him was futile. He did not understand manners and proper behavior when it came to dealing with decent people.

"Running away. Are you afraid that I am telling the truth?" Nick grabbed her arm, preventing her from leaving.

"Let go of me." She struggled to release her arm. Then, her other hand came flying, right across his temple. "I am not afraid of you." She hissed with so much distaste.

But instead of getting hurt, he only tightened his hold on her arm. And then he smirked as if he did not mind the slap at all.

"Take your hands off, Dani," Jacky shouted, about to retaliate against Nick's actions when another man joined in, making her halt and looked in his direction.

"Hey, Dani already asked you to let her go. What part of that did you not understand." Suddenly a man walked into their group and inserted himself in the middle of the commotion." He grabbed Nick's hand and twisted it away from Dani.

Then, two burly men in black also came on either side of them as the commotion started to attract attention.

Nick had no choice but to let her go, seeing that he was no match to the three. "You have no right to meddle in our affairs. It is a private conversation between the two of us." He shoved the man away from him.

"It became my business when you keep forcing yourself on Dani when it is obvious she doesn't want your presence." The newcomer answered Nick, not bulging from his place.

"Whoever you are, you will regret this." Nick pointed to the other man. "This is not yet over. We are not yet over." Nick hissed at Dani, seething in anger before walking away. The two bouncers followed him until he was out of their sight.

"Troy, what are you doing here?" Dani finally turned around and recognized the man that helped them.

Although she did not exactly need any help, she could have easily defended herself in the likes of Nick. But she was still thankful that they avoided a scandalous scene. His father would surely not appreciate her face splattered all over the news just because of Nick.

"I am out with my friends when I thought I saw you." Troy pointed to the group on the corner. "So, I came to check." He explained to Dani.

"Thanks for helping us out." Dani still appreciated what he did when he did not have to do that.

"It is nothing. I'm just glad that you are ok." Troy smiled at her as they continued to stand in the middle of the crowd.

"Hey, I'm Jacky. Maybe you remember me." Jacky waved his hand to Troy, who seemed to only have eyes for her friend.

"Hi, Jacky. I hope you're ok too." Troy suddenly turned his attention to her. "Maybe you two will like to join me with my friends." He offered.

"Thanks, but we have to say no. We are here to bond, a girl's night out." Dani declined his offer. "But thanks for asking."

"Why don't we go get our drinks now?" Jacky interjected as she dragged Dani with her.

"Ok." She answered as Jacky led her to the bar.

She decided that after two or three drinks, they should make their way home. Nick already ruined the night, and she was wary that he still might be lurking around outside, waiting to create trouble. She figured they could always come back another time.

"What about I buy your drinks?" Troy offered as he followed them in front of the bar. "Joey, drinks for these two lovely ladies. Put it all on my tab."

"You did not need to do that," Dani told him, not wanting to impose on him.

"We are now friends. Right, Jacky. So, let me welcome both of you to my club." Troy said as he handed them their drinks.

"This is your business." She stated, but it sounded more like a question.

The few times they spent jogging together, she always forgot to ask what he did for a living. Since she rarely saw him come out in the morning to go to work like most of the tenants of that building.

"Unfortunately, yes. I hope you won't think so lowly of me." Troy also ordered a drink and joined them at the bar.

"I'm sure that this is a very lucrative business and nothing about this is lowly," Jacky stated, indicating the packed crowd.

"Yes, money is good. The business is decent." He acknowledged with some pride. He had worked hard to build this place from scratch.

But he still could not compare himself to the more established businesses around him. He still had a long way to go.

"Well, you did great with this place so far," Dani commented, admiring his hard work.

Suddenly, they heard voices calling his name. "Well, I better go and leave you two alone to enjoy your night." He stood up from his seat, signaling the bartender to attend to the needs of his friends. "I hope I'll see you again in our morning jogs."

After a quick nod to the two girls, Troy walked away from them and back to his group. Some of Troy's friends looked in their direction, but after a few minutes, they returned to their drinks, having a great time.

Jacky and Dani also shifted their attention to their party for two and enjoyed the free drinks.

"When did you learn that he owns this club?" Dani asked, knowing that was the only way that Jacky had a free pass earlier at the entrance.

"The other day. I bumped into him. Then we talked for a few minutes, and I asked what he did for a living. He invited us to come here tonight to check it out." Jacky finally answered all her questions.

