



Refusing Their Favor

“Of course! I’ll go anywhere you go, Mommy!” the little guy beamed, his large eyes looking like glistening onyxes as they curved into crescent moons.

Anastasia couldn’t help musing over how beautiful the child was. Every time she looked at his little face, she felt a surge of comfort and gratitude, as though constantly in awe of how she had managed to birth such an adorable little one.

“Well, then, we best pack our things now. We’re leaving for the airport tomorrow afternoon.”

“Okay!” The little one gave one firm nod, then dashed into his room to pack his things for the trip.

Anastasia heaved a sigh. She had been living abroad since her father threw her out of the house five years ago. It wasn’t so much that she didn’t want to go home as it was that she had no place in it.

She didn’t even tell her father after she had delivered her child while abroad, and now that she was going back to her homeland for her work and career, she had made up her mind to see the old man. He was still her father, after all.

Three days later, it was evening time at the international airport when Anastasia wheeled the baggage cart forward. Her son was seated on top of the large suitcase on the cart, and he gazed around in wonder. Everything about Anastasia’s homeland seemed to pique his interest, and there was a curious gleam in his sparkly eyes.

Presently, Anastasia had only just stepped out of the arrival hall when two men in suits walked up to her, thereafter greeting politely, “Miss Tillman, we have been sent here by Old Madam Presgrave, who has prepared a ride for you just outside the entrance. If you please—”

She blinked at them and said very courteously, “I appreciate the Presgraves’ kind gesture, but I have no need for a ride, thank you.”

“Miss Presgrave, the old madam truly wishes to see you,” the middle-aged man said respectfully.

Anastasia knew that Old Madam Presgrave bore no ill will, but she really had no plans on accepting the old madam’s kind favor. “Please tell Old Madam Presgrave that it was my mother’s duty to save others, and that there is no need to repay the deed, at least not to me.” With that, she made to brush past the two men, pushing the cart toward the exit.

One of the men took out his phone and informed dutifully, “Young Master Elliot, Miss Tillman has refused our offer to pick her up.”

Presently, three gleaming black Rolls-Royce with heavily tinted windows that deterred anyone’s efforts of peeking inside were parked by the airport entrance. There was a man seated in the backseat of the Rolls-Royce in the middle of the fleet who kept his gaze on the airport doors, and he saw a young woman pushing her cart through them just as he set his phone aside.

The woman wore a white blouse and plain jeans. Her hair had been gathered at her nape, revealing a delicate and pretty face. Her skin was alabaster, and her demeanor somewhat leisurely as she maneuvered the cart. Without a doubt, her presence among the crowd was a dazzling one.

Just then, Elliot’s gaze was caught by something, or rather, someone—the little boy who leaped off the woman’s cart. He looked to be around four or five years of age, and he wore a gray sweater with joggers, his thick and soft hair

flopping over his forehead. He might be young, but his features were finely chiseled, making him all the more adorable.

At that moment, Anastasia crouched down and helped the little one straighten his clothes; there was no mistaking the gentle and indulgent look in her eyes.

Who's the kid? Is Anastasia married? If so, then I won't have to marry her just to fulfill Grandma's wishes. With that in mind, Elliot watched as the taxi Anastasia and her supposed child got into pulled away. Not long after that, his fleet left as well.

They had barely covered any distance when his phone rang. He glanced at the caller ID and greeted, "Hey, Hayley."

"Elliot, when are you coming to see me? I've missed you." Hayley's coy voice whined on the other line.

"I've been a little busy recently, but I'll see you as soon as I'm free," he answered, the bass in his voice prominent.

"Promise?" Hayley asked coquettishly.

"Yes," he replied with forced patience.

Meanwhile, over at Presgrave Residence, a silver-haired old lady was sitting on the couch sipping her tea when she heard her subordinates' latest findings. She looked up in shock as she demanded, "What? Anastasia has a child? Is she married?"

