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Hayley finally felt a little safer. My scheme worked perfectly, and I managed to enter without having to sneak in. "This is my first time coming to a place like this, and I don't know anyone. Can I stay with you, Elliot?" Hayley knew that the most eye-catching spot she could take would be the one beside Elliot, which would make her his female partner. She wanted to stay by his side so that other women wouldn't get a chance with him. Elliot knew that Hayley grew up in a regular family, and he knew that she wasn't familiar with such places. "Okay. Bring a drink over, and you can stay with me," he said with a nod. "Okay!" Hayley walked off happily. She glanced at her surroundings in search of Anastasia, but she couldn't find her anywhere as there were too many guests. Meanwhile, Anastasia was sitting by a window seat near the buffet area. Right then, a male guest who was in his thirties walked over and sat next to Anastasia. "Hey there. I don't have a spot to sit, so can I sit here?" "Sure!" Anastasia looked up and smiled. The man's eyes lit up the moment he saw her smile-he had noticed her gorgeous figure earlier, and he could tell that she was a pretty lady. However, he was immediately blown away when he saw her smiling. The man's heart pounded as he realized what he wanted to do-he wanted to get to know her and chase after her. "My name is Samuel Stone. And you are?" he asked. "I'm Anastasia Tillman," she replied..

"That's a really pretty name, Miss Tillman. Are you here alone?" he asked. "Yeah! I'm with a friend, but he's busy now, so I'm alone," she replied. "That's such a coincidence. I'm the general manager of First World Company, and I'm involved in the asset transaction business." He handed her his name card while speaking. He was considered successful for his age, and Anastasia eyed him with a surprised look after hearing what he said. "That's really impressive! You're already a general manager at such a young age." "You're being too nice. What do you do, Miss Tillman?"

"I'm a jewelry designer," she replied. "Woah. You must be really talented." Samuel found himself more attracted to her. She wasn't just a pretty face; she was also a designer. Right then, Anastasia's phone began to ring. She glanced at her phone before picking it up. "Hello, Nigel." "Hey, Anastasia. My Dad's making me talk to guests, but I promise to come and get you in ten minutes," he uttered. "Don't worry about it. You should focus on entertaining the guests," Anastasia said in an understanding tone. "Ah! I'm so annoyed, but my dad wants to introduce me to more people. It's giving me a headache," he grumbled. "You shouldn't think of it that way! Tons of people would love to have such connections. You should spend time with these guests since they'll be really helpful for your work." Anastasia tried to comfort him. "Yeah. I feel a lot better after listening to your voice. Where are you now?" he asked. "I'm eating at the buffet area," she replied. "Okay. I'll come to look for you in a while," he replied. After Anastasia ended Nigel's call, she looked up to see a couple walking in. It was Elliot and Hayley. Anastasia narrowed her eyes when she saw Hayley as she hadn't expected Hayley to come. Furthermore, she hadn't expected Hayley to come with Elliot. A cold smirk spread across Anastasia's face as she thought, Hayley's scheming skills must have improved, huh? She's good at using manipulative tactics, but she's even able to apply them to Elliot now. Impressive. Anastasia looked away, and her eyes met Samuel's. He was staring at her with a look of admiration on his face. She gave him a cheerful smile, and he felt his heart rate doubling instantly. He felt like he was about to get a heart attack. "You're so pretty, Miss Tillman!" he said. "Thank you." She gave him a polite smile. Elliot had walked over with Hayley for a meal, but his focus had been shifted the moment he saw the

woman by the window. He narrowed his icy gaze when he saw Anastasia beaming at the man in front of her. They looked like they were having a fun time talking to each other. "Let's find a spot to sit down, Elliot!" Hayley looked around her surroundings, and she immediately caught sight of Anastasia. The table beside Anastasia's had just gotten up to leave, so Hayley quickly grabbed Elliot's arm and led him over. "There's a spot there," she uttered daringly.

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Elliot's arm tensed for a moment, but he didn't fling the woman's hand away. He was also interested to take a look at the man in front of Anastasia, who had made her laugh so heartily. The moment Anastasia looked up, she saw Elliot and Hayley walking in her direction. She then realized that the table next to her had just been cleared. They're not going to sit here, are they? Hayley shot Anastasia a smug look when she walked over and pretended to greet her. "I didn't know you were here, Anastasia!" Anastasia gave Hayley a cold glare before turning her head to face the window. She didn't bother being nice to Hayley as she saw no point in it. Hayley could only settle in her seat with a bitter smile on her face. Meanwhile, Elliot took his seat opposite Hayley. The position of his seat allowed him to stare directly at Anastasia's face. He took a glance at the man opposite her as he thought, I don't know who this guy is. That means that he's probably just some regular person. "My company's really near to yours, Miss Tillman! It's just two streets away. I'll have to buy you lunch and coffee next time!" Samuel's gaze remained on Anastasia the whole time, and he didn't notice the icy glare that was boring into the back of his head. Anastasia ran her fingers through her hair as she put on a shy smile. "Sure! We can grab coffee when we're free. Since you're such an impressive individual, I bet I can learn some investment related things from you," she uttered.

some "I do have some achievements in that field, so I'd gladly teach you some tricks," Samuel replied in a confident tone. He was secretly pleased when he noticed how Anastasia seemed to have a better impression of him after he talked about his career. "Let's get some food, Elliot!" Hayley said. "You go ahead. I need to make a call," Elliot replied while staying put in his seat. Hayley had no choice but to go on her own. As she turned to gaze at the man sitting opposite Anastasia, she scoffed. What's Anastasia's taste in men like? This guy doesn't look good at all.

