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Chapter 401

"Will Elliot be attending any events these days where I might run into him?"

The benefit gala tomorrow night came to Daniel's mind, but knowing that Elliot would likely bring Anastasia as his date, he lied, "Not that I'm aware of. President Presgrave has been tied up with work at the company these days."

Hayley could only swallow her bitter resentment. Her eyes were still a little swollen post-surgery, and she could afford to wait before meeting Elliot in person.

The next morning, the news of the Lancaster Group's benefit gala broke out among the upper-crust society. Given Lucas' network, he managed to rally a considerable number of distinguished guests for the benefit, one of whom happened to be Elliot.

For the sake of being able to climb the social ladder and work the elite society to the advantage of her schemes, Aliona had ordered Lucas to announce her identity as his illegitimate daughter at the benefit tonight. She had only one target this evening, and that was Elliot. She had already made all the arrangements and set her plans into motion; all there was left to do now was for him to rise to the bait.

Needless to say, she was going to dress up to the nines in hopes of catching his eye, and it would be even better if he could fall for her charms without any prompting on her end. If he refused to bed her tonight, then she was going to have to resort to other means to make him.

That afternoon, Anastasia had only just finished lunch when Elliot called to tell her he would be picking her up at 2.00PM and bringing her somewhere. He had deliberately kept the details vague, so at this point, she could only sit around and wait for Rey's phone call.

Just then, her phone rang a second time. She thought it might be Rey, but upon glancing at the caller ID, she saw that it was an unfamiliar number. As she frowned, she put the call through and asked, "Hello, who is this?"

"Good afternoon, Anastasia. Have you been taking good care of my son?" The voice on the other line belonged to a man, but it was heavily warped by a voice processor and hearing it sent a chill down Anastasia's spine.

A dark look passed over her face, and her hand shook as she clutched the phone tightly. "I swear, if you show up, I'll kill you with my own hands."

The man chuckled. "You could kill me, Anastasia, but that would leave our son with two criminal parents. It could be rather brutal for the kid, don't you think?"

“Shut up,” she demanded through gritted teeth as her thoughts clamored in her head.

“What is your relationship with Elliot?” he asked grimly. “If you dare to even marry another man and have him become the new father to my son, trust me when I say I’ll be very, very angry with you.”

“My son has nothing to do with you,” Anastasia growled.

“He’s my son too, and that means I’m just as involved in his life as you are.”

She clenched her fists as a murderous rage filled her. “What the hell do you want?”

“Listen carefully, Anastasia—you are not allowed to marry someone else while our son is under your care, especially if that someone is Elliot.”

“You know Elliot?” she asked when she sensed unbridled hostility in his tone when he mentioned Elliot.

“I don’t know who he is, but I saw your pictures with him all over the internet. If you so much as even think about marrying him and setting up a new family for our son, you can be sure that I will make you pay,” he threatened in a low and angry voice.

“The kid is mine and mine alone, and you have nothing to do with him! If you show up, I won’t hesitate to call the police and have you locked up,” Anastasia warned, not at all backing down in the face of his threats.

“You were the one who snuck into my room voluntarily five years ago, Anastasia. Whatever happened next was a mere accident, and you can’t press charges against me for that.”

She clenched her jaw and bit out, “In that case, why don’t you try me and see if I could put you in jail for life?”

“I’m sure our son would love to find out more about his biological father,” he said, biting down on her weakness.

“Leave my son alone! Don’t you dare go near him!”

“I know where he goes to school, where you live, and where your father lives.”

“Don’t even think about hurting my family unless you want to pay in blood,” she warned maliciously.

He scoffed. “You don’t scare me at all, Anastasia. I am a man with nothing to lose, and I don’t mind taking our son down to hell with me if you were to kill me.”

“Why don’t you die someplace else and leave my son alone?” Her heart had leaped to her throat, and in the next second, she started to formulate a plan. She took a deep breath and pressed in a more obliging tone, “What do you want? Money? I could give you a sum of money if you promise to leave my family alone.”

“You’re going to give me money?”

“I could give you a million, but you have to stay the hell away from my son” she bargained icily.

However, he countered, “I don’t want your money. I want you to stay away from Elliot!”

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Anastasia frowned. She found it odd that the man claimed he had nothing to live for on one hand while refusing her money on the other, and odder still was how someone so heated down insisted she stay away from Elliot. He simply wasn’t making any sense.

In the end, the man’s greed got the better of him as he said, “Fine, wire me the money!”

“I’ll hand you the card with the money in it if you come over personally to retrieve it,” Anastasia countered stubbornly.

“Trying to lure me out, I see. Hah! I’m no idiot, Anastasia. I know you’re trying to set me up to get caught! Save your energy and don’t bother trying to catch me; you won’t succeed. Stay away from Elliot if you know what’s good for you, you hear?”

With that, the man hung up.

Anastasia stared at her phone as she pondered on their conversation. She couldn’t help wondering why the man so stubbornly demanded that she stay away from Elliot. Does he bear a grudge against Elliot?

More to the point, the man had figured out that she was, indeed, trying to lure him out into the light by using money as bait.

In the past, she would do all that she could to avoid ever meeting the man who had assaulted her five years ago, but now, he was forcing her to confront him. She was starting to realize that the only way she could move on from her nightmarish past was not by running away, but by facing it head-on fearlessly. Perhaps it was only after she had personally condemned the sc*mbag to a life of imprisonment that she could finally look back on the incident from five years ago and learn to walk away from it.

Anastasia vowed that she would never let this man escape the rule of law no matter what. She wouldn’t let him get away with what he had done to her, even if it meant having to tell Jared the truth about his birth.

Meanwhile, over by the man-made lake near Summit Mansion, Hayley was seething with rage as she clutched her phone in one trembling hand after she realized that Anastasia could no longer be manipulated by her vicious, albeit empty threats.

She had planned on using the identity of the male escort to force Anastasia into staying away from Elliot, but the call had ended with Hayley being the one threatened instead.

It was 3.00PM when Rey pulled up outside Anastasia's apartment. She got into the car and was ferried to a boutique in the heart of the city.

"Miss Tillman, President Presgrave has asked that you pick out a dress for the benefit gala tonight, which you will be attending as his date," Rey informed politely.—

Anastasia nodded. If she was going to attend an event with Elliot, it was only par for the course that she had to pick out something elegant and understated to match his refined grace. After all, the last thing she wanted was to humiliate him by wearing some old dress pulled from the back of her wardrobe.

The boutique had a wide collection of designer dresses from Anastasia to choose from, and the owner personally led her to peruse the seasonal items that were on the more exclusive end of the evening-wear spectrum.

However, Anastasia had turned down all of these dresses in favor of a beige one that accentuated her flawless, porcelain skin, which seemed to glow under the lights.

Time ticked by, and before anyone noticed, it was already 5.00PM. Anastasia emerged from the boutique with her make-up done and her dress fitted. The beige evening dress hugged her slender figure and flattered her curves, and her hair was gathered elegantly at her nape with tendrils framing her face. Coupled with the shimmering earrings she was using, she was the perfect picture of poise and grace.

"You look beautiful tonight, Miss Tillman," Rey praised with a smile.

"Thank you," she replied graciously. She slid into the backseat of the car as Rey held the door open for her, and the staff at the boutique came out to send her off, enviously watching her leave.

As Anastasia leaned into the seat, she looked like a young lady born out of aristocracy whose every little gesture and expression radiated innate elegance.

Not two minutes after the car had pulled up outside Presgrave Corporation's headquarters, Anastasia saw a towering figure step out of the revolving doors of the main entrance before he proceeded toward her. He looked ethereal when the twilight

rays from the winter sun played over him, giving the illusion that he had a halo around him.

Anastasia's eyes lit up at the sight of him, and she didn't even realize that she was gazing upon him with love and endearment.

Then again, anyone would look at Elliot the same way if they caught even the slightest glimpse of him!

Elliot opened the door and slid into the backseat next to her. His eyes fell on her appreciatively, and he found himself unable to look away.

He thought she was already gorgeous enough without dressing up, but now that she had, he was surprised by how breathtaking she looked.

Anastasia couldn't help blushing at the way he was staring at her, and she self consciously tucked a lock of hair behind her ear as she asked shyly, "How do I look?"

"No words can describe how beautiful you are right now," Elliot said honestly as he grinned, the corners of his eyes crinkling lovingly.

She gaped at him. "You're exaggerating, aren't you? I think I look passably decent, if not slightly better than how I usually look." "I think you're drop-dead gorgeous," he went on to praise.

A little flustered by how earnest he sounded, she pointed out, "You look really good in a suit as well. In fact, you're the only man I know who can look this handsome in a suit."

He was pleased to hear her compliment, and a delighted smile curled on his lips.

Alas, neither of them ever stopped to think about how Rey-the perpetual bachelor who was driving them to the benefit gala at present-might feel as they rubbed their relationship in his face.

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They cruised down the road leading to the hotel where the benefit gala was being held. When it came to charity auctions and benefit galas in the upper-crust society, the charity aspect was often overlooked in light of the distinguished guest list. More valuable than any of the antiques and items in the auction were the connections one could make during an event like this.

As such, the benefit gala became a hotspot for powerful figures in politics and business to gather and acquaint themselves with those who could launch their careers and social lives into new heights.

It went without saying that Elliot was the main target for the social climbers this evening

Presently, Aliona was seated in her hotel room, checking her make-up in the mirror. She had seen Elliot's name on the guest list, and she was delighted when she found out that he did not have a plus-one. If things went well, she could seize the chance to become his date for the evening.

Just then, the hotel manager whom she had ordered to keep her informed on the arrival of the guests called and said, "Miss Dora, Mr. Presgrave has arrived."

"Alright," she replied as a smile curled on her lips. After checking herself one last time in the mirror, she grabbed her sequined clutch and rose to leave the room.

She was dressed in a ravishing red dress tonight that gave a subtle view of her cleavage. Any man who saw her would undoubtedly be attracted to her.

When she was in the elevator, she gazed at her reflection and admired her flawless presentation. She wondered if she would catch Elliot's eye as soon as she showed up in front of him, and there was a confident voice in her head that told her she would. Upon reaching the conference hall downstairs, she descended the stairs that led to the crowd that had gathered below. She was the princess of Dora Group, and she was set to impress those who beheld her.

However, just as she was walking down the steps, she caught sight of something that made her so angry that she nearly tripped on the hem of her skirt. Disbelief colored her face when her gaze fell on the woman who was currently holding onto Elliot's arm. What the hell is Anastasia doing here?

Aliona swallowed her rage and continued her elegant descent, but she was already fuming. Anastasia's name had not been on the guest list, which meant she should have been denied entrance the moment she showed up at the entrance.

Then again, Elliot was powerful and intimidating enough to bring in anyone he pleased without needing further verification.

At the thought of this, Aliona took a deep breath and steeled herself as she walked toward Elliot. She was determined to trample all over Anastasia tonight.

Downstairs, Anastasia could sense hostility being directed at her, and she looked up to meet Aliona's spiteful gaze as the latter made her way down from the landing. When Aliona looked at her, it was with unbridled contempt, but when she looked at Elliot, it was with adoration.

"You're here, Elliot."

"Miss Dora," Elliot greeted perfunctorily as he nodded in acknowledgment.

Aliona's icy gaze flickered over to Anastasia. She smiled as she asked, "I didn't think you'd be here as well, Miss Tillman. If I'm not mistaken, your name wasn't on the guest list."

Anyone who heard this would feel a rush of humiliation, but Anastasia took it in stride as she feigned exasperation and said, "Oh, I wish I didn't have to come, but President Presgrave insisted and dragged me into this. I'm a little embarrassed, honestly."

The smile on Aliona's face turned frigid. "Is that true?"

Elliot took Anastasia by the hand at that moment and interjected, "Come on, let's go say hi to Mr. Dora."

Anastasia nodded and turned to look at Aliona, who was standing in their way. With a delicate raise of her brow, she said flatly, "Excuse us."

Aliona could do nothing but step aside to let them pass, watching as they happily made their way over to Lucas to greet him.

Her fists clenched at her sides as fury burned in her. She hated how Anastasia always cropped up unexpectedly and thwarted her schemes. Frustrated, she fished out her phone and dialed a number before she barked, "All of you, meet me at the lounge on the third floor right now."

She had called one of her henchmen that she had stationed at the event to ensure Elliot would sleep with her tonight.

Aliona looked stormy as she sat on the couch in the third-floor lounge and said to the four bodyguards who had appeared before her, "You guys saw that woman who was clinging onto Elliot just now, right? She's his date for the evening, and I want you to find a way to throw her out."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Better yet, kill her if you get the chance," she added viciously. However, she had only just said this when she decided that laying low for tonight would be the wiser thing to do. She shouldn't make any dramatic moves if she planned on seducing Elliot. After she changed her mind, she said dismissively, "Forget it. Just throw her out of here."

She was belligerent that a woman like Anastasia, who couldn't even begin to compete with her, was lording Elliot over her head like she had already won.

Back at the conference hall, Anastasia was appraising Lucas with concern. He might be the one who had put this charity auction together, but he didn't look to be in high spirits at all. In fact, he seemed exhausted. "Mr. Dora, take it easy and make sure to get enough rest," she pointed out gently.

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Lucas was touched by Anastasia's gentle reminder, and he gave her a grateful smile as he said, "Thank you for your concern, Miss Tillman." He would never have agreed to Riley and Aliona's plans had they not used his son's life as leverage. He could never bring himself to do this to Elliot, but as things were, he had no choice.

There was nothing he could do but watch Aliona succeed in her plot against Elliot. Resigned, he looked at Elliot and said meaningfully, "The young woman on your arm right now is as gorgeous as she is kind. Make sure to keep her."

"We'll invite you to our wedding for sure, Mr. Dora," Elliot replied with a good natured laugh.

Anastasia, on the other hand, blushed. There he goes with that nonsense again, she thought in exasperation, though there was no denying the fondness she felt for him.

"Very well, and I'll be sure to show up for the occasion. Have fun this evening."

Not long after, the first session of the auction kicked off. Elliot wasted no time in bidding for a diamond bracelet for Harriet, and he was the highest bidder at three million. Next to him, Anastasia pursed her lips as she tried to reign in her shock.

This was closely followed by his bidding for an antique, and it was sold to him at a whopping eight million. A gift for Harriet, he had told Anastasia.

She swallowed. The man was shopping like how she would at a thrift store at this point of the auction. He didn't even blink when he bid millions on the items.

"You're welcome to put up your card when you see something you like," Elliot said quietly as he leaned closer to her. Most of the things he had bid on were more suited to geriatric tastes, so he didn't manage to get anything for Anastasia.

She shook her head and pointed out, "I'd rather not take advantage of your money, Elliot. It's bad behavior."

"You'll be my woman someday anyway; think of it as indulging in advance," he countered with a confident smile.

She didn't know how he could be so confident that they would get married one day, but she had to admit that confidence certainly boosted a man's charms.

At that moment, she glanced over at Aliona, who sat toward the front of the crowd.

She had turned around several times to cast edifying looks at Elliot, and it was clear to see that she was trying to seduce him.

Anastasia whispered in amusement, "I think Miss Dora has feelings for you."

"Those are nothing compared to the feelings I have for you," Elliot said matter-of-factly as he turned to look at her with a devilish gleam in his obsidian eyes.

A smile touched Anastasia's lips, and he took the chance to wrap an arm around her shoulders, pulling her close to kiss her on the forehead. She froze at first, and when she glanced at Aliona again, she met the latter's scornful and mutinous gaze.

