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Elliot was not only repaying her but her father-for several years now, to boot. "Please don't blame President Presgrave anymore, Miss Tillman. He hasn't done anything wrong. He's been taking care of your father all these years." Since Rey was the one to witness everything all these years, he only wanted to speak up on his boss' behalf in the face of Anastasia's questioning. At this moment, Elliot stared silently as the color drained out of Anastasia's face. He wanted to say something but didn't know what to say. "It's what I should have done," he finally uttered before leaving with Rey. As Anastasia stood there with her mind blank, Francis emerged excitedly with the employees whom he had brought along. "What are you doing here, Anastasia? We can leave now. Let's pick Jared up and head out for a celebration dinner this evening." Naturally, he didn't know who had helped him win the bid. "Dad..." "You see how strong my company is! This undertaking will solve many of my worries. Our operations have not been smooth-sailing lately and I've just been waiting to be rescued by this

project!" Hearing her father say that, she swallowed everything that she had been about to tell him. How could she possibly tell her father that Elliot had been the one helping him all these years? This was a kindness that her mother had had to sacrifice her life for! Even though Francis wanted to celebrate, Anastasia used having to pick her son up as an excuse not to tag along since she couldn't face her father's appreciation. To think that Elliot managed to win the project for her father with a single word, only for her father to think his luck was good. Ah! Thinking about it made Anastasia's head want to explode. In the evening, she dined outside with Jared since she was too lazy to cook at home. As the little boy ate, he suddenly asked inquisitively, "When will you invite Mr. Presgrave to eat with us, Mommy? I miss

him!" Anastasia's heart stopped and she hurried to explain, "He's busy. Extremely busy. You won't be able to see him soon." "Oh." Jared pouted. As he continued to eat, he thought about Elliot. While he didn't know where this longing was coming from, he truly missed Elliot very much; it was perhaps because many of his friends had been picked up by their fathers today. On the way home after dinner, Anastasia fretted over what she had learned. She couldn't decide whether to tell her father about Elliot helping him or continue to let him be clueless. Not long after she arrived home, she received a phone call from Francis and reached out to answer. "Hi, Dad. Are you all still celebrating?" "Ah! I'm upset, Anastasia. Naomi just told me that she took over 2 million from the house for Erica to use as a down payment. That was all the cash we had at home!" Very rarely did he disclose his worries to her, but he had no one else to go to at that moment. Instantly, Anastasia felt a pang of heartache. Her father had just spent 8 million on an apartment for her and here was Naomi, spending 2 million on her own daughter. Just like that, the burden on her father's shoulders had become heavier. "It's a good thing that I won the bid today, or I wouldn't know what else to do. I have to get back to work now, Anastasia. Take good care of Jared, okay? I'll go and visit you both when I'm free." "Of course! Don't work too hard, Dad. Remember to get some rest." After hearing her dad hang up the phone, Anastasia suddenly thought about how useless she was. If she had only worked harder, she wouldn't have needed her father to purchase a place for her to live. Tillman Residence. Erica was extremely happy. Now, she had her own place to stay as well-a deluxe apartment worth 8 million. As her mother had said, she needed to have whatever Anastasia had as well. Although Erica was paying by installment, the apartment was

still under her name at the end of the day and her mother would be the one repaying the loan in the future using funds from her father's pocket. Erica herself didn't need to pay for anything.

The only reason why she stayed out of Anastasia's way during this period was that she and her mother had been looking for apartments. Meanwhile, Anastasia tossed and turned for the whole night. When she slept, she dreamed of her mother, who gravely warned her not to accept any repayment from the Presgraves.

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In her dreams, Anastasia gave her mother her word. By the time she opened her eyes again, it was already dawn. As she went to the front of a mirror, she saw that her slightly swollen eyes had turned visibly more haggard. After dropping her son off at school, she went to work. The moment she entered the elevator, two women in front of her intentionally spoke in loud voices. "Hey! Wasn't there a trophy in the display case before? Why is it missing?" "I heard that it was returned. It was awarded under pretenses so great that someone felt too ashamed to accept it!" "My, if it were me, I wouldn't even leave the house, let alone come to work!" "Would you both like a loudspeaker so that you can make yourselves heard?" Anastasia asked them. Both of them glanced at her. "Ah, Miss Tillman, we didn't say who we were talking about! Are you admitting it was you?" e talking about someone else. Don't misunderstand us now. Miss Tillman."

