

Too Far 161

Chapter 161

After sending Jared to school, Elliot did not go back to the company. Instead, he bought breakfast and returned to Anastasia's home.

He still had the key to the house that Anastasia gave him.

With the breakfast in his hands, Elliot shot a look into the master room through the open doorway. Upon seeing the owner of the house bundled up in a blanket, he smiled before he walked out.

If Anastasia knew Elliot would be admiring her sleeping posture, she would've slept in a more better looking position. At that moment, she looked like a tame kitten that was sleeping soundly, and she would adjust into a different sleeping position every now and then.

Even the man himself did not notice that his gaze upon her was extremely gentle, and there was nostalgia in his eyes when he looked at her.

Meanwhile, the sleeping woman was lying on the bed with all her limbs stretched out. The sun shone on her face, showing off her perfect skin and red lips, and it made her look very seductive.

This made Elliot want to bite into her as he was eager to know how she tasted.

Currently, Anastasia was wearing low-cut pajamas and her collarbone were exposed, making the man gulp unconsciously as his Adam's apple bobbed.

Although Elliot was always calm and collected, he fell apart in front of the woman. She always had a way of making his heart go haywire.

In the end, he decided to just not look at her, since he was very confident that she would belong to him sooner or later.

With that thought, Elliot stood up and left.

Anastasia's biological clock would always wake her up as she did not have a habit of sleeping in. However, it was the blaring horn coming from the cars outside that truly made her feel awake in the end.

Opening her eyes, she then spaced out for a bit before getting out of bed. Slowly, she washed her face and brushed her teeth. Walking out of her room to get a glass of water, she was scared out of her wits by the man sitting on her sofa.

"You..." Anastasia stared at him wide-eyed, a hint of anger in her gaze as she questioned, "Why did you come back?!"

"I brought breakfast for you." Elliot replied with raised eyebrows.

Looking back at the door to her room, she found it to be wide open. So, was he in a position where he could simply look in on her whenever he wanted?

Did he actually look at how I slept?

Yet, Anastasia already knew the answer to this obvious question. It was evident that Elliot had done so. Did I drool in my sleep? Was I sleeping in a shameless position? Was I sleepwalking?!

For reasons unbeknownst to her, Anastasia started to blush. Looking down, she was relieved upon seeing she still had on normal looking pajamas. Coughing lightly, she then said, "You can leave now."

"I'll wait for you to finish breakfast, then we can go to the company together."

"It's fine. I'll just take a cab. You don't need to wait for me."

"But I'm willing to wait," Elliot said in his low seductive voice without a hint of waver to it.

Frowning, Anastasia thought, Does he really think that this is his home? Why is he staying at this cramped three room apartment when he has a literal mansion he can live in?

Because she was famished, she walked to the table before starting to eat the breakfast he brought her. Looking at the man sitting opposite to her, Anastasia pretended to be concerned as she asked, "Have you eaten?"

"I have," Elliot said as he glanced at her.

"What about your stomach? Is it any better?" When Anastasia asked him about this, she prayed that it had better not get worse. Otherwise, she would feel guilt to no end.

"It's fine now. Please take more care of my stomach from now on, Miss Tillman." The man said this with a snort and it was obvious that he was upset about yesterday's events.

Guiltily, Anastasia replied, "I understand. I'll watch out from now on."

Satisfied, Elliot smiled before stating, "Miss Tillman, you have a very adorable sleeping posture."

"Y-You are not to come into my bedroom from now on without my permission. That is my private space, understand?" Using her rights as the owner, she warned him.

Raising his eyebrows, Elliot answered her lazily, "Alright. I won't enter it from now on."

Not believing him that easily, Anastasia snorted in response. "You better keep your word."

After breakfast, Anastasia chose to ride in his car but upon getting into his car, she found out that it was already 9.20 AM. Goodness, my full attendance for this month is gone again!

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Catching her sighing, Elliot, who was sitting beside her, asked curiously, "What's wrong?"

"Because of you, my full attendance bonus is gone now." Anastasia blamed Elliot in its entirety; she wouldn't have been sleepless if it weren't for him sleeping at her house last night.

If she hadn't been sleepless, she wouldn't have missed the slot to arrive at work on time.

"Are you that short on money?" he asked in an amused voice.

"Of course I am! Do you think everybody's pockets are bursting at the seams with money like you? Us common folk spend every penny carefully, you know!" Anastasia rebuked.

Upon hearing that, Elliot wanted to make up for it, so he announced, "Then I'll tell them to include your full attendance bonus for this month."

Anastasia's mood immediately turned for the better as she grinned ear to ear. "Are you serious?"

Elliot nodded and he hummed in response.

She was really over the moon now. Looking outside the car window, Anastasia could only think about the deal of the custom set of lock and key that would cost five million. With the deadline being the day after tomorrow, she had to quickly come up with a design.

Reaching the underground car park of the company, Anastasia ran the moment she got out of the car, because she did not want to get into the same elevator with a certain individual. After locking his car, Elliot snorted upon seeing the woman, who was still standing at the hallway of the elevator, disappear.

Already reaching her office, Anastasia then called Grace on the company line.

"Grace, could you come in for a moment?"

Thinking that she wanted coffee, Grace came in with a cup in her hands. "Miss Tillman, here's your coffee. I added some creamer for you today, since you said that it was too bitter last time."

Touched, Anastasia nodded as a reply. However, she still had to ask the necessary question.

"Grace, who was it that told you the president wanted to see me?" Anastasia asked seriously.