At the same time, Elliot's gaze was fixed on the woman sitting at the next table. There was a light hanging from above Anastasia's head, and her gray evening gown made her skin seem fairer than usual. Her sharp features and her mesmerizing eyes made her seem especially attractive, and her glossy red lips looked extra seductive. Any man who saw her perky, glossy lips would yearn to bite on them. Although Anastasia wasn't paying any attention to the man beside their table, she could feel him staring at her. What's he looking at? Doesn't he already have Hayley with him? she scoffed silently. While Samuel lowered his head to drink water, Anastasia took the opportunity to roll her eyes at Elliot before glaring at him. Elliot's confused eyes met her eyes, and he felt a surge of inexplicable emotions in his chest. Anastasia smiles in such a happy manner when she's with this man, yet she has never smiled at me like that before. Why? Don't I deserve her smiles? These thoughts made Elliot more frustrated than before. As he watched Anastasia continuing to engage in conversation with the other man, Elliot felt like he couldn't handle it anymore. In the end, he stood up and walked to Samuel. "Excuse me, sir. I need this seat for a while as there are some work-related things I'd like to discuss with my staff." Samuel felt rather annoyed. Which brat's trying to mess with my attempt at chasing after Anastasia? The moment Samuel turned around, he was utterly shocked by what he saw. Isn't this the young master of the

Presgrave Group? "P-Please sit down, President Presgrave." Samuel moved at the speed of lightning as he gestured for Elliot to sit. Then, Samuel realized... Does Anastasia work for Elliot? Anastasia stared at the man in a rather troubled manner. "I'm not at work right now, President Presgrave. Let's talk about work during work hours," she uttered coldly. "I think talking about work is better than chatting with this boring man here." Elliot had instantly attacked Samuel's personality by calling him a boring man. Samuel was speechless for two seconds before he put on a polite smile. "You're right, President Presgrave. I'm a rather naggy person who likes to have conversations on useless topics," he explained.

Anastasia didn't know how to respond as she stared at Elliot. "This might be the first time I've seen someone talk so rudely about others in front of their face," she muttered. "Did I say anything wrong?" Elliot raised an eyebrow in a cocky manner. He's right that Samuel brags, but I'm willing to listen to him! I'd rather listen to Samuel than Elliot! Anastasia thought. "I like it when others brag. Do you have the ability to do that, President Presgrave? Why don't you try it?" Anastasia said in a provoking manner.

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The man's expression dimmed as his lips twitched a little. "No," he muttered. Anastasia let out a scoff. "I'm afraid someone as plain and normal as me will never be able to converse with someone as high and mighty as you." After finishing her sentence, Anastasia picked her bag up and walked away.

Coincidentally, Hayley was walking over with some plates of food. The moment Hayley saw Anastasia walking in her direction, Hayley intentionally leaned closer to Anastasia so that she could allow herself to be hit by Anastasia's shoulder. Then, Hayley started her grand performance. She threw her plate onto the ground as she stumbled and clutched the table beside her. "Ah..." she let out a weak cry. Elliot had his back against them at first, but he immediately turned around when he heard the sound of glass shattering. The moment he turned, he saw Hayley clutching a chair, Anastasia looking back while scoffing, and glass shattered all over the ground. Anastasia didn't bother to take a second look at the situation and simply walked off. Hayley quickly bent down to pick up the shattered glass pieces, but the man stopped her. "Don't pick that up! You might cut yourself. Get the servers to do it!"

Hayley had done that on purpose-she knew that Elliot wouldn't watch her pick up the glass shards without saying anything, "What a waste," she muttered as she put on a mournful look. As she spoke, she rubbed her shoulder. "Did she hurt you?" Elliot asked in a caring tone. "It's not her fault. I don't blame her for anything." Hayley bit her lip as if she were trying to force herself to endure all the ways in which she had been wronged. This would make it seem like Anastasia was the rude, demanding one. A rather troubled look flashed across Elliot's face. For some reason, he felt rather exasperated at Anastasia's behavior-he didn't want her to be such a rude person. Anastasia clearly knew that Hayley was putting on an act, but she didn't want to do anything about it. Elliot's blind, so he won't be able to realize anything on his own. I don't want to be the person to tell him any of this, she thought. Meanwhile, Nigel and his parents were still in the VIP room. Nigel's parents were introducing him to a

few other senior figures in the business industry. They hoped that these seniors would provide their son with more guidance and support in the future. After Nigel clinked glasses and introduced himself to all of them, he finally got the chance to sneak out to the grand hall. He only looked around for a few moments before he found the attractive, curvy figure he had been looking for in the crowd. At the same time, Elliot strode out from the buffet area. Nigel caught sight of him almost immediately, and Nigel intentionally walked over to Anastasia before putting his arm around her waist. "Did you miss me?" he asked in an intimate tone. Anastasia jumped a little before she turned to see Nigel. "You scared me!"