It was at that moment when the elevator stopped at the level of the Department of Design. As Anastasia moved to step out of the elevator, one of the women suddenly stuck a foot out and nearly tripped her. She then turned back to angrily glare at the woman. "My apologies, Miss Tillman," the woman apologized in a fake manner despite having clearly done it on purpose. After huffing, Anastasia walked to her office. Grace had already tidied it up for her and even poured her a cup of coffee. At ten in the morning, Felicia held a department meeting. A somewhat listless Anastasia took her seat and played with her pen. The noisy conference room suddenly became so quiet that she could have heard a pin drop. As she jerked her head up, she saw Elliot's tall, handsome figure coming in through the conference room door. He hadn't been to the meetings in several days and she had no idea why he was here now. Nonetheless, she lowered her head down again in her reluctance to pay any attention to him. As he pulled out a chair and sat down next to Anastasia, Felicia greeted respectfully, "Good morning, President Presgrave." "Let's begin," Elliot uttered in a low voice as he looked at the woman next to him. Anastasia looked like she had a lot on her mind. Then, Felicia suddenly called her name. "Anastasia." Buried deep in her own thoughts, Anastasia failed to respond and everyone stared at her in astonishment. How bold she had to be to space out so completely even with Elliot sitting next to her! "Anastasia, do you hear me?" Felicia raised her voice. Abruptly, Anastasia came back to her senses and realized that she was being called. She quickly— nodded. "Oh! Please proceed, Director Evans." "We just received a private custom order. The client has expressly asked for you to design her a set of jewelry. You should be fine with that, shouldn't you?" Since Anastasia lacked money at the moment, she didn't hesitate to nod. "Of course." Meanwhile, seated opposite Anastasia was Alice, who kept lowering the collar of her blouse in such a manner that her blouse was becoming out of shape. With intent, she directed her cleavage toward Elliot. Naturally being able to see what the woman was doing, Anastasia propped her chin up with a hand and sneered at Alice. "You better stop tugging or your blouse will tear." A furiously blushing Alice glanced at Elliot before glaring at Anastasia. Even Felicia coughed lightly with embarrassment. "Behave yourselves." Since what Alice had been doing was only meant for Elliot's eyes, she hadn't

expected Anastasia to expose her so directly. potrebné “Is there anything you’d like to add?” Felicia now looked at Elliot. “Anastasia Tillman, stay behind. Everyone else, leave,” Elliot ordered quietly.

Once again, Anastasia received a wave of envious, resentful glances, yet she had no choice but to remain in her seat as Felicia dismissed everyone else and closed the door after them. “Please stop interfering with my dad’s business in the future. That said, I’m glad for the help you’ve offered him in the past.” She looked earnestly up at Elliot. No matter what, she had to thank him. “I’m only doing what I should have done, Anastasia. You don’t need to feel guilty.” He stared at her deeply. “No, my father owes you, and I’ll pay you back on his behalf from now on.” Since she still didn’t want her father to know about this, she would have to pay Elliot back on his behalf.

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Narrowing his eyes, Elliot asked in a clear, curious voice, “How do you intend to pay me back?” In a lower voice, he continued with hope, “Will you agree to marry me so that my helping your father will be nothing more than assisting my future father-in-law?” It was enough to cause Anastasia to suck in a breath of air. What a ridiculous idea! “I can’t marry you. Please give me another request!” She turned her chair away and began doodling in her notebook His expression sank at that. Did she find him so unlikeable? “Give me something I can fulfill,” she reminded him since she had no way of promising him something she couldn’t fulfill. As Elliot stared at her delicate side profile, he suddenly relaxed. Sometimes, the process was more enjoyable than the result. “Alright, then. From today onward, I’ll eat over at your place.” It was something that he believed she could do. Anastasia’s eyebrows drew together. While this request wasn’t necessarily over the line, it still made things difficult for her. Dinner at her place? She supposed that it was quite a good method of repayment since she had no money to repay him with and he also didn’t need any money. “If you’re not willing, that’s fine since I’m helping your father as a repayment to your mother, anyway.” Seeing that she wasn’t saying anything, Elliot stood up and made to leave.

Instantly, Anastasia whipped her head around to agree. “Alright, you can eat at my place, but you must promise that you’ll behave yourself and not make any moves on me.” “I have no interest in women,” he lied with a straight face. Struck dumb by his boldness, she gaped at him. No interest in women? Had he forgotten the time he forced his kisses on her? Nevertheless, if she could repay him for the help he gave her father by doing this, she would feel better. “Fine, consider it a measure of trust,” she finally said before getting up and pushing open the conference room door to leave.