Blinking, Grace then thought about it for a while before answering, "It was Alex from the Planning Department that told me about it. She walked over to my desk with some documents in hand and told me that. Then, I relayed it to you immediately."

"Did she tell you about who told her to do that?"

Shaking her head, Grace replied, "I didn't ask. Do you want me now?"

Upon hearing that, Anastasia could only give up. "There's no need for that. I was just asking because the president wasn't in his office when I went over yesterday."

It seemed like Hayley had planted her people deep enough to be able to use any assistant to inform Anastasia about this. The latter believed that the person called Alex was also being used by someone. As for who it was, it was possible to find the mastermind behind this if Anastasia really wanted to. However, not wishing to spook the individual and alerting them, she could only comfort herself by keeping a lookout for these kinds of things in the future.

Diving deep into designing, she first drafted up two drawings, one being the lock and the other being the key. A lot of couples liked this kind of concept, as the man's heart often represented the lock, with it

needing a gentle touch of the woman in the form of a key for the two parties to completely accept each other.

Because Anastasia had a very good inspiration, she got off to a smooth start and completed two detailed drawings. Instead of the normal sharp looking lock, the design of the lock was extremely exquisite with its smooth edges. Meanwhile, the key had an oval handle, and the bottom was thin. It had beautiful carvings on it, making it stand out.

Remembering the customer specifying about their initials, she then designed a logo at the side. It was an E and H, with a heart linking the two alphabets together.

Now that the rough draft was ready, Anastasia then started to draw them out on her computer, adding color and changing the details at the same time.

Suddenly, Grace knocked on her door. Pushing it open, she was seen accompanied by a worker, who had a beautiful bouquet in his hands as he asked, "Are you Miss

Tillman? These are for you."

Upon seeing the flowers, Anastasia knew that it was from Nigel. It looked like he ignored her statement of not giving her any flowers.

"Thank you. Please place them on the sofa," Anastasia murmured with a smile.

After ten minutes, Grace knocked on her door once again. "Miss Tillman, there are flowers for you again."

After saying that, another employee from a different florist then came in with a huge bouquet of roses that were obviously imported. The flowers themselves looked heavenly, and it was as if they had just been freshly plucked.

At that moment, Anastasia stood up abruptly and she stared incredulously at the two bouquets of flowers that were sent within the short span of ten minutes. Why did Nigel send two bouquets today?

And so, she stood up and walked to stand in front of the rose bouquet. Suddenly, she realized that there was a card attached to the flowers, so she reached out to retrieve it. It turned out that there was a succinct sentence on the card-'I hope that there will be a favorable outcome for my patience!

Meanwhile, it was signed with the last name Pesgrave, with the date written below.

Anastasia's beautiful eyes widened and she couldn't believe it as she looked at the signature. There was only one man that she knew who had that last name Pesgrave. Could it be from him?!

Shortly after that, she walked to stand in front of the table and took the landline. Next, she dialed the number to the president's office. However, no one answered the phone.

She refused to give up, so she took out her cell phone and dialed his number once again.

"Hello." The low, baritone voice that rang out was quite melodious to the ears.

Meanwhile, Anastasia didn't beat around the bush and she posed the question directly. "Did you send me a bouquet of flowers?"

“Do you like it?”

“You’re being stupid. Don’t do that again.” She kept her eyes on the two bouquets of flowers on the couch as she wondered how to deal with them.

“You love the flowers that Nigel sent you, but you’re actually disgusted by the ones I sent?” The man on the other end of the line voiced out frustratedly.

Upon hearing that, Anastasia was at a loss for words. “Why are you comparing yourself to him? He’s my friend but you’re my boss. Why did you send me flowers?”

“I like sending you flowers, so I’ll do as I please. The choice is yours whether to accept it or not.” After Elliot finished his sentence, he immediately hung up on her.

Feeling slightly shocked, Anastasia glanced at the phone in her hands. This was the second time she was hung up on and she lamented to herself, This guy’s mood is quite unpredictable.

Shortly after that, Grace sent some documents into the room. As soon as she noticed the two bouquets on the couch, she couldn’t help going forward to admire them. “Wow! It’s so pretty! These roses are imported and even a single stalk of it is quite pricey, not to mention that there are about thirty stalks in this bouquet!”

“You can have it. Use it to accessorize the vase on your desk if you like.”

“Are you sure? Can I really take two stalks with me?” Grace asked joyfully.

“Yup. It will last a couple more days in a vase. If anyone else likes some, share it with them too. Just take the whole thing with you.”

“Wow! Anastasia, you’re awesome! Thanks! I’ll take it and share with everyone else then.” Grace took the huge bouquet of roses and walked out to distribute it to the others.

Indeed, in no time at all, the huge bouquet was disassembled and distributed to everyone. Subsequently, the entire office got to know that Anastasia’s admirer had gifted her with some imported roses.

Everyone speculated that it must be a man from a well-to-do family.

In the afternoon, there was a weekly meeting, so Felicia knocked on the door to Anastasia’s office and popped inside to have a chat with her. As they spoke, Felicia suddenly leaned forward and shot a secretive look at Anastasia. “Anastasia, I’ve got a request. Could you help me with something?”

“Anything, Felicia.” Evidently, Anastasia was willing to help if she could.

“Well, the thing is, we’re in discussions to come up with another snack area. We’ve discussed this together and everyone was thinking of getting Belle Patisserie to join the company, but I’m sure you’re aware that they are overly expensive and the cost of it would bust our budget. The price is a concern.”

Anastasia couldn’t quite comprehend how this matter related to her despite listening intently to Felicia’s words. How can I be of help then?