she chuckled. Nigel then leaned closer to whisper into Anastasia's ear. However, from Elliot's angle, it looked more like Nigel was giving Anastasia a kiss on the cheek. "You're so gorgeous tonight, Anastasia," Nigel whispered into her ear before smiling while letting go of her. But in Elliot's eyes, he was certain that he had just witnessed Nigel kissing Anastasia in front of everyone. Furthermore, Anastasia just let out a smile as if she enjoyed his kiss a lot. Elliot's entire face stiffened after he witnessed this scene, and he immediately turned and walked in a different direction after that. Nigel watched his cousin walk away, and he let out a soft sigh as he thought, It seems like my little plan worked out! Anastasia had no idea what was going on, and Nigel quickly held her hand before leading her aside. "Hey, let's go to get some rest in one of the rooms on the second floor. There are too many people here; it's a little noisy." Anastasia had no choice but to go up to the second floor with him since he was holding her. As they walked up the stairs, a few men who had been drinking bumped into them, which made Nigel more annoyed than before. Once they got to the rooms on the second floor, Nigel told the waiter to send them some fruits. Then, he lazily loosened his tie while leaning back in his chair. He was dressed in a light blue suit and had his hair waxed and combed up. He looked especially handsome that day-he gave off a boyish, cool yet elegant aura.

Unfortunately, Anastasia only saw this handsome man as her good friend and nothing more than that. For the past two years, Anastasia only ever thought of him as a good friend. She couldn't date someone she knew too well.

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However, Nigel held a strong sense of determination in this matter-he wanted to marry Anastasia, and he wanted her as his wife. He wanted to care for her, and he wanted to surrender his whole life to her. Nigel told Anastasia all about the guests he had met earlier-many of them were huge tycoons that he wouldn't have had the chance to meet if it weren't for the charity dinner. "But I got so bored," Nigel muttered with a sigh. He smiled when he saw the bracelet on her hand. "Are you finally wearing what I gave you?" She gazed at the bracelet. "Of course. I'm the one who designed this." Nigel had purchased a bracelet from her, and he had gifted it to her on the day that he received it. Anastasia had been speechless-she didn't want to take it but Nigel had insisted, so she had no choice but to accept his gift in the end. Right then, Nigel's phone rang. "Hello? Dad." "Hey, Nigel. Johnson and his family are here. Come over and help me out," Nigel's dad ordered.

"Can I stay with my friend for a while, Dad?" Nigel asked. "You can go off with your friend later, Nigel. You have to show more respect to your seniors. Hurry over now." His father's voice sounded sterner this time. "Dad, I..." Nigel was helpless. It seemed like his dad wasn't about to let him go off so easily. "Go on! We can meet anytime," Anastasia urged with a smile on her face. "Okay. Wait for me here, and I'll come back to you once I'm done," Nigel replied. That was exactly what Anastasia wanted to do-she had no intention of leaving when she had just found such a luxurious room where she could rest in. After Nigel left, Anastasia picked up a cup of fruit tea and sipped on it while she pulled her phone out to scroll through the news. It had only been two minutes before someone opened the door to the room. She looked up in surprise. Is Nigel back already? However, she froze when she looked up. The man who entered the room wasn't Nigel, but Elliot, the last person she wanted to see then "How did you know that I was here?" Anastasia eyed him with a rather frustrated look. Elliot straightened his firm and muscular body as he made his way in and shut the door behind him. He sat down on the couch in an elegant manner before he turned to look at Anastasia. "Stay away from Nigel," he warned.