“From tonight onward,” he spoke up softly behind her. Without turning back, she answered, “Okay.” After returning to her office, Anastasia rested her head on her hands. What a headache! Did that mean she would have to greet him with a table full of food from now on whenever he wanted to eat at her place? Yet, in comparison to the help he offered her father, this was a relatively light repayment. Well, she would have to put up with it. Really, it was no different from cooking for one more person. Right then, Grace knocked on the door and entered with a document folder. “This is the client information that Director Evans has sent over, Miss Tillman. Have a look!” Anastasia obliged by reaching out to accept the document folder. As she flipped it open to the first page, her eyes widened. How could it be her? Her client was none other than Leah Hart, as detailed in the information folder. It listed Leah’s family background, educational background, and even the fact that she was the daughter of the first domestic catering giant. To Anastasia, it was obvious that Leah was here to cause trouble. Their previous unhappy ending had no doubt resulted in Leah looking for other ways to make things difficult for her.

Right then, Felicia called to urge Anastasia. “Get in contact with the client as soon as possible, Anastasia. She must have chosen us because she believed in your ability, so we can’t let her down.” Anastasia laughed bitterly in her heart. No matter how warmly she had received Leah, she might not necessarily be able to see the order through. Nevertheless, she still answered, “Alright, I’ll immediately contact her.” Then, Anastasia picked up her cell phone, found the correct number, and dialed it. “Who is this?” a lazy voice asked at the other end of the line. “Good morning. I’m Anastasia Tillman, a designer from Bourgeois Jewelry Atelier. I’d like to ask when you would like to meet to discuss the design direction of your jewelry, Miss Hart.” “Oh! How about tomorrow morning? You must get ready for everything you need and not let me down!” Leah’s final sentence had a smug undertone.

“Of course. Shall I choose the meeting place?” “No, I’ll contact you. You can come over when the time comes!” With that, Leah hung up. And just like that, Anastasia was left with no choice but to follow the protocol. Tomorrow, she would meet Leah and see what on earth the other woman was up to.

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As the end of the workday finally approached, Anastasia’s office phone rang and she reached out to answer the call. “Good evening.” “Meet me at the parking lot in 10 minutes,” Elliot instructed her concisely before hanging up. She stared at the phone in speechlessness. Never did she think she would be heading home in his car! Nevertheless, given that her only other option was to take a cab, she might as well save her money by carpooling with him instead. And so, 10 minutes later, Anastasia picked up her purse and sprinted to the car park where the black sedan was already waiting for her. After Anastasia pulled open the passenger’s side door and climbed in, Elliot zoomed off toward the garage exit. “We’ll pick Jared up first and stop by the grocery store for some ingredients before going home,” he instructed. “Okay,” she answered. It wasn’t like she had the confidence to say otherwise, anyway—if Elliot was the only reason why her father was successful, what place was there for her opinion? The only thing she could do was try her best to repay Elliot.

“There have been major issues with your father’s company funds recently,” he told her as he elegantly turned the steering wheel while keeping his eyes on the road. “If he didn’t have this project to save him, he would need to ask a lot of people for help.” At that, Anastasia’s heart clenched. Of course she already knew her father undertaking this company meant he would need to make requests from a lot of people. Yet, a single word from Elliot had saved her father from such dire straits and kept her father from needing to humble himself in front of others. “Thank you,” she said from the bottom of her heart as she glanced sincerely at Elliot. “I barely had to lift a finger.” Elliot raised his eyebrow slightly. Such was the charm of power. Where others had to beg, he only had to say a single sentence. “At any rate, I’m very grateful that you helped my dad out.”

“The larger Tillman Constructions grows, the more projects he will need to keep it alive. Don’t worry, I won’t let anything happen to it.” Elliot’s voice was low, powerful, and mesmerizing in the car. Anastasia stopped breathing. Did that mean he would continue to help her father? And that Francis would always need his help? No—the debt of gratitude she owed him would only snowball by then. How was she going to repay him in the future? Yet, the current size of Tillman Constructions would indeed require continuous projects to maintain. Once funds were cut off, it would suffer huge losses and Francis would be subject to endless pressure and anxiety. Given his age, she was afraid that he wouldn’t be able to withstand the pressure. Meanwhile, glancing at the silent woman next to him and knowing he had stressed her out, Elliot said lightly, “Don’t think too much about it. I won’t ask too much of you.” As if

that was what she was worried about! Lifting her head, Anastasia said, "I'll try my best to ask my dad to work hard to get his own projects in the future. We won't need your help anymore." Elliot smiled. "Are you sure?" Of course Anastasia wasn't sure. She knew nothing about her father's company. "You will be the one to take over your father's company in the future, won't you?" Elliot guessed correctly in a single sentence. She ignored him in speechlessness. She would only think about it when the time came. Who knew whether she would end up selling the company when it came into her hands by then? At the school gates. After Anastasia went inside to pick up her son, Elliot sat in the car and stared unwaveringly at the school gates. He felt just like a father waiting for his son. Since he hadn't seen Jared in a few days, he missed Jared quite a lot, just like he would if Jared were actually his son. Not long after that, he saw the heartwarming scene of the mother and son emerging from the school gates. The woman was slender and beautiful; the child, sensible and adorable. It was a sight for sore

eyes. At that juncture, he pushed open the car door and stepped out. The moment Jared saw him, the little boy released his mother's hand and sprinted toward Elliot, shouting excitedly, "Mr. Presgrave! Mr. Presgrave!" A speechless Anastasia stared at her son. Why on earth did Jared like Elliot so much? Meanwhile, Elliot reached down and carried Jared up. Seated in the crook of his strong arms, the little boy smiled happily. To Jared, there was nothing more he yearned for than a strong and domineering father and Elliot satisfied everything he imagined a father to be.