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Soon after that, Anastasia directly voiced out, "Well, how can I be of any help?"

"I'll invite President Presgrave to attend the meeting this afternoon. When the time

comes, could you mention this in the meeting? I want to seek his approval. Once he approves, it would make things easier to proceed with the human relations department." Felicia looked at Anastasia expectantly.

At that moment, Anastasia was at a loss for words and after quite some time, she asked slightly doubtfully, "Do you think my words would make a difference?" .

"If you're the one who voices out, then the chances of this being a success would be much higher than if any of us were to do it." Felicia was confident that this would be approved if Anastasia brought it up.

"Okay, then. I'll casually bring it up in the meeting. But I don't have the confidence that it'll be a success."

"Sure. You just have to briefly mention it during the meeting." Felicia reached out to pat her on the shoulder before taking another look at the bouquet of flowers on the couch. "Anastasia, you've got plenty of admirers, huh?"

Anastasia's heart skipped a beat when she heard that and she hurriedly explained, "No, you're mistaken!"

"I also took a share of two stalks of that imported red roses that you received! It obviously looks like top-quality red roses that came from Holland. The sender of the flowers is quite thoughtful!"

As soon as Anastasia thought of the sender of the flowers, she suddenly felt a looming headache. With a chuckle, she replied, "I don't know who sent the flowers because there was no name attached."

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Felicia smiled and left without saying another word. However, she had a strong hunch that the roses came from their big boss from upstairs.

The meeting was scheduled for 2.30 PM and Felicia sent an email to Elliot's mailbox to inform him. It was up to him whether he turned up or not, but Felicia sure hoped that he would attend it. After all, the proposal for the snack area had been put on hold for quite some time now, so a lot of their staff were in fact quite looking forward to that.

As soon as Anastasia received Grace's reminder about the upcoming meeting, she quickly tidied up the drafts she was working on and took her cell phone with her as she headed toward the direction of the meeting room.

Meanwhile, Anastasia realized upon walking in that everyone in the meeting room seemed to be addressing her in a very pleasant manner.

"Miss Tillman, thanks for the roses. I heard that it costs at least two hundred to buy a stalk of that!"

"Yeah! The rose can last for at least fifteen days too. The flowering period is so long!"

At that moment, Anastasia revealed a slight smile before pulling out a chair to take a seat. Suddenly, everyone focused their attention behind her. Elliot had arrived exactly on the dot.

Swiftly, Anastasia turned her head to glance at him before quickly shifting her eyes in the other direction. She intentionally kept a distance from him in the office as she wanted to avoid being involved in any rumors with him.

“Alright, enough with the chatter, guys. It’s time to start the meeting!” Felicia instructed her subordinates to stop their discussion.

Firstly, Felicia made a few announcements regarding some work and then she also reported on the situation recently with the manuscript submissions. She also talked about the situation with the market analysis she had found out.

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Meanwhile, Anastasia sat by Elliot’s side and her thoughts ran wild as she sat there. For example, she recalled the incident with his gastritis last night and also the kiss they shared in her bed. Furthermore, she thought of the flowers from this morning

too.

“Anastasia... Ahem! Anastasia...” Felicia tried to get Anastasia’s attention once again.

Right away, Anastasia came to her senses and lifted her head to glance at Felicia with a slightly confused look.

Just then, Alice, who was seated across from Anastasia, was quite annoyed, so the former took the opportunity to deliver a scathing remark. “Miss Tillman, you seem to be quite preoccupied each time we have a meeting. This is rather disrespectful of you!”

Anastasia’s face turned slightly flushed when she heard that. She was quite embarrassed as she recalled what she had been thinking of earlier.

“Forgive me. I was too preoccupied thinking about work-related matters,” Anastasia apologized.

By then, everyone in the meeting room had turned to glance at Elliot, who was seated next to her, and each of them wondered how he would react to knowing that his staff was daydreaming during a meeting.

However, they were stunned to see Elliot’s expression. Right now, he was looking at Anastasia with a doting gaze that held a hint of amusement.

“Anastasia, we were just talking about the introduction of a tea break area. What do you think about that?” Felicia chose that moment to bring up this topic.

Instantly, Anastasia recollected herself. “Uh... I think that we should switch to a different dessert shop. I’ve heard of a very popular place and I think it would be awesome if we could arrange for that company to prepare the pastries for our tea break.”

“Oh—could you share the name of the place?” Felicia immediately asked.

"It's a patisserie located in town and the name of the place is Belle's Patisserie. I've been there plenty of times with my son and the pastries taste very good. The ingredients that they use are very fresh too."

With a torn expression, Felicia muttered, "But as far as I know, the prices of pastries from this place are on the higher end and we do have a budget restraint. Well..."

"Then let's just make arrangements for this shop to join our company." Suddenly, a low yet dominating male voice rang out.

At that instance, Felicia turned to glance at Anastasia, and there was an approving look that flashed across the former's eyes. Indeed, this plan worked and Elliot is agreeing to it!

Meanwhile, Anastasia was quite shocked when she heard that. How can he just agree to it so easily?!

On the opposite end, Alice shot Anastasia a jealous look as she thought to herself, Anastasia is treated so favorably in the company; even President Presgrave gives in to her whims.

"You guys continue with the meeting." Elliot glanced at his watch and looked at the time. "I've got something else on, so I'll head off now."

After he left the room, everyone in the meeting room heaved a sigh of relief and the first thing that they obviously did was to thank Anastasia for suggesting the new patisserie, thus successfully obtaining such great staff benefits for them.