She hated Aliona for her disgusting two-faced demeanor.

Aliona, on the other hand, sneered when she saw how tenderly Elliot had kissed Anastasia on the forehead. He'll be mine by the end of the night. Mark my words, Anastasia. Just imagining the devastated look on Anastasia's face filled her with satisfaction. After the first round of the auction was over, Aliona leaned close and whispered to Lucas, "I think it's time you introduce me." Lucas sighed wearily and rose to go up on stage, whereupon he announced, "Thank you all for being here tonight. Next up, I have an important announcement. I would like to introduce all of you to someone, namely my daughter, Aliona."

When her name was called, Aliona rose in her seat and elegantly made her way up the stage. Then, she hugged Lucas as she said sentimentally, "Thank you, Dad. I love you the most."

Lucas was decidedly uncomfortable in her embrace, but just as he was about to pull away, she whispered in her ear menacingly, "I'll be handing you a glass of wine later, and I want you to give it to Elliot."

"I want no part in this," Lucas rejected in hushed tones.

"Oh, but that won't do. You must be the one to give him the wine," she drawled as she dug her nails into his shoulders, threatening him.

"Fine," he bit out forcefully and unwillingly,

Below the stage, everyone thought that it was a harmless and loving embrace between a father and his daughter. They were all clueless about the truth of their exchange.

Meanwhile, Anastasia was seated as she took in the scene. She had to give it to Aliona for being so dedicated in her pursuit of Elliot.

Now that the first round of the auction was over, the guests resumed their relaxed chatter and glass-clinking, hoping that they could seize every chance to strengthen.

their social network during the benefit gala. Some of them circled Elliot, who was the main target of these social climbers tonight, while trying to get acquainted with him.

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They even tried to hand him the precious goods they had bid for during the auction as gifts, but Elliot turned them all down.

Just then, Lucas walked up to him with two glasses of wine in hand, one of which had been spiked by Aliona.

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The only way to avoid Elliot's suspicion was to have Lucas hand him the wine. Aliona sat on the other end of the room, but her gaze was fixed on: Elliot and the glass of wine in his hand. She had to make sure that he finished every last drop.

She had spiked the wine with a powerful dosage of the drug, which was specially — made to knock someone out temporarily, only to have them wake up as the effects of the drug hit their peak.

The woman whom Aliona had arranged to get close to Anastasia was swooping into action now. She greeted Anastasia after walking up to her and said politely, "Miss Tillman, I heard through the grapevine that you're a jewelry designer at Bourgeois. I was wondering if I could have a moment with you?"

Anastasia looked at the elegantly dressed woman and nodded, not wanting to turn her down. The woman led her to the side of the room, away from Elliot and Lucas. Then, she explained with a smile, "If you must know, I have taken a liking to your designs, and I'd like to have a jewelry set custom-made. Could you squeeze me in for an appointment so that we can go over the details?"

"I'm no longer working in Bourgeois, I'm afraid, but I can recommend someone whose work is far better than mine if you'd like," Anastasia offered. Naturally, she would love to help bring in business to Bourgeois, and though she had left the atelier, she was still supportive of Felicia's work.

Presently, in the banquet hall, Elliot had taken the glass of wine Lucas offered him.

After making some sentimental remarks, Lucas said to the younger man, "Here's to pulling off this event successfully." He made a toasting gesture and added, "Bottoms up, Elliot."

Being the younger of the two, it was only courtesy for Elliot to finish the wine. He tipped his head back and gulped down every last drop of wine, then looked down again to see that Lucas had already finished his own drink.

The two men held onto their empty glasses as Lucas went on to say, "There's something I'd like to discuss with you, Elliot. Shall we head on to the second-floor lounge?"

Glancing over in Anastasia's direction and seeing that she was in the middle of conversing with a woman, Elliot turned to follow Lucas up the stairs.

Meanwhile, Aliona was so excited to see Elliot finish his glass of wine that her heart beat wildly in her chest. Her plan was finally going to succeed; she was but one step away from making Elliot hers tonight.

She greatly anticipated his performance later on. While he would pass out from the drink at first, the aftermath that followed was something to look forward to. She felt certain that he would please her in all the ways she had dreamed he would

The mere thought of that sent a pleasurable shiver down her spine as she pulled out her phone and ordered the person on the other line, "You can get rid of her now."

Anastasia was still talking about jewelry with the woman from earlier when two security guards suddenly walked up to her and said, "Sorry, miss, but we noticed that you weren't on the guestlist. I'm afraid we have to ask you to leave."

"My apologies. I came here with Young Master Elliot at the very last minute, which is why my name wasn't on the guest list," Anastasia explained.

The interruption provided the woman a chance to slither away, and Anastasia was left alone to deal with the guards. They insisted, "In that case, could you please come with us for verification purposes?"

Upon hearing this, Anastasia looked around the hall to search for Elliot's familiar figure. She didn't want to follow these two strange guards out of the hall, and when she couldn't find Elliot, she said stubbornly, "I'll find someone who can verify my attendance as Young Master Elliot's plus-one."

"Miss, we have reason to believe that you are here with suspicious ulterior motives. Please come with us," one of the security guards ordered as he reached out to grab her by the wrist.

Just then, she looked up in time to catch the pleased look on Aliona's gaze from across the room. It was then that she realized these two guards were acting on her orders. Throwing me out, I see, Anastasia mused. She had no reason to stay here anyway, but she didn't want to give Aliona the satisfaction.

At that moment, however, she saw Aliona turn to head up the stairs to the second floor.

Anastasia swiftly shoved the security guard's hand away from her wrist and blended into the crowd of guests. Then, she made her way over to the buffet restaurant from the other side of the hall.

She wanted to look for Elliot, but she had made one round through the vicinity and found him nowhere in sight.

In the lounge on the second floor, Elliot was listening to what Lucas had to say when he suddenly felt as if his blood was rushing to his head. He blinked hard, but when that did little to alleviate the dizziness, he glanced at Lucas and said, "Mr. Dora, my head is spinning."

"Why don't you get some rest, Elliot? Here, you can take a nap here and return to the party later," Lucas offered as he went over to help the younger man. As Elliot's conscious mind slowly slipped into the darkness, he lay down on the couch and dozed off within seconds.

Shortly after, Aliona pushed the door open and walked into the lounge. She looked at Elliot's unconscious form, and a devious but elated smirk curled on her lips. "Finally, he's mine."

Lucas glowered at her in disgust. "Take him upstairs. You've finally got what you asked for."

Aliona smiled as she drawled breezily, "Go down and entertain your guests. I don't want any of them bothering me tonight."

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Anastasia was trying to shake off the two security guards, but when she saw Aliona walking up the stairs, she wondered if Elliot was on the second floor as well.

After all, Aliona gravitated toward Elliot no matter where he went. Anastasia reckoned that he was on the second floor, so she made her way upstairs. However, even as she arrived in the corridor, she wasn't sure where to start looking; all the lounges on this floor were identical, and their doors were all firmly shut.

Just then, she caught sight of someone being hauled out of the lounge at the end of the corridor. While she was turning away, she could clearly see that the figure being carried away by two security guards was none other than Elliot.

What's wrong with him? She grew anxious immediately as her heart leaped to her throat. Elliot looked weak and drained, and he couldn't walk without the two guards supporting him under the

arms.

The next second, she saw Aliona emerge from the lounge before she followed the two guards toward the elevators. At once, Anastasia's stomach churned. What the hell? Did Aliona drug him?

A fiery rage seized Anastasia as she hurried over to the elevator lobby, where she saw that the elevator Aliona and her henchmen had presumably taken had stopped on the fifteenth floor. The banquet hall where the auction was being held was on the eighth, which meant there were a good seven floors that got in the way of Anastasia's rescue mission.

She pressed the button on the panel repeatedly, but no elevator came down for her. As of now, the only thing that flooded her mind were thoughts of how Aliona was close to claiming Elliot as her own.

Anastasia couldn't quite understand where her sudden possessiveness was coming from, but she was adamant to keep her man away from other women's clutches. With that in mind, she was even more determined to go up and stop Aliona from doing anything despicable to Elliot. What the hell is wrong with Elliot? Why does he keep getting drugged? Isn't it bad enough that he had slept with Hayley unintentionally five years ago? Now, he's about to fall victim to Aliona!

Finally, an elevator arrived on her floor. She hurried through the open doors and stared anxiously at the floor numbers displayed on the little screen in the elevator, feeling bile rising in her throat. Never had she imagined that an elevator could move so slowly. She couldn't believe that the fifteenth floor felt so far away. Is Aliona getting her hands all over Elliot now?

Meanwhile, Elliot had been carried into a suite and plopped down on the couch. The security guards had left, and right now, Aliona was sitting on the other side of the couch with a smirk on her lips as she appraised the sleeping man.

He was a work of art. She took in the chiseled angles and planes of his handsome face, and when her gaze fell upon the perfect curve of his lips, she swallowed. She wanted nothing more than to kiss him right now and see how he tasted.

However, she wasn't in a hurry to make a move on him, knowing that he wouldn't be able to resist seeking her out and pulling her into his arms the moment he woke up. All she had to do now was wait for him to regain his senses, and she wanted to make sure that the first thing he saw when he

opened his eyes was her in a suggestive outfit.

She went into the adjoining bedroom to put on the night-gown that she had prepared for this night. Once she put it on, no man would be able to resist the temptation of bedding her.

When Anastasia arrived on the fifteenth floor after what felt like ages, she stepped out of the elevator doors and surveyed the eerily quiet hallway. She didn't know which room Aliona was in but she was desperate enough to knock on every door until she found out.

She was going to do everything she could to stop Aliona's hideous acts before she got away with them. I have to save Elliot no matter what!

While the thought of this was amusing, it didn't change the fact that the man needed saving tonight. She was going to be his knight in shining armor for a change.

Anastasia began to knock on every door along the hallway. Seeing as there were several rooms left vacant for the night, she didn't get a response after knocking on a handful of doors. Once in a while, she would come across a room that was occupied, and presently, the woman who opened the door was astonished to see her. "Is there something I can help you with?"

"Sorry, I must have the wrong room. I apologize for disrupting your evening," Anastasia replied courteously.

Then, she went on knocking one door after the next. She couldn't care less about the embarrassment, and every time she knocked, she would dodge to the side of the door, afraid that Aliona would not open up if she saw her through the peephole.

At last, when she came to a stop at the fast room, Anastasia took a deep breath and rapped her knuckles against the door several times.

This was Aliona's suite. She frowned when she heard the knock, and she wondered with no small amount of disgruntlement who would bother her at this crucial time. Then, she thought that perhaps one of her henchmen needed to speak with her, so she crossed the room to answer the door.

She looked through the peephole, but when she saw that nobody was on the other side, she turned to walk away. Just then, another series of knocks came, and she impatiently threw open the door without checking this time.

Only one person was standing out in the hallway,

Anastasia let out a breath of relief when she saw Aliona at the door, dressed in nothing but a suggestive nightgown. I've found you.

Aliona flushed as she demanded hotly, "What are you doing here, Anastasia?" As soon as the words left her mouth, she belatedly realized what was happening and quickly reached to close the door.

However, Anastasia was quicker. She slammed her palm against the door before it shut all the way and marched into the room.

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"Get out of my room, Anastasia," Aliona thundered.

Anastasia took one look at Elliot's sleeping form on the couch and pointed at him. She said, "Oh, I will leave, and I'm taking him with me!"

"Elliot got drunk and fell asleep in my room. What does any of this have to do with you? Leave on your own!" Aliona barked as she reached out to grab Anastasia by the wrist and tried to drag her out the door. "Get out!"

As she pulled away from her, Anastasia countered angrily, "Did he really get drunk, or did you spike his drink to try and set him up for your own schemes? As a woman, I'm disgusted by you."

Aliona immediately pulled out her phone to call for backup, but when Anastasia saw this, she snatched the phone away and asked snidely, "Oh, trying to call for help to throw me out, are you?"

"Give me back my phone, Anastasia!" Aliona ground out. There was an icy fury in her eyes as she eyed Anastasia murderously. This annoying pest is always trying to foil my plans!

Without another word, Anastasia threw the phone on the ground and stepped on it with her heel, breaking and shattering the screen.

"How dare you destroy my phone?!" Aliona screeched, refusing to believe that Anastasia had such a feral side to her even though she had seen it with her own eyes.

Indeed, Anastasia's rage was sufficiently stoked this evening. Just thinking about the despicable things Aliona had planned to do to Elliot sent unbridled anger rushing through her. With a defiant gaze, she pointed out snarkily, "I can pay for the damages if you'd like." Then, she assessed the nightgown Aliona was wearing and sneered, "Why bother wearing a nightgown when you could save time and wear nothing instead?"

"This is between me and Elliot, Anastasia. Stay out of it! What right do you have to come in here and demand to leave with him?" Aliona shrieked. Now that she couldn't call for backup, she was going to have to chase Anastasia out of here herself.

“Even if I was here as a friend, I still wouldn’t let Elliot be taken advantage of by the disgusting likes of you!” Anastasia snapped righteously.

‘I’ll call security if you don’t get out right now.’

“Might as well, seeing as I’m going to call the police on you,” Anastasia spat as she took out her phone to make a call.

At the sight of this, Aliona faltered and quickly rushed up to her. “I told you to stay out of this!”

Anastasia threw her phone and purse aside, then stormed forward to meet Aliona halfway. Soon, the two women were embroiled in a vicious fight. Aliona got slapped in the face before she could even snatch up Anastasia’s phone, and she couldn’t believe that she had just been struck.

“Did you just hit me?” she screeched.

“How very astute of you,” Anastasia drawled sarcastically. She glanced over at the man lying on the couch. If she hadn’t gotten here in time, Aliona would have had her way with him.

Aliona raised her hand to fight back, but Anastasia clutched her wrist. She had grown up fighting with Erica, and her experience put her at an advantage. Aliona, on the other hand, had been raised and coddled like a princess by Riley, which left her helpless in a physical brawl.

Presently, she let out a piercing shriek. She was like a cat with all its fur standing on its back as she hysterically launched herself at Anastasia.

Having not anticipated this, Anastasia toppled backward onto the ground, but when she retaliated, she was like an angered lioness.

She reached up and grabbed a handful of Aliona’s hair, pulling it with as much force as she could summon.

A sharp cry escaped Aliona as tears sprang to her eyes, feeling as if her hair was going to be pulled from her scalp. “Let go of me, you b*tch! Let go!”

However, Anastasia did not let go. Instead, she pinned Aliona to the ground while keeping a firm grip on her hair.

Not wanting to lose, Aliona reached up to grab Anastasia’s hair as well, thereby clawing off the silver comb that held her hair in place.

As Anastasia's long hair tumbled wildly around her face, both women were locked in a fierce battle, screaming as one tried to push the other to the ground.

Neither of them realized that the man on the couch had been awakened by their shrill cries. Elliot sat up groggily with one hand pressed to his forehead, only to see the commotion taking place in the space next to the couch. The two women were tangled together in a violent fight that was only escalating with every passing second. When he heard a familiar voice amidst the screams and taunts, his eyes widened.

"Stop!" he ordered hoarsely.

The two women stopped immediately as his voice cut above theirs.

Anastasia and Aliona released each other, though she was visibly more bewildered than Anastasia.

If one had to pick a winner, Anastasia would undoubtedly be a victor in this brawl. She had dealt considerable damage to Aliona, whose hair had come close to being pulled out of her scalp. There were even claw marks on her skin, and the delicate straps of her nightgown had been ripped off, barely holding up the only item of clothing she had on.