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"Get in. We're going to the grocery store." As Elliot placed Jared at the backseat, it suddenly occurred to him that he would need to get a child safety seat installed so that it would be easier for him to pick Jared up in the future. After the three of them returned to the car, they went to a nearby commercial area where they had plenty of time to stop since it was still rather early. While they were inside the grocery store, Jared sat on the cart that was pushed around by Elliot while Anastasia was in charge of selecting ingredients for that evening's dinner. Feeling somewhat gluttonous tonight, she picked up some pork, shrimp, and a few kinds of vegetables. "My! What a beautiful family!" someone suddenly commented as Anastasia was choosing vegetables. When she turned her head, she saw two young women standing nearby and staring at them. The moment Anastasia turned to look at them, they scuttled away in embarrassment as they had been caught in the act. When Anastasia glanced back at Elliot and her son, she understood why those two young women had misunderstood. They looked very much like a family of three on a shopping trip indeed! She quickly finished grabbing the vegetables and said to the man pushing the cart behind her, "Let's go. I'm done."

Of course Elliot's eyes had caught everything as well and it made the corners of his mouth lift. To him, it was a happy feeling. After they finished shopping, he drove all the way to the entrance of her neighborhood and parked. As soon as she gathered the bags of ingredients she had bought, he took them from her while saying, "I can carry them." "They're not heavy. It's fine." Anastasia didn't want him to lend a hand. However, he stubbornly snatched them from her; his action prompted her to glance speechlessly at her son, who was also happy to have Elliot hold his hand. Now that she was somewhat embarrassed, she strode off quickly to maintain her distance from them

so that the neighbors wouldn't think they were a family. "Mommy, wait for us!" Jared shouted behind her. Anastasia could only wait for them in a disconcerted manner. When they finally arrived home, she let out a sigh of relief and took the bags from Elliot before heading into the kitchen. Some foods, like the pork, required a little more time to cook and she would need to prepare it beforehand. "Entertain our

guest, Jared," she instructed her son as she left the kitchen to grab something. A somewhat befuddled Jared nodded and looked up at Elliot. To him, Elliot was not a guest but something of a family member. Elliot stroked Jared's hair with a grin. "I can entertain myself." Meanwhile, Anastasia began to busy herself in the kitchen. Since she had spent so many years cooking for her son, she had completely mastered her way around the kitchen. Moreover, to cater to her son's taste, she had even spent many years looking up recipes and studying the concept of heat distribution. That meant she was quite adept at home cooking. Since the pork was for herself, she added more spice and seasonings; for her son, she made do with some vegetables on top of the steamed egg custard with shrimp. Both dishes would be enough for him. As she entered and exited the kitchen on occasion, she would see Elliot watching television with her son at one point and playing with Jared in his room at another. It was turning out not to be an entirely bad thing to have Elliot in her home. At the very least, he could keep her son company. Sometimes, what Anastasia feared most was that she and her son had lacked a man's influence in their lives. Now that Elliot was there to accompany Jared, she found that it was a good thing. Dinner was finally served and she knocked on her son's door after untying her apron. "Time for dinner." It didn't take long for Jared to come sprinting out and exclaim upon seeing the food on the table, "It's all of my favorite dishes!" At this point, Elliot also took a seat. Jared had loved egg custard so much that he was digging into it with great gusto, which left Elliot unable to resist the adorable sight of the little boy eating so earnestly.

Now, he had also discovered that Anastasia was excellent at cooking. The pork that she prepared was just soft enough; it was fatty but not greasy and although it was a tad bit too spicy for him, it wasn't as if he couldn't take one bite after another. It was incredibly appetizing. Although Anastasia had prepared some rice to go with the pork, she didn't eat much as she was afraid of gaining weight. Instead, she slowly and patiently chewed before swallowing her share. On the other hand, although Elliot was equally elegant, he kept heading into the kitchen for more servings of rice.