Anastasia had merely mentioned it in passing, so she actually didn't expect that Elliot would agree to her suggestion just like that.

Right after Elliot walked out of the meeting room, he suddenly heard two female staff chatting to each other excitedly by the end of the corridor.

"The flowers were given to us by a designer. The roses are very beautiful! It's a shame that you weren't here earlier so you missed the chance."

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"She's so generous. She shared such expensive flowers with the entire office"

At that point, Elliot paused in his tracks and his handsome face significantly darkened. He strode back toward the direction of the working area and instantly, he saw that every single vase of all of the staff in the office was adorned with a stalk of red rose. From his observation, it was in fact the imported roses that he had carefully hand-picked from the florist before his morning meeting. That woman just gave it away after taking a glance at it?!

His handsome face was as cold as ice and there was an annoyed look in his eyes. He turned around and walked back toward the meeting room. Subsequently, he yanked open the door and hollered toward the woman inside, "Anastasia, come and see me in my office." After he had said that, he added, "Now."

His tone of voice caused everyone in the meeting room to tense up as they directed slightly sympathetic looks at the woman specifically mentioned by Elliot. Deep down, they thought to themselves, What sort

of major mistake has she committed this time? Why is the big boss using such a commandeering tone of voice?

Slightly shocked, Anastasia collected her belongings and got out of her seat. Then, she walked out and shut the door to the meeting room behind her. "President Presgrave, is there something urgent?"

"Let's talk in my office." He spoke through clenched teeth and strode on ahead toward the direction of the elevator.

Meanwhile, Anastasia was quite confused. How did I offend him anyway? Is it because of the suggestion for that patisserie earlier on? But I didn't insist on it, though! It's entirely up to him!

In the elevator, Anastasia could clearly feel the tense vibe in the air and she glanced at the tall, strapping man next to her who had his arms crossed. He seemed quite angry at the moment.

"How's your gastritis? Are you feeling better now?" She took the chance to express her concern.

However, Elliot continued to ignore her and as soon as the elevator doors slid open, he strode out immediately with his long legs. As for Anastasia, she trailed behind him awkwardly.

The moment she entered Elliot's office, she saw him turn around all of a sudden and his tall, well-built figure approached her. Frightened, she took a step backward but she found her back hit against the door. Meanwhile, he placed both of his hands by each side of her shoulders as he held her captive against the door.

"Anastasia Tillman, do you actually dislike the flowers I gave you so much?! Why did you share it with the others just like that?!" Elliot's deep, dark eyes were clearly smoldering with anger.

In response, Anastasia blinked her eyes a few times. Oh—so he's mad about this!

"You sent me a lot of flowers but I don't know how to maintain them, so I shared them with the others in the office. That's much better than having the flowers wither in my hands, right?" Anastasia tried hard to come up with an excuse, but it sounded quite feeble.

"I hand-picked every single stalk of the roses today, so how dare you waste my efforts like that?!" Elliot's warm breath hit the skin on her face, and he looked quite angry to the point that he seemed to be about to devour her.

Shortly after that, he did exactly that. He leaned forward and bit Anastasia with his thin lips just below her clavicle underneath her shirt.

At that moment, Anastasia had her guard down so she yelped out in pain and surprise. "Ah!"

After Elliot had bitten her, he continued to stare at her with a sullen look on his face. "This is just a minor punishment. I won't let you off the hook so easily next time if you disregard my gift again."

In response, Anastasia reached out to shove him before retorting confidently, "Well, I could always give you back a bouquet of flowers!"

"Yes, it is possible to pay me back with another bouquet of flowers, but are you able to compensate for the effort I put into it?" Elliot spoke up in a hoarse voice and his expression was quite upset.

Meanwhile, Anastasia was lost in thought for a moment, but she then pushed him aside insistently. “You know that I’m not going to appreciate your gifts, so you should just stop giving me anything from now on. Otherwise, you’re surely going to be upset again if I get rid of it.”

Suddenly, Elliot took two steps backward and he continued to stare intently at her with his deep, dark eyes. His brows were furrowed and he looked as if his feelings were hurt.

Anastasia’s eyes met his and she suddenly realized that her words were too scathing. At that moment, she apologized to him. “I’m sorry. I apologize if my words hurt your feelings.”

Instantly, the coldness dissipated from Elliot’s eyes and there seemed to be a glimmer of warmth that shone through. However, he maintained a demanding tone of voice as he commanded, “Anastasia, I don’t want my efforts to be cast aside like trash again.”

Feeling slightly stunned, Anastasia pulled open the door and merely responded, “Then you’d better not send me any gifts. I’ll still choose to cast anything that you give me aside.”

At that, the man left in the office stood there with a defeated look on his handsome face. He remained silent for a short while before walking off to stand in front of the full-length windows. His elongated and strapping figure exuded loneliness as he was basked under the dusk light from outside.

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Anastasia went back to the working area and for a moment, her thoughts were all over the place. Truth was, she found Elliot’s behavior quite baffling. He’s behaving quite abnormally today. Don’t tell me that he likes me?! Well, I didn’t expect him to personally pick the flowers he gave me! I mean, even though Nigel sent me flowers too, surely he would have just called the florist to place an order? Nigel wouldn’t take the time to go and pick out the flowers personally just like Elliot. I guess it’s understandable that Elliot’s mad because I didn’t appreciate the flowers he sent me. But honestly, I never expected that he would have picked out every single stalk personally. Gosh!