"Why did you not tell me about it?" She asked Jacky, who was enjoying the drinks.

"Because I know you will never agree." Jacky voiced out.

"I guess you are right," Dani said as she realized what she had put her friend to all these years. She had been doing everything she liked but failed to ask what Jacky wanted.

"Now, can we dance?" Jacky asked as she drank the remaining liquid in her glass.

"Fine," Dani said as she grabbed Jacky's hand and dragged her to the dance floor.

This night was for Jacky. They would enjoy it till the music stopped, and Jacky was satisfied to her heart's content.

Chapter 165 - A Slow Pace On A Fast Beat

"Guys, I think I had enough. What about you guys?" Alex said as he grabbed his card and handed it to the girl serving their drinks. "Charge everything to me." He could not see any point in staying anymore.

"It is still early. Why don't you stick around for another hour," Marcus replied as he went back to kissing the girl in his lap.

Marcus kept telling himself that another girl was all he needed to get back to his old self. Jacky was a distraction he never wanted. He was better off without her in his life.

"Sorry, guys, but I am tired. I still have a lot of things to do tomorrow." Alex made his excuse, although he only had one thing in mind that he had to do. He wanted to see Dani and hang out with her compared to his seemingly drunk friends.

"I am also going with Alex. I think the two of you can handle it from here." David agreed with Alex, not particularly thrilled to spend more time with the other two if Alex was already leaving.

"You two are no fun." Evan finally spoke up as he shoved the remaining alcohol in his throat.

"Don't go yet." The woman that was under the arms of Evan said to Alex, clearly still flirting with him. "We have not to dance yet."

"I'm sorry, guys. But I will see you on Monday. Have fun for the rest of the night." Alex stood up and grabbed his card from the waitress. He saluted to his friend, walking away from their table with David doing the same.

Out of the club, they turned to their individual awaiting cars. "Are you going home?" David asked his friend.

"Nope. I plan to check on Dani. If they were already through, I might as well pick her up." Alex told David, who only smirked at his plans.

"You are that serious with her." David finally understood that Alex was not playing around when he said he was entering a committed relationship with Dani.

"Yeah, I am." Alex once again confirmed to his friend. "What about you? Are you still fit to drive home?"

He already asked two of his security to drive the other two if they were too drunk to drive.

"I'll probably crash at Rosella's apartment. It is just around the block. I am too tired to go home." David made his excuse. But like Alex, he was not intoxicated.

But to Alex's brain, he was only using that excuse to see Rosella. He still found it hard to admit to himself that he was already falling for her. The sweet and kind girl he met two years ago.

"Ok. Then I'll see you on Monday." They waved goodbye and went on their way.

Compared to the two that they left behind. Alex was not drunk. He never drank beyond his limits, which was three glasses, not wanting to end up incapacitated.

His security already informed him of Dani and Jacky's location.

"Are they still inside?" Checking on the address, it was only a few blocks from his location. It would not take him long to reach the place. His man confirmed that they were.

He only hoped that Dani would not think he was invading her space by following her on her night out. He did not want to seem clingy, but it appeared that he was beginning to become one.

"What are you doing?" He asked himself as he held the steering wheel in his hands.

But in his defense, he only wanted to spend more time with her to establish a more stable relationship. Because he knew that there would come a time that his work would demand more of his time once all their plans were in place.

He was entering a battle where his concentration would be needed. He would not have time for any distraction. He was not saying that Dani would be one, but he felt his time with her might be reduced.

He looked around the club once he was inside. Getting entry was easy when the bouncer recognized one of his men. As he went further, he found Dani and Jacky happily dancing on the dance floor.

Both seemed a bit intoxicated but still able to dance into the rhythm, or so he thought when the two bumped into each other. They almost lost their balance as they held each other. But after a few seconds, they started laughing and continued moving to the music.

"Scotch neat." He told the man behind the counter and sat at the bar while he watched the two girls.

He could see that several men were looking in their direction, but no one came to dance with her. He wondered why, but who was he to complain. That meant no problems for him as he observed Dani's movement, entranced as she moved with grace and class.

She was indeed a good dancer, probably a result of years of training. Well, except for the occasional slips and out-of-cue movements, which made him smile.

Then, finally, a man came close to Dani. He recognized him as the man he saw at her apartment. He leaned down closer to Dani's ear, probably saying something to her. He was uncertain what came over him when he found himself standing up and walking towards the dance floor.