He wasn't trying to have a discussion with her, but giving her firm orders instead. Anastasia knew he was about to talk about her relationship with Nigel again, and she felt rather repulsed by his actions. "Why don't you think about yourself first, President Presgrave? Nigel and I don't need you to meddle with our relationship." Elliot's gaze darkened as he spoke in a cold tone. "Even if you've saved him in the past, I'm sure my uncle and aunt wouldn't want you as their daughter-in-law. I know them better than you do." "Why not?" Anastasia blinked. "They want a daughter-in-law who can match up to their standards." Elliot shot her a cold glare that had hints of malice in it. Anastasia knew that she was no match for Nigel, so she genuinely wanted just to be friends with him. She never dared to have other hopes for him. When Elliot saw how she pressed her lips together in silence, he knew that what he said must have hurt her. However, it was also the truth. My uncle and aunt have always had the thought of arranging a marriage for Nigel. Even Grandma talked about this last week, and I recall hearing that my aunt had already found a rich girl whom they thought was an ideal match. Anastasia let out a seemingly self-deprecating scoff. "I know I'm just a normal person. I don't need you to remind me of that. I know where I stand," she uttered. He knitted his brows together when he saw the way she was bringing herself down. "I wasn't looking down on you," he explained. "I don't need you to think any better of me," she replied flatly. Right then, she recalled her memory of Elliot and Hayley walking to the buffet area together, and it made her angry just thinking about it. If he gets closer to Hayley, I hope he'll stay away from me. I won't have to feel so bothered by him then. "You need to stay away from Nigel tonight, Anastasia. You don't know who you might end up. triggering otherwise." Elliot used the same tone to give her another warning. Anastasia stared directly into his eyes with an annoyed look on her face. "Are you done talking?" He was genuinely annoyed at Anastasia's stubborn personality. Can't she just listen to me for once?

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Since Elliot didn't want to leave, Anastasia decided that she would leave instead. She picked her bag up and was about to go when Elliot raised an eyebrow and reached his long arm over to grab her wrist and pull her into his arms. She lost her balance and immediately fell face-first into his chest. She looked up angrily, only to feel his breath on her face. He stared fixedly at her face, and there was a hint of amusement in his gaze as she tried to push him away. "Don't mess around with me, Elliot! Let go!" "What if I don't?" The man started getting playful with her. She's the one who made me feel so troubled the whole night, anyway, he thought. I didn't even have the mental capacity to care about anything other than her during the charity dinner today. She really pushed my buttons this time. "You..." She continued pushing him away. He was dressed in a white silk shirt, and she could feel his firm muscles against her palm as she pushed him. Elliot wrapped both his arms around her waist and intertwined his fingers to form a firm lock behind her back. She was losing her mind at this point. What is this guy trying to do here? Anyone can push the door open at any time, and my reputation will be ruined if someone sees us like this. The news of me seducing the Presgrave Family's young master will spread like wildfire then.

While she continued to wrestle her way out of his grip, he quietly admired her gorgeous features. His gaze fell on her red lips—the lipstick she used that day made her look especially pretty as the color made her lips look juicy and full. He could feel his heart fluttering, and he was tempted to know the way that she tasted. All of a sudden, he loosened his grip on her. She thought she would be able to escape then, but the man then held onto her waist and the back of her head. His grip was firm and controlling, and the look in his eyes turned rather dangerous. Frustration bubbled in Anastasia's chest as the man's

lips moved closer to hers. Right when he was about to force her into a kiss, she raised her right hand to swing it across his face. Smack! The sound of her slap was extra loud and crisp in the small room. Moments later, a red slap mark appeared on his

handsome face. The air seemed to freeze as the man's gaze grew visibly darker. There was a fiery look in Anastasia's eyes-she was like a ferocious phoenix that was glaring at her prey. "I dare you to kiss me again." She didn't want him to take advantage of her any longer, and she wanted him to know that she wasn't someone he could mess with. However, she had just finished her sentence when the man lost his temper. He used all his might to shove her down onto the couch. Then, he climbed on top of her before he leaned forward to press his palm against her nose and red lips. Anastasia couldn't breathe. This b*stard is suffocating me! Does he want me to slap him again? Her right hand was pinned down, so she raised her left hand to do the job. However, the man grabbed her wrist before holding it above her head. Then, he pressed his lips against hers in a fierce, rough manner. She felt as if he were sucking all the energy out of her. Her teeth and lips were chattering! Anastasia felt like she was a kitten who had been dominated by the man's strength and bodily heat. In the end, the man let go of her. She finally found the strength to scold him then. "You b*stard, Elliot! You're such a pervert!" she cried. But the man simply stood up to leave. After he walked out, she took a few sips of water as she thought about the slap she gave him earlier. Why didn't I hit him a little harder? Well, everyone knows that Young M rder? Well, everyone knows that Young Master Elliot is probably going to be the most popular choice among the rest of the young ladies. Yet, the only woman he tried to kiss gave him a large slap on his face. He has probably never felt so ashamed in his whole life. Anastasia was contemplating whether to leave the party or not when her phone started ringing. She glanced at the caller ID before taking a deep breath and picking it up. "Hello, Old madam Presgrave," she uttered in a serious tone. "Where are you, Anastasia? Why didn't I see you?" Harriet asked. "I'm resting in one of the rooms on the second floor," Anastasia replied. "I'm on the first floor. Hurry over here! I'd like to see you." The old woman spoke in a gentle but firm

tone. Anastasia felt her heart skipping a beat as she thought, I don't think Old Madam Presgrave knows that I just slapped her favorite grandson, right?