At that point, Anastasia held her head in her hands and she was significantly frustrated

In the afternoon, Felicia came over to report the good news. The human resource department had contacted Belle Patisserie and the contract had been drafted. Once everything was signed, then Belle Patisserie would finally be able to move in. As such, they would be able to enjoy tasty pastries and cakes, as well as freshly brewed aromatic coffee for their tea break in the future.

All of this was thanks to Anastasia and the entire office was quite aware of that.

Suddenly, Anastasia’s image in the company went through a complete reversal and those colleagues who had secretly looked down on her in the past were now full of gratitude for her in public. After all, this was an awesome benefit.

The only person quite unhappy about it was Alice. She had hoped fervently for the entire office to dislike Anastasia but unexpectedly, Anastasia had managed to win the people’s hearts with just a single move.

Meanwhile, May was currently quite impatient and she quickly found a hiding spot outside the company as she dialed Hayley’s number to inform Hayley about this incident.

Hayley had just put on an act in front of Anastasia but unexpectedly, the latter had fought back so soon after that. Hayley had assumed that Anastasia was just putting up an act, and that Anastasia had done that to show Hayley how important she was to Elliot.

At that moment, Hayley bit her lip and she felt as if she was about to lose her mind. She felt as if she was currently living in a darkened state, devoid of light. Her heart was completely closed off and she couldn't see the light in her life at all. She was now fully consumed by hatred, jealousy, and all sorts of other negative feelings.

Hayley's encounter with Elliot wasn't a good thing for her, as she found that he was a calamity in her life. After all, he was a spectacular individual while she wasn't exactly that great. As such, she had lost not only her true self but also her happiness. She hated Anastasia with a passion and now, the hatred conspired her. To Hayley, it was Anastasia that had ruined Hayley's life.

In the afternoon, Anastasia handed over the initial draft for Felicia's perusal. Meanwhile, Felicia was quite pleased with it and asked Anastasia to refine some details before showing it to the female client tomorrow. If everything was acceptable, then they could proceed to generate the end-product drawing. Subsequently, production could be initiated by handing over the end-product drawing to the factory.

At about 4 PM, Anastasia was busy working on her computer as she put the finishing touches on her refined draft. Suddenly, she received a call on her landline, so she reached out to answer the phone. "Hello?"

"Come to the underground parking lot in two minutes." A man's low, clear voice rang out.

Suddenly, Anastasia grabbed her cell phone to check the time and she gasped. She had been too busy with work to the extent that she had nearly forgotten that she had to go and fetch Jared.

"Okay, I'll be there right away," Anastasia instantly responded. Subsequently, she collected her belongings and switched off the computer before dashing out of the door.

In the underground parking lot, Anastasia saw the car that was already with its ignition on, so she pulled open the door to the front passenger seat and entered the car. As she buckled her seatbelt, she murmured anxiously, "Hurry up and get going. We're going to be late!"

Meanwhile, Elliot was slightly speechless. After all, if it wasn't for his reminder, she would have completely forgotten that she had to pick Jared up.

Despite that, the man stepped on the accelerator to increase the speed and drove off in a rush.

As for Anastasia, she glanced outside of the window and breathed out slowly as she watched the traffic outside. She was in good spirits at the moment. After all, her work was going quite well and her family was safe and sound too. She found herself currently in an exceptionally relaxed state that she hadn't experienced before.

Suddenly, her cell phone rang and she took it in her hand to glance at it. Anastasia was caught by surprise for a moment as she turned to glance at the man next to her. "It's your grandma on the line."

Elliot shot her a look and responded with a low voice, "Put her on speakerphone."

And so, Anastasia took a deep breath before hitting the speaker button and she answered the phone with a sweet and polite voice, "Good evening, Old Madam Presgrave."

At that moment, Harriet responded in a warm, gentle voice, "Anastasia! How have you been? Are you quite busy lately?"

"Uh... No, I'm not too busy. Is there anything that you'd like me to do?" Anastasia asked with a smile.

"Well, I wanted to treat you to lunch tomorrow. I didn't get to talk much to you during the dinner party the other time because it was just too hectic then. Will you be free tomorrow afternoon?"

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"Uh... Y-Yes... I'm free tomorrow!" Anastasia replied while glancing at Elliot, who was driving "I know that you're usually occupied at night because you need to stay home to keep an eye on your child, so that's not a good time for you. That's why I asked you out in the afternoon. That's decided then. Let's have lunch together tomorrow." "Sure thing, Old Madam Presgrave." Anastasia naturally agreed to it. After all, this was the first time that Harriet had asked her out for a meal, so it would be quite rude to reject it. "Okay, I'll contact you tomorrow. You must be busy right now. That's all, then." "Sure, see you tomorrow." After Anastasia had ended her sentence, she waited for Harriet to hang up the phone and she finally heaved a sigh of relief. At that moment, she glanced at Elliot and asked, "Do you know why your grandma asked me out for a meal? Does she actually just want to have a chat with me?" "It's quite likely that she wants to talk to you about the matter between you and Nigel." Elliot kept his eyes in front of him and his handsome face remained expressionless. "What? Why?" Anastasia blinked her eyes in confusion. "That's because Nigel proposed to you the last time and she's taken it seriously. It's quite likely that she wants to talk to you about the wedding preparation." "What?! Are you being serious?" Anastasia was indeed quite shocked upon hearing Elliot's words. Has Old Madam Presgrave actually taken the proposal seriously? "This is the problem that you created yourself, so shouldn't you be prepared for the consequences?" Elliot coldly snorted in response. Meanwhile, Anastasia bit her red lip. Indeed, everyone had taken that proposal seriously. However, no one realized that she had privately explained the situation to Nigel. "Then what should I do? I never intended to marry Nigel." Anastasia heaved a resigned sigh. After all, she had no intention of disrupting Nigel's marriage prospects. "Anastasia, you have to be frank here. How do you actually feel about Nigel? Do you like him or not?" Coincidentally, Elliot's car came to a stop at the traffic light and he directed his deep gaze intently at her.