"Hey, surprise, Dani." He stood in front of Dani and the guy. He could not determine if his name was Troy or Ray, but whatever, he was not interested. He did not appreciate the way he was moving around his girlfriend.

He claimed that he was not the jealous type. But at this moment, he could not help but be possessive of Dani. It was not in his character to act this way, but his instinct warned him to be cautious.

"Alex, what are you doing here?" Dani could not believe that her boyfriend was standing in front of her. She had to blink her eyes several times to be definite that it was him and not just her imagination.

"Alex." She repeated before moving towards him.

"Sorry if I came without notice." He moved towards her and wrapped him in his arms, showing whoever happened to look that she was his. That included Troy. He lowered his head and gave her a light kiss, but it was enough to ward off any other guy interested in her.

"Alex, you remember Troy, my neighbor." Dani suddenly remembered that they were not alone. "Troy, this is Alex, my boyfriend." She found introducing him in that manner a bit unfamiliar, but it did feel right. "Jacky, Alex is here." She shouted over Alex's shoulder.

Jacky, who was dancing with a group, turned around and looked at them. "Oh, you are here. I hope you did not bring your stupid friend." She said before twirling around again to dance without a care.

"I did not," Alex answered, knowing who she meant.

"I better leave the two of you alone." Troy excused himself and went back to his friends.

"Want to dance?" Dani asked Alex.

He grabbed her waist and brought their bodies closer together as they tried to move in the rhythm of the music. She never knew that dancing at a slow pace on a fast beat could be so sensual.

Chapter 166 - Fast And Effective

"Where had you been, Nick? I'd been calling and texting you for hours, but you are not answering your phone." She asked, fuming in anger as he entered her apartment.

They were supposed to go out together tonight, and she had been waiting all night for him to call. But her eyes almost turned white, waiting for him, but he did not even bother to tell her that he was not going to show up.

Unfortunately, she was still wearing her sexy dress, hoping they were still going out and salvaged the remaining of the night. But from the look on Nick's face, it was not likely to happen.

"Cassie, I have no time for your shit." He said, pressing his lips together, not in the mood for her dramatics. "I'm tired." Dismissing her with a wave of his hands.

He quickly entered her room to get changed. For the last couple of months, he had decided to bring some of his things to her apartment. In case he had to spend the night in her place. It saved him the time from going from traveling to two places to change.

He untied his tie and unbuttoned his shirt as he prepared for bed. He did not even notice that Cassie was about to explode in anger from how he was behaving. His mind was still busy thinking of what happened earlier.

"Seriously, that is all you have to say. You are tired." Cassie stood in front of him. The veins bulged in her temples and her fists clenched on her side as she controlled not to hit him in his face. "You're not even sorry for standing me up."

"Oh, is that all you want?" Nick stopped what he was doing and looked at her. "I'm sorry. Satisfied?" He said sarcastically, clearly annoyed as he moved to the bathroom, slamming the door behind him. He quickly removed the remaining of his clothes to hit the shower.

He walked into the large cubicle and closed the glass door. He opened the faucet, wanting the cold water to cool him down because he knew he was still simmering inside. Besides, he could not take Cassie's nagging at a time like this.

He wanted to be alone while he recalled his encounter with Dani. The way her skin felt in his touch and the way her voice sounded in his ears. He wanted her back, and he would do anything to have her again.

He suddenly regretted that he had ignored her during the time that they were together. It was a mistake to fool around with Cassie when he already had Dani in his hands. But Cassie was superb in bed, compared to Dani, a temptation that was hard to refuse.

A huge mistake that he presently regretted and would do anything to remedy. But he could not dump Cassie yet. He still needed her in his plans.

As the water ran down his body, his mind flew on the event earlier. He just finished a meeting with some clients when he saw her on her way to the bar with the girl he saw at the party.

He could not believe his luck because he had been waiting for an opportunity to see her. It would seem that fate was on his side.

He already expected that she would resist his presence, the same way she did at the party. But he already had something set in his mind. He scanned the place for Alex, and he was nowhere in sight, so it was safe to say that she was here and he was not.

"Damn!" He cursed loudly as the water kept dripping down his body. He suddenly remembered the man that tried to stop him from his plans.