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Anastasia forced herself to head downstairs. She found Harriet surrounded by a group of people. Harriet was dressed in a tight, elegant dress that made her appear especially young and classy. She looked really kind and friendly although she had a headful of gray hair. Before Anastasia approached her, Harriet had already pushed the crowd aside to go toward Anastasia. It was almost as if Anastasia was the VIP there. Everyone in the crowd tossed curious looks in Anastasia's direction. Which rich family is this young lady from? Why is Old Madam Presgrave giving her such-a _ grand welcome? they wondered. "Old Madam Presgrave," Anastasia greeted with a smile. "There you are, girl! You look so gorgeous tonight!" Harriet reached her hand out to hold Anastasia's hand as she spoke to the crowd around her, "This is my god-granddaughter, Anastasia." Once the crowd heard what Harriet said, the young girls gazed at Anastasia with looks of admiration. How did she get so lucky? Why did Old Madam Presgrave choose her as her god granddaughter? At the same time, the owner of a pair of hatred and jealousy-filled eyes glared at Anastasia from outside the crowd-it was none other than Hayley, who watched as Harriet introduced Anastasia to all of the people around her. Old Madam Presgrave's eyes are filled with love for Anastasia, but what about me?

Although Hayley was just a fake product, she had genuinely begun to perceive herself as the Anastasia from five years ago. That explained why she thought she was being treated unfairly. "Hey! Where's Elliot? Why don't I see him?" Harriet suddenly realized that her eldest grandson wasn't around. Anastasia's heart skipped a beat as she thought, The finger marks on Elliot's face are really obvious; I don't think he should show up here. Fortunately for Anastasia, Harriet only told others to look for him without asking for him to be there. "Come here, Anastasia. Let's sit down and have a chat." Harriet held Anastasia's hand and led her to the couch. Right then, Hayley purposely showed up beside them while calling out for Harriet. "Old Madam Presgrave!"

Harriet turned around in surprise. The moment she saw that it was Hayley, a natural smile appeared on her face. "You're here too, Hayley." Hayley immediately wrapped her hands around Harriet's arm. "You don't mind that I'm here, right, Old Madam Presgrave? Elliot told me that he missed out on my invitation. I wouldn't have known about this whole thing if Daniel hadn't told me!" "I guess there must have been a mistake," Harriet replied. Initially, Harriet hadn't wanted Hayley to be at the event, but Harriet couldn't do anything since Hayley was already there. "I missed you so much, Old Madam Presgrave!" Hayley gave the old lady a fond peck on her cheek. "Which family is this young lady from, Old Madam Presgrave?" one of the ladies in the crowd asked curiously. Hayley quickly replied to the lady with a smile. "I'm also one of Old Madam Presgrave's god- granddaughters!" After Hayley finished her sentence, a rather complicated look flashed across Harriet's face. Harriet could easily tell what Hayley was trying to do. It seems like Hayley is more manipulative than I thought her to be, Harriet thought. Both Hayley and Anastasia stood to the left and right of Harriet, and Anastasia simply continued smiling after hearing what Hayley said. Anastasia could only scoff in her heart when she saw what Hayley was trying to do. Hayley wanted to steal the spotlight away from Anastasia, and she wanted the crowd to recognize who she was so that they would be more aware of her status in the future. In the public's eye, anyone who could get close to Harriet had to have a good relationship with the Presgrave Family. While Hayley wasn't paying attention, Harriet casually pulled her hand out of Hayley's arm before addressing both the girls. "Come over here and have a chat with me." Harriet led Anastasia toward the couch, and Hayley immediately tagged along. She didn't want Hayley to get all the good stuff. Harriet initially had some personal matters that she wished to talk to Anastasia about, but she had to put it off since Hayley was just beside them. Harriet ended up asking Anastasia about her work. I'll find another chance to talk to Anastasia, I guess, Harriet thought. Harriet asked Hayley how she was doing as well, and Hayley put on her happiest look as she spoke to Harriet. The crowd observed their interactions and wondered, Can Hayley be any more friendly and

warm? Meanwhile, Nigel's parents had called him over to another room. There was a rich couple sitting inside, and a young, gorgeous girl was sitting beside them. The girl's eyes lit up when she saw Nigel as she was attracted to him.

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"Come over here, Nigel. I'd like you to meet Mr. Johnson, his wife, and his only daughter, Leah. You guys met when you were younger." Nigel's father, Jonathan Manson, chuckled as he glanced at the other family's daughter with a fond and loving gaze. "Yeah! You guys brought Nigel over during Leah's 100-day-old party. Nigel was only two years old then! We already had the idea of matching them since," Johnson's wife uttered with a sweet smile. "Exactly! Their age difference is just perfect." Joy appeared in Brenda's-Nigel's mother-eyes as she looked at Leah. Brenda was wholly satisfied with this idea. Both

Brenda and Jonathan had Leah as their first choice in mind. Leah's parents were powerful people in the food industry, and they had a lot of partnerships with hotel businesses. If Nigel took over the business, he'd be able to receive support from Leah's family. So, the most ideal plan was to matchmake them and unite their families, so that they could both help each other double and triple their revenue! Nigel would no longer have to worry about a lack of support in his career as he would have an extremely powerful father-in-law! Leah's parents shared the same thoughts, and they figured that both families would only grow stronger once they combined their resources. Furthermore, Leah's family wouldn't have to worry about finding another inheritor for their business because they were satisfied with Nigel's capabilities.