"According to our investigation, the child's father never showed up, so we're assuming that she had the child out of wedlock."

"Oh, that poor dear. To become a single mother at such a young age..."

Harriet Presgrave, otherwise more widely known as Old Madam Presgrave, sighed. Guilt surged through her as she thought about the brave female police

officer who had died after sustaining eighteen fatal stabs from the ruffian who had threatened to hurt Elliot all those years ago.

She was only just lamenting on this when an elegant and towering figure sauntered into the living room. It was Elliot, and he had returned from the airport. "Come here, Elliot," Harriet said as she beckoned her grandson over.

Elliot promptly took the seat next to hers and began to say, "Grandma, Anastasia kept refusing our offer, so maybe I—"

"I just found out that Miss Tillman is a single mother who had a child out of wedlock. You must take care of the poor mother and son, Elliot. It's your duty."

Elliot gaped at the old woman speechlessly, stunned by her suggestion. He had thought that she would have given up on the matter, but as it turned out, she grew even more determined to see it through instead.

"Grandma, I don't have to marry her. We could always use some other way to repay her mother's kind deeds and make it up to her," he countered calmly, hoping that his grandmother would see sense.

However, the moment Harriet heard this, she shot him a frigid look and said, "No, that won't do. You must marry Anastasia and protect her and take care of her for the rest of her life."

Elliot frowned. He didn't think any good could come from a loveless marriage, but he couldn't even reject his grandmother's suggestion because she was set on repaying the sacrifice Anastasia's mother had made all those years ago.

"You can't even imagine how many stabs Officer Amelia Chapman had sustained just to protect you. The amount of blood... The gruesome nature of the crime..." Harriet's eyes were sad as she said this. Then, she looked up and cast her grandson a hard look, pointing out, "Taking care of her daughter is

the least you could do. You won't ever be able to repay the officer's selfless deed, even if you were to take care of Anastasia for eternity."

Elliot nodded quietly. "Fine, then I'll take her for a wife."

But there was another woman whom he could not let go of, whom he needed to compensate as well. That said, he had no plans to tell Harriet about this just yet, and he knew that even if he did tell her, it wouldn't dissuade her from forcing him to marry Anastasia.

"Anastasia has a kid," he said.

That backfired on him because Harriet seemed delighted by the news. "That's right! It's a little boy, probably around three or four years old. I can't believe some scoundrel just left them like that. Listen to me, Elliot—don't you dare snub that child, is that understood?"

Elliot could hardly believe this. He stared at his grandmother, stumped as he thought, Is this some kind of a buy-one-free-one deal?

The Bourgeois Jewelry Atelier was an old and well-known establishment that had been acquired by Anastasia's superior. In order to grow the brand, Anastasia—being the chief designer for the Queen's Rose QR Diamond Global—had been transferred back to her homeland to work on diversifying Bourgeois.

Through the arrangements made by Bourgeois, Anastasia was put up in an apartment. She went about decorating and straightening up her new abode while her son slept, and within two hours, the apartment was transformed into the perfect cozy nest for the mother-and-son duo.

She was exhausted, but she did not feel like turning in for the day as she watched her son's adorable sleeping profile.

Whatever had happened in this city five years ago still haunted her and made her stomach churn. Her best friend's betrayal, her stepsister's wickedness, and her father's ultimatum that resulted in her being exiled were like cuts that ran too deep to heal over.

It was a miracle at all that she had survived the past five years. She had had to balance raising her son as a single mother and picking up design courses, and during the later part of the five years, she slowly worked her way up the ladder and became chief designer. She had toiled harder than anyone else, and the heavens must have granted her the stroke of luck she needed to get to where she was today.

As of now, she had her savings, her son, and a job that allowed her freedom.

She picked up her phone and stared at her father's number. There were several times when she thought about calling him, but something made her hesitate. It's been five years. I wonder if he's still angry with me.

Then, she heaved a sigh. Forget it.

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