Presently, Anastasia tried to pull her tangled long hair into submission. She grabbed her purse and went up to Elliot to help him to his feet, saying, "Now that you're awake, let's go!"

The moment her hand touched his, it sent an electric current through Elliot. He narrowed his eyes slightly and suddenly felt heat rising in him, threatening to consume him whole.

Chapter 408

It was as if there was a raging fire burning in Elliot, and it didn't feel like it was dying down anytime soon. It was then that he realized he had been set up.

At that moment, Aliona reached out to stop Anastasia while seething, "You can't take him away now. He needs a woman!"

"And he has one—that's me. He has no need for you," Anastasia retorted furiously as she held onto Elliot to keep him upright.

Upon hearing this, Elliot's eyes glimmered happily. She's going to save me, he thought.

"Don't go, Elliot!" Aliona cried out pleadingly, reaching out for him.

However, one baleful look on his part was all it took to make her falter. He glowered at her warningly as he bit out in disgust, "Don't touch me." He didn't need to think to know that she was the one who had drugged him tonight.

“Come on,” Anastasia prompted as she opened the door and led him out. Then, she fished out her phone and called Rey, asking him to meet them at the hotel entrance.

Back in the suite, Aliona was close to unraveling with hysteria. She couldn’t believe that her plans had once again been thwarted by Anastasia.

Meanwhile, Anastasia hauled Elliot into the elevator and propped him up against one wall. Now that her hands were free, she tried to comb her hair into submission with her fingers and straightened her slightly crumpled dress. When she tilted her head and saw the imprint on the alabaster skin of her neck, she cursed, “Damn it.”

Elliot’s heart twisted as he assessed the damage on her. He then asked weakly, “Does it hurt?”

She shook her head and turned to look at him glumly. “You ought to thank me for saving you before you became Aliona’s plaything in bed.”

He gaped at her speechlessly. With superhuman effort, he pushed through the fire that was threatening to consume him and asked in a strained voice, “You got into a fight with Aliona to defend my honor?”

“Are you implying that I shouldn’t have done that to save you? You just want to sleep with Aliona, don’t you?” Anastasia countered sharply as she gave him an accusatory look.

“The only person I want is you, Anastasia,” Elliot forced out almost breathlessly as he leaned against the elevator wall, too weak to stand properly on his feet. In a show of his genuine desire for her, he added, “Let’s switch hotels. I need you.”

“Switch hotels? Fat chance! We’re going to the hospital.” She had only just said this when the elevator doors opened, and she snaked an arm around his waist to haul him out.

He was evidently disgruntled as he muttered, “I thought you were going to sacrifice yourself to save me from distress.”

“You’ve overestimated the extent of my selflessness,” she pointed out sarcastically. As if I would ever think about doing that, Elliott

Just then, Rey hurried up to them, and when he saw how unwell Elliot looked, he urged. “What happened to President Presgrave?”

“He was drugged. Quick, we have to get him to the hospital!” Anastasia said.

Upon hearing this, Rey hastily helped Elliot over to the car.

When Elliot had settled into the backseat, he could feel the heat in him grow relentless. Rey was behind the wheel, and Anastasia was seated close to a man whose smoldering gaze was fixed on her.

She sensed the desire that was pulsating through him, and when she turned to check on him, he lunged forward and kissed her.

“It hurts... Help me, Anastasia,” he pleaded in a low and husky voice.

Anastasia quickly pulled down the screen that separated the front and backseat of the car while trying to shove the man away from her. “Just hold on a little bit longer, Elliot. We’re almost at the hospital.”

However, with the effects of the drug peaking in him, waiting was no longer a viable option for him. He desperately needed relief now.

“Elliot, just hang on a little bit-”

She was cut off when he leaned forward and kissed her hungrily,

In the driver’s seat, Rey stepped on the gas and weaved through the lanes on the road as he sped toward the hospital. He didn’t want Elliot to make any mistakes out of impulse tonight, or else Anastasia might hold a grudge against him.

Having sought relief in the kiss, Elliot visibly calmed down in the spacious backseat. He managed to recover a sliver of self- control as he murmured in a pained and hoarse voice, “Anastasia... I need you...”

Fortunately, there was a hospital nearby. After Rey pulled up at the entrance, he tapped on the window to indicate that they had arrived. Anastasia shoved Elliot and his restless hands away from her and said, “Come on, Elliot, pull yourself together. We’re already here at the hospital.”

Rey opened the car door for them, and Elliot obligingly stepped down from the car. Anastasia took her purse and followed suit before she walked with him to the doctor’s office.

A series of procedures later, he was put up in a hospital room and hooked to an IV. As the sedative worked through his system, Elliot was like a tamed beast, and he eventually drifted off into a deep slumber.

It was only then that Anastasia finally relaxed. She leaned into the seat next to the bed tiredly and thought with dismay about how she had not unleashed her full force on Aliona during the fight earlier. There was residual adrenaline thrumming in her veins, reminding her that she ought

teach that wretched girl a hard lesson.

She was pulled from her thoughts when Rey, having sorted out the paperwork at the counter, returned to ask, "Miss Tillman, would you like to go home?"

"No, I'm good. I'll stay here and look after him."

"Very well, then. I'll be right outside, so just call me if you need anything."

Chapter 409

Anastasia nodded wearily. She gazed at Elliot pensively while he slept soundly under the dim glow of the lights. The sedative had evidently overpowered the effects of the drug from earlier and the IV solution was being transfused slowly through a tube that was attached to his strong arm by a short needle.

As she watched him, she began to wonder if Aliona had planned on forcing herself onto him before making him take responsibility later.

The plan was a good one, admittedly, but unfortunately for Aliona, Anastasia caught on to it and thwarted it in time.

Anastasia was incredibly relieved that she had attended the benefit gala with him tonight. Had she not been there, he would have fallen into Aliona's evil clutches. She had come upon him lying unconscious in Aliona's hotel suite, and with the effects of the drug snatching away his voice of reason, she couldn't help wondering if he and Aliona would have gone all the way had she not intervened.

Eventually, she fell asleep. She wasn't sure how much time had passed when she felt herself being picked up and pulled into a warm and comforting embrace.

It was already 3.00AM when Elliot woke up to see that the girl had dozed off on the couch with his suit jacket draped over her. He felt his gut wrench, and he rose to carry her over to the bed.

The effects of the drug had worn off by then. When he saw the claw mark that ran along the delicate skin of her neck and her tousled hair, his heart twisted.

As he sighed, he blamed himself for having put her through the tiresome ordeal of saving him.

Meanwhile, back at the hotel, Aliona was fuming in her suite after her plan was ruined. She wasted no time lashing out at the two security guards who had let Anastasia out of their sight. As things were, she did not stand a chance to get close to Elliot, much less claim him as her own. In fact, she wouldn't be surprised if he hated her with a passion.

"Miss, should we bring you to the hospital to get your face treated?" the bodyguard asked out of concern.

Naturally, Aliona had seen the imprint on her cheek where Anastasia had slapped her earlier. The scratch marks all over her body were even more jarring under the light. She couldn't believe how savage and persistent Anastasia had been during the fight. She had only been wearing a thin nightgown when the brawl happened, which exposed most of her skin to Anastasia's vicious attacks.

"That wretched little b*tch!" Aliona bit out as resentment and rage bumed in her eyes. "I won't let her get away with this!"

In the hospital, Anastasia stirred from her sleep when it was slightly past dawn. She opened her eyes slowly, only to meet the dark and amused gaze of the man sitting next to the bed.

She instinctively covered her face with her hands. Suddenly, she registered where she was. Wait, how did I even end up in bed? He must have carried me over from the couch!

I've been staring at you for the past half an hour. It's a little late for you to hide your face now, don't you think?" Elliot teased as a low chuckle escaped him.

She flushed and let her hands drop, then turned to look at him with her clear and unwavering gaze as she asked, "Are you okay now?"

"I am." he reassured with a smile. He reached out to stroke her hair, but when his hand came away with a few broken strands of it, he asked in a pained voice, "Does your scalp still hurt?"

Of course it does! Aliona practically tried to weed my hair out with her possur hands! "Not really," she lied nonetheless as she lifted the covers off her and got out of bed. She was still wearing the dress from last night, though it was a little wrinkled now. After leaving the hospital, Rey dropped them off at Elliot's villa, whereupon Anastasia hopped into the shower, put on a change of clothes, and went downstairs.

Presently, Elliot was on a call with Lucas. "Mr. Dora, I just called to let you know that your daughter, Aliona, spiked the drink you gave me last night," he said unhappily.

"What? Are you alright, Elliot? I know Aliona can be impulsive, but she never should have gone this far no matter how much she likes you!" Guilt worked its way into Lucas' tone as he added on the other line, "Please don't hold it against her. She's only young, and she didn't think before she acted."

'Ill let this incident go, but only because 'Ill let you and I are on good terms. That said, I don't ever want to see your daughter again," Elliot said icily, the anger in his voice evident.

"I'm sorry, Elliot. I'm truly, truly sorry that she put you through this," Lucas humbled himself and apologized profusely.

Elliot hung up the phone and turned to see that Anastasia had already come down the stairs. He reigned in his anger and resumed his affable and charming disposition as he asked, "Are you hungry? How about I make you something to eat?"

ISO

Anastasia gaped at him. "You know how to cook?"

"Nothing fancy, but I can do a mean steak."

"Alright then, I'd very much like to try your cooking."

He went into the kitchen to get started on lunch for her. For a moment, it was as if she had become a distinguished guest, and he was the personal chef who would tend to her palate.

He pulled the dark gray apron over his black shirt and matching trousers. He might be cooking, but it seemed as if elegance did not abandon him even while he was operating the stove.

He kicked off Anastasia's dining experience with a hot cup of coffee. "Enjoy, Miss Tillman," he said teasingly with a playful smile.

She sat on the couch and reached for the coffee, indulging in the personal service that he rendered her. As she nodded, she brought the cup to her lips and took a sip, pleasantly surprised to find that it had the sweet aroma that she preferred in her coffee.

Chapter 410

"The coffee's good," Anastasia praised heartily as she set her cup down.

Elliot was in the kitchen slicing up fruits for the salad, and next to the chopping board was the raw steak that he planned on searing for Anastasia.

The villa that was tucked halfway up the hill boasted glass walls that offered a full view of the gorgeous scenery outside. Elliot had put on some lighthearted music, filling the room with an idyllic and romantic air.

The steak he made was aromatic and tender, and coupled with the fruit salad, he managed to pull off an impressive yet simple meal.

"Tell me about how you saved me last night," he said, curiosity getting the better of him.

Anastasia recounted the events of last night briefly. Then, she frowned as she asked, "You're usually bright; how did you get tricked into letting your guard down?"

“Aliona had her father pass me the wine, and I didn’t think much of it when I gulped it down,” Elliot confessed.

“Looks like you’ll have to be careful when you’re outside of your home. There are plenty of women who would do despicable things just to make you climb into bed with them,” she warned darkly, thinking that even men weren’t safe in modern society and thus needed to learn to defend themselves.

Men like Elliot, in particular, with their deadly good looks and insurmountable wealth, ought to have their guards up most times.

Naturally, Elliot would not allow the incident to repeat itself. He didn’t want to see Aliona’s face ever again.

Presently, he teased as mischief glittered in his eyes, saying, “I wouldn’t have minded losing my honor at all if you were the one who had spiked my drink last night and taken me to bed.”

A look of disgust flashed across Anastasia’s features as she countered, “Underhanded methods like that are not my forte.” After all, she would never stoop so low.

He knew that, but he still believed that he would have willingly leaped into the fire if she had been the one who started it.

It was noon when Nigel dropped by the villa with Jared in tow. The little one had taken a strong liking to Elliot’s abode, and he wasted no time in going up to his mother as he pleaded, “Mommy, can we please stay in Mr. Presgrave’s house for a few days? Just a few days!”

Anastasia thought about the threatening phone call she had received from the male escort the other day and shuddered. She wanted her son to stay someplace safe, and now that winter break was upon them, she decided to give him some time off school.

“Very well,” she relented with a nod. “As long as Mr. Presgrave agrees to let us stay, then we will.”

At once, Jared ran over to Elliot, who was speaking to Nigel in the drawing room.

It didn’t take long before the little guy hurried back to his mother and declared happily. “Mr. Presgrave said we could stay here for as long as we like!”

SEO

“Very well then, we’ll stay. However, you have to promise to be on your best behavior.”

‘I promise, Mommy! I’ll be on my very best behavior!’

After a while, Elliot and Nigel walked up to them, with the latter saying that he had to leave to attend to some things.

Having seen Nigel off, Elliot brought Jared out to play catch. That was when Anastasia received a call from Francis telling her to drop by the company on Monday.

Anastasia had decided to go into Tillman Constructions to familiarize herself with the management of the company, and she couldn't give up the endeavor halfway through.

Meanwhile, over at Summit Mansion, Hayley looked up at Daniel as he walked in and asked, "Has

everything been settled?"

"I don't think you should lie to President Presgrave like this, Miss Seymour," Daniel pointed out sullenly.

"Why not?" She sounded unhappy at being chided by an assistant-type, and she added snarkily, "I'm asking you if the matter has been settled."

"Yes, it has. The private hospital has agreed to cooperate with you," Daniel replied. Then, he handed her the forged medical report for a miscarriage. "Here's what you asked for."

Elated, she took the report and checked through the details. When she saw that the dates and time stamps were all in check, she beamed and said, "I must say, Daniel, you certainly know how to carry out your duties."

"I'll be leaving now if there's nothing else you need," he replied curtly.

"Remember to keep this a secret between us," she emphasized.

"I know." With that, he turned to leave.

A menacing gleam flashed in her eyes. She was sure that if Anastasia had given birth to a child and warranted such lavish favors and affections on Elliot's part, then she would receive the same, if not better treatment too. She wanted him to know that she had gone through an abortion five years ago to add to the guilt that he was already feeling toward her.

Now that she had the sonogram and the report detailing the miscarriage in hand, her lie was iron-clad. There was no way Elliot wouldn't believe her.

She took a deep breath and dialed his number.

"Hello?" Elliot greeted when he picked up the line.

“Elliot, it’s me. Do you think you could come to see me for a bit?”

“Why?”

“I... Pm not feeling toa well.”

“Are you sick?”

Hayley hummed in response. “It’s a long-time illness that acts up every winter.” She deliberately lowered her voice as she said feebly, “Elliot, there’s something that I’ve been hiding from you all this time, but I think I should tell you the truth now.”

Chapter 411

“What is it?” Elliot asked.

“Five years ago, we... we had a baby together.”

Elliot had one hand in his pocket as he stood in front of the French windows in the study, and when he heard what Hayley said over the phone, his eyes widened. “What are you talking about?”

“Our baby didn’t manage to survive, but I was looking through my stuff and I found the sonogram from all those years ago. Our baby.” Hayley let out a heartbreaking sob. “I lost the baby at three months... I’m so sorry for not being able to keep him.”

He was shell-shocked. He never thought that he had hurt Hayley more than she let on five years ago, and he didn’t ever expect her to have gone through a miscarriage.

“I didn’t know that I was pregnant at the time. I was always so overworked and tired, and by the time I found out I was expecting a baby, the fetal heartbeat had stopped.” She was crying even more mournfully now on the other line as she went on to say, “It was all my fault. I didn’t know I was having a baby. If I did, I would have done everything I could to bring the baby into this world.” “Stop crying,” Elliot urged gently. “That’s enough now. Don’t beat yourself up over this; maybe this is just fate at work.”

