



The Addictive Taste of Her

The room was bathed in a warm glow of the lights. The man who sat on the couch had flawless features, his handsome face the painstaking artwork of the heavens. He wore a finely tailored suit that accentuated his strong silhouette. At present, Elliot Presgrave's eyes turned icy as his grandmother's steely voice reverberated in his mind.

Elliot, you must take Anastasia Tillman for a wife. I will only have her and no one else as my granddaughter-in-law in the Presgrave Family.

Right now, however, the only person Elliot was thinking of was the woman whom he had ravished in the dark all those years ago. That fateful night, his drink had been laced and rendered him so intoxicated that the only thing he remembered was how the woman had hopelessly sobbed while she begged for mercy under him.

When all was done, he had taken off his watch and pressed it into her hand, thereafter passing out in the dimness of that room.

Fast forward to five years later; he was still looking for her. It was just last week when he learned that she had sold off his watch at the secondhand market, but the news came too late, for his grandmother insisted that he take some other woman for a wife.

Just then, his phone rang once more. He picked it up and greeted brusquely, "What?"

"Young Master Elliot, we have found the girl. Her name is Hayley Seymour, and she was the one who personally sold off the watch."

“Send me her address, and I’ll pay her a visit,” Elliot ordered as an elated gleam flashed in his eyes. The mysterious girl from that night has finally been sighted! I have to find her, no matter what. I need to make it up to her for the things I’ve done that night.

Meanwhile, Hayley was in the women’s boutique. She had taken over the boutique a little over a year ago, but the business had been on a steady decline. Struggling to pay rent, she had tried to come up with ways to scrape together enough money to tide over. At last, she decided to try to sell the watch she had in her possession, and much to her pleasant surprise, it fetched a whopping price of five hundred thousand.

The watch hadn’t been hers, to begin with. Five years ago, the clubhouse staff had contacted her and told her that they had retrieved a watch from the private room, thereafter prompting her to collect it from their lost and found department. Upon arriving at the club and seeing that it was a designer men’s watch, she claimed it as her own without even a second of hesitation.

Since then, the watch had been nestling in her closet until she decided to sell it off at the secondhand market last week. Leading up to the sale, she hadn’t expected that the watch would be worth much, but that was before she was offered an astonishing five hundred thousand for it.

Hayley was glowing as she stared at the amount of money she had in her account, and she thought happily to herself, I guess I can live comfortably for a while longer.

At that moment, the door to her boutique swung open, and she quickly rose to greet the customer. “Welcome to...”

She trailed off then, so stunned that she abandoned the rest of her words.

The man who had entered her boutique stood tall and straight. He was handsome beyond comprehension, and he carried with him an innate nobility.

It took a while for Hayley to snap out of her daze before she stumbled over her words to ask, “I-Is there someone you’re looking for, sir?”

That was a fair question, considering she was running a women’s boutique. It was impossible that a man wearing a refined handmade suit would be here to browse through dresses and the like. He looked like he stood at six feet two, and there was no mistaking the domineering edge of his presence.

“Hayley Seymour?” Elliot asked as his narrowed eyes locked onto her. He searched her face, desperately trying to find traces of the woman from five years ago.

“Y-Yes, that’s me. And you are...” She couldn’t quite finish her words; her faculty of speech was going haywire under the man’s burning gaze.

Having heard her reply, the man reached into his pocket and produced a men’s watch before her, then asked in a deep, rumbling voice, “Has this watch been in your possession all these years?”

Hayley glanced at the watch and instantly felt the urge to shrink into herself. Blinking guiltily, she stammered, “Y-Yes, the watch is... mine.”

“And you were the woman from the Abyss Club five years ago? The one who was in Room 808?” Elliot pressed, eyeing the girl in front of him intently as he thought with a start, Could she really be the girl from that night?

The wheels in Hayley’s mind began to turn furiously. Room 808 from five years ago... Wasn’t that the room where Erica and I set Anastasia up? Why is this man asking me about that incident?