She was supposed to be dating Alex, so he wondered who was the man with Dani at the club. Why did he appear to be close to her as he protected her as if she belonged to him? Was she out on a date with him? But that was unlikely.

It did not make sense, but he intended to find out more about the man that was circling Dani. It would seem that another one was vying for her attention, and he could not have that.

After Nick left her in the room, Cassie wished to follow him in the bathroom at that instant. But then thought otherwise, she believed that they would only clash and worsen their situation. That was not how she should handle him when he was in this mood.

"Oh! If only." She stopped herself from finishing her sentence, not wanting him to hear what she had in her mind. She had to calm down and think this through before it escalated to a huge fight, and she ended up like Dani.

But if she would guess why he was acting this way, she could only think of one reason. He probably saw or heard something about Dani. That was the only possible reason he would be in such a bad state.

After fifteen minutes of calming down, she decided to follow him inside the bathroom. She stared at the man behind the glass door, slightly covered in steam.

Unhooking her gown from the back of her neck, she let it slide down her body until it hit the tiled floor. The rest followed until she stood naked outside the door.

She slid it open. Not waiting for an invitation, she joined Nick underneath the flowing water. She knew what to do in a time like this. She had done it so many times that seduction was almost second-natured to her.

"I want to be alone." Nick hissed as he felt her touch.

One thing he could count on Cassie was her expertise in making him want her. Despite the way he felt about her, she still managed to get into his skin.

"No, you don't. You want me." Her lip started on the base of his neck, down to his chest, making its way downwards until she reached her goal.

"You certainly know what I need." He said as he quivered under her ministrations. With his hand entangled in her hair, he guided her to what he desired until he found his satisfaction.

With a guttural roar, he released the tension he suffered since he saw Dani, giving him relief like no other. It might be Cassie in front of him, but in his mind, he imagined differently.

"Yes, and you should remember that." Cassie stood up from her position and entwined her arms around his neck, wanting it to be her turn.

When she felt him moved closer until their bodies were almost one, she knew everything would be alright between them. He claimed her lips with so much passion. Caressed her face, down her body, making her want more.

"Please, I need you now." She begged him as her body burned everywhere he touched and kissed her.

"Patience," Nick told her as he worked her up until she was writhing underneath his body.

Then he entered her, possessing her and owning her, reminding her that she was his and his alone.

Cassie felt satiated after feeling him explode in her, seeing the gratification in his face. She knew she did well. She had accomplished her mission.

It was the simplest way to resolve their issue. It was fast and effective.

Chapter 167 - Triggered The Memory

"Everything is set. The gown is beautiful. The cake will surely be the center of attention in the reception." Dani giggled happily at her mom as she enumerated what was in her checklist of things she still needed in her wedding.

The wedding of the century, many of the press was saying. But the organizers still had a month to iron out the kinks and made sure that everything would be perfect, just the way she dreamed it would be.

Well, she was only going to get married once, so she wanted it to be beautiful and flawless.

"I am sure that the gown, the cake, and everything will fade away once your groom sees you. You will be the center of everyone's attention." Her mom hugged her and let her be comforted in her bosom, just like the way she used to when she was little.

Then, she fell asleep, knowing that the wedding of her dreams was almost at her reach and the man that she loved would soon be hers, forever.

When she woke up, she was surprised to hear a commotion downstairs. Her father was shouting profanities, and everyone in the house was rushing around.

"Ethan, calm down. It will not help if you keep shouting. Why are you doing this?" Her mother asked her father as she took a peek at the top of the stairs.

She wanted to know what was going on. But if she went down, her father would refuse to tell them what was wrong. It was better if she kept herself out of sight and listened to what her father had to say.

"Laura, the wedding is off. I can't let Dani marry that scam bug." Ethan hissed in anger as he tried to take a deep breath.

"Why? I thought that you like him. You have been his number one supporter from the start. What changed?" Laura asked, shocked at the way her husband was acting.

She never liked Nick. There was something about him that did not feel right with her. But since Ethan vouched for him, she never questioned Nick's sincerity. She knew that her husband's ability to judge people was enough to guarantee Nick's character.

So, hearing her husband saying that he did not want Nick for their daughter was a great surprise for her. She had to know the reason for his sudden change of heart.

"No," Dani almost blurted out, but she managed to cover her mouth before they noticed her. She wanted to hear what else her father had to say about Nick.

