

Too Far 311

Chapter 311

"It's the annual board meeting. It is of the utmost importance, so do take a day off and attend," Francis said solemnly.

Since she didn't have much planned for the day as well, Anastasia called Felicia to request a day off before driving over to Francis' company.

At around 10:00AM, she entered the conference room that was located in his company to join the rest of the attendees. Alex was seated next to her for the board meeting and although he was of a young age, all the directors were full of praise for him as he was indeed capable and had made significant contributions to the company.

He fought for a place on the board with his capabilities, but his attention today was captured by Anastasia. She wore a white shirt with a black skirt, which was both simple and elegant. With her long hair draped behind her, she looked stunning.

Anastasia was merely playing the role of an audience at the meeting as she listened to her father's presentation of their latest project. Elliot's name came to mind as she listened since this project was obtained with his assistance.

Meanwhile, Elliot was with Rey in the office on the eighth floor of Bourgeois Jewelry Atelier. He dialed Anastasia's office number as soon as he sat down, but it went unanswered.

What is she doing?

Then, he took out his phone and dialed her number, which went unanswered as well. He was starting to become annoyed. This woman is not picking up my call now?

"Check to see whether Anastasia is in her office," he instructed Rey while sitting in front of a stack of documents.

Rey immediately went straight to the Department of Design and after enquiring Anastasia's assistant, Grace, he learned that Anastasia had taken a day off.

He relayed this information to Elliot. With that, Elliot immediately gave Felicia a call to ask about this.

"Anastasia said she'll be going to her father's company," she answered honestly.

Hearing that, Elliot's face darkened because he remembered Alex, who was in Tillman Constructions too.

Alex was both Francis' right hand and his most trusted subordinate. Francis had already begun training Alex to oversee all company affairs for Alex to be Anastasia's assistant when she took the company over in the future.

In addition to that, Elliot had also discovered Alex's feelings toward Anastasia since the previous Tillman Constructions' annual event.

Both Alex and Anastasia had previously gone on a dinner date and he even sent her loving messages as well, but she still happily went to see him.

The more he thought about it, the more dissatisfied Elliot became. He was putting in all his efforts to court her, but she didn't reciprocate and even turned herself to another man!

"President Presgrave, are you going to Tillman Constructions to look for Miss Tillman?" Rey asked curiously.

It was something Elliot would normally do, but he was hesitant to lower his ego today. A relationship should be a two-way street; if he was the only one making an effort, nothing would come of it.

"I'm not going to," he replied with his face looking solemn.

Meanwhile, at Tillman Constructions, Anastasia was having lunch with her father together with the other shareholders. Due to the meeting, her phone had been on silent mode earlier and it was only now that she was able to check it. A few missed calls appeared on her screen, and seeing that, she couldn't help but to be surprised.

Elliot called? Why did he call?

She considered returning his call, but after a brief hesitation, she decided not to because there appeared to be nothing urgent.

After the meal, she wanted to return to work, but Francis insisted on taking her to the new project with him, so she had no choice but to oblige and accompany him to the site. Alex was with her the entire day and he appeared to be more excited and happy than usual.

When they were at the site, her helmet didn't seem to be properly buckled, so he helped her with it. She shyly allowed him to do so since it was a windy day and the wind was constantly blowing through her hair. Her skin appeared fair and smooth in the bright sunlight and along with her red lips, they made Alex lose his heart to her.

"Thank you," Anastasia gratefully said.

"You're welcome." Alex's burning gaze was locked on her and he could not take his eyes off her any more for the rest of the day.

Anastasia, on the other hand, was too preoccupied with helping her father to notice Alex's persistent gaze.

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She was still with Francis at 4:00PM and couldn't make it back to her company in time to take her car before picking up Jared. In light of this, he directed Alex to drive her to Jared's school and all of them could have dinner together tonight. As she was pressed for time and her car was still parked at her workplace, she had no other option but to accept Alex's help.

Meanwhile, in Bourgeois Jewelry Atelier, the man who had been sulking all day decided to head to Jared's school as well to see whether he would run into Anastasia by chance, and also to visit Jared's new school.

As the atelier was nearer, they had arrived at the school ahead of time. Rey found a perfect parking spot and Elliot perused his work documents in the car while waiting for Anastasia to come to pick up Jared.

At around 4.30PM, Rey was observing the crowd that arrived to pick up their children. Finally, he saw Anastasia with a man beside her.

"President Presgrave, Miss Tillman is here." He alerted the man on the seat behind.

Hearing that, Elliot dropped his document and looked out the window at the woman in the crowd, but the moment he saw her, he became furious. Why did she bring Alex along?