“I get really cold whenever winter comes around. The doctor mentioned that it’s a side effect from the miscarriage. Elliot, I want to see you, right now..” Hayley pleaded, “Can you please come over and see me?”

He frowned. “Right now?”

“Yes, right now. I’m really, really unwell, and I want to see you. Please,” she begged.

“Okay, I’ll go over now,” he agreed. He couldn’t believe that Hayley had suffered a miscarriage that left her with such brutal side effects.

Presently, it was evening time, and Anastasia was resting in her bedroom when Elliot pushed the door open to come in. "I need to head out for a while. Mrs. Collins will come by later to make dinner."

"Oh, okay," Anastasia replied with a nod.

Elliot's dilemma was clear in his obsidian eyes as he gazed at her. He didn't want her to know that he was going over to Hayley's place because he didn't want to hurt her.

"What time will you be back?" she pressed.

"A little later than usual."

"Alright then. Go ahead." She didn't want to intrude too much upon his personal life either.

He gave her a long look, then turned and left.

Meanwhile, over at Summit Mansion, Hayley flew into her room and sat down in front of the

nity. She happily grabbed her cosmetic bag and began to put on her make-up so that she looked ready to welcome Elliot.

The swelling and bruises on her face from the plastic surgery had healed over, and having gone through a rigorous skin treatment, she was glowing beautifully under the lights. A delighted smile curled on her lips, and she was entirely happy with how the procedure had turned out even though she bore some semblance to Anastasia now.

She carefully applied her make-up to create an effortless and natural look, then ran toward her wardrobe to pull on a stunning negligee that revealed just the right amount of skin. After that, she grabbed a white fur coat and draped it over herself to add a luxurious touch to her overall appearance.

When she was done, she sat on the couch and waited for Elliot to show up.

As night devoured the land, a black sedan drove into the front yard of the mansion. Elliot's elegant and towering figure stepped out of the vehicle. He was dressed in all-black, and there was an imposing air of nobility about him as he made his way up the path to the front door.

Hayley was peering at him through the window with unadulterated adoration. She had been wanting to claim this man as her own, in life and in bed, ever since she laid eyes on him. At the same time, she was admittedly flustered and nervous, she wasn't sure if he would take too kindly to her new face, but at the thought of how men often fell for beauties, her desire to be loved by him overpowered her fear and uncertainty.

Elliot opened the front door, which had been left unlocked, and walked into the house. He was greeted at once by the sight of Hayley lounging on the couch in the living room, the dim lighting overhead casting a warm glow over her skin as the thin blanket slid halfway off her torso. Just then, she looked up slowly, and her eyes lit up when she registered his arrival.

Upon taking a good look at her face, he stopped in his tracks. His eyes narrowed slightly as he appraised her, and for a moment, he couldn't believe what he was seeing.

He could see traces of Anastasia's delicate features on Hayley's face. Shock rippled through him as he belatedly realized that she had gone for plastic surgery. Just so she could look like Anastasia, he thought grimly.

"What's wrong, Elliot? Do you not like the way I look now?" Hayley looked crestfallen. "I know how much you like Anastasia, so I... I did my best to look like her. I did this for you. Please don't push me away after this!" She sounded like she might cry any time, though she was subtly pleading for his compliments.

Chapter 412

"Plastic surgery comes with its risks, and there isn't a need for you to go to such lengths." Elliot pointed out as he sat down on the couch across from Hayley. He couldn't help finding it unsettling to see her looking like this.

"All I ever want is for you to love and notice me like how you do to Anastasia," Hayley muttered demurely as she bit down on her lower lip.

He frowned at this. "You really didn't have to get so much work done on your face just to suit my preferences."

She felt gutted. He wasn't behaving the way she thought he would at all, and he was still treating her with the same indifference as he did before she went for plastic surgery.

Without another word, she picked up a docket from the table and handed it to him, saying, "All the information about our baby is in there, Elliot. Take a look for yourself. I know it's been five years, but I... I still haven't moved past it."

He rose to take the docket, then opened it to pull out the sonogram. It had Hayley's name and the date written on it, and the timestamp showed that it was taken about three months after the incident at Abyss Club.

"Take care of yourself and rest up," Elliot said as he set the documents aside. When he looked up at Hayley again, it was with compassion and apology. "I'm sorry for putting you through the pain and the heartache. I'll hire a nutritionist to come by tomorrow to curate a special diet for you while you're recuperating."

At that moment, Hayley let out a low hiss of pain and doubled down as her hand pressed down on her abdomen. "It hurts..."

He stood up immediately and crossed over to her, urging, "Would you like to see a doctor?"

She clutched his arm and pulled him down on the couch, and he did as he was prompted. Then, she nuzzled into his embrace while he was distracted and snaked her arms around his waist, hugging him tight as she mumbled, "I'm cold, Elliot. Can you hold me, please?"

Elliot's gaze darkened as he reached for the blanket and draped it over her shoulders. He then offered flatly, "I'll go and turn up the thermostat."

"No! I just need your warmth," she insisted, still clinging onto him as her eyes fluttered closed. She wanted nothing but to breathe in more of his scent.

He stiffened before patting her shoulder awkwardly. Being touched by any woman other than Anastasia irked him to no end.

Suddenly, Hayley grabbed her phone from the coffee table and clicked into the camera. Then, she took a picture of herself snuggled up in Elliot's arms. She gazed up at him and explained, "Just so I can take a look at you whenever I miss you and you aren't around."

"I'll go and turn up the thermostat," he bit out coldly as he shoved her firmly aside. He marched over to the control panel on the wall where the thermostat was and turned up the heat in the

living room

Hayley stood up from the couch and let her fur coat slide down her shoulders deliberately, revealing the red negligee that she wore underneath. It revealed her skin in all the right places, and it was so short that she might as well be naked. She gave Elliot a helpless look, seemingly flustered by the loss of her fur coat.

At present, the sheer amount of skin she was revealing would have prompted any other man to abandon all sense of reason and rush up to her to devour every bit of her stunning, fragile beauty. —

"Elliot, I'm cold..." She was like a child who couldn't even bend down to pick up her own coat. All she did was stand there and stare at Elliot imploringly, silently willing him to save her from distress.

However, he was focused on turning up the thermostat, and when he finally turned to look at her, it was with an impassive expression that matched the frosty gleam in his eyes.

She dispensed with subtlety as she begged, "Elliot, hold me! Please!"

Having turned up the thermostat, he returned to her side and picked up the coat before handing it to her, swiftly blocking out the ample amount of décolletage that she was showing. In a cold and crisp voice, he said, "Don't bother using such tricks on me. A woman is only ever desirable and lovable when she loves and values herself first, got it?" He did not fall for her seductive charms and decided to lecture her instead.

It seemed as if the novelty of romance was lost on him.

Hayley was stunned by his rejection, and when she saw him grab his phone off the coffee table, she demanded, "Are you leaving?"

Needless to say, Elliot had already figured out the true reason she asked him to come over, and if seduction was all she had planned for tonight, he didn't think he had to stay here a moment longer. "If you're lonely and dying for company, you're welcome to bring home any man you want," he pointed out sardonically before he turned to head for the door.

You're the only one I like, Elliot! Can't you just stay with me for a night? I'll give you anything you want!" Hayley cried as she shamelessly and desperately chased after him.

Chapter 413

However, Elliot had already slid into his car and closed the door. Hayley hurtled toward him, but just as she was about to reach the door, he backed out of the driveway smoothly and sped off into the night, leaving her shivering in the cold breeze,

The fur coat on her kept her warm, but there was no thawing of the icicles that pierced her heart following his harsh rejection. The courage she had summoned just to go through with the plastic surgery was all for naught; Elliot wasn't impressed by her new face at all, nor did he glance at it for even longer than a few seconds.

She couldn't understand why this was happening. He likes the way Anastasia looks, doesn't he? I've had all this work done just to look like her, so why am I still not good enough?

Gritting her teeth, she fished out her phone with a malicious gleam in her eyes and selected the picture she had taken earlier before sending it to Anastasia.

With her chest rising and falling rapidly, she screamed into the night, "If I can't have you, Elliot, then neither can Anastasia!" She stormed back into the house and plopped down on the couch, grabbing the bottle of wine she had been drinking before Elliot's arrival, and threw her head back as she gulped down the contents. However, at that moment, her eyes widened when she realized that the wine had lost its familiar tangy fragrance, and it seemed like it had been diluted with water.

Hayley stared at the wine in astonishment. Have I left it exposed to the air for too long? She filled half a glass with the wine and drank it, only to find that it was as tasteless as tap water.

Her hand flew to her throat as her mind scrambled for an answer. What's happening? Why can't I taste the wine?

As panic seized her, she hurried to the fridge and rummaged the drawer for a handful of cherries. She didn't bother washing them as she shoved them into her mouth. The sweetness of the cherries, which she was sure she had tasted just the day before, had been severely diluted, barely coating her tongue. It was as if her taste buds were degenerating.

She started to grow anxious as she ran into the kitchen. She had never cooked here, but the servants had stocked up the salt and sugar. Having found a bag of salt, she tore it open and shoveled a handful of it into her mouth. The saltiness ought to make her cringe and shudder, but she could not taste it at all, and she only became incredibly thirsty afterward.

"My taste buds!" She let out a frantic shriek. Then, she crouched down on the floor and clutched her throat. She couldn't believe that the plastic surgery had caused her to lose her sense of taste.

Without wasting another second, she dashed out of the house and into the garage, driving over to the hospital.

Meanwhile, Anastasia was curled up in bed with a good book, and she had spent the better part of the last few hours without her phone. Now that she wanted to check the time, she began to search for her phone.

Elliot's villa was huge, and it would take a while for her to find the phone she had so casually set aside somewhere.

It was only after she ventured down into the living room that she found her phone on the table next to the couch. She sat down to check the time, only to see that she had received a new message

She clicked into it, and the contents made her eyes widen in shock. The text was sent from an unfamiliar number, and the picture that came with it was one of a woman, who bore a striking ... resemblance to her, snuggled up in Elliot's arms.

Anastasia did not miss the fact that Elliot was wearing the same clothes he had when he left the house earlier. When he said he was heading out, did he really mean he was going to some other woman's place?

She glanced at the woman in the picture again. Aside from the strong resemblance they shared, she was a little stunned to see that there was something unnervingly familiar about the woman.

Anastasia had no idea that Hayley had gone under the knife. More importantly, it had been a major procedure. It was only normal that Anastasia could not recognize her underneath all that make-up and raunchy outfit.

How did this woman get my number anyway? She even sent me this picture to rile me up!

She tossed her phone aside as frustration and anger welled up in her. Just then, she heard the sound of a car, specifically Elliot's, pulling up outside.

She fixed her murderous gaze on the door, and sure enough, it wasn't long before Elliot walked past the threshold with his car keys in hand.

Anastasia narrowed her eyes and crossed her arms as she stared at him like he was the guilty cat that ate the canary.

Catching sight of this, Elliot felt a chill run down his spine as he asked, "What's wrong?"

He had been happy to see that she was waiting on the couch for him, but when he caught the murderous look in her eyes, he began to wonder what he had done to offend her.

"Nothing," she bit out coldly. She smiled, but it did not reach her eyes as she drawled, "Did you have fun, President Presgrave?" He raised a brow at her and countered, "Did you wait up for me on purpose?"

"Don't flatter yourself; I only came down for a drink," she said humorlessly as she rose to pour a glass of water for herself.

"I want a drink too. Pour one for me?"

"Unless your arms or your legs are broken, do it yourself!" Anastasia snapped as she took the glass of water she had poured for herself and went up the stairs.

Chapter 414

Downstairs, Elliot gaped after Anastasia wordlessly

For some reason, he felt like he was being abandoned. Women were perpetually unsolvable mysteries, and not even Elliot, with his businessman brilliance and intelligence, could figure them out.

He did not bother pouring himself a glass of water and followed Anastasia up the stairs instead. When he got to her bedroom doorway, he saw that she was seated on the couch on the second floor and asked, "Where's Jared?"

"Playing Legos," she answered coolly, deliberately avoiding his gaze as she flipped through her half-read book.

At that moment, Elliot saw the glass of water on the table next to her and reached out to take it. However, just as he brought it up to his lips, she said curtly, "Don't touch my glass."

Seeing as he had already begun to drink from the glass, he gulped down a mouthful of water. He then narrowed his eyes as he asked, "Why not?"

When she saw that he had taken a sip, she shrugged and said, "Fine, drink the whole glass of water. I'll just go downstairs and pour myself another one!"

She was making it sound like he carried some infectious disease. We've already kissed multiple times, and all of a sudden she doesn't want me drinking from her glass? He was baffled as he sat down across from her. His piercing gaze was inquisitive as he asked, "I drank your water. Why should that stop you from drinking the rest of it?"

He had sensed her hostility from the moment he came home, and her passive-aggressiveness was making him nervous, not to mention frustrated.

"I don't want to talk about it," she muttered in annoyance, not wanting to say anything more after that.

"Why not?" he pressed. He was never one to beat around the bush be it in business deals or conversations. He would much rather have an open discussion when it came to solving problems, and he wanted to have a solution as soon as possible. "Is there a problem between us that I should know about?"

"You know what, I never should have saved you last night! Sure, what Aliona did was despicable and disgusting, but it wasn't as if you would be at a loss, right? You'd only have to put in some physical labor, but that's about it! She's the one who would have gotten the short end of the stick! Right?" Anastasia blurted out all of a sudden.

This only made Elliot more puzzled. However, before he could say anything, she went on to ask in all seriousness, "Did you think I was butting into your personal affairs last night and you secretly blame me for it?"

It was then that he realized they didn't just have a problem; they were having a crisis. Otherwise, she wouldn't take such a feisty tone with him at present.

Everything had been fine when he left home earlier, which meant something must have happened in between that made her lash out at him like this. He softened and asked in hopes of settling the matter amicably, "Anastasia, tell me what happened."

She took her phone and pulled up the picture she had received from the unfamiliar number earlier, showing it to him as she snapped, "Next time you decide to fool around behind my back, find a woman who doesn't look so eerily similar to me. It makes me sick."

Elliot narrowed his eyes slightly when he saw the picture. I can't believe Hayley sent it to her! —

In a grave tone, he asked, "Anastasia, do you know who she is?"

"What, have I seen her before or something?" Anastasia was admittedly astonished by his question. She didn't think that the person he was fooling around with was someone she knew.

"That's Hayley."

"What?" Anastasia gasped. "That's Hayley?!"

That explained why she had found the woman so familiar yet so strange at the same time. She never expected Hayley to have gone under the knife and gotten all this work done just to look like her. The thought of this made her sick to the stomach; the person she hated and was disgusted by the most had decided to take on her face!

"She went for plastic surgery, and apparently, the procedure was done with your looks in mind," Elliot elaborated, sounding equally unsettled and queasy.

"Well, she certainly snuggled up real close to you, didn't she?" Anastasia mumbled unhappily.

"Don't get the wrong idea. I've never felt anything but guilt toward her, and I don't intend to let that progress into anything else," he explained in a low voice as he stared at her imploringly as if silently begging for forgiveness.

Naturally, Anastasia knew that Hayley had set this up and taken the picture just to spite her. Besides, if she were to look really closely, she could tell that Hayley was the only one who was doing all the hugging; Elliot did not reciprocate her gesture at all. Wait! Why am I getting jealous here? She isn't someone I should be jealous of! Anastasia flushed as she pursed her lips. Then, she grew a little embarrassed as she offered sheepishly, "President Presgrave, would you like a glass of water? I'll go and pour you one right now!"