At that moment, Anastasia bit her lower lip. "I only think of him as a friend. I like him for his witty and amusing personality. I also like the way he maintains such a carefree and relaxed lifestyle, but I never thought of marrying him. I like him, but I don't love him." As soon as Anastasia said that, she suddenly came to her senses and she turned to glare at Elliot. "Why am I telling you all these anyway?" Meanwhile, he curled his lips into a smile. "Well, you've spoken out so the reason shouldn't matter." Elliot seemed to appear aloof, cold, and distant in front of the others but to Anastasia, he had somehow become someone she could confide in. She couldn't even figure out when this had happened. "I don't want to talk about this. I'm still trying to figure out how to explain the situation tomorrow." Anastasia heaved a sigh as she found herself in a pickle. Upon hearing that, Elliot lifted his brows and suggested. "I have a tip." "Out with it, then!" Anastasia couldn't wait to find out. He then suggested a foolproof plan. "Tomorrow, just confess your love toward me in front of Nigel and Grandma." Suddenly, Anastasia's pretty eyes widened slightly and she laughed mockingly. "In your dreams!" However, Elliot was

unaffected by her reaction, and he wasn't the least bit upset or angered at all. On the contrary, the smile on his lips deepened. "Otherwise, I could confess my love to you." "No! Don't you dare do anything drastic! The situation is complicated enough, so please don't complicate things any further, alright?" Anastasia suddenly felt that he was just here to purposely create trouble for her. At that moment, Jared's school was within eyeshot and Elliot suddenly turned to her. "I'll go inside and get Jared. You can wait in the car." However, Anastasia was adamant not to bother Elliot, so she muttered, "Jared's my son, so I'll go and get him." "I promised Jared in the morning that I would come and pick him up personally in the afternoon, so I have to keep my word." After Elliot said that, he pushed open the car door and got out of the car. As for Anastasia, she could only sit and wait in the car. Actually, she could have joined him and turned

up at the school together, but she felt slightly diffident. After all, they were not an actual couple. Previously, Elliot had pretended to be Jared's father and he turned up for the sports event, so if any other parents initiated a conversation with them it would be quite awkward. And so, Anastasia decided to just stay put in the car. Shortly after that, she saw Jared walking out of the school hand-in-hand with Elliot. The boy was evidently quite happy as there was a spring to his step. As soon as Anastasia saw that, she couldn't contain the smile on her face. She was very joyful each time she saw Jared in a happy state. "Mommy!" Jared got into the car and sat in his car seat. Elliot leaned forward to buckle the seatbelt for him, and the current scene showed Elliot performing the exact role of a doting father.

Chapter 168 Anastasia saw the scene in front of her and there was a sudden inexplicable feeling that arose within her. Should I continue to allow this man to be involved in our lives? What if Jared gets used to seeing him every day and becomes dependent on his close company? If he suddenly disappears from our life someday, would Jared feel disappointed then? "Mommy, let's go grocery shopping, alright? I want to go to the mall." "Okay! Let's go together today." Anastasia responded with a smile. And so, Elliot drove the car to a large mall by their house. In the supermarket, Anastasia was busy picking out some fresh vegetables while Elliot brought Jared to pick out some toys. Anastasia then walked off to the fruits section after picking out the vegetables. As soon as she saw some fresh durians, she couldn't help craving them as it had been quite a while since she had some. As such, she picked out one which was quite fleshy and went off to get it weighed. The price of the durian was quite exorbitant and she actually winced at the thought of it, but it was fine as an occasional splurge. After that, Anastasia went to seek out Jared and Elliot, but she found that Elliot's trolley was full of presents. Though slightly resigned, she kept it to herself and thought, Is he trying to spoil Jared? That's

too many presents there! "Mommy, Mr. Presgrave bought all of these for me." Jared sat in the trolley and showed it off to her. "We can't have Mr. Presgrave spending so much money on you. Let's just pick one that you really like, alright?" Anastasia explained to Jared. Upon hearing that, Elliot spoke in a low voice. "These are all my presents for Jared and the toys are educational." "I like all of them." Jared pouted as well, as he wanted all of these toys. Meanwhile, Anastasia shook her head resignedly. "It's just for this once, alright? Let's go and pay for it." She was prepared to foot the bill herself but then before she could even reach out for her cell phone, Elliot had already paid for everything. It's such a shame that I didn't get more durians! I would have bought two if I knew that he was going to fight to pay for the grocery bill. After entering the car, Jared instantly smelled the pungent scent. "Mommy, did you buy some durian? It smells so good!" "Yes, I bought the Musang King variety. Let's go home and enjoy it." "Yay! I love durian!" Jared had developed a liking for durian due to Anastasia's influence. On the other hand, Elliot, who was standing by the side, frowned slightly as there was a slight smell of

durian inside the car. As soon as they arrived home, Anastasia quickly opened the fruit and the smell of it filled the entire house. She placed the flesh on a plate and brought it out. Meanwhile, Jared had already washed his hands and he was waiting patiently on the couch to have some. Anastasia glanced at Elliot, who was sitting on the couch too, and she generously offered, "Come and have some too." "I don't like this type of fruit," Elliot rejected. However, Anastasia insistently handed him one. "It's really good. Why don't you try some?" "Mr. Presgrave, do try some. It's really good!" Jared had one in his hand and he spoke while devouring it. If it was anyone else who had suggested for Elliot to try some, he would definitely reject them but