At the school's entrance, the children ran around like little beasts who had just been let out of their cages. One small boy was running toward Anastasia and almost collided with her, but in her attempt to avoid him, she fell in the direction of Alex. He instinctively reached out with his hand and held her waist as she unceremoniously stepped on his leather shoes.

She hurriedly raised her head and asked in concern with her hand on Alex's arm, "I'm sorry. Did I hurt you?"

"No." He shook his head with a smile.

Yet, Anastasia felt apologetic. "I'm really sorry about that."

"It's fine, don't worry." In fact, Alex enjoyed watching her concerned gaze.

In the car, the man who initially wanted to step down from the car looked even angrier. The flirting duo had enraged him so much that looking at them hurt his eyes.

Rey was thinking the same thing. Is Miss Tillman bent on enraging President Presgrave?

"Do you want to go down and look for Miss Tillman, President Presgrave?" he reminded Elliot.

Elliot already had his stomach full of resentment and rage. The more he saw them, the more he felt that all his efforts toward Anastasia during this period of time went down the drain. She was getting along so well with Alex behind his back. Elliot had never seen her smiling so coquettishly at him before, like how she did to Alex.

From his vantage point, he didn't notice Anastasia stepping on Alex's shoes; for him, they were flirting instead.

After picking up Jared, Anastasia took the child's hand in hers and Alex was beside them. For a far, they looked just like a close-knit family.

And such a scene pricked Elliot's heart and irritated his eyes.

"Miss Tillman is leaving, President Presgrave. Are you sure you do not want to go down?" Rey asked anxiously. As long as Elliot went down, there would be no place for that man.

Whether it was in terms of attractiveness, figure, or wealth, the man next to Anastasia was completely incomparable to Elliot.

Elliot watched the three of them leave the school with cold eyes and clenched teeth. His fist, which was clenched tightly, never loosened for a second, as if he was about to fight someone the next second.

Of course he considered getting out of the car and chasing Alex away, leaving him as the only guardian for Anastasia and Jared.

His dignity, however, forbade him from doing so. Do I need to compete with Alex? Is it necessary for me to stoop so low to fight with a man who is totally not comparable to me?

Since she did not value his feelings at all, it would be nothing more than a joke even if he managed to win her over.

Am I not worthy of her love? Not worthy to be cherished by her? Or I have put in so much effort that she had taken me for granted?

"Drive home," he ordered Rey.

"It's not too late, President Presgrave, to catch up with them." From the rearview mirror, Rey noticed Anastasia had just gotten into the car and was confident that he would be able to block her as soon as he stepped on the accelerator.

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"Let's go." Elliot's tone became solemn as it was clear that he took it to heart.

With that, Rey had no choice but to follow his instructions and left using another exit.

On the other hand, Alex brought Anastasia and Jared to meet Francis whereby the three of them had dinner near the company. Then, she returned with Jared at around 8.30PM.

After they arrived home, she was busy showering her son and checking his homework. Before she even realized it, it was already 9.30PM, whereupon she tucked her son to bed.

It was only after Jared fell asleep that she went back to room and yawned all the way there. Just before she headed off to bed, she scrolled through her phone and recalled Elliot's missed call. Looking at the screen, she wondered whether she should ask Elliot why he had called her.

However, it was already past 10.00PM. If she were to text him, she would be disturbing his rest.

Well, let's see how things go tomorrow, she thought.

It was a new day the next morning.

Anastasia rushed to her workplace after dropping Jared off at his school.

She was already in her office at about 10.00AM and reading all of her unread emails when Grace suddenly entered without even knocking on the door.

"Anastasia!" Grace supported herself on the table with her hands, as if she had heard something shocking.

"What happened?" Anastasia asked as she blinked at Grace.

"Miss Dora, who is new here, received a bouquet of blue roses! Do you know who sent it to her?"

"Who?" Anastasia raised her teacup and asked, seemingly uninterested.

To that, Grace responded with envy. "I heard that it's from President Presgrave."

When Anastasia heard that, she almost choked on her tea. She quickly swallowed it and pretended to be calm. "Well, President Presgrave is always on the lookout for newcomers!"

Grace stared at her. "Anastasia, aren't you jealous?"

It was a question that Anastasia found amusing. "Why should I be?"

This answer of hers stunned Grace. Being someone unrelated, she was slightly dissatisfied with the situation, so how could Anastasia not feel anything?

Anastasia was aware of Aliona's identity. Since she is the daughter of Elliot's late father's close friend and her first day in the company, it is perfectly normal for Elliot to send her flowers.

With such a thought in her mind, Anastasia opened her unfinished sketch and wanted to devote her mind into it.