She did not want to hear any more lies because they were protecting her. She wanted the entire truth. And she would only learn it by listening to their secret.

"Let's move to my office." Her father directed her mother to the room on the other side of the house.

Dani quickly ran down the stairs to follow them. She knew where she was going to hide to listen to them. It was a secret place that nobody knew, except for her and her grandfather, who passed away.

She moved to the other room, next to her father's office. Inside the large cabinet, she squeezed her body until she was flat on the wall. There was a tiny hole in the wall that she could use to look inside the office, and the thin wall was not soundproof. His grandfather designed it in such a way to use for spying on his guests.

"What is it that you are not saying?" Laura finally asked when they were safely inside the office.

"I recently discovered that Nick was only using Dani to get to me. He didn't love our daughter. He only wants the money that he will get once he was married to our daughter. And a possible way to secure my position in the future." Ethan elaborated on what he recently discovered.

"How did you come up with this news?" Laura still could not believe what he was hearing.

She and Dani were talking about the wedding last night. She had no idea how her daughter was going to take the news. Funnily, she already knew this all along, but she also believed Ethan when he said that Nick was the right man for Dani.

"I have a reliable source. I also have proof that Nick was cheating on our daughter." He stated, guaranteeing her that his accusations had a found basis.

"What do we do now?" Laura asked as she sat defeated in a chair near her.

She was afraid of what Dani would think and feel about this. Dani was totally in love with Nick. And learning about this news would surely devastate her.

She could already feel how her daughter's heart would break once she found out that the wedding was off. But more importantly, hearing that Nick did not love her.

"For now, pretend you don't know anything," Ethan said as he walked into the drawer of his desk. "I will confront Nick first at the office and make sure that he will never be able to see or call Dani again. I will be back later so we can discuss this as a family."

Dani heard his father came out of his office and walked out of the house, leaving her mother still sitting on the chair. She also quickly stumbled out of the room and ran.

She kept running and running, but it seemed that she was not going anywhere. She was tired, but her feet kept on going until she fell on the soft floor.

When she opened her eyes, she was lying down on her bed with a man at her side, looking at her concernedly. She scrubbed her eyes to assure herself that she was awake and not in another dream.

But when her eyes opened, it still landed on Alex and not Nick.

"Hey, what's wrong? Did you have a bad dream?" Alex touched her sweaty face and checked on her.

He was concerned that whatever it was, it must be a terrible dream, even a nightmare from how she had reacted.

"Yeah, I think so, but I am not sure of what it was." She said automatically. She never wanted to talk about her past, not even to him. She did not want to lie to him, but she did not see any point in sharing that with him.

Thankfully, she only had a bad dream. Or maybe a slight recollection of a past she wished she did not have to remember. But that was it, a time in her life that she had to forget. Because now, she had Alex at her side.

"Are you sure? You know whatever it was, maybe I can help." Alex offered as he positioned himself closer to her and cradled her in his arms. "I'm a good listener."

She tilted her head to him and kissed him. "I know. I'll make sure to consider that when I need someone to talk to about my problems." She appreciated what he was doing, but in her opinion, she had it under control. She did not have to recall what she buried in the recesses of her mind.

But unfortunately, it is still embedded in her brain, and it would take a miracle for her to erase it from her memory. It was probably seeing Nick the other night that might have triggered the memory.

Chapter 168 - Obligation To The Throne?

"Let us not get off-topic here. We are here to discuss the finances of the kingdom." Duke Frederick reminded the Council members as they started arguing about the other issues circulating in the kingdom.

At the palace of the duke, all the Council members converged for their monthly assemblage. The meeting revolved around the discussion of how they could improve the social status of the kingdom and strengthen their finances.

"We are seriously facing extinction if we kept up at this same pace." Lord Bailey, a member of the Council, stated as their meeting continued.

The Lord of the farthest south part of the kingdom and the other Councils expressed their concern about the predicament of the future generation. As new governments and industrialization began to take over the world, they were afraid that the future of their kingdom was also at risk of dying.

"That is true. We are likely to follow the same path as the other kingdoms from other nations that seized to exist anymore. The kingdom will suffer if we allow the present Prince to take over the kingdom soon." Count Fordshire agreed with the other man as he pointed out what he thought was the real problem.

"I think the problem is not with King Edward. He had proved that he deserved his position. But we believed it was thanks to you, Fred. Your guidance helped retained the kingdom's honor and standing." Count Edinburgh added to the other Councils' statement.