because it was Anastasia and Jared, and they had a strong influence on Elliot, he overcame his disgust and reached out for a tiny piece before opening his mouth slightly to taste it. The taste of it was surprisingly better than he thought and as he tasted it carefully, the rich yet uncloying taste of it filled his taste buds. He found himself unable to resist the creamy texture of the fruit and his initial resistance went out of the window. He lifted his head and turned to nod at Anastasia. "It's really good." "See? I told you it was yummy!" Inexplicably, Anastasia suddenly felt a sense of accomplishment. She felt quite pleased to be able to force Elliot to try some durian. "Is there any more in the kitchen? Is that all that you bought?" Elliot clearly expressed that it wasn't enough. In response, Anastasia blinked her eyes. "The Musang King variety is very expensive! One of them is quite a splurge already. I dream of the day when I can finally achieve the freedom of having durians whenever I please!" "I can easily grant your wish," Elliot commented with narrowed eyes. I can supply you with as many durians as you wish to the point where you might get sick of it. "It's alright. I can earn more and buy it for myself!" After Anastasia said that, she glanced at the clock and mentioned, "I'll go prepare dinner now. Keep an eye on Jared for me." Subsequently, Anastasia headed off to the kitchen as Elliot went along with Jared to the toy area to unbox the new toys. Meanwhile, Elliot's eyes shone with a doting expression as he watched Jared happily unbox his new toys. At that moment, Elliot felt as if he was truly Jared's father.

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Elliot thought to himself, If she agrees to it, I sincerely want to care for her and Jared forever. I don't mind not having my own child in this lifetime.

At that moment, Anastasia was busy chopping up some vegetables, but she was careless and cut herself. The pain she felt made her wince and she was close to tears. Even the vegetables were

stained with droplets of bright-red blood and it was quite a horrifying scene. It was only then that she realized that it was quite a deep cut that she had suffered.

Instantly, she placed her finger under running water. As she looked at the blood still trickling from her wound, she suddenly recalled that she had a first-aid kit, so she took a kitchen towel and wrapped it around her finger before heading out of the kitchen. She then turned to Elliot, who was currently in a squatting position on the ground, and asked, "President Presgrave, could you please help me get the first-aid kit? I just cut myself."

As soon as she said that, Jared-initially busy with his presents—and Elliot, who was by Jared's side, instantly rushed over to her. Elliot anxiously asked, "Where's the first aid kit?"

"It's underneath that cupboard."

“Mommy, let me have a look. There’s so much blood!” Jared was frantic as he shouted, “Mr. Presgrave, hurry up and help Mommy!”

Elliot opened the first-aid kit and retrieved the crepe bandage from the box. Then, Anastasia removed the towel wrapped around her wound, causing the cut to become exposed to the air. She had suffered a cut to her left index finger at the part connecting to her fingernail, so there were plenty of blood vessels there. It would likely take some time to stop the bleeding.

“Why were you so clumsy?” Elliot’s expression was full of worry and there was a slightly pained look in his eyes.

“It’s alright. It’s quite normal to suffer a cut to the finger for one who’s used to cooking.” Anastasia was quite calm as this was a small matter for her.

However, her words caused Elliot’s heart to clench. Does that mean she has a lot of past experiences with cutting herself?!

At that point, Elliot thought of her bringing up Jared by herself overseas without any

support and wondered, How did she get through that by herself? Besides, Jared was still very young back then. Instantly, Elliot’s thoughts went to his cousin Nigel.

That explains why she’s so close to Nigel. It must be because he provided her with a lot of help over the two years when she was overseas. As such, she regards Nigel as a friend as close as her family, but she doesn’t love him.

“When you were overseas, did Nigel help you in many ways?” Elliot looked at her and asked

In response, Anastasia nodded. “Yes, he did.”

At that, Elliot took a deep breath. Why didn’t I take the time to get to know her earlier? He had focused his efforts on helping Francis and he had assumed that everyone in the Tillman Family would obviously have a great life if Francis was doing well. However, Elliot’s recent investigations had uncovered that she had left the Tillman Family ages ago and brought up her child by herself overseas. She hardly kept in contact with Francis, but Elliot hadn’t quite yet found out the exact reason for that.

“Let’s go out for dinner. Take a break from cooking tonight.” Elliot finished off by adding, “It’s my treat.”

He was well aware of how cost-conscious Anastasia was, so he didn’t want her to have to spend money.

Meanwhile, Anastasia also realized that she couldn’t possibly cook in such a state, so she nodded. “Sure, let’s go to a nearby restaurant.”

“Mommy, does it hurt?” Jared inched closer to peer at her finger and he blew at it comfortingly. At that point, Elliot had already bandaged her finger carefully.

Anastasia shook her head. “No, it doesn’t hurt at all.”

However, Jared was quite skeptical. “Mommy, you should take a break from cooking for the time being. We can eat out. I’ll use my allowance to treat you.”

“That’s not necessary. I’ll treat you guys for the entire month.” Elliot ruffled Jared’s hair as he announced, “Come on, let’s go and have dinner!”

Elliot brought them to a high-ended restaurant and all of the food served seemed to be quite pricey.

Meanwhile, Anastasia speculated that the entire meal cost one month of her paycheck. Come to think of it, I actually do benefit from being friends with Elliot!