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As Anastasia watched more of the pork disappear, she couldn't help feeling a sense of accomplishment "Mr. Presgrave, is the food that my mommy prepared delicious?" Jared asked inquisitively. "It is. It's exceptional," Elliot couldn't help praising and even glanced at Anastasia. With a light cough, she advised, "You should have more if you like it." "You have no more rice left," he grumbled. A speechless Anastasia stared at him. Just how many servings of rice have you eaten? "Um... I'll make more rice in the future. I miscalculated today," she answered awkwardly.

At this moment, he placed his cutlery down and let out a burp, which nearly caused her to burst out laughing. How could he imply he hadn't had enough when he was so full that he was burping? He had even covered his mouth before walking over to a glass that he spied on the shelf next to it before immediately drinking the water inside, "That's mine!" Anastasia exclaimed immediately. "I don't have any problem with that." Elliot gave a cheeky smile as he drank. "But I do!" she exclaimed with annoyance. His grin turned even more roguish. "Well, that makes me want to drink from it even more." Anastasia was once again rendered speechless. In her heart, she had made up her mind to grab him some daily necessities, such as glasses, if he would be eating at her place for the next year too. After that, Anastasia got up to tidy the table. As she was washing the dishes, Jared shouted from the door, "I'm going for a stroll with Mr. Presgrave, Mommy! Will you come down later?" Turning her head, she shouted in response, "Sure! You guys go ahead!" Jared happily went downstairs for a stroll with his hand

in Elliot's. This was the first time where Anastasia felt safe about handing her son over to a man who wasn't Francis or Nigel. In truth, she was somewhat surprised at herself. When had she assimilated this man into her life so seamlessly? Ah! Sure enough, some things couldn't be stopped. Even as she was saying that she would never have

any kind of a relationship with him, their lives had entangled together without her even realizing it. After Anastasia had finished tidying up the kitchen, she took the trash out and went downstairs, The greenery and facilities in her neighborhood were excellent, which encouraged many parents and children to stroll about in the evenings. After tossing the trash into the garbage bin, she went to look for Elliot and her son. The lights in this neighborhood weren't exceptionally bright, but they were instead dim enough to create a stylish contrast against the greenery. As she carefully studied the surroundings of the lazy chair, she suddenly heard a familiar voice coming from the fitness area. Even though it was somewhat far away, she could tell that it was the sound of Jared's laughter. However, her heart stopped. It had been a long time since she heard her son laughing so happily. She immediately turned around only to see beneath the lamplight that Elliot was with her son at the monkey bars. The little boy was holding onto a bar and dangling in mid-air, and although Elliot had released his grip, he was still standing protectively by Jared's side. When Jared's arms grew weak and he was about to fall, Elliot caught hold of him, which caused the little boy to laugh raucously again. "More, Mr. Presgrave!" Standing not far away, Anastasia watched without going over to disturb them. In truth, the scene where Elliot and Jared played together had indeed reminded her of a father and son. Her son looked very much like Elliot. When he saw Jared's insistence on staying at the monkey bars, Elliot patiently accompanied him and sometimes even softly laughed. Elliot looked tall and straight as he stood underneath the lamplight with Jared. His sleeves were rolled up and exposed his muscular arms while his pants illustrated the strong, firm lines of his hips and legs. There was something mesmerizing about him. Anastasia couldn't help stealing a few looks before she finally decided that it was late and they shouldn't take any more of Elliot's time. So, she called out as she went toward her sweaty son, "Let's go home, Jared!"

"I still want to play, Mommy." Jared was hooked, for he rarely had the opportunity to do something so strenuous.

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"Mr. Presgrave is extremely busy. Let's not take up any more of his time, okay?" Anastasia advised Jared. To her dismay, Elliot had carried Jared instead. "I'm not busy. We can continue playing." "Yay!" A happy Jared threw his arms around Elliot's neck before turning back to say to her, "Let's play together, Mommy." Even though she was exasperated, she only sighed in response. "I'll take a stroll then. See you guys in a bit." Hoping that the light exercise would aid with her digestion, Anastasia went for a walk around the neighborhood. The clock had turned to nine just like that and she returned to the fitness area to see her son on the swings this time. Since Elliot was still pushing him, she could only head over and order, "We're going back to take a bath, Jared. You still have school tomorrow!" Hearing the sternness in his mother's voice, Jared nodded obediently. "Alright, let's go home!" Anastasia glanced up at Elliot. "Why don't you head home first?" "My car keys are still at your place, not to mention that I'd like a drink of water as well." He hinted at going back to her apartment.