Upon seeing the sudden shift in her demeanor, Elliot knew that her anger had waned. He had to admit that the furious side of her piqued a certain fear and anxiousness that he had never felt before.

Anastasia, on the other hand, was not envious of the fact that Hayley's plastic surgery had been a success. After all, procedures like these often required a severe alteration of one's bones, muscles, and nerves. There was no telling if there would be any long-lasting damages that came from this.

Chapter 415

"You're not upset with me anymore, are you?" Elliot got up and sat beside her with a hint of tentativeness in his eyes.

"I'm not upset! I did say some harsh words just now, but don't take it to heart!" Anastasia turned around and realized that she had no right to treat him that way.

"I'm going back to the room." Anastasia wanted to go back to the room and have some alone time.

However, as soon as she got up, a strong arm grabbed her wrist and yanked her down. In an instant, Anastasia fell onto Elliot's lap and into his arms.

"You." Anastasia squinted her eyes, wondering what he was up to.

"Do you still hate me?"

"I don't hate you!" Anastasia lied through her teeth.

"That glass of water," reminded Elliot.

"That doesn't mean I hate you," Anastasia explained quickly.

"I don't believe it unless you prove it to me."

"How should I prove it to you?" She felt that there was nothing to prove.

"I have a way," said Elliot in a low voice as he clasped the back of her head and kissed her thin lips.

Anastasia's mind instantly went blank. How could he kiss her whenever he wanted to? Could he at least respect her?

After a passionate kiss, Elliot proved with facts that she did not despise him. Only then did he let go of her in satisfaction.

Without uttering another word, Anastasia grabbed her phone and entered the room. She

needed some quiet time to herself! She should think about the consequences first before messing with him next time.

The next morning, Anastasia received a call from Felicia while she was still in a groggy state.

“Anastasia, have you seen the news? Alice has been sentenced to five years in prison.”

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Hearing that, Anastasia’s eyes immediately shot open, and she was now wide awake.

“Five years?”

“Yeah! President Presgrave seems to have shown his temper this time, but Alice dug her own grave. She didn’t just ruin her own future but was even sentenced to five years in prison. She deserves it, though. Besides her, Jacqueline has also been sentenced to three years of imprisonment.” Anastasia could hear the hint of regret underneath Felicia’s words.

However, when the case was applied to Anastasia, she didn’t find them innocent at all. Alice was a

vicious woman, while Jacqueline didn’t know how to draw a line. As if it wasn’t enough for her to steal Anastasia’s work as her own, she even had to betray Anastasia!

If it weren’t for Elliot’s help this time, it would have been difficult for Anastasia to find proof of Alice’s theft, not to mention the fact that Savill Jewelry Atelier had been supporting Alice in secret. Anastasia faced the risk of getting kicked out of the design industry and becoming a joke among the public. How cruel was that to her?

“Felicia, I think Alice is too ambitious and is always finding ways to replace you. There’s no need — to pity her,” Anastasia uttered disapprovingly.

She remembered the kind acts of those who treated her well, but she would not pity those who treated her badly.

“You’re right, Alice deserves to be punished. Those who have spoken ill of you in the company are now terrified. They’ve underestimated President Presgrave’s love for you.”

Anastasia instantly felt warmth filling her chest. Only those involved were more emotional.

“I know, and I’m grateful for what he has done for me.”

“Okay, after you take over your father’s company, I’ll welcome you back. Besides, all the works that have plagiarized yours have been taken off the shelves, and your works have been re launched.”

“Thank you, Felicia.”

“Savill is pretty unlucky too. Weren’t they supposed to be listed soon? Sadly, because of this incident, they’ve become bankrupt. I heard that the president even went to beg President Presgrave to let them go, but President Presgrave refused.”

‘Is that so?’

“Yeah! He begged President Presgrave through various connections, and he even went to stop his car several times. I heard that he even kneeled on the ground while begging too.”

Anastasia wasn’t aware that the owner of Savill had done all those things.

As she lifted the blanket, Anastasia got out of bed. She glanced at her son and saw that he was still fast asleep, probably from the excitement last night.

After putting on another coat, Anastasia went downstairs. It was cold outside since winter had arrived. It was a foggy morning, and in the far distance, mountains could be vaguely seen spiking in the clouds.

If someone were to bring her a cup of warm coffee at that moment, that would be even more pleasant.

With that thought in mind, she smelled the aroma of coffee coming from the kitchen. There stood an elegant figure while he was cooking breakfast. He was wearing an off-white sweater and khaki-colored pants. This was the softest look Anastasia had seen on Elliot.

Usually, he wore dark-colored clothing, but today, he decided to go with a light and mellow toned outfit. It was simply a domestic sight to see.

Chapter 416 “You’re awakel” Elliot was wearing an apron, giving off the vibes of a househusband.

Anastasia walked up to him and discovered that a scrumptious breakfast had been laid out on the table. Elliot, on the other hand, was fiddling with the coffee machine,

‘Take a seat. Breakfast will be ready soon.’ As he spoke, Elliot checked the time.

While watching his back, Anastasia suddenly had the urge to hug him. With that thought in mind, she walked over on a whim, extended her arms, and gave him a back hug.

Elliot was slightly startled, but he wasn't stiff. It was just a pleasant surprise to him. His eyes curved into crescent shapes, and the corners of his mouth lifted slightly.

Just like that, Anastasia hugged him for a while, indulging in his warmth early in the morning.

"Thank you for everything you have done for me." Anastasia pressed against his firm back and uttered gratefully from the bottom of her heart.

Meanwhile, Elliot took the opportunity and reached out to hold her hand. He turned around, as if afraid that she would pull away once he faced her.

Anastasia's arms stayed on his waist while his hands were placed lightly on her shoulder. After the two made eye contact, Anastasia lowered her head shyly.

"For me, it's far from enough. As long as you give me a chance, I can do more for you," Elliot uttered in a baritone voice while he reached out and stroked her hair. "Will you give me the chance to do so?"

As a response, Anastasia threw herself into his arms. His tender gaze overwhelmed her.

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"I'm already by your side. Are you still afraid that you don't have enough chances to spoil me?" Anastasia raised her head and inquired with a smile.

Elliot kissed her hair and responded, "Wait a minute. I'll make breakfast for you and Jared."

"I'm so glad that Jared and I can have breakfast that you've prepared!"

Picking up a cup of coffee, she sat in front of the floor-to-ceiling window, waiting for Chef Elliot's breakfast.

Ten minutes later, Elliot came over with two plates of big breakfast. It was a nutritiously-balanced meal, and it smelled so good.

Even the food plating was aesthetic.

Anastasia quickly enjoyed her meal. With him here, she had nothing to worry about.

"My grandma will be holding a banquet tomorrow to host some guests, do you want to come?" Elliot asked cautiously.

Ever since the incident with Riley last time, he was a little worried that Anastasia would mind going over to Presgrave Residence.

After pondering for a while, she nodded. "Sure! I'll come."

Hearing that, Elliot let out an inaudible sigh of relief. Thank goodness she was willing to go.

Meanwhile, in a mansion within the city, Aliona sat on the sofa with a sullen face, thinking about her following plans. After being interrupted by Anastasia last time, her good impression in front of Elliot had been completely ruined.

Lucas called to say that Elliot was furious now, and he didn't want to see her again.

Anastasia was the culprit. If she hadn't appeared, Aliona would have succeeded that night.

"Anastasia, you cruel woman!" Just then, Aliona saw the news. Because of her plagiarism, Elliot made a jewelry company bankrupt for Anastasia's sake and even sent two designers to jail.

Now, Aliona had to rebuild her good impression in front of Elliot so that when she gave birth to his child, Elliot would treat the child like his own.

What could she do now? She couldn't even contact her godfather.

Just then, a subordinate hurriedly entered from the outside to hand her a letter.

"Miss Aliona, Master Riley sent this from jail. Hurry up and take a look."

Aliona took it and immediately tore it open to check the letter, only to read several words that contained a vague meaning from Riley.

"Aliona, the situation doesn't seem to be in my favor. I want you to implement the final plan as soon as possible. Regarding the plan we discussed before, just do it boldly without any hesitation."

Aliona's heart skipped a beat when she read those words. The final plan that her godfather had mentioned was for her to get pregnant with Elliot's child and kill Elliot before the child was born. That way, the child would be sent to the Presgrave Family and become their only heir.

This was the quickest way to acquire the assets of the Presgrave Family. The Presgraves had only a few candidates for their heir, and Elliot was the family's only direct son. Since he had no children yet, whoever gave birth to his child would be considered a treasure.

Aliona held the letter and clutched it tightly with her beautiful nails. Was her godfather in such a critical condition already?

Chapter 417

Lucas had once told her that Elliot was investigating his kidnapping case back when he was a child and Anastasia's mother had also been killed in the very same incident. Therefore, Elliot was trying his best to reopen the case.

That must be what her godfather meant by the situation wasn't in his favor. He was worried that Elliot might harm him in prison, or if Elliot found out what happened in the past, he would definitely make Riley rot in prison for the rest of his life.

"Miss Aliona, now that Master Riley isn't here, we will listen to your commands." The subordinate had a premonition that Riley was at a dead end now, and Aliona was the one who held Riley's foreign assets.

They could definitely reap the benefits by following her.

Aliona shut her eyes and ordered, "You guys may leave."

Her godfather would not let her give up just like that because Lucas was making sure that she didn't abuse her power. Lucas' son was still kidnapped overseas under the watch of Riley's subordinates, and she didn't even know where he was locked up in. Moreover, she had not inherited her godfather's assets completely yet, so if she opted out now, it wouldn't be beneficial for her. She even had to bear the risk of being hunted down.

However, she could bet on Elliot. All she had to do was to give birth to his son and kill him to enjoy the billions of assets from the Presgrave empire.

"Tell Father that I will execute his plan." Aliona bit her lip, feeling ambitious.

CA

To be able to work alongside a conspirator like Riley proved that Aliona didn't have an innocent mind.

At Summit Mansion, Rey had sent some men over to carry out investigations and monitoring works. Eventually, they managed to retrieve footage near the communication tracking address. It was a footage of a woman in a call, and she was standing beside the fountain.

Ww

According to the GPS location, Rey was pretty certain that it was her who had ordered the security guard to burn the Abyss. Club's server room.

She was the only person who fit the timing and address, after all.

"Do you have any other footage? I want something clearer."

The security guard tried to search for other footage on the surveillance screens and zoomed in on one of the shots. In that specific footage, Rey could see the woman clearly and widened his eyes in shock.

Indeed, the woman in that footage was Hayley!

"Send me this video," Rey uttered calmly.

After he returned to the car with this information, Rey dialed Elliot's number.

"Hello?"

"President Presgrave, according to the GPS location, I just discovered that the person who ordered the security to set fire to the server room is Miss Seymour."

"What? Are you sure?"

"I'm sure it's her. I'll send the information to you in a while."

After returning to the study, Elliot received the footage sent by Rey. The woman on the screen was indeed Hayley, and she was on the phone.

Elliot trusted that there wouldn't be a problem with Rey's sources, and their tracking system under Presgrave Group was even bound to the satellite positioning system to measure accurate time and distance.

CI

Why did Hayley order the security guard to burn down the server room? What secret was she hiding? Elliot's inner doubts welled up.

Perhaps Anastasia would know better about Hayley.

He then picked up his laptop and got up to find Anastasia. Currently, she was on the second floor reading a pile of material reports sent by her father. It took her a long time to digest a few material terms.

She was already feeling a headache since she wasn't fit to manage a company.

“Do you have some time to spare? I have something to ask you.” Elliot sat opposite her and showed her his laptop.

Squinting her eyes, Anastasia looked at the woman on the screen, asking, “isn’t that Hayley?”

“Please forgive me for investigating the incident five years ago without your consent,” Elliot apologized beforehand.

Hearing that, Anastasia was baffled. “Why do you want to investigate this matter?”

“I want to find that b*stard and make him rot in prison.” Elliot’s eyes were cold.

Anastasia quickly recalled a recent call from the host who slept with her before. She knew that he was a time bomb that would explode by her side at any time.

By then, her reputation and her son’s background would be heavily affected.

Therefore, sending him to prison could be the only way to end it once and for all.

“Did I tell you that it was Hayley who arranged for the host to sleep with me?” Anastasia raised her head without evading the question.

Hearing that, Elliot was completely stunned. It was the first time he had heard about this from Anastasia.

Chapter 418

“Hayley was the one who framed you five years ago?” Elliot instantly widened his eyes in disbelief.

Anastasia recalled that she hadn’t told him about it before, so she nodded. “Back then, Hayley and my sister teamed up to trick me into going to the club. Once I entered the private room, there was already a man who dragged me in.”

Upon hearing the new piece of information, Elliot clenched his fists. What he heard from Hayley was that Anastasia had entered the wrong private room and was violated by a man. She even cut off her friendship with Hayley after that.

Between Hayley and Anastasia’s words, Elliot chose to believe in Anastasia without reason.

“Why didn’t you tell me before that Hayley had framed you?” Elliot felt incredibly guilty and blamed himself for believing in Hayley’s words.

“How could I when you’re so protective of her? I was worried that you’ll believe in her words rather than mine.” When Anastasia thought of that, she felt uneasy.

“Of course I’d believe you,” Elliot affirmed while looking into her eyes.

“Why did you show me this photo?” Anastasia inquired while staring at the screen.

“I asked Rey to check the surveillance footage of the night you were laid five years ago and discovered that a security guard burned the server room of Abyss Club. After checking the IP address as well as the call log of the security guard’s phone, we found out the person who instructed the security guard was indeed Hayley.”

Anastasia was equally as puzzled. Why did Hayley do it?

Was she trying to hide a secret by burning the server room of Abyss Club five years ago?

“Did you know that Hayley and I slept together in this same club?” Elliot spoke though he wasn’t willing to. After all, mentioning it always made him regret it deeply.

Once again, Anastasia was stunned to hear that, so she inquired, “How did it happen?”

“I was unprepared that night. I got caught in someone’s trap, and they wanted to create a scandal to blackmail me, so I fled to a private room. Hayley came afterward, and I took advantage of her under the influence of drugs.”

“Weren’t you intoxicated? How did you know it was Hayley that night?” Anastasia questioned out of curiosity. .

“I gave her a watch afterward. She found me through the watch.”

“What kind of watch is it?”

“It is one of my custom-made watches. There is only one of it in the world, and it was in Hayley’s hands. She took it as a pawn in the second-hand market in March this year, and that’s how I

found her.”

Anastasia couldn’t help but silently mocked herself. How could they both experience the same thing, but Hayley received Elliot’s materialistic compensation and apology while she wasn’t so lucky? The host she met was selfish and ruthless. He was blinded by greed, didn’t repent his mistakes, and even dared to threaten her!

That made her desperate to find that b*stard and see what kind of nasty look he had. Even though he seemed ashamed that night and even offered his watch to her, she would never forgive him.

“Anastasia, I think you should know Hayley better than I do. Why do you think she burned the server room?” Elliot inquired.

Shaking her head, she answered, “I’m afraid only Hayley knows the answer.”

Since the host existed and even tried to threaten Anastasia before, she never thought about the possibility that Hayley had replaced her, nor did she realize that the b*stard was sitting right in front of her

“If someone called me, are you capable of finding out who this person was?” Anastasia wanted to rely on Elliot’s ability to find the host.

“Who are you looking for?”

“The host actually called me a few days ago and threatened me. If he calls me next time, perhaps you can help me find out who he is.”