In the end, Elliot sent them back to the entrance of their residential area and Anastasia stated insistently, “You should go home now.”

She was adamant not to allow him to enter her house as it was quite late.

However, Elliot was quite worried, so he murmured, “Call me right away if there are any issues.”

Meanwhile, Anastasia waved at him and hand-in-hand with Jared, the mother-son duo walked back in the direction of the entrance of the residential area.

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Elliot stayed there and watched them walk inside before driving off.

“Mommy, Mr. Presgrave is so nice to us. Grandpa said that you should marry the one who treats us well.” Jared lifted his head and turned to Anastasia when he said that.

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Anastasia reached out a hand to ruffle Jared’s hair and spoke in a relaxed tone. “I don’t need anyone else but you. I’m not going to marry anyone again in this lifetime.”

That was because she didn’t want to put a bet on an uncertain future. She just wanted to raise her son in a stable environment. Besides, Elliot clearly was doing all this as an expression of his gratitude. As such, such a relationship was as fragile as a tiny bubble and it could disintegrate at any time.

Anastasia was no longer a young girl, so she was quite conscious of what was going on. She would not be easily affected just because someone was kind to her, and she definitely wasn’t going to sacrifice all of herself due to being touched by someone else’s kindness. She was now a very level-headed and logical person.

The next morning, Anastasia had just helped Jared place his belongings into his school bag and was about to leave the house when the doorbell sounded. She looked through the peephole and was immediately stunned. Why is he here?

Meanwhile, she opened the door to see Elliot standing outside. He was dressed impeccably in a suit and he looked exactly like an elitist standing there.

“Mr. Presgrave!” Jared happily clung to Elliot’s thigh. “Why are you here?”

“I came over to send you to school and send your mommy to work.”

“Mr. Presgrave, you’re such a nice person!” Jared kept his eyes on Elliot unblinkingly and the boy’s expression was quite affectionate.

At that moment, Elliot directed his gaze toward Anastasia with the hopes that she would react the same way as Jared. However, she felt quite shy to bother him.

"You don't have to do this next time. I don't want to take up too much of your precious time," Anastasia suggested.

"I'm happy to spend my time any way I prefer," Elliot curled his lips into a smile and replied. Subsequently, he squatted down and took Jared into his arms before turning around to head toward the elevator.

Meanwhile, Anastasia was left slightly speechless. She really didn't want to waste the man's time, as he usually had business dealings that ran in the range of billions.

After dropping off Jared at school, Anastasia suddenly recalled that she had a lunch

date with Harriet in the afternoon, so she turned her head to glance at Elliot. "Will you be attending the lunch appointment this afternoon?"

"My grandma didn't invite me along." Elliot felt slightly upset too as he had waited the whole night for Harriet's phone call, but it was in vain. Evidently, he was not included in the lunch date.

Anastasia pursed her lips in response. "Okay, then. I'll try my best to explain the situation to her."

Elliot drove his car into the underground parking lot and Anastasia tried to quickly make a dash for it as she wanted to avoid entering the elevator at the same time as him.

However, Elliot refused to let her have her way and he strode purposefully behind her on his long legs. Just as he was about to enter the elevator, Anastasia frantically pressed the button to shut the door while yelling toward him, who was still outside, "Take the next one."

Unfortunately for her, he stretched out his hand. As soon as the sensors on the door sensed movement, they slid open instantly and Elliot made his way into the elevator gracefully.

Meanwhile, Anastasia placed her palm on her forehead and inched closer to the corner of the elevator. Even if she had to be in the same lift, she was determined to stand as far away from him as possible.

Indeed, there was a huge group of staff waiting to enter the elevator in the lobby. However, as soon as the doors to the elevator slid open, the anxious bunch of people outside suddenly stopped in their tracks. None of them dared to step foot into the elevator because Elliot was standing there.

"President Presgrave, you can go ahead. We'll take the next one." Each of them said so fawningly with smiles on their faces.

Soon after that, the doors to the elevator slid shut. Meanwhile, Anastasia was intent on admiring Elliot's strapping, attractive figure as she thought, He has the perfect figure that even a model couldn't compete against him! The clothes on him were perfectly molded to his body and he had the perfect figure that enhanced any outfit he wore. Elliot's figure was so perfect that he looked slim in any shirt he put on and yet when he took off his shirt, he was filled out in all the right places.

They arrived at the Department of Design and Anastasia quickly slipped past the man to get out of the elevator. However, at that moment, Elliot reached out and

suddenly held her hand for a short while. Shocked, Anastasia shivered and she quickly flung off his hand as she fled the elevator. At the same time, she scanned her surroundings guiltily.

She couldn't contain herself from blushing. How annoying!

She arrived at her working area and instantly focused her efforts on her work. Although she had hurt her finger, she could only bear it and work with an injured finger. Luckily, she could operate everything by using the computer, so it made things much easier for her.

She finally made finishing touches to the draft for the pair of necklaces and it was quite perfect in her eyes, so she sent it to Felicia for her to contact the customer. After all, this was an important commissioned piece, so Felicia was in on it too.

At about 10 in the morning, Anastasia's cell phone suddenly rang and she reached out to answer the phone call. "Hello, who's on the line?"

"Hi, is this Miss Anastasia Tillman? I'm calling from the fruit shop. There's a customer who ordered a truckload of Musang King durian for you. Where would you like me to deliver it to?"

"What?! A truckload? How many would that be?"

"There are about two hundred of them."

At that point, Anastasia nearly had a heart attack. Elliot has too much money on his hands, huh? Why did he send me two hundred Musang King durians early in the morning anyway?!