At that, she frowned. She thought he would be able to leave at that moment! Once they returned home, Anastasia took a look at her son's sweaty body and decided that he needed to be bathed at once. Thus, she told Elliot, who was drinking a glass of water on her couch, "I'm taking Jared to wash up. Just close

the door behind you as you're leaving." "Sure!" He nodded. And so, she took her son into the bathroom. As they emerged from the bathroom after his bath, she discovered that Elliot was still on the couch. A dumbfounded Anastasia then asked, "You haven't left yet?" "I'd like to rest for a moment more." Elliot was sprawled out lazily on her couch, having no intention of

leaving. "Well, Jared has to sleep, so you can leave once you've rested enough!" she told him. She forcefully called Jared into his bedroom, made him get into bed, and handed him a storybook. "Read by yourself quietly for a moment. You're not allowed to look for Mr. Presgrave anymore. He has to head home, okay?" "Okay." Although Jared was clearly unhappy about it, he did not dare to dissent for he was afraid of being scolded. After stroking his hair and giving him a kiss, Anastasia stood up and left the room. When she emerged and found that Elliot was no longer on her couch, she couldn't help being relieved. He is finally gone! Remembering that her son's dirty clothes were still in the bathroom and wanting to toss them into the washer, she turned the knob to enter the bathroom. Yet, right as she stepped one foot in, she realized that there was a man standing in front of her— toilet bowl, urinating... "Ahhh!" Anastasia was so startled that she knocked her head against the doorframe before slamming the door shut again with a red face. God! Not only had he not left, but she had just run into him doing something so embarrassing. Even though his back was to her, she couldn't help but blush as her mind went blank. At this moment, he walked out of the bathroom and glanced down at her, seated on the couch and clutching her head. Concerned, he asked softly, "Does it hurt?" "W-Why are you still here?" Anastasia was truly exasperated. "Do you really wish for me to leave that much?" After saying that, he moved toward the couch area only for her to move her head at the sight. Then, she warned, "Don't you touch me." He leaned down and underneath the lamplight, his face was breathtakingly handsome. Thinking that Elliot was about to kiss her, her eyes widened in warning, only for him to pull his cell phone out from next to her before he stood at his full height.

"Did you think I wanted to kiss you?" He smirked. As Anastasia looked at the cell phone in his hand, her face burned with embarrassment. "See yourself out!" Elliot suddenly leaned down to pinch her jaw and thereafter pressed his lips against hers. Before she could react, he was already straightening his posture and heading toward the front door. "How dare you!" "Just consider it a punishment for you peeking at me!" he answered without looking back. "I didn't see anything," Anastasia protested angrily. Having just arrived at the door, Elliot turned back and looked at her teasingly. "Yeah? I don't suppose you regret it?"

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Anastasia's face furiously reddened. "I do not." "Marry me, and you'll be able to look at it whenever you want," Elliot told her. "I don't want to look at it!" she shouted as her face reddened even further. Is this man truly so self confident? It was only after he gave a meaningful smile did he pull open the door and leave. Now that she was left alone on the couch, she spaced out. Her mind was still on the blue screen of death. Even as she covered her reddened cheeks, she could still feel the warmth of his lips on hers. What a scoundrel. Didn't he say before that he will behave himself? She shouldn't have believed him. For that man to keep his word, pigs would instead be climbing trees by then. At this moment, Anastasia glanced toward her son's room. It was a good thing that he didn't know what had happened. As the gravity of having to share her evenings with Elliot for the next year sank in, she felt her head aching.

She rushed to work after dropping her son off at school early the next morning. As she hurried through the crowd with her curls bouncing on her shoulders, she was in a gray plaid blouse and a black pencil skirt with a purse slung over her shoulder. Such an attire of hers had inadvertently showcased her

professionalism. A black sedan stopped at the entrance of her workplace at this very moment. Elliot was here to take a document back to the Presgrave Corporation when he happened to see her coming from the street as she weaved through the crowd of office workers while radiating a strong, mesmerizing sense of calm confidence. At this moment, Anastasia happened to glance at her watch and noticed that there were only two minutes left for her to clock in. She instantly panicked and sprinted toward the lobby, not caring that she looked somewhat wretched as she did so.