“Give me his number. I’ll get Rey to check it for you right now.”

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After fishing out her phone, Anastasia scrolled to the number that had called her a few days ago. Elliot quickly recorded the number and sent it to Rey for investigation.

“Actually, I could ask Hayley if I wanted to find this b*stard. She has his information, but I know that she will refuse to tell me.” Anastasia hated Hayley to her bones.

After hearing Anastasia’s story, Elliot no longer had good feelings for Hayley. He didn’t even want to see her face from now on.

Feeling guilty for her was one thing, but what she did to Anastasia back then was unforgivable. When he found out who the host was, he was definitely going to make Hayley apologize to Anastasia.

Chapter 419

“I will find this person out and make him pay for his actions back then,” Elliot reassured her.

“Okay. Sorry for the trouble.” Anastasia took a deep breath.

She didn’t want to see the disgusting face of that man, yet she had to face him.

Meanwhile, over at Summit Mansion, Hayley had just returned from the hospital. Her tastebuds were still pretty bland, but she already requested an agency to inquire about her condition with several foreign doctors.

However, Hayley was still happy with her new, beautiful face in the mirror.

The only thing Anastasia had won over her since they were kids was her face. Hayley had always been like a leaf to a rose whenever she stood beside Anastasia.

Now, she had finally become a rose as well.

Just then, her phone rang. After glancing at the screen, she picked up the call and said, "Hello, Daniel."

"Miss Seymour, I just received news that Old Madam Presgrave will be hosting the annual family banquet tomorrow and inviting her friends and family. Has President Presgrave notified you about it yet?"

"What? Tomorrow?" Disappointment flashed in Hayley's eyes. Elliot hadn't even mentioned it to her.

"Yes. It's tomorrow afternoon at Presgrave Residence. There will be three tables for guests who have a close relationship with the Presgrave Family. I thought President Presgrave invited you, though."

"I want to be invited! Daniel, can you think of a way to let me in?" Hayley wasn't going to miss this opportunity. She had to be there!

"You may arrive early tomorrow morning without notifying President Presgrave. Once you're here, he will not chase you out in front of so many relatives."

Hayley thought he made sense. After all, it was time for her to reveal her new face beside Anastasia. Not only that, she should arrive early for the banquet, and she was pretty sure that Harriet wouldn't kick her out because Elliot had violated her before. As she sat on the sofa, there was a hint of coldness in her eyes. She must not let go of this opportunity to go against Anastasia.

Then, she dialed Erica's number and said. "Erica, come over to my place tonight. I have a gift for you."

If she wanted to know anything regarding Anastasia, Erica was the most reliable person.

Hearing that there

g that there was a gift for her, Erica left the house immediately.

After arriving, she was shocked to see Hayley.

“Hayley, have you had plastic surgery?” She scanned her up and down in disbelief.

Hayley smirked. “Who do you think I look like?”

“You...” After taking a closer look, she blurted, “You didn’t get surgery just to look like Anastasia, did you?!”

“Just praise my beauty already. I don’t like to hear anything else,” said Hayley as she gloated.

“Oh! You’re so pretty! You’re way more beautiful than Anastasia. Your beauty makes you look elegant! Anastasia is no match for you!” Erica quickly praised her.

Receiving those praises put Hayley in a good mood. She then pushed a bag that she didn’t fancy in front of her, offering, “Here you go.”

“Wow! This is so pretty! You treat me so well, Hayley. I’ve always wanted this bag, but I could never afford it.”

Now that she was using the money that Elliot had compensated her with, Hayley no longer fancied a bag like this.

Straightforwardly, she demanded, “Tell me what Anastasia has been up to lately!”

“Did you know? My dad told me she was kidnapped, and the kidnapper is highly likely to be the culprit in her mother’s death.” “Really? Didn’t her mother sacrifice to save Elliot, though?”

say

“Yeah! The culprit was Elliot’s uncle, a half-brother to his father.”

Hayley was stunned to hear that. Did that mean the culprit who killed Anastasia’s mother was someone from the Presgrave Family? That should be interesting! Shouldn’t Anastasia hate the Presgraves now?

While Erica continued blabbering, Hayley no longer wanted to hear her out; she already had her own plans.

If Anastasia hated the Presgrave Family, what would she do to them? She would definitely do something to hurt the Presgraves.

For example, she might take the opportunity to take revenge on Harriet.

Last time, Hayley noticed that Harriet had been taking some kind of medicine. If something went wrong with her medicine, the blame would fall on Anastasia.

Hayley had always been a vicious person, and she was also a person who dared to act on it.

Chapter 420

As long as she could separate Anastasia and Elliot, what else wouldn't she do?

Just then, Erica's phone beeped. When she picked it up, she saw a message from Alex that read, Come to my place tonight.

After reading the message, she smiled and replied, 'Sure!'

Now that she and Alex had hooked up, their relationship was progressing rapidly. They had even slept together before.

Hayley went to bed once Erica left, but before going to sleep, she took out a watch from her desk. To her, it was the only thing she had that was possessed by Elliot before.

The watch contained Elliot's presence, and it could provide comfort to her emptiness.

After switching off the lights, the watch suddenly glowed in a shady green color in the dark, its diamonds shining on the entire screen. The shape of a wolf's head could also be seen in the middle of the watch.

Indeed, it was a beautiful timepiece.

Just like its owner, the watch shone in the dark, showing off its elegance.

The dark green luster paired with the wolf head was a totem of the Presgrave Family.

It was a watch that Harriet tailored specially for Elliot, so it was the only watch in the world.

In Elliot's mansion, Anastasia lay in bed thinking about her promise to Elliot about attending his family's banquet on Sunday.

However, she didn't feel like bringing her son over.

Therefore, she decided to ask if her father had a day to spare for her son.

In her dreams, Anastasia unknowingly returned to that night five years ago. She felt that there were a pair of hands clasping tightly around her, and as she struggled, a faint green light flashed across in front of her. That was the only light source amidst the dark.

It was the watch that was glowing in green. Anastasia clearly remembered the wolf head engraved in the watch; in a moment of despair, she struggled to see the source of light emitted from the devil. Unfortunately, she wasn't able to see the man clearly. The next morning, Anastasia contacted her father. Since Francis hadn't seen his grandson in a few days, he was eager to meet Jared again.

Elliot, on the other hand, agreed with Anastasia's decision. He even assigned his bodyguard to send Jared over.

"My grandma loves Jared. She says that Jared looks like me when I was younger." As Elliot watched the car leave, he heaved an audible sigh.

Anastasia was just trying to protect her son. If Jared were to attend a crowded event, he might be

looked down upon as a child with a single parent.

"Sorry. I don't mean to not bring Jared over. I hope you understand," Anastasia explained as she raised her head.

"I understand. You don't have to apologize." With that, Elliot held her hand. "You're not allowed to dress like this today."

After glancing down at her outfit, she realized it was a little plain. "What should I wear?"

"Let's go back to the room. I'll pick your outfit." While saying that, he pulled her into the living room.

When they arrived in Anastasia's room, both of them stood in front of the wardrobe. Elliot had bought her many pieces of the latest trends and branded clothes, but she had never worn them. After swiping his slender fingers across the row of clothes, he finally picked an elegant lace dress. "Wear this."

After that, he grabbed another long trench coat and said, "And this."

Anastasia thought he had a good eye for fashion, so she agreed, "Okay, I'll wear them later."

"Wear them now!" Elliot folded his arms in front of his chest in anticipation. "I want to see how my taste is."

With that, Anastasia grabbed the clothes and entered the bathroom. After a while, she came out in the dress and requested helplessly, "Can you help me with the zip?"

Smiling, Elliot walked up to her back and pulled the zip for her. At the same time, he pecked her fair neck.

Feeling shy, Anastasia quickly entered the bathroom and grabbed the coat. Sure enough, the outfit looked fashionable and elegant on her. At the same time, it was eye-catching and pleasant to see.

"It looks good on you," praised Elliot. He then added, "That's because you look good in everything you wear."

Anastasia seemed to take his compliment well. Looking at the time, she inquired, "Should we be leaving now?"

"Sure! Let's go!"

"You didn't invite Hayley, did you?" Anastasia suddenly inquired.

"I won't invite her." Elliot didn't want to see Hayley now or ever.

At the Presgrave Residence, Hayley came uninvited, which gave Harriet a surprise. However, due to what her grandson had done to Hayley back then. Harriet greeted her as usual out of courtesy.

Chapter 421

At the same time. Harriet realized that Hayley's face seemed to have changed. Though she still looked beautiful, it seemed that she had done something to her appearance.

To be frank, Harriet rejected the behavior of pursuing beauty through surgery. Since her body had been given to her by her parents, she should cherish them.

"I'm sorry for coming uninvited to your banquet, Grandma. It's just that I've missed you so much." The look in Hayley's eyes didn't seem sincere at all.

However, Harriet reassured her, "No worries. I forgot to inform you about it. Since it's usually the same old relatives coming every year, I'm happy that you've come too." After saying that, she instructed one of the maids, "Escort Miss Seymour to the garden for some tea."

Hayley was overjoyed upon hearing that. Sure enough, Harriet didn't drive her away, so she happily followed the maid to the garden.

As soon as Hayley left, Harriet let out a sigh of relief. She was aware of Hayley's intentions, but the Presgrave Family could only accept one daughter-in-law. Therefore, no matter what Hayley did, it would be useless.

"From whom did Miss Seymour hear the news?" One of the female housekeepers on the side questioned in surprise. She was the one who had sent out the invitations, but she didn't recall sending an invite to Hayley.

"Don't worry about it. Let's just serve her since she's already here!" said Harriet with a wave of a hand.

However, the housekeeper blamed herself. After all, she knew what Hayley's identity was; she was merely a woman whom Young Master Elliot couldn't get rid of.

"Should I inform Young Master Elliot?"

When Harriet recalled that Elliot would be bringing Anastasia to visit today, she was certain that Anastasia wouldn't come if she knew that Hayley was here. She couldn't help but shake her head and replied, "Forget it. Let's tell them when they arrive!"

One of them was someone Harriet didn't welcome, while the other was someone Harriet desperately wanted her to be here.

Between Hayley and Anastasia, it was obvious who had the upper hand.

Soon, Harriet's daughter, son-in-law, as well as Nigel arrived.

Some relatives and friends had also arrived earlier, so the whole yard was packed with luxury cars. All the relatives of the Presgrave Family had gained a firm foothold in the political and business circles with the support of the Presgrave Family. The Presgraves were like a big tree, and there was an intricate network of relationships under the protection of said tree. Even Harriet's brother was able to soar high in the political circle due to the family's influence.

While sitting in the tea house in the garden, Hayley couldn't help but feel a little nervous when

she heard the lively atmosphere in the main hall. However, it wasn't going to make her flinch or retreat. Looking down at the box of drugs in her bag, she smirked cynically.

Anastasia was going to lose her pride today in front of all the relatives of the Presgrave Family

After picking up the cup of tea, she took a few sips. It tasted pretty bland although she had already taken some medication to revive her taste buds.

The doctors said that the surgery might cause long-term side effects, but for her beauty, Hayley could only endure it.

At that moment, a black Rolls-Royce entered the front yard. The man who came out of the car was Elliot while the woman that came out of the car was Anastasia.

He extended his hand to hold her, but she hid her hand shyly. "Let's not hold hands."

His deep gaze locked on her for a few seconds before realizing that she was just shy and didn't want to show too much affection in front of her relatives.

"Let's go, then!" Elliot understood her feelings.

As they walked past the front garden and into the hall, they saw three banquet tables in the living hall. All of the guests had arrived.

Once they entered the hall, Elliot started greeting the guests. As the most honorable child of the Presgrave Family, Elliot had been polite and thoughtful since young. Therefore, everyone adored him.

While Anastasia followed him around, she listened to him exchanging customary greetings with his relatives. It was also the first time she had seen him behaving like a well-mannered junior. Usually, he was aloof and unapproachable, making everyone surrender to him!

“Elliot, why don’t you introduce us to this beautiful lady beside you?” one of his aunts urged.

“This is Anastasia Tillman, my girlfriend,” Elliot introduced her naturally.

Anastasia couldn’t help but feel her cheeks heat up when she heard that. She had thought about this question before coming, but she still couldn’t avoid revealing her identity.

Chapter 422

“What a beauty! Elliot has a good eye!”

“Of course, he does! Elliot has always been the most good-looking child to us. Naturally, he should go out with a beautiful woman.”

“I don’t agree!” Suddenly, a male voice sounded behind the lady.

Turning around, the lady couldn’t help but laugh out loud at the sight of Nigel. Nigel raised his chin and questioned, “Which part of me doesn’t win over Elliot? I was obviously the best looking when we were young.”

“You’re right. You’re the most handsome!” The lady quickly changed her words, eliciting some laughter among the crowd.

Even Anastasia was amused by their interaction. Based on Nigel’s looks, he was indeed not inferior to Elliot. However, in terms of his stance, Elliot was more domineering than he was.

“Anastasia, you should be the judge. Who is more good-looking between Elliot and me?”

Initially, Anastasia was just a spectator watching them. Now that Nigel had thrown the question at her, she could only cough awkwardly as she replied, “You.”

After saying that, Anastasia sensed a pair of eyes filled with resentment staring at her.

“Anastasia has good taste.” With that, Nigel reached out his hand to Anastasia, suggesting, “Come on, let’s go over there. I have something to tell you.”

However, the moment he finished his sentence, Elliot shot daggers at him. Nigel immediately sensed the deathly stare and realized that he couldn’t treat Anastasia casually anymore. He couldn’t even get involved with her personal affairs now that she belonged to someone else.

“What is it that you cannot talk in front of me?” Elliot glared at Nigel to prove his presence.

Anastasia covered her mouth while chuckling, but Nigel huffed while saying, “You petty man. Can’t I talk to your girlfriend for a little while?”

“No!” rejected Elliot coldly.

“Be the judge, Anastasia. He was the one who interrupted us when I tried to pursue you. I was kind enough to let you go, but look at how he’s treating me now!” Nigel started whining.

Anastasia laughed out loud at his antics. “I’m not meddling in your fight. You should solve it between yourselves.”

“Let’s go and greet Grandma.” Upon landing an arm on her waist, Elliot dragged Anastasia away from Nigel.

Since he was left without a choice, Nigel tagged along because he was bored. Everyone who attended the banquet today was mostly the seniors, and all the juniors didn’t manage to attend.

Currently, Harriet was sitting in the hall chatting away with the other old madams. When she saw Elliot and Anastasia walking up to her, her eyes were instantly filled with tenderness and affection.

“Come here, Anastasia. Take a seat,” she invited gently.

With that. Anastasia took the seat next to her. Harriet looked at her with guilt and apology “Didn’t you bring Jared with you?” “Jared went to my father’s place.”

“Oh! I quite like that child. He’s so adorable.” Whenever Harriet thought of the child, she immediately saw young Elliot in him.

Just then, the housekeeper requested to talk to Elliot outside.

“Young Master Elliot, I have something to tell you. Miss Hayley is here.”

Elliot's face immediately darkened. "Who let her in?"

"Miss Hayley was the earliest to arrive, but I don't know who informed her," the housekeeper uttered helplessly.

There was a hint of coolness that flashed in Elliot's eyes. Who was the one who obtained the information and relayed it to Hayley? There was only one person who knew about it, and that was his personal assistant, Daniel.

It seemed that Hayley even had the means to buy information from people around him.

"Where is she?" Elliot questioned indifferently.

"She's at the tea house in the garden and hasn't been invited to the hall yet. Do you want to see her?"