However, looking at the sketch in front of her, she felt as if her mind was blank with no inspiration. She had no idea where to begin.

As a result, she decided to put it aside for the time being. She didn't want to push herself when she didn't know where to begin. Following that, she went to the dessert bar to get some afters, knowing that the newly introduced dessert was very popular.

Just as she sat down, she heard a voice mocking her from behind her. "It appears that someone has fallen out of favor, huh."

It was Alice. She was holding her cup of coffee and staring at Anastasia with those eyes that bore no good intention.

Anastasia did not want to entertain her and merely continued eating the cake.

Such an action merely increased Alice's arrogance. "Anastasia, I heard that President Presgrave has a new target now. Don't be too sad about it. Men are like that; they'll ditch the previous one once they find someone new."

And Anastasia remained ignoring her.

Faced with Anastasia's attitude, Alice found no fun in it and left shortly after.

In the afternoon, Anastasia went for lunch with Felicia at the western restaurant opposite their workplace where both of them took the table by the window. Not long after they sat down, Felicia was shocked to see a couple walking into the restaurant.

After that, she immediately tried to divert Anastasia's attention. "Look at that car outside, Anastasia. Do you think it's lovely?"

She looked toward the direction that Felicia was pointing at and replied, "Kind of. I like the color, but it's beyond what I can afford."

However, at this moment, they heard a clear woman's voice. "Director Evans and Anastasia, both of you are having lunch here too! What a coincidence!"

It was Aliona.

Anastasia turned her head in response and when she saw Elliot standing next to Aliona in the restaurant, her heart twitched for a moment. They are having lunch together?

"Enjoy your lunch. Ours is in the private room." Aliona waved to both Felicia and Anastasia before intentionally turning around to knock into Elliot's embrace. "Ahhh! My head!"

"Be careful," Elliot advised in a deep, concerned voice as he added while extending his long arms toward her, "Don't be so careless."

Then, both Elliot and Aliona made their way to the private room in front of Anastasia. With this, Anastasia suddenly realized the reason why Felicia had diverted her attention earlier. Was she worried that I'd see both of them?

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"Anastasia, it's not a big deal. It's perfectly normal for a superior to have a meal with his subordinate. Who knows that they may even be relatives?" Felicia attempted to console her.

Anastasia smiled in response. Acting as if she wasn't affected, she answered, "They are not relatives. Aliona's father was a close friend of Elliot's father."

That stumped Felicia had no idea what to say. "Let's eat."

While eating, Anastasia feigned that she was alright too. In fact, she believed she was genuinely unaffected and was not merely pretending. It's Elliot's choice to date anyone he wanted; it's none of my business.

"The upcoming competition is quite pressing. Do you have any ideas?"

"Yes, I've already sketched the first draft and will give it to you after some modifications."

"That's great. We'll try to get the product out before the jewelry show. I hope that you will be able to make a name for yourself through this."

"I'll do my best." Anastasia felt the same way. She wished she could attain some achievement in this industry and carve a name for herself.

Throughout the meal, she kept looking at the private room subconsciously and imagining things.

Considering Elliot's flirting character and Aliona's beauty, of course he would lay his hands on her. Perhaps he was planning how to take advantage of Aliona.

As a designer, she had a surprisingly rich imagination and started picturing Elliot pressing Aliona against the wall, trying to kiss her. The image she pictured was extremely vivid.

"I'm full." Anastasia had no appetite and had only a few bites of the food on the table.

"We'll go back now then! I'm stuffed too." Felicia wanted to bring her away from this restaurant.

In the private room, Aliona was happily supporting her chin with her hand on the table in the private room. "I'm so happy."

"I promised your father that I'll take good care of you in the company."

"Thank you, Elliot. I'll rely on you in the future! Oh, were you the one who sent me the flowers this morning?"

He responded with a nod. "It was to welcome you as a new employee in our company."

"Thank you. I love it!" Despite her broad smile, Aliona was disappointed in her heart. Doesn't he have another meaning for sending the flowers?

With that, she intentionally asked, "By the way, everyone in the company is spreading rumors about us. Do you think I need to explain to them?"

"You should if it affects your work." Elliot appeared to be deep in thought as he looked out the window.

"No, it doesn't affect me at all! I'm not explaining then." She smiled, her lips pursed. Such a misunderstanding suited her perfectly, and she craved more of it!

When Anastasia crossed the road after leaving the restaurant, her thoughts wandered and Felicia had to hold her across the pathway. Once she reached her office, she heaved a deep breath and sat on her seat. All she could think about was Elliot with nothing else about work on her mind. Why am I thinking about him?