What she didn't know was that Elliot was witnessing everything from inside the car. Her rushed demeanor had made him smile. In the past, he didn't know a woman like her even existed. She wasn't particularly outstanding or alluring, but she had a certain charm to her that drove him crazy. He was even willing to be branded a voyeur for staring at her because of this. At the last minute, she managed to clock in. When she saw the green light flashing, she smiled, feeling somewhat accomplished and inexplicably satisfied at being able to arrive on the dot for work. After Anastasia entered her office, Grace carried her cup of coffee to her. "You're going to meet with a client today, Miss Tillman! Do you need any materials to be prepared?" Recalling immediately that she would have to meet Leah today, Anastasia went to her cabinet to pull out a few documents and set them on the desk. "Do you need me to go with you, Miss Tillman?" Grace asked. With a smile, Anastasia shook her head. "There's no need. Let me understand the situation first. I'll bring you along next time." After all, Leah was only trying to make things difficult for her. If she had brought Grace along, Grace would only be bullied alongside her, so it was best she withstood this pressure alone! Anastasia called Leah at around ten in the morning. At the other end of the line, Leah's voice asked, "Why are you only looking for me now, Miss Tillman? Surely your work efficiency could be better than this!" "My apologies. I'll come right away. Where would you like to meet?" "I'll give you the address and you can come over!" Leah grumbled with deliberate impatience. Not long after that, Anastasia received the address. After keying in the location on her device, she went downstairs to hail a cab and head to the destination. While on the way there, she couldn't help spacing out for a moment and thinking about Elliot. Images of him keeping her son company floated through her mind. When she was sending Jared to school that morning, he even asked her expectantly, "Will Mr. Presgrave come to our place for dinner tonight, Mommy?" To placate her son, Anastasia simply responded, "Yes."

Upon seeing her son happily skipping around at her answer, she found herself hoping that Elliot would be free to come over that evening. Anastasia sighed. What is happening to me lately? Why are all my thoughts full of this man? At this moment, the cab driver told her, "We're here, miss." When she raised her head to glance out of the window, Anastasia saw the signboard of an atmospheric cafe, after which she paid the driver and alighted from the cab. It wasn't until she entered the lobby that she realized the cafe was on the top floor. She helplessly entered the elevator and rode all the way to the top floor. The cafe in question was the kind of coffeehouse which only the rich could afford. For someone like her, being able to drink Starbucks on a normal day was already considered a luxury.

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An attendant went forward to inform Anastasia at this moment. "Miss Tillman? Miss Hart is waiting for you." "That's me," Anastasia acknowledged with a smile and a nod of her head. "Please follow me." The attendant gestured in invitation. After stepping into the cafe, Anastasia saw Leah and another woman sitting at a table by the window and chatting at this moment. At a glance, it was obvious to Anastasia that the other woman was just as rich as Leah and dressed to denote equal status. "Ah, the designer is

here! Please sit! Bring the coffee,” Leah ordered the attendant. The attendant immediately nodded. Anastasia had only just sat down when a cup of coffee was placed in front of her. Looking over at Leah, she responded, “Thank you for the coffee, Miss Hart.” “You’re welcome. Let’s talk about design, then! I wish to commission an engagement jewelry for myself —something that befits my status. I hope you won’t let me down.”

“Please share your opinions with me. I have several styles for you to choose from.” Anastasia reached out to retrieve her documents. “Hmph, I’m the client here. What I want is your design. What’s the point in having me choose?” “I still have to know what you like for me to have a direction for the design.” “What I like is something unique, beautiful, and suits my temperament. The rest is up to you. Besides, don’t you know how to research what I like? You can look me up!” Leah lazily reclined against her seat with an arrogant look on her face. For a few moments, a dumbstruck Anastasia stared at Leah. Now, she finally understood that. Leah had no wish to give any direction or communicate any idea for the design. What Leah wanted was for her to come up with a design out of thin air that was satisfactory to Leah. “I’m sorry, Miss Hart. I’m afraid I can’t take your commission. Please find another designer!” Anastasia had no wish to stay any longer. After all, there would be no earning Leah’s money no matter how much effort she wasted.

Right as Anastasia took her purse and was about to stand up, the woman next to Leah sneered. “What kind of attitude is this? Are all designers from Bourgeois like this? I’m certainly learning something new today.” “Don’t you know that I’ve already signed a contract with your company, Anastasia Tillman? If you don’t design for me, I can sue your company for breach of contract. I hear they pay quite a bit for that! Three times the deposit! And I paid 1 million in deposit,” Leah said smugly behind Anastasia. At that, Anastasia stopped in her tracks. Of course Leah wouldn’t make things so simple. As she turned back, she proposed, “If you’re willing to have a conversation with me, Miss Hart, we can continue working together.” “We are having a conversation!” “I meant an earnest and sincere one,” she answered coldly. “I’m your client, Anastasia. How can you speak with me in that tone? Aren’t you afraid I’ll file a complaint about you?” Leah questioned somewhat angrily. Retaking her seat, Anastasia stared into Leah’s haughty eyes. “Of course you have the right to file a complaint about me. If there’s somewhere I’ve fallen short, you can file as you please; if you only wish to make things difficult for me, then let’s not waste each other’s time any longer.” Leah smiled coldly. “Let me be plain, then. Leave Nigel or Bourgeois. Pick one.” At that, Anastasia couldn’t help being amused. “I’m afraid you’re not the one with the ability to make me leave Bourgeois. My boss is the one.” “Then, I’ll make it impossible for you to stay in the design world.” Leah sneered. “Don’t underestimate what I can do.” “Anastasia Tillman, isn’t it?” the woman next to her asked smugly. “We only need to spread the word for the entire upper-class client base to keep from hiring you or ever buying your designs.” However, Anastasia was not one to be easily scared. With a smile, she announced, “Breach of contract it is! I’ll have the bill settled for you once I get back to Bourgeois.” “What are you showing off for, Anastasia Tillman? Do you even have the capital to do that? And one more thing before you leave-We’re going Dutch today, so you can pay for your own coffee!” Leah