Without dwelling too much on this, she answered straightforwardly, “Of course, that was me.”

“Keep this watch from now on, and don’t try to pawn it off again. I’ll make it up to you for what happened that night,” he said as he handed the watch to her. “I’m Elliot Presgrave. Remember my name, will you?”

Hayley looked up at him in shock. Elliot Presgrave? As in, the heir to Presgrave Corporation, the leading conglomerate? “Y-You’re Elliot Presgrave?” she asked, so overwhelmed she might collapse.

The man next to Elliot handed her a name card and interjected, “Miss Seymour, this is our young master’s name card. You may look for him if you need his help in any way.”

She took the card with one shaky hand, and when she saw the shell-shocking name embossed onto the gold stationery, her heart nearly flew out of her chest. So the guy who slept with Anastasia five years ago was not the male escort we arranged for her, but this fine specimen who happens to be the heir to the Presgraves’ family fortune?

As realization dawned upon her, Hayley reached out and grabbed Elliot’s arm, then forced tears to spring to her eyes as she threw a fit. “You have to take responsibility, Elliot. Do you know how hurt and traumatized I was after that night?” With that, she looked down and cried crocodile tears, sobbing miserably like she was the one who had been violated five years ago.

There was only one thing on her mind right now: to step into Anastasia’s shoes and assume the role of the victim from that fateful night. She was set on having Elliot take responsibility so that she could get more benefits out of this. Ultimately, she hoped to marry the man and become Mrs. Presgrave.

“Don’t worry, I promise to take responsibility,” the man said solemnly, his husky voice steady and reassuring.

“Miss Seymour, Young Master Elliot has arranged a villa for you, and you can move in anytime. He will take care of all your needs from now on.” Elliot’s personal assistant, Rey Osborne, pointed out helpfully.

Hayley’s eyes lit up at once. She was so ecstatic she could pass out. A world of riches and glamor will soon be in my hands!

“There are some things I have to take care of, so I’ll get going,” Elliot said, then after casting Hayley a brief look, he turned to leave.

When the door swung shut behind him, Hayley clutched the watch tightly. She was so overwhelmed by this unexpected turn of events that she could cry. “I’m going to be rich! Rich!” While she celebrated the windfall, she found herself hoping viciously that Anastasia had dropped dead within the last five years so that she wouldn’t appear out of nowhere like roadkill.

In the understated luxury ride, Elliot sat in the backseat with his eyes closed. Is Hayley really the woman from five years ago? Why does she seem different? Or have five years changed her?

The orange rays of the setting sun spilled through the car window and played over the man’s chiseled features. He looked so handsome that it was hard to believe he wasn’t some valuable piece of art that belonged in a museum; there was no one who could replicate such fine looks.

He was the true successor to Presgrave Group. He had taken over the reins five years ago and launched the conglomerate to new heights, so much so that it was crowned first place among the world’s leading companies.

On that fateful night five years ago, he had experienced his first and only downfall in his lifetime. One of his rivals had spiked his drink in hopes of manipulating him into ruining his own reputation. Elliot had saved himself by darting into the private room, but just as the effect of the drug was at its peak, a random woman scurried in and relieved him of his predicament.

Since then, the fact that he had just ravished and taken away a girl's innocence had been weighing on his conscience.

He was sure that she had been chaste up to that night, for when he woke up after the deed, he saw under the lights of the private room the traces of blood that stained the couch.

As he thought about the scattered mess in the private room that followed his misdeed, he stopped doubting Hayley's identity and his impression of her. I have to take responsibility for what I've done to her.

While this was happening, Anastasia was in her apartment somewhere abroad as she said on the phone, "Got it. Give me three days tops to return to the country and prepare for the competition."

"Mommy, are we going back?" A small figure wandered over to her side. He wore a blue checkered shirt and a pair of denim shorts. His features were delicately chiseled, albeit childish. He was only four or so, but there was unmistakable grace and elegance to his movements.

Anastasia smiled and nodded. "Would you like to go back with me?"

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