At this moment, Grace knocked on the door and entered. In hushed tones, she said, "President Presgrave had lunch together with Aliona earlier, Anastasia. Everyone thinks they're dating. Are you all right?"

Hearing that, Anastasia sneered in her heart. Well, he's making it so obvious to everyone! He sent her flowers and took her out for lunch, not fearing that the entire company would know. Is he now publicly showing his interest in Aliona?

"Don't tell me such matters anymore. I'm not interested." Anastasia raised her head and reminded Grace.

To that, Grace puffed her cheeks and replied, "Okay, noted."

Grace left after that. Anastasia then rubbed her brows, attempting to chase her messy thoughts away so that she could focus on her work.

At about 3.00PM, Anastasia received Felicia's call. "We'll have a meeting in five minutes."

On the other hand, Aliona was admiring the roses in her office, her chin resting on her hand. Though they were meant to welcome her, she wondered if they meant something else—Elliot was interested in her.

After all, he did not reject her invitation for lunch earlier. Perhaps I overestimated how important Anastasia is to him.

Furthermore, she was extremely confident in herself. Thus, sooner or later, he would be hers.

In the president's office.

Chapter 315

Elliot was staring at the computer screen with his thoughts wandering around. He was recalling Anastasia's cheerful smile toward Alex the day before. With that, he did not intend to explain to her about his flower gift to Aliona this morning as well as his lunch with her.

He simply did what Anastasia had done as she had made no mention of her meeting with Alex the day before.

He needed to make her feel insecure at times.

Their encounter in the restaurant today wasn't a coincidence either. He was the one who instructed Rey to find where she was. After knowing she was having lunch with Felicia at the restaurant across the road, Aliona happened to invite Elliot for lunch, hence he accepted it and suggested the same restaurant.

At this moment, his office phone rang, and he answered it. "Hello?"

"Hello, President Presgrave. The Department of Design is having a meeting. Do you want to join?" Felicia asked.

"Sure. I will attend," he nonchalantly replied. After he hung up the phone, his gaze twitched, as if he was thinking of something. He was really interested to know whether Anastasia would be jealous.

At the Department of Design, Felicia immediately called Anastasia after finishing her conversation with Elliot.

"I'll be there in a while, Felicia," Anastasia's voice resonated from the other end of the call.

"Just to remind you, Anastasia, that President Presgrave will be attending the meeting as well."

Hearing that, her body stiffened. He is joining the meeting too? Is he doing so for Aliona and trying to mesmerize her in every possible way?

Then, Anastasia took a deep breath and walked toward the conference room with her notebook in her hand.

Aliona had already taken her seat in the conference room. She had everyone's attention since she entered the room because she now had a new identity: Elliot's new lover.

When Anastasia stepped into the room, everyone's gaze was drawn to her—some were sympathetic, some were mocking, and others were simply rejoicing in her misfortune. She, like Aliona, had taken on a new identity: she was the pitiful old flame who had been abandoned by Elliot.

Anastasia walked right to the last seat and sat down. Knowing that everyone was staring at her, she lowered her head and played with her phone.

Alice couldn't help but sneer. "Why are you sitting at the back, Anastasia?"

At this instant, the door was opened again and an imposing figure stepped in. It was Elliot making his entrance.

He was dressed simply but elegantly in a white shirt and pants. Walking with his long legs, he exuded such a commanding presence that the entire conference room fell silent.

Then, he took a seat next to Aliona after surveying the room. The corners of her lips curved when she saw this.

Anastasia was sitting behind and raised her head to take a glance before quickly retracting her gaze. All she saw was his attractive side face while he was telling Felicia, "Let's start."

Felicia began the agenda for today's meeting after letting out a light cough. She began by reviewing the current month's market study report, then moved on to the popular elements in the mainstream market.

Throughout her presentation, Elliot remained silent. His gaze scanned the room before settling on the woman seated in the last seat behind him. Her head was bowed, her eyes hidden behind her long lashes, as if he were looking at a painting. He couldn't see the expression on her face, though.

Sensing his gaze, she pretended to be emotionless as she bit her pen lid without looking at him.

As he felt her intention, his lips pursed as he seemed to sense her resentment. Great. This is what I wanted.

"Let's give Anastasia a big round of applause. Her designed products are always the most popular." Felicia began clapping.

Several clapping sounds followed.

"I have a lot to learn from Anastasia," Aliona said with a smile.

She had to be friendly to Anastasia, or at least appeared to be so, because she needed to show Elliot her kind and generous side.

Alice, on the other hand, was filled with jealousy. She had always been unwilling to accept that Anastasia's designs were way above hers.