"King Edward is more than capable of running this empire even without me." The duke defended his brother.

Even if Edward sometimes sought advice from him, Fred still believed that the King was more than capable of handling any situation.

"We are not questioning the present's King capability. Our concern has nothing to do with him. But it has everything to do with the Prince. We still firmly believe that he is not the rightful King to take over his father's position." Count Wellington finally spoke up.

"I still maintained my previous position that if anyone should sit on the throne when the time comes, it should be your son, Alexander." Lord Asthorne of the north part of the kingdom voiced his opinion.

"Yes, I do agree with Lord Asthorne." Count Wellington raised his hand, catching Fred's attention. "Have you spoken about this to him after his birthday?"

Everybody was aware of the law where the Council could reconsider another heir to the throne. They have a right to choose another Prince if ever they felt the succeeding King did not meet the entire criteria for a King.

In addition, if the current Prince's actions defied their laws and disregarded the interest of the entirety of their kingdom for his own. In the past several years, Prince Edward only proved in his actions his total disregard for their laws as he continued to defy them.

With his irresponsible actions, the Council had to reconsider their plan to give him the throne and seek a new heir. A more suitable one that they could crown as their new King.

"Not yet. Are you sure that you are not rushing about considering my son as a replacement for the throne? You know how he feels about his obligation to the Empire." Fred asked the other members of the Council.

It was not a secret that Alex denounced his right to the throne before leaving his house a few years ago. However, the Council denied Alex's request at the time. They knew that when the time comes, they might still need him.

Now, the time had come for Alex to step up to what he was born to be. That was to serve his people as their King.

"We believe that he was still young at the time, but when the time comes. He would realize that his duty to his people is more valuable than anything else." Count Wellington took a drink of the wine in front of him.

"The fact that he still upheld our tradition by introducing his future wife spoke volumes of his intentions." Lord Bailey boasted as if that answered the question of Alex's stand in the matter.

"It still doesn't mean that he will accept the title. I know my son. When he set his mind, it will be hard to change it. As of now, he is dead set in conquering another world." Remembering Alex's last words when he tried to convince him to stay and helped him in their business.

"We still have time to convince him to change his mind. We can't settle for Prince Edward, or else the life as we know it would be gone in a puff of smoke." Count Fordshire said as he shook his head.

He could not risk the lives of his entire family and people in the hands of the Prince. His lack of people skills, business sense, and humanity would only disgrace the throne. He would only bring the kingdom down to its ruin.

"If only Edward can be half the man as your son, then we do not need to have this conversation." Lord Asthorne kept his stand that the Prince would never be as competent as Alexander.

His sons were more capable of handling the kingdom than the Prince, but they were not qualified to be King. But he would still prefer someone who he believed deserved the crown.

"I will still have to carefully consider this before I can discuss this with my son. Although rest assured that if he ever decides to accept, he is more than capable of reigning the Empire." Fred said resignedly.

He had trained Alex to be a good son, not caring if he was in line to the crown. All he wanted was to prepare him to survive in the cutthroat world he was born to, unfortunately.

A life of royalty was not purely glamour and power. Duties and obligations were at an early age engraved in each one of them. A part of Alex's life that he took seriously. But threats and danger were also a part of their existence, something they should never ignore.

"That is all we wanted to hear. We believe that we will all sleep better at night once your son is on the throne." Count Wellington announced.

"Thank you for all your vote of confidence, but all we can do as of now is wait and see." Fred was not committing to anything yet.

He also experienced the same condition before, between choosing the throne or his peace of mind. But he had the luxury to choose the latter because he knew that his brother was capable and more willing to do it.

As the older son, he was in line to the throne, but he chose to denounce his right. He decided to be a Duke and lived a simpler life with his wife and their son. He would not wish it for his son if there was a choice.

He knew that when the time came for Alex to step up to the plate, there was little choice for him but to take it. Despite his resolution to let him live his life the way he wanted it, his obligation to the throne still outweighed his feelings as a father.

Chapter 169 - A Night To Remember

Days had been a bit hectic for the two love birds as work piled up. But they still managed to see each other four times the last week. But sad to say, dating was out of the question. They could only crash on her apartment or his at the end of the day.