After glancing at Anastasia, who was busy chatting with his grandmother, he walked toward the tea house in the garden.

On this side, Hayley had been waiting to be invited to the main hall. However, it was Elliot who greeted her instead with a long face.

Hayley was in utter shock. Flustered, she almost broke the teacup in her hand. "How did you know I was here, Elliot?"

Ever since he knew that Hayley was the cause of Anastasia's misery back then, he didn't have any feelings for her anymore.

"This is my family's gathering. There's no reason for you to attend." Elliot stared at her coldly.

Chapter 423

Hayley's eyes immediately reddened. "Why can't I come when Anastasia is here? You're being too biased, Elliot."

Elliot frowned slightly and retorted somewhat coldly, "To me, you're incomparable to Anastasia. I have always wanted to make up to you only in the material aspect, and you should know that."

Hayley sensed that Elliot had changed, and his attitude toward her had become extraordinarily cold. Did Anastasia tell him something?

"Elliot, why are you doing this to me? Did I do something wrong?" Hayley bit her red lips and showed a pitiful look.

"Is it your fault that Anastasia was harassed five years ago?" Elliot interrogated.

Hearing that, Hayley quivered. She shook her head fervently and denied, "It wasn't me; it wasn't me, Elliot. It was her stepsister who did it. When I wanted to stop her, it was too late. I regret it so much now, and I deserve Anastasia's hatred."

Hayley appeared to be helpless on the surface, but in reality, she hated Anastasia to her bones. Sure enough, Anastasia exposed what happened back then just to win Elliot's heart.

Staring at Hayley's face, Elliot could only see how ugly her cry was after she underwent plastic surgery. It made him extremely uncomfortable, and he didn't believe in a single word she uttered.

Hayley knew that she looked beautiful when smiling, but she didn't know how hideous she looked when crying.

"Do not step into the hall, but you may have lunch here before leaving," Elliot warned in a low voice. He didn't want Anastasia to know that she was here.

Hayley understood his intentions, so she panicked and said, "Elliot, you can't do this to me."

This time, Elliot was already at the door. He turned back and shot her a cold gaze, uttering, "From now on, I don't want to see you again."

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This sentence was undoubtedly like a sharp sword stabbing into Hayley's chest. She underwent surgery to look like the woman he liked, but instead, he told her that he didn't want to see her again.

"Elliot..." Hayley stood up and chased after him, but she was stopped by two maids. "Please stay here, Miss Seymour." Hayley's heart fell into an abyss at this moment. Elliot's attitude showed her that no matter what she did, he only loved Anastasia.

In order to make Anastasia happy, he didn't allow her to enter the hall even if she had already come all the way to Presgrave Residence. Anastasia would be the protagonist tonight, while she was going to suffer from humiliation all alone.

When she returned to the sofa, a strong feeling of resentment flashed in Hayley's eyes. Anastasia being alive was her greatest pain.

In the main hall. Anastasia did not know that Hayley was also there. Harriet took her to a quiet lounge and explained the truth about how Elliot had been saved back then without holding back..

Back then, the situation was complicated, and it definitely gave her mother pressure to save the hostage. In Elliot's case, however, she sacrificed herself and pounced on him to save him. That was her duty as a police officer, and she wasn't forced by anyone.

"Anastasia, you may blame me if you're upset, but don't blame Elliot, okay? He was depressed and completely lost when he came back that day. He loves you very much, and he doesn't want to lose

you."

Anastasia was moved to hear Harriet's words. Hearing others tell her that Elliot loved her seemed to give her a sense of certainty as if he loved her wholeheartedly.

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"Grandma, I'm sorry for believing in Riley's words and misunderstanding you," Anastasia apologized.

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Harriet didn't have any more comments about her stepson. All she wanted was for the younger generation to not be harmed by him again.

Elliot instructed the housekeeper to serve Hayley in the tea house and made sure that she left after having lunch.

Upon moving to the quiet lounge, he immediately softened when he saw the woman sitting on the sofa with his grandmother.

There was now a touch of warmth in between his brows, and the coldness toward Hayley just now had completely disappeared.

Anastasia looked up at the man who was approaching, and a blush of shyness crept up her cheeks.

Harriet couldn't help but smile upon seeing them. "Well, it's time for me to go out and greet the guests now. I'll let Elliot keep you company in here."

After speaking, Harriet left the room. Elliot sat beside her naturally, staring at her as if he could never have enough of the woman.

Chapter 424

Anastasia suddenly laughed, "Can you stop staring?"

"Didn't you say that Nigel's more handsome than me?" Elliot wanted to settle this matter with her privately.

Seeing him like that, Anastasia burst out laughing. "What? Are you jealous?"

As she laughed, Elliot's long arms stretched out and wrapped around her waist, pulling her down with him until they were both lying on the sofa. Anastasia was on top of him, staring down at his face that was too close for comfort.

A perfectly flawless face was reflected in her eyes.

"Take a good look. Is my face not up to your standards?" Elliot intentionally described himself pitifully.

In response, Anastasia pursed her lips and smiled. Why was he so competitive? Why did he insist on comparing himself to Nigel in terms of appearance?

He was definitely more childish than her son.

"You're handsome. In fact, you're the most handsome guy to me." Anastasia used the same trick she had coaxed her son on him.

Fortunately, it seemed that the trick worked even better on him. Elliot curved his thin lips, asking, "Really?"

"Yeah! It's true. In terms of appearance, my son comes first, you are second, and Nigel is in third place," Anastasia answered him in all seriousness. He should be satisfied with her answer by now!

Elliot knew that it was too difficult to win over Jared and take down the first place, so he was satisfied with the final outcome.

Only then did Anastasia realize that she was still lying in his arms, and she could feel the heat radiating from him through his clothes. The warmth of his skin felt a little too hot for her to bear, so she immediately struggled to get up.

However, Elliot's long arms were lazily draped around her waist, and a malicious smile crept on his face.

"Elliot, let me go," Anastasia complained softly.

"If you don't show me your love, I won't let go," said Elliot with a smirk.

"What do you mean? You're really unreasonable sometimes." Anastasia had enough of him. How could he just say things like that out of plain air?

"It's either you kiss me, or I kiss you. Pick one."

Did it make a difference? Wasn't she going to be kissed in the end? What a canny businessman he

“Neither. I want to go out to eat something delicious.” After Anastasia finished speaking, she got up forcibly.

Elliot sat up with her, but in the next second, the two fell on the sofa once again. This time, Anastasia was below Elliot.

“You...” Anastasia thought Elliot was a nasty man.

“I won’t give up until I achieve my goal,” said Elliot before kissing her red lips.

All of sudden, Anastasia felt as if a current was running through her body. It felt like she was going crazy. Elliot really liked to mess around with her regardless of the occasion.

However, there was no doubt that the kiss was exciting and sweet. As the sunlight shone onto the sofa, Anastasia was surrounded by his breath, indulging in his gentle and delicate kiss. Elliot had a special ability; whenever he looked at Anastasia or kissed her, it was as if his eyes were dripping with honey. He looked at her as if she meant the world to him.

Upon hearing footsteps coming from outside the window, Anastasia shoved him hard, causing him to fall to the ground.

With a loud thud, Elliot’s head hit the ground harshly.

“Oh, dear! Elliot, are you alright?” Anastasia sat up. She felt bad for Elliot, who was currently lying on the ground.

How hard did she push him just now? How bad did it hurt when his head hit the ground?

Although there was a layer of carpet, there was indeed a loud thud just now.

Elliot’s eyes were full of grievances. “Are you trying to murder your husband?”

Seeing that he was lying on the floor and unable to get up, she reached out to pull him while apologizing, “Sorry. I thought your Grandma would come in and see us.”

Elliot now knew what would happen to him if he angered her after marriage. He would face the fate of being kicked down from the bed.

Borrowing the strength of her pull, Elliot pushed her onto the sofa once again. “I won’t forgive you if you don’t kiss me first.” Anastasia took the initiative now and kissed him on the cheek. “Happy?”

“On the lips,” Elliot reminded.

Anastasia rolled her eyes and muttered, “You’re so bossy.”

“Don’t roll your eyes at me. That’s rude,” reminded Elliot once again.

Defying him, Anastasia rolled her eyes before uttering proudly, “We’re not officially in a relationship yet, anyway. You Still have a chance to run back.”

Chapter 425

Elliot didn’t know what to do with her. Just then, Anastasia hugged his neck and planted a kiss on his thin lips. “All peachy? I’ll go eat now.”

With that, she smoothed her clothes and went out.

Behind her, the man still looked majestic despite sitting on the carpet, and there was a hint of mischief on his handsome face.

In another tea room at the end of the corridor, even though Hayley enjoyed the treatment as a guest and had a table full of food laid out before her, she was suffering inside..

Her existence here was like a joke. The servants looked like they respected her on the outside, but she knew that they were laughing at her behind her back!

She hated Elliot for treating her like that, but she hated Anastasia even more; Anastasia must have whispered horrible things about her in Elliot’s ears, turning her into a vicious woman.

Hayley took a deep breath, the hatred apparent in her eyes as a sneer crept onto her lips. She got up and walked out of the room, but a servant immediately reached out and stopped her. “Miss Seymour, Young Master Elliot insists that you have your meal here.”

“Can’t I go to the bathroom?” Hayley glared coldly at her, then strode toward a certain place. When she was here last time, she had the opportunity to tour the Presgrave Residence.

She remembered faintly that Harriet’s medicine was kept in a specialized room on the first floor. She thought that since the Presgrave Residence housed such a large family, they probably wouldn’t install CCTVs inside their house. This would make her operation much easier.

Just as expected, she didn’t spot any CCTVs around her. When she passed by the garden, she heard laughter coming from the main hall. It filled her heart with envy, for Anastasia was probably there as well.

Hayley noticed that the servant was following her. Annoyance flashed across the depths of her eyes as she instantly walked further into the garden. The servant called after her, “Miss Seymour, please don’t run around. That’s not where the bathroom is.” Soon, Hayley managed to throw off the servant and emerged from another corridor. Now, all

the servants were gathered at the main hall to serve the guests, so the huge Presgrave Residence looked especially empty.

A vicious feeling rose up in Hayley's heart. Even if Harriet had no ill intentions toward her, she still hated that old woman. She hated how Harriet favored Anastasia over her without helping her get together with Elliot.

As such, Hayley wouldn't mind Harriet dying. She just wanted Anastasia to take the blame.

Finally, Hayley found the storeroom on the first floor. As expected, she walked briskly over and found that it was unlocked. She opened the door and saw a few freezers inside, in addition to a row of shelves. However, Harriet's usual medication was placed on a table, and a few medicine bottles were placed separately in a small basket. Hayley poured them out and studied them briefly before putting two similar types of pills inside.

The pills were sleeping medications and also heart medications with complicated ingredients. If consumed over a long period of time, a person of Harriet's age would experience problems soon enough.

After swapping out the pills, Hayley immediately left the scene.

Hayley passed by the garden once again, and when she saw the bustling on the other side, she suddenly felt the urge to go over as well. Didn't Elliot ban her from meeting Anastasia?

In that case, it was all the more reason for her to let Anastasia know that she was here.

Hayley went closer to the main hall on purpose. When she saw two well-dressed ladies in front of her, she suddenly put a hand to her forehead and fell onto the floor.

"Oh! Are you alright, miss?" Just as expected, one of the ladies rushed over to her.

Hayley fainted right away, and she heard another lady say, "I'll go get help."

At the table, Anastasia was sampling the desserts when she heard a lady rush in, saying, "Come quick! Someone just fainted. Hurry up and send her to the

Elliot had just excused himself to answer a call, and Anastasia was sitting next to Nigel. When they heard the shouts, Nigel was the first to get up. Anastasia followed him out.

Nigel looked at Hayley and asked, a little stunned, "Who even is she?!"

"Just ignore that and send her to the hospital right away," Nigel's mother urged.

When Anastasia saw Hayley lying on the floor, she was instantly shocked. She didn't expect that Hayley would be here as well. Just then, someone shouted, "She's waking up."

Chapter 426

Hayley, who was in Nigel's arms at the time, suddenly opened her eyes. Nigel immediately put her down. Just then, a servant hastily walked over. "Miss Seymour, why are you here? I've been looking all over for you."

"What's the matter with this Miss Seymour?" Brenda asked.

"Y-Young Master Elliot told us to let Miss Seymour dine in the side hall," the servant replied.

Anastasia's gaze met Hayley's, and the hatred in Hayley's eyes was directed right at her. Anastasia understood right away that Hayley had attended as well, but Elliot had arranged a separate dining area for her.

Hayley definitely didn't come on official invitation; she had come of her own accord.

"You—" Nigel looked at Hayley, then back at Anastasia. He felt as if he had just met the bootleg version of Anastasia, and traces of Hayley's plastic surgery were visible in the sunlight.

"Miss Seymour, I'll get a car ready to send you back after the meal." The housekeeper appeared and gestured toward Hayley.

"This way, please."

"I'll inform Old Madam Presgrave first," Hayley told the housekeeper.

"Sorry, but Young Master Elliot has asked me to take you home right away." The housekeeper didn't want Hayley to affect the other guests.

Hayley was a little reluctant, but at that moment, the female guests who gathered around her were all examining her in surprise.

She could only say, "Fine, I'll leave. However, can I have a word with my friend first?"

With that, she pointed at Anastasia.

Anastasia instantly declined in disdain. "There's nothing to say between us."

"Anastasia, when you were assaulted five years ago, you said that I was the one who did it. Why did you tell Elliot that I was the one behind it? Since when did I order a host to sleep with you, causing you to give birth to a son as a result?" Hayley said loudly. At the side, Nigel was so furious that he wanted to cover her mouth. Similarly, Anastasia

turned red in the face out of anger.

Hayley was mentioning this incident in front of all the guests on purpose.

“Hayley, that’s enough messing around.” Just then, Elliot walked over to them from somewhere, his expression dark.

Startled, Hayley trembled slightly, but she raised her voice to retort, “Did I say anything wrong? Elliot, I don’t want you to misunderstand. I really didn’t harm her.”

Anastasia clenched her fists tightly as she shivered in fury. Even up until now, Hayley kept crossing the line.

How could someone twist the truth to this extent?

Elliot’s expression was unimaginably dark. Hayley was taking the opportunity to tell all the Presgraves’ relatives about that incident, and she clearly wanted to ruin Anastasia’s reputation

“Shut up, Hayley.” Elliot gave her a warning glare.

Hayley’s eyes immediately went red, and she accused in tears, “Elliot, I gave you my first time five years ago to cure you, and you bullied me to no end. I even miscarried once for you. Is this how you should treat me?”

Everyone present stared at Elliot in shock, for they couldn’t believe he did something like that. They had no idea if they should blame this most noble young master of the Presgraves.

Anastasia’s face turned pale in an instant as she looked at Hayley. She actually miscarried once for Elliot’s sake?

Harriet had just arrived on the scene and managed to catch Hayley’s act. She said to Hayley, “Miss Seymour, I know that Elliot had mistreated you before, and he also committed some mistakes. However, Elliot has been looking for you for the past five years so he could make it up to you. Now, we’re doing our best to compensate you for the incident five years ago. Ever since we found you, have the Presgraves ever mistreated you?”

Hayley’s true desire wasn’t any material object, for she actually wanted to be Elliot’s wife. Gritting her teeth, she said, “Grandma, I can’t even find a man to marry now. I want to be Elliot’s wife. I want to marry him.”

Hayley exposed her ambitions without restraint. She looked toward Elliot with a meaningful gaze. “Elliot, I don’t blame you for what you did to me that night. I just want to stay by your side and be with you.”

“You can’t force love, Hayley. I will never take you as my wife,” Elliot rejected coldly.

Chapter 427

“Miss Seymour. I know Elliot has mistreated you before, but he also compensated you in every way he could. You should know where the line is drawn.” Brenda stepped forward, not wishing for her mother to be troubled and intending to protect her own nephew.

Hayley looked at the well-dressed lady, whose eyes glared in warning toward her. She had done and said everything she planned to do and say today, and she didn’t want it to spiral into chaos either. She pitifully nodded. “I understand. I’m sorry, Grandma. I shouldn’t have disturbed your banquet. I’m so sorry, and I’ll be leaving now.”

The housekeeper immediately sent for someone to take Hayley home. Hayley kept looking back at Elliot as she left, her love and adoration obvious to all.

However, under the sunlight, Elliot’s entire body emanated a chill. No matter how loving Hayley’s gaze was, it could not remove the coldness in him.

While no one was looking, Anastasia quietly left the crowd. She walked toward a deserted garden, her thoughts occupied with the notion that Hayley had undergone abortion for Elliot’s sake.

This was further proof of the incident between Elliot and Hayley that night. It reminded her again of this, and she felt unbearably sad.

Brenda helped her mother back inside to rest. The other relatives and friends also understood the Presgraves’ situation, so they didn’t make any comments on it. The Presgrave Family was powerful exactly because its members were united.

Just then, Harriet felt some discomfort in her chest. She told the housekeeper, “Jodie, fetch my medicine.”

“Please calm down, Old Madam Presgrave. Do not heed to Miss Seymour’s words.”

“She miscarried a child for Elliot’s sake! A child of the Presgraves!” Harriet said regretfully.

“Mom, don’t think like that. It’d be real trouble if Elliot had a child with that girl.” Brenda was aware. After all, someone with a personality like Hayley’s did not deserve to marry into the Presgrave Family.

Just then, the housekeeper brought the medicine. She also gave Harriet some water to take the pills with. After Harriet had taken the medicine, she sighed. “No matter

what, the right wife for Elliot can only be Anastasia.”

“Yes! I also hope Miss Tillman will marry Elliot.” Brenda actually preferred Anastasia too. Anastasia had saved her son’s life, after all.

When Elliot found Anastasia, she was sitting on a swing in the garden. She was in a daze as she sat on the swing, and when the wind lifted her hair, it was as if her hair was also glowing under the sunlight. She looked like a princess heavy with worry.

Elliot strode over in light steps and walked up to her. Then, he began pushing the swing into motion.

Anastasia let him continue pushing before she asked, “When did you find out that Hayley miscarried for you before?”

“Last time, when she sent you a photo,” Elliot answered truthfully.

He hadn’t declined when Hayley clung onto him and asked him for a photo!

“Why didn’t you let her into the main hall to eat today?” Anastasia asked.

‘I didn’t want you to see her and upset your mood,” he replied.

“I’ve shamed you in front of your family, though,” Anastasia said bitterly. After all, she was assuming the role of his girlfriend today.

Elliot let the swing stop, then bent down and looked at her in all earnestness.

“Anastasia, I don’t care what other people think of you. I only know that in my heart, you have always been perfect.”

Anastasia looked at him, her heart aching for him,

“Do you regret that incident with Hayley five years ago?” Anastasia asked.

Elliot nodded. He couldn’t find any words to express the regret in his heart.

Just then, a servant came rushing along the garden path. “Young Master Elliot, come quick. Old Madam Pregrave has fainted.” Elliot and Anastasia instantly got to their feet in shock. They exchanged glances and strode hurriedly toward the main hall.

Nigel had carried Harriet back to her room and placed her down. Harriet’s face was pale, and her eyes were tightly closed. She was barely conscious.

“Why did Grandma faint all of a sudden?” Elliot hastily walked into the room.

“She said she was feeling uncomfortable in her chest, and she asked for some medicine to ease the discomfort. Within ten minutes of her taking the pills, she suddenly fainted on the floor.” The housekeeper was extremely anxious as well.

Chapter 428

“Are those pills the ones Grandma usually takes?”

“Yes! They’re the heart pills she always takes.”

“Elliot, hurry up and send her to the hospital” Brenda was so anxious that her eyes were turning red.

Anastasia was deeply worried too. Elliot carried the unconscious Harriet and walked out the door, whereas Brenda and Jonathan left along with him. Nigel helped Anastasia up and said, “You can go in my car.”

In a private hospital which Presgrave Group had invested in, Harriet was immediately sent to the emergency unit.

In the car, Nigel was anxious as well. “My grandmother’s health has always been in the pink, so how could she just faint like that? Was it too shocking for her? Also, who’s that Hayley person just now?”

After Anastasia told him about Hayley and Elliot, Nigel was stunned. He never thought that something like that had happened to his cousin five years ago.

“There’s definitely more to this Hayley person.” Nigel hated that sort of woman at first glance.

“Hayley wants to be Mrs. Presgrave.”

“She had plastic surgery too, didn’t she? She’s trying to look like you.” Nigel disliked her even more.

Anastasia nodded. Any mention of Hayley was like a heavy rock upon her heart.

By the time Anastasia and Nigel arrived at the hospital, Harriet had been in the emergency unit for more than ten minutes.

Anastasia saw Elliot standing in the corridor, his expression tense and his eyes filled with worry. At the side, Brenda also leaned against her husband with her fists clenched tightly.

“Dad, Mom, did the doctor say anything?”

“No, not yet.” Jonathan shook his head.

Anastasia walked over to Elliot. She wanted to comfort him, but she didn't know what to say. Harriet didn't look too good just now. What would he do if something happened to Harriet?

'I'm fine,' said Elliot, comforting her instead.

Anastasia patted him on the shoulder and accompanied him as they waited for the results.

Suddenly, the door opened, and the doctor emerged while asking, "Young Master Elliot, we found Old Madam Presgrave's heartbeat unusual just now, and it seemed as though she had taken the wrong medication. Are you sure that she had taken heart pills that are easy on her?"

"What's the situation with my grandma?"

"We cleansed her stomach just now, and we're trying to lower her blood pressure. However, this may be an arduous experience for her."

Hearing that, everyone present felt their heart ache for her. Anastasia noticed Elliot's tightly-clenched fists, and she pitied him as well.

"We'll do our best so that she can regain consciousness. Young Master Elliot, can you bring me the pills Old Madam Presgrave usually takes at home? I want to examine them."

Elliot nodded. When the doctor closed the door again, Elliot called up the housekeeper and asked her to deliver the medicine.

"Mom is at an old age now, but she still has to suffer like this. I feel so sorry for her," Brenda said as she clutched at her chest.

"Even normal people can't bear all this suffering. Was there something wrong with the medication?" Jonathan frowned.

Anastasia intuitively thought of someone. Hayley had appeared at the Presgrave Residence today, and she was an evil and scheming woman. Could she be involved in this?

Nonetheless, Anastasia kept this guess to herself. After all, she couldn't say anything without proof.

After more than two hours in the emergency unit, Harriet was moved to the ward. Within half a day, she seemed to have gained a few more years, and she looked

considerably weaker.

Just then, the housekeeper had also brought the medication, which was promptly sent to the doctor for examination.

Anastasia looked at the time and found that it was almost 4.00PM. She called up her father and asked him to take her son back to her home and stay the night there, and she would go back as soon as Harriet woke up.

Francis told her not to worry, and she could wait as long as she wanted at the hospital until Harriet regained consciousness.

Meanwhile, Elliot stationed himself in the doctor's office as he watched the doctor study every bottle of medicine. He wanted to know the main reason his grandmother had fainted.

Just as the doctor poured out a bottle of pills, he looked at the shape and size of the pills on the paper, and he could immediately spot the problem.

'This isn't heart medication. Has there been a mix-up?'

Chapter 429

The housekeeper, who was standing at the side, also came closer to look. She exclaimed, "When did the pills get so large? Even the marks don't look like the pills Old Madam Presgrave usually takes."

"I don't think these are heart pills either. I'll have someone run a thorough analysis to determine its ingredients."

Elliot looked at the housekeeper. "Jodie, what's going on?"

"I don't know either, Young Master Elliot. The pills I gave Old Madam Presgrave yesterday were still the normal size, but how did they turn bigger today?" The housekeeper also had no idea what was going on.

"Someone probably swapped the contents." With that, the doctor took another bottle and poured the pills onto a piece of paper to examine them. "These are sleeping pills, but there's something wrong with them too. Even though they look more or less alike, these pills contain 6 times the contents of the pills I usually prescribe to Old Madam Presgrave. If she takes these pills, her life would be at risk."

Elliot's expression changed. It was obvious that someone had swapped his grandma's pills, but who would do such a vicious thing?

The housekeeper was also shocked to the core. "Oh my goodness! Who's trying to kill her? How dare they meddle with her usual medication!"

"You'd better find out as soon as possible." The doctor looked at Elliot. "Young Master Elliot, with Old Madam Presgrave's age, her medications must not have the slightest bit of error."

Rage was already obvious on Elliot's face, and there was a cold murderous look in his eyes.

Who dared to meddle with his grandma's medication?

No matter who it was, when the culprit was uncovered, he would make them pay dearly.

"Fortunately, she has quite a strong resistance to medicine, and it caused such a reaction. This is how we were able to determine early on that someone had meddled with her medication."

"Young Master Elliot, I really can't figure out who would do such a thing. All the servants in the Presgrave Residence love and respect Old Madam Presgrave. She's usually very caring toward us, and we are all grateful to her. Who would plot against her?" "When did you think the pills were swapped? Were the pills normal yesterday?"

The housekeeper nodded. "Yes, the pills were still normal yesterday, and they were fine this morning. The pills only seemed different this afternoon."

The housekeeper was only a little more than 40 years old. She had no problems with her eyesight, and her memory was quite decent as well.

If none of the servants in the Presgrave Residence would do such a thing, then someone outside of the house might have done it. Even though many relatives and friends visited today, they were all people the Pregraves were on good terms with.

"Could it be Miss Seymour? She might hate you for not letting her dine in the main hall, and that may be why she plotted against Old Madam Presgrave," the housekeeper reminded.

A cold light instantly gleamed in Elliot's eyes. Indeed, Hayley was the most probable culprit.

"I asked you to send people to keep an eye on her, didn't I?"

"It was lunch time, and we were short staffed. I only sent one person to watch her, but she probably couldn't be tracked throughout the entire process. She must have found an opportunity to slip into the medicine room."

"The CCTV! Young Master Elliot, we have CCTV in the medicine room." The housekeeper suddenly remembered. A cat had sneaked into the medicine room last time, but she thought that a new servant had broken something instead. In the end, when they found out the truth, Harriet even scolded her for it, so she installed CCTV in the medicine room after that.

"In order to keep better watch over the medicine room, I installed the CCTV there of my own accord. I feared that something was wrong with the medicine." With that, the housekeeper took out her phone. The CCTV was linked to an app on her phone. "Show me the recording," Elliot ordered through gritted teeth. He was already extremely furious at this point.

The housekeeper navigated the app and found the folder where the recordings were stored. They were saved in chunks, so she had to look through the recordings chronologically. Soon, she found the time when Hayley entered the room. Then, Elliot took her phone and sat on a couch nearby, playing the video in fast forward. Finally, sounds could be heard in the quiet medicine room at 12.45PM.

It was the sound of a door opening. Immediately after that, a figure walked in. Who else could it be but Hayley?

She looked around her for a while, then got to work swapping the contents of the medicine bottles. Her evil act was caught right on camera.

Chapter 430

"Just as expected, it's Hayley. I can't believe she could get so evil at such a young age. Hasn't Old Madam Presgrave treated her well enough?" The housekeeper had never seen such a vicious woman.

Elliot watched the entire process of her swapping out the medicine, which lasted a few minutes. His handsome face was tense, and a fearsome and chilly aura emanated from him.

He already thought that she was incredibly evil when she first harmed Anastasia all those years ago. He didn't expect her to endanger his grandma's life as well.

Hayley had no idea that her every action was being recorded. When she turned around, she even looked at the medicine with a vicious smile on her face. She smiled gleefully for a few seconds before finally leaving.

The housekeeper was almost driven mad by her anger. Hayley obviously had the intention of harming people, and she couldn't believe that Hayley's heart could be so ugly beneath the pretty exterior.

"Send me a copy of the video." Elliot passed the phone back to the housekeeper, then asked the doctor, "How's my grandma's condition right now?"

"She's doing well, and her blood pressure has been regulated. She can stay in the hospital, and we'll check on her for a while. Fortunately, the medicine wasn't completely absorbed into her body."

Elliot nodded, then said to the housekeeper, "Don't tell my grandma about this yet. I don't want her to be affected."

"Understood, Young Master Elliot. Please don't let Hayley off the hook. She's too evil."

The housekeeper was extremely furious as well. If Hayley wasn't found out, she might be the one to take the blame. She couldn't imagine what would happen to her

then.

Also, Harriet was such a kind person, so if the old woman passed away just like that, she would live all the days of her life in regret.

"I won't let her off so easily," Elliot said through gritted teeth. Hayley's good days were over.

Elliot didn't get back at Hayley right away. For now, he just wanted to wait until

Harriet woke up, and he would deal with this matter when her condition had stabilized.

However, he still had one more person to deal with. He reached out and dialed Rey's number. "Get Daniel to take care of Hayley tonight, and keep a close eye on him throughout the whole process. I want to know his relationship with Hayley." I

"Understood!" Rey sensed that something was about to happen, so he did exactly as he was told.

Meanwhile, Hayley didn't know anything about Harriet being hospitalized. After she was sent back to the villa, she had a round of drinks and got completely drunk. After her drinking session, she received a call from Daniel.

"President Presgrave has asked me to come and take care of you. Are you okay, Miss Seymour?" Daniel asked over the phone.

"Come here, Danny. I need you." At that moment, Hayley only wanted a man to depend on.

'Ill be right there." Since it was Elliot's orders, Daniel had a valid reason to come and take care of Hayley.

Daniel arrived after a short while. When he saw Hayley lying in the pile of wine bottles, he went over and helped her up. "Miss Seymour, you're drunk."

"Danny, am I really that bad-looking? Am I really inferior to Anastasia?"

Daniel could only coax her as he said, "No, you're very beautiful too."

“How come Elliot only has eyes for Anastasia, though? What about me? I put in so much effort to look like her, but Elliot didn’t even spare me a look. He had no idea how scared I was when I was on the operating table. Even my sense of taste has gone wrong, but he still doesn’t like me.” Hayley sobbed into Daniel’s arms.

This scene was caught on a camera not far away, for Rey had sent people to keep an eye on them. Hayley and Daniel were unaware of all this as they talked in the room.

“Danny, carry me upstairs.” Hayley’s eyes were filled with a pleading look. She needed a man right now.

Daniel looked at Hayley. Even though Hayley had altered her appearance, Daniel still loved her. After all, they had been intimate on a few occasions before.

Daniel carried Hayley upstairs, and all this was recorded and sent to Elliot’s phone. As Elliot watched Hayley mingle with his assistant, there was only disgust in his heart.

Elliot was now sitting on a couch in the lounge. Anastasia had fetched a glass of water for him, so Elliot turned off his phone and accepted it.

Anastasia could see that Elliot wasn’t in a good mood. He seemed worried, and he was also terribly furious.

The Novel will be updated daily. Come back and continue reading tomorrow, everyone!