"Do you have anything to add, President Presgrave?" Felicia smilingly asked Elliot.

"No. Let's end the meeting now. Aliona, come to my office." He left right away after finishing his words.

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Being called out by him publicly, Aliona pretended to be shy and nodded. She then replied with a sweet smile, "Sure. I'll be there shortly."

"You're blessed, Miss Dora! President Presgrave treats you well," a female designer said to Aliona.

"There's nothing between President Presgrave and me. Please don't misunderstand," Aliona replied smilingly. Then, she walked away with her documents in her hand.

At the same time, Anastasia was packing her belongings as well. For unknown reasons, she did not hold her notebook tightly and it fell onto the ground.

"Oh, it appears that someone was offended." Alice took advantage of the situation to mock Anastasia.

To that, Anastasia ignored her and calmly picked her notebook up.

However, Alice had no intention of letting Anastasia off the hook so easily. "Isn't being abandoned a terrible feeling, Anastasia? Your reign has ended, and Aliona has taken your place."

An emotionless Anastasia left the conference room in the midst of Alice's mockery. Offended? Me? Impossible!

There was nothing between Elliot and her at all. They had only kissed a few times where she had been taken advantage of several times by him as well. Those weren't a big deal.

The moment she returned to her office, she heaved a deep breath and intended to use the remaining working hours to revise her sketch. However, just when she was about to start working, an image of Elliot and Aliona flashed through her mind.

She imagined Aliona in Elliot's office with this man eagerly pressing Aliona down to the table.

Go away! Anastasia patted her own head, wanting to chase these messy thoughts away. What has happened to me? I must have been with this man for too long that I started having these dirty thoughts.

Her office phone rang at this instant and she answered it immediately, "Hello."

"I'm going over to your place for dinner tonight. Prepare my portion as well." Elliot's deep and mesmerizing voice resonated.

She somehow seemed to pull her rage from the air and responded indifferently, "Tonight I'm not going to cook. President Presgrave, please eat your dinner outside with Aliona."

"Why are you not cooking?" he asked curiously.

"No reason," she answered again stoically.

"Fine. Drive carefully when you're picking Jared up later."

"I don't need your concern," Anastasia stubbornly responded, and she ended the conversation right away.

In the president's office, the man who had just ended a call couldn't stop smiling because he knew that Anastasia was jealous.

Well, she only had herself to blame for getting so close with Alex. Since she had enraged Elliot, he had to return the favor as well.

In the afternoon, Anastasia and Jared had returned home. She bought sausages on the way and decided to make them for dinner.

"Mom, is Mr. Presgrave coming later? Should we buy more?" He immediately thought of Elliot when he saw the sausages.

“He’s not coming, and he won’t be coming anymore in the future,” she replied while preparing the sausages.

Jared’s eyes immediately widened as he inquired, “Why?”

“Because... he’s busy.” She simply stuffed him with an excuse. She couldn’t possibly tell her son that Elliot was busy dating, could she?

Although this was something that Jared should know sooner or later, Anastasia decided to keep it from him at the moment. She regretted allowing him to become so close with Elliot in the first place, as he had grown attached to Elliot and even bore expectations for Elliot as well. She had no idea how to get her son out of this relationship.

After finishing the sausages, Jared knew that she was busy and he played by himself.

In the wee hours, when Jared was already asleep, Anastasia, on the other hand, wasn’t sleepy at all. Some images kept on appearing in her mind including that of Elliot kissing her. All of these were like ants that persistently scratched at her heart.

His breath, his domineering strength, his possessive gaze, his approaching lips...

Frustrated, she rolled on the bed again and had tried a variety of laying positions but still couldn’t fall asleep.

Each domineering kiss from Elliot became vivid in her mind, and the more she thought about them, the angrier she became. Who was he to kiss her so many times? Why didn’t she refuse him?

Chapter 317

Not to mention, all of these things were the ones that he would do to Aliona as well. Perhaps he had also brought her to the villa!

Elliot derived no benefit from her whereas Aliona clearly admired and courted him. Would they both be emotionally and physically attracted to each other at first instance?

Anastasia then closed her eyes, attempting to quiet her mind. Having such a vivid imagination was not a good thing since she already had all sorts of things that Elliot and Aliona would do in her mind.

And in her mind, this man was like a wild wolf, never satisfied with what he wanted.

She had no idea how long it had been before she finally fell asleep due to exhaustion. However, even in her dreams, she saw Elliot and Aliona behaving intimately at every possible location she could think of: the office, his villa, or in the hotel.

However, she had no idea that her brows were furrowed throughout her dreