

BLURB

Angela Lipscomb is flattered when Prince Andres of Estoria expresses interest in her, but she's not looking for love. Not with a demanding career that takes all of her time and vivid memories of the pain caused by a broken heart. But their attraction is too strong to resist, and soon she's convinced that an international fling couldn't possibly hurt...could it?

Prince Andres is incapable of taking no for an answer. The playboy prince has set his sights on Angela, and neither the vastness of the ocean nor the distance of continents will keep him away. But when reality steps in, he's forced to make a tough decision. Can their relationship work? Or are they better off apart?

Princess of Estoria by Delaney Diamond

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Chapter 1

Prince Andres Luis Vasquez Alamanzar II of the Principality of Estoria eyed his older cousin, Juan the Viscount of Guzman, from his position beside him. They both sat in the opulent office of Prince Felipe, Andres's grandfather.

As the ruling head of state of Estoria, Felipe managed the country's affairs primarily from this office, decorated with dark wood walls and furnishings that consisted of a desk that was centuries old, and heavy wood chairs whose colors matched the room in maroons and deep brown. At the moment, he stood facing the window, listening to Andres and Juan debate each other.

"It's only a proposal," Juan said.

"A proposal that could annihilate the marine life that location is known for. It's the perfect viewing spot to see sharks, rays, and Eurasian otters. The eastern shore is one of the few tourism draws that we have in our country. If we disrupt that habitat, we risk losing animals."

As the outdoorsy type, Andres enjoyed horseback riding and water sports like kayaking and deep-sea fishing off the coast of the island country. The idea of harming or in any way disrupting the ecosystem turned his stomach.

He knew very well that his cousin Juan didn't care about nature and wildlife. The casino-hotel that he proposed bringing to the island would indeed generate additional revenue, but Andres believed the last thing they needed was another casino on an island that already had two—particularly one that could adversely impact the environment. In his opinion, the drawbacks outweighed the benefits. If he didn't know his cousin better, he'd think the man was getting a kickback.

But the truth was, Juan probably hadn't given the idea much thought and had been talked into it by his friend, one of the co-owners of the proposed casino. His cousin was simply not thorough. Because Juan was older and worked closely with Felipe on a number of palace projects, he was expected to take the throne after Felipe, but Andres had concerns. Hopefully, with the National Council for guidance, he would be a good ruler, though at times Andres questioned his judgment.

Felipe turned from the window where he had been looking out at the harbor. He wore a black suit and red tie. In his hand was a cup of coffee. Wrinkles lined his face, and the short hair on his head, as well as his mustache and goatee, were completely white. He looked, for lack of a better word, old, but in public maintained a certain vibrancy in appearance and walk. Only in private did he

allow his shoulders to take on a gentle slope, like they did now.

“We should get the... What do you call that agency...? To look into it,” Felipe said.

“The environmental commission,” Andres supplied.

The commission was one of the smaller departments in the government, and depended on the state budget for a significant portion of its budget, much of which Andres had fought for upon his expanded role in Estoria’s financial affairs a few years ago.

“Yes. Have they been contacted yet?” Felipe asked.

“Not yet,” Juan admitted. “But—”

“Why not?” Felipe interrupted.

“My contact says we don’t have much time. If they can’t build here, the alternative is to take their business to Portugal. Do we really want to lose this opportunity to them?”

Andres gritted his teeth. Juan had purposely mentioned Portugal because of the contentious history between both countries.

Felipe’s brows snapped together in concern. “Of course not. What do you think, Andres?”

“I think we should wait to do this right. The owners can’t expect us to rush through such an important decision. If they do, we shouldn’t do business with them.”

Felipe nodded gravely and set down his coffee cup. “I agree. Here is what I suggest. Get me the proposal on the casino, and I’ll look at it and be better able to make a decision at that time.”

“The proposal was delivered to you a few days ago,” Juan said with a frown. He pointed at the bound document on the desk.

Felipe glanced down. “Oh.”

Andres frowned, too. The whole purpose of this meeting was to discuss the proposal and the potential for additional tax income from the erection of the new casino. Why hadn’t his grandfather read the report yet? As a matter of fact, he seemed a bit out of sorts lately.

Andres stood. “I think we should bring this meeting to a close. Grandfather, you need time to review the report, and so do I.” Much to his chagrin, he hadn’t received a copy until today.

Juan’s lips thinned into a line of displeasure, but he stood, too. “How long will this take, so I can get back to the owners? A few days?”

Andres shook his head. “I leave for the wedding in Zamibia day after tomorrow and won’t be back until next week. Let’s plan to meet when I get back.”

He would read the report on the plane to get up to speed. In the meantime, he’d touch base with the environmental commission to get to work on a study on the impact the building and its

infrastructure might have on the coastal habitat.

“Very well. Have a safe trip. Uncle, I await your decision on when we should meet again.”

Juan maintained a look of displeasure, but he nodded and exited the office.

As soon as the door clicked shut, Felipe said, “You don’t like the idea.”

“Not particularly. Aside from the fact that we don’t need another casino, you know how I feel about preserving the environment and the animals we share this space with. There are other ways to make money, and we’re currently doing a good job exploring them.”

Estoria was a banking center with no income tax, low business taxes, and as a tax haven was on par with Malta in the number of offshore companies domiciled there. Its warm climate welcomed visitors all year round, and the rich and famous frequented its shores, coming over from mainland Europe to enjoy the weather and hide away in villas scattered throughout the country. At the same time, Andres and a team of advisors oversaw highly profitable investment portfolios and businesses here and abroad for The Crown.

“I trust your judgment. I’ll look at the proposal while you’re gone on your trip.”

Andres picked up his copy from the edge of the desk and watched his grandfather settle into his chair.

“Are you all right, Grandfather?”

Felipe looked up. “Yes. Why?”

“You seem distracted of late. I just want to make sure you’re fine.”

Felipe waved his hand dismissively. “I’m fine. Don’t worry about me. Nothing some extra rest won’t help.”

“Then make sure you get that rest,” Andres said.

The old man smiled slightly. “I will. Enjoy your time at the wedding, and please give my regards to King Babatunde, Prince Kofi, and his new bride. I trust you’ve arranged a suitable gift?”

“Of course. For individual gifts, I chose a pearl necklace from the royal collection for the bride and engraved diamond cufflinks for the groom. As a couple, they’ll receive a five-bedroom chalet in Switzerland with a stunning view of the Alps. Workers are getting it ready as we speak.”

“Excellent. Then I will see when you return.”

Andres bowed his head in deference and exited the office.

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About the Author

Delaney Diamond is the USA Today Bestselling Author of sweet, sensual, passionate romance novels. Originally from the U.S. Virgin Islands, she now lives in Atlanta, Georgia. She reads romance novels, mysteries, thrillers, and a fair amount of nonfiction. When she's not busy reading or writing, she's in the kitchen trying out new recipes, dining at one of her favorite restaurants, or traveling to an interesting locale.

Enjoy free reads and the first chapter of all her novels on her website. Join her mailing list to get sneak peeks, notices of sale prices, and find out about new releases.

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