It did not matter as long as they were together. Just like today, Alex was supposed to pick her up, but he just texted that he was running late.

"I guessed I'll be waiting for him at home." She told Jacky, who was preparing to leave early. "I might as well go home too."

She suddenly did not feel like working overtime tonight. She felt like they were too engrossed with their work that they barely made time for each other. She decided that at least one of them should make the sacrifice to make this night special.

Besides, she could not think of any time she made an effort to surprise him with something special. Most of the time, it was he who took the time to create their moment together extraordinary.

"Well, I am going out today." Jacky hesitantly told her. It had been a while since she dated, and it felt weird to go out again after Marcus and Lance.

However, she was determined to find the right man for her. But this time, she was taking her time to get to know the man. She was changing her ways and was not settling for less.

Lance, in her opinion, was a good catch. He became the standard of what a man should be in her eyes. But she knew that a man liked him was one in a million. It would be hard to find another Lance in this sea of men. But she was willing to try.

"Wow, with whom?" She asked, surprised that she had not heard anything about it till now. Usually, Jacky would be jumping in her office to inform her about it as early as yesterday.

She also could not remember Jacky mentioning meeting someone new. Could it be an old fling?

"I met him at the club the other night while you were dancing with Alex. He seems to be a nice guy, so I agreed to have dinner with him." Jacky informed her.

"And his name is?" Dani asked, still waiting for the identity of the mystery man. "I need a guarantee that he was not one of the people on the wanted list." She told her. But it was a joke between the two of them.

"Sebastian Reece. I think he is a doctor but not sure of his specialty." Jacky informed her friend. "I still don't know much about him, hence the purpose of the date. It was not exactly a conducive place to talk to him, inside the noisy and crowded bar."

"Fine. I'm happy that you are trying to get back on your feet again." She could not argue with that. "Are you sure that the whole Marcus thing is over?" Dani could not help but ask. She had to be sure that her friend was not looking for a rebound thing.

"It will take time before I can say that I am completely over with that jerk. But I wish to try to get back on the dating game. My clock is ticking, and I wish to be happy with a man that will love me for me." Jacky explained to Dani what she had come up with in her mind these past few days of reflecting on her life.

"I am glad that you are trying, but don't rush things again. I don't want to see you get hurt." She patted her friend on the shoulder as they moved towards the elevators.

She did not want another repeat of what happened to Jacky and Marcus. She only wished for her happiness and love ever after.

Back home, as Jacky prepared for her date, she busied herself with planning for a great night. She knew she still had plenty of time. She texted Alex, and he said that he was still in a meeting.

Now, all she needed was to execute her plan. First, she decided to order food. She was not a gourmet chef, so she could not expect herself to whip up something delicious in a short time.

But she was a little artistic, so she knew she could decorate the place with flowers and candles, creating a romantic ambiance. Then, arrange the food later as if it came from the kitchen, creating the illusion of homemade food.

After setting the dining table and arranging all the food, she chilled a bottle of wine in the fridge. She looked once again at her masterpiece, and she believed she created a good job. A slight adjustment on the flower and the candle, and it was perfect.

All she needed to do was light the candle later before he arrived. Now, off she went to the bathroom to pamper herself. She wanted to look fresh and smelling good when he saw her tonight. Not the usual haggard and sweaty girlfriend that met him the other nights they spent together.

"Dani, I am heading out. I'll see you tonight, or probably tomorrow." She shouted outside her bathroom.

She was not sure if she should even go home after seeing the setting outside. She could see that her friend had put in an effort, making this night special. She was not about to ruin it by walking in on them and disturbing their romantic night together.

"Be careful, Jacky." She hollered back then she heard her say goodbye. A few seconds later, the house was quiet again.

She returned to her bubble bath and let the aroma calm her nerves. She closed her eyes, allowing the warm water to soothe her muscles and prepare her for the rest of the night.

Now, she was alone in the house, waiting for her man to come home from his busy night. But she would make sure to relieve all his stress and gave him a night to remember.

Chapter 170 - Put On A Firing Squad

"I want an update of all the files placed on my desk early Monday morning," Alex ordered the team that was handling their new requisition. "If there are no more matters that needed my attention, we can adjourn for the night."

It was already late, and he was sure that his people were dying to leave this room. He, himself, could not wait to see his people gone so that he could also dash out of the office.