"It's been a while, Nigel!" Leah gave him a friendly greeting. This wasn't the first time they had met each other. They were both club members of some overseas racing club, and Leah had fallen in love with Nigel the first time she saw him. It was love at first sight-she even followed him back to the country after he left. Most importantly, Leah was overjoyed to find out that both her and Nigel's parents were supportive of the relationship. "It's been a while, Leah. Thank you for coming to my grandmother's party, Mr. and Mrs. Hart." Nigel spoke in a polite tone. "It's our pleasure and honor to be able to attend this party." The Hart couple had come over just so that their children could meet up during the party. "Why don't you show Leah to the buffet area for some

food, Nigel? Us old ones will be here catching up with each other." Brenda shot her son a look. Nigel was exasperated deep down, but he maintained a polite expression on his face. "Okay, Mom." Nigel brought Leah out of the hall and toward the buffet area. After Leah got some food, Nigel seized this opportunity to escape. "I have other matters to handle, Leah! You enjoy your meal, alright?" Leah immediately stared at him with a look of disappointment. She had spent the whole day preparing and dolling herself up for the party, yet Nigel barely looked at her. That hurt her heart more than ever. However, when she recalled how both families' parents were willing to matchmake them, she felt a little better. She had no need to rush since she was going to be the Manson's daughter-in-law eventually. "That was Old Madam Presgrave's grandson, wasn't he? He looks stunning!" someone uttered. "Yeah, I heard that there have been a large number of ladies from rich families who are circling the two young masters! I wonder which girl will be lucky enough to get married to him and be a part of their family," another said. A confident smirk formed on Leah's lips after she heard the conversations. I'm one of those lucky girls, she thought. No one else will ever have enough power and resources to take Nigel away from me. Meanwhile, Nigel had just arrived at the PA system room. The host of the night happened to be there. "I'm going to propose to a girl later, and I need your help," Nigel said. "When are you doing it? I'll prepare everything for you right now," the staff member replied. "Ten minutes later, I'd like you to call Anastasia's name and get her on stage. Then, you guys can prepare the music and lighting. Take this USB; I've prepared a video that I edited, and you can play it on the big stream. It goes well with romantic songs," Nigel explained. "We got your back, Young Master Nigel!" they cried. Once Nigel was done, he left with a satisfied smile on his face. My proposal is going to start in ten minutes, he thought as he pulled the diamond ring out of his pocket. It wasn't in a box, but the shining surface and the rainbow-like reflections made it clear that it was expensive. Meanwhile, Anastasia and Harriet had separated. Earlier, Harriet told Anastasia to stay past 9.00PM, so Anastasia decided to follow Harriet's wishes. I'll wait here until it's past 9.00PM! Anastasia walked over to a quieter spot before she heard a malicious female voice sneering at her. "Your mother only

passed away due to her work back then, Anastasia. Are you really expecting the Presgrave Family to continue repaying you?"

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Anastasia turned around to find Hayley with a glass of red wine in her hand. Hayley had her arms crossed as she sneered at Anastasia. "Do you think I don't know what you're doing? You're trying to polish your reputation while being the third party in a relationship at the same time. You're secretly seducing Elliot." Hayley's eyes glinted with resentment. Now that it was just the both of them, she didn't need to fake it anymore and could express all the hatred she felt. Anastasia scoffed. "Are you sure you want to mess with me? If I shamelessly decide to get married to Elliot, you will only be left crying in a corner!" "You..." Hayley didn't just fail to offend Anastasia, but she even allowed Anastasia to infuriate her further. "Don't you care about the fact that I've slept with Elliot, Anastasia?" Hayley hissed through gritted teeth. "I don't," Anastasia replied with an eyebrow raised. She was intentionally trying to make Hayley angry. Right then, a hateful look gathered in Hayley's eyes as she clenched her fists. I'm never going to let Anastasia take Elliot away, she thought.

Anastasia wasn't in the mood to continue talking to Hayley, so she turned to head toward the balcony, which wasn't as crowded. However, an attractive, male voice came from the hall at this moment- it was the host calling for Anastasia through the mic. "I'd like to invite Miss Anastasia Tillman up onto the stage. You've dropped something." Anastasia froze. All of the guests were just as shocked, and they wondered if Anastasia had dropped something extremely valuable. Why would the host have to make such a grand announcement otherwise? Anastasia was just as confused. What did I drop? She went through her bag and searched for any missing items. Everything's here! "Is Miss Anastasia Tillman here? Please come on stage. Thank you." The host continued to ask for her. Anastasia had no choice but to ignore the embarrassment she felt while shuffling over to the stage. I really didn't drop anything! Has there been a mistake? she thought.