shouted at her. The undeterred Anastasia stood up and walked toward the counter to ask the attendant, “How much does my coffee cost?”.

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The waiter named the price with a smile. "That will be 5,888, thank you!" Anastasia's almond-shaped eyes widened when she heard the unbelievably expensive price tag that the cup of coffee had. "That's unreasonably expensive!" "The coffee was brewed with coffee beans of the finest quality, so it is definitely worth the price." Anastasia was rendered speechless. The coffee cost me a fortune although I have barely sipped it-I didn't even manage to relish the taste. "Fine, just get me the bill. Pack the coffee too. Add some ice, sugar and cream please." Then, she took out her card and handed it to a stunned waiter. The waiter immediately asked his colleague to pack the drink. However, Anastasia's action led Leah, who was sitting near the window, to scoff at her. "Anastasia, my apologies. I've forgotten that you are an ordinary white-collar employee. I reckon that this cup of coffee must have cost about half of your monthly salary!" Anastasia wasn't bothered to respond and she was unfazed by the unusual glances from the waiters around. When the waiter handed her the coffee, she took the coffee and left with her chest puffed out. Upon seeing that, Leah was so pissed that she clenched her teeth. Anastasia's really a tough nut to crack, she thought.

It was almost lunch hour when Anastasia returned to the office. She asked Felicia out for lunch and told her about all that had happened earlier that day. "What? She was spiteful to you?" Felicia asked in shock. "Yes! She even attempted to force me to leave my friends, so she deliberately made things difficult for me. It wasn't her intention to do business with us at all." At that point, Anastasia had yet to mention the incident about the coffee! "In that case, I'll make a request with the management to collect liquidated damages from her instead. I can't put you in a difficult situation because of this," a reasonable Felicia replied, to which Anastasia nodded and responded, "Sorry for the trouble, Felicia." "No worries. We can't let anyone bully us because of this, eh?" Felicia smiled. Besides, with Elliot

around, nobody can lay a finger on you! At about 2.00PM, she went upstairs to Elliot's office. Elliot was sitting on the couch reading a document. The man displayed high work efficiency; the large pile of documents that had been on his desk that morning had vanished with only a few remaining documents. "President Presgrave, I have something I'd like to report to you," Felicia uttered. Elliot placed the documents down and nodded. "Go ahead." She reiterated the incident that had happened that morning, whereby Anastasia had met Leah, before she added, "I'd talk to you regarding their request for liquidated damage." It was apparent that Elliot's expression darkened when he heard the story. "How dare she request for liquidated damages from our company after she bullied my staff! Does Miss Hart think that our legal department is good for nothing?" he coldly replied: Felicia was stunned by his response. It seems like President Presgrave is really enraged! "I'll phone Miss Hart and discuss with her to see whether we can resolve this amicably." "Invite Miss Hart over in the afternoon. I'd like to personally talk to her about the liquidated damages," he impassively replied. It seemed like he had no plans to let this slide easily. She was pleased upon seeing his reaction. I can't wait for the interesting drama to unfold. "Noted, President Presgrave." After Felicia had left the room, Elliot narrowed his eyes and thought, That woman was bullied? On the other hand, Felicia called Leah the first thing after returning to her office. She invited Leah over to talk about the liquidated damages without mentioning that Elliot wanted to see her: personally. Leah coincidentally happened to be nearby, so she would be arriving in 20 minutes, at most. Thereafter, Felicia went to Anastasia's office to inform her that Leah's matter would be handled by Elliot, which stunned Anastasia. "Does he even have the time to deal with this?" "Anastasia, do you think Leah would receive the liquidated damages?" "She would be really lucky if she really gets it; it would be as if earning two million is like a walk in the park. I would have done so if it's really that good of a deal." Anastasia's eyes beamed at the discovery of a new way to become rich.

“Don’t be foolish. That’s a crime. It’s more realistic to go to work.” With that, Felicia left the scene with a grin. Anastasia propped her chin on her arm and dropped the thought. Twenty minutes later, Leah arrived at their office along with her best friend. Felicia invited them into a reception room and greeted them warmly.