He was already itching to see Dani, who already texted him several times earlier, saying that she missed him already. He could already imagine the way her face would light up once she saw him walking into the room.

"Sir, there are some issues that we need to address regarding the substandard materials that our suppliers delivered last week." The one in charge of the procurement stated. "I suggest we change to another supplier after such an irresponsible mistake."

"Did the matter got resolved immediately?" Alex asked, not wanting to make any haste decision on the matter. At the same time, he was hoping that he would not have to deal with it tonight.

"Yes, Sir. But it still cost us certain lost because of the time wasted because of the mishap." His man reiterated his findings.

"Well, let me decide on it next week after I carefully review all the facts," Alex told him.

In his opinion, it was not an urgent matter that needed his attention right away. It would be better to decide on its fate when his mind was fresh and not distracted.

At the moment, he was concerned that Dani was not answering his calls. But maybe she was just busy, or like most of the time, left her phone off or in silent mode. He figured as he readied himself to leave the conference room.

"If there is nothing else urgent, then all of you may go," Alex announced in the room. Fortunately, Marcus was not part of the meeting. He did not need another distraction to his plans.

He quickly returned to his office to get his things. "Just sent me only important and urgent messages. The rest hold it till Monday. I won't be in tomorrow." He told his secretary.

Since their company was conducting several projects, at the same time, some of his staff had to work overtime on a Saturday, including him. But he decided that this weekend would be different.

He wanted to surprise Dani with a weekend getaway. He missed pampering her with his time and giving her surprises. That included the one in his hand right now. He quickly got out of his office in a sprint, hoping to see her, not soon enough.

Back at the apartment, Dani felt so relax and refresh after her long bubble bath. She chose a simple light dress for their dinner. She only wanted comfort and not to feel overdressed inside her apartment.

I'm on my way.

That was the only text she received a few minutes ago, coming from him. But there were several missed calls that she failed to answer because she was in the bathroom.

She texted him back, saying that she was already waiting. But her nerves were already on edge with excitement. She could not wait to see him and give him her surprise. She hoped that he would like it.

The knock on the door alerted her of his arrival. She could not help but smile at the gift that she had stashed away for him later. She quickly moved to the door to answer it.

"Hi." He quickly said when she opened the door.

To her surprise, she was not able to reply fast enough. Her mind was not expecting to see the man in front of her.

"I'm sorry to bother you." He apologized with his hand, palm flat on his chest and with a boyish grin. "But I was hoping if you can help me."

"It's no problem. What do you need, Troy?" She wondered why he was knocking at her door at this time of night.

She usually only saw him in the morning in the few times that they jogged together and the other night in his club. So, she was slightly startled to see him now.

"I'm truly sorry for being a bother, but I am hoping if I can borrow a few tablespoons of sugar. I forgot that I already run out of stock, and I badly need my coffee before I leave and drive." He showed her the cup that was in his hand.

"Oh." She suddenly felt relieved that it was nothing serious. "Sure, come in. Let me give you some." She opened her door for him to step inside.

"You have a cute apartment. Clean and organized, unlike mine." Troy stated as he looked around her living room.

"Thank Jacky for that. She usually does most of the cleaning." She spoke to him over her shoulders as he followed her to the kitchen.

"Oh, I hope I am not about to disturb anything." He said, seeing the beautifully arranged table with flowers and candles on top.

"Oh, yes. Alex is coming over tonight. I plan to surprise him." She explained the reason for the setup. "Let me have your cup." She extended her hand to grab the cup.

"Ok." He handed it to her as he stood by the counter.

Once in her hold, she slowly put one teaspoon of sugar in it. "I'm sorry, but how sweet do you like your coffee." She asked before she scooped more to his cup.

"Just two scoops." He checked her measurement and nodded on the second teaspoon. "Perfect."

Simultaneously, the door to her apartment opened. "Dani, are you here?" She recognized the voice as he entered her apartment.

Immediately, Dani answered him. "I'm in the kitchen." She hollered at him.

"Why is your door open? Are you alright?" He asked as he walked past the living room towards the direction of her voice.

He only stopped when he finally saw Dani standing behind the counter, and her neighbor stood on the other side.

"You remember Troy." Dani suddenly felt awkward with Troy and Alex standing in her kitchen.

She knew that she had nothing to be guilty about since she did nothing wrong. But from the expression on Alex's face, she suddenly felt like she was about to be put on a firing squad.