The host walked over to her once she got up onto the stage. "Are you Miss Anastasia?" he asked with a smile. "Yes, I am. But I didn't leave anything behind!" she cried. She felt especially uneasy since she could feel thousands of eyes on her. "No. You left behind a really important part of your life," the host uttered in a riddle-like manner. All of a sudden, the speakers began to play a romantic song from an overseas singer. The man's deep and husky voice filled the hall, and many other guests gathered in front of the stage as they wanted to see what was going on. There was a loud ringing in Anastasia's head as she watched this happen. Who's the one playing the song? All of a sudden, she saw a lanky figure strolling toward her with a broad grin on his face. Who else could it be apart from Nigel? Anastasia's face turned red. What's Nigel trying to do this time? And why is he doing it in front of everyone? Has he ever thought about how I feel about this? Nigel fixed his loving gaze on the woman as he took firm steps over to her. Eventually, when he was about two feet away from her, he got down on one knee. The whole crowd cheered like mad! They were all shocked. Isn't that the young master of the Manson Family? What is he doing? It looks like he's... proposing to her?! At the same time, another tall figure had just started his way down the stairs on the second floor, and he froze when he saw what was happening on the stage. Elliot's pupils shrank as he realized what Nigel was doing. I hadn't expected Nigel to propose to Anastasia today. Anastasia was just as stunned. She stared at Nigel for a moment before she reached out to pull him up from his knee. "What are you doing, Nigel? Hurry and stand up! Stop messing around!" Right then, Nigel reached into his coat pocket and felt for the diamond ring. He carefully presented it in front of her before taking the host's mic to speak into it. "I love you, Anastasia. Will you marry me?" he asked in a sincere tone. A loud ringing filled Anastasia's head as she widened

her eyes and stared at Nigel in disbelief. She could tell that he was serious—he was genuinely proposing to her without fooling around at all. “Nigel,

you...” Anastasia was too stunned to say or do anything. There were tons of girls in the crowd who were eyeing Anastasia with looks of admiration and envy. Leah, who had just walked out of the buffet area, was also stunned when she saw what was happening. The man she loved was proposing to another woman on stage.

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In a panic, Leah pulled her phone out and dialed her mother’s number. She shouted into the phone the moment her mother picked up. “Mom, tell Mr. and Mrs. Manson to come over right now! Nigel is proposing to someone else in the hall!” Leah was close to stomping the ground with rage. How can this happen? Who’s the woman he’s proposing to? Where’s she from, and what’s her background?

Meanwhile, Elliot, who was standing on the stairway of the second floor, fixed his cold and sharp gaze on the woman on stage. He was hoping for Anastasia to surprise Nigel with a harsh rejection. Elliot would never allow her to marry someone else, after all. He felt a strong urge to dominate and gain control over the woman as he watched the proposal happening. I want her. I don’t care if it’s because of my grandmother’s orders or the fact that her mother saved our family; I want Anastasia anyway. I wasn’t sure about my feelings in the past, but everything is clear now. I’m certain that she belongs to me. While all of this was going on, Harriet walked out of one of the private rooms just in time to see Nigel’s proposal. Harriet’s eyesight wasn’t the best, so she had to ask the people around her about it. “Who’s the one making a marriage proposal on the stage?” she asked.

“It’s your grandson, Nigel, proposing to some girl!” a guest replied. “What? Which girl is this?” Harriet squinted to get a better look. The woman on stage seems rather familiar... Is that Anastasia? Someone gave Harriet the answer then. “Your grandson is proposing to Miss Anastasia.” “What?” Harriet was too shocked to move. “Is that Anastasia?” What’s going on? Elliot’s the one who should be proposing to Anastasia! Why is Nigel the one proposing? Hayley was somewhere in the crowd, and she watched the entire situation with a look of disbelief on her face. Did someone just propose to Anastasia? I didn’t know who the guy was earlier, but I heard the other people say that the man is Old Madam Presgrave’s grandson, Young Master Nigel. How could that be? Why would the young master of the Manson Family propose to Anastasia? Is she that attractive? If Anastasia doesn’t get married to Elliot, there’s still another rich man who’s waiting for her. Both these

men are Old Madam Presgrave’s grandsons! I can’t believe it. Meanwhile, Anastasia remained on stage with her face beet red. She desperately wanted to dig a hole to bury her head in it. Nigel’s actions had put her in a highly awkward situation, where she would hurt Nigel if she rejected him in front of everyone. She would turn him into a fool in front of all the guests, and she didn’t want to do that to him. But if she said yes, then it was simply too sudden for her. How could she say yes just like that? It felt just as irresponsible to do such a thing. “Why don’t we talk privately, Nigel?” Anastasia bent down a little to talk to Nigel. However, Nigel wasn’t in the mood to have a discussion then. He gave her a solid gaze as he repeated his question into the mic. “Marry me, Anastasia! I’ll take care of you for the rest of your life, and I’ll keep you happy forever.” Nigel was so desperate for her! He knew it wasn’t right to put her in such a tough spot, but he didn’t want to wait any longer. He wanted to give her a proper title as his wife, and he wanted to take care of her and Jared. “Nigel!” Anastasia was giving him all sorts of looks, hinting for him to get off the stage. She didn’t want to continue being the center of attention. However, Nigel

refused to stand up and continued to kneel while staring at her. He held the diamond ring in front of her without moving at all. "Say yes!" Someone in the crowd started cheering. More people began to clap and shout. "Say yes, girl! Don't hesitate anymore! Say yes!" Anastasia felt even more embarrassed after hearing all the cheers. Blood rushed all the way to her ears as she stared at the ring in Nigel's hand. If I put it on, will I be able to get Nigel to stand up and leave the stage? Right then, she noticed the sincere look in Nigel's eyes. She didn't know how to deal with the feelings he had for her, so she simply pressed her red lips together before sighing and taking the ring into her hands. The very next second, Nigel leaped up in joy before giving her a tight hug. Anastasia hadn't expected the sudden embrace. The next thing she knew, she felt his lips pressing themselves against hers.

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Anastasia heard a loud ringing in her ears. You've gone too far this time, Nigel. "I knew you wouldn't reject me, Anastasia. I know you love me too!" Nigel cried happily. His voice was so loud that the crowd could hear him even though he wasn't using the microphone. By then, Harriet had already arrived at the front of the stage. She looked up to see Nigel and Anastasia hugging each other, and she was too stunned to say anything for a moment. Did both my grandsons switch roles? Was Anastasia more interested in Nigel all along? Either way, I just want Anastasia to be a part of our family. It doesn't matter who she gets married to; I'll be happy just to have her with us. If the one Anastasia truly likes is Nigel, then I'd be happy to support their marriage as well. Elliot watched the whole proposal from the second floor without a hint of emotion on his face. However, he tightened his grip on the railing, and veins popped up on the back of his hands. He looked like he was trying to crush the railing "Get off the stage. Stop fooling around," Anastasia told Nigel. Nigel held her hand before he grabbed the mic and addressed the crowd below him. "Thank you for the wishes, everyone. I'm really happy that my proposal was a success."

Anastasia eyed him speechlessly. Fine! I'll have to explain myself to him later. At the same time, the Harts wore grim looks on their faces as they turned to glare at the Mansons. "What's going on, Mr. and Mrs. Manson? Does Nigel want to marry someone else?" "We're not too sure about this. That woman once saved Nigel," Brenda explained before letting out a sigh. Brenda knew that Nigel had always been thankful for the girl who had saved her, but she hadn't expected her son to propose to the girl tonight. "I still hope for Nigel and Leah to get married. We would gladly marry our daughter to him if we get the chance to do so," Leah's mother uttered. She still hoped that there was a chance for changes to happen. Brenda and Jonathan could do nothing but give them an apologetic smile. "Okay. Let's talk about this in the future. You guys should enjoy the party for now."

Anastasia dragged Nigel off the stage and through the crowd to find somewhere quiet where they could talk. She found an empty room by the side, and Anastasia pulled him into the room. He shut the door behind him, muting the loud noises that came from the crowd outside. Anastasia quickly grabbed Nigel's hand before shoving the ring back into his palm. "We're just friends, Nigel. I'm sorry. I can't say yes to your proposal," she uttered in a firm voice. A dumbfounded look formed on Nigel's handsome face, and he looked down at the diamond ring in his hand. "Why? Why can't you marry me? Am I not good enough? Did I do something wrong?" he asked anxiously. Anastasia shook her head before looking at him with a gentle gaze. "You're a great man, Nigel. This is my problem-it has got nothing to do with you," she replied. "What's your problem? You're the best woman I've ever met, and you're the one I love the most." Nigel held onto her hands while staring at her with passion burning in his eyes. Anastasia

racked her brains to come up with reasons she could use to reject him. In the end, she found the best way to do it. "Nigel, I've never thought of remarrying ever since I had Jared. I've been hurt a lot of times in the past, and I haven't fully healed from all the traumatic events. So, I can't bring myself to date men," she uttered before sighing. Concern gathered in Nigel's eyes as he looked at her. "Did Jared's father hurt you in the past? Tell me, Anastasia. What did you go through in the past? Who is Jared's father?" he asked worriedly. But Anastasia rejected him without any hesitation. "I don't want to talk about this. Anyway, I can't — say yes to your proposal. I'm sorry." Nigel didn't seem too mad, nor did he look dejected after hearing what she said. He had planned the entire proposal with the intention of trying his luck, so he didn't have high hopes of succeeding from the start. "It doesn't matter if you say no to me, Anastasia. I just want you to know that I'll always be by your side. I'll always be around to protect you," he uttered. "That's good enough for me, Nigel. You're the best friend I've ever had." Anastasia emphasized their friendship as she had only treated him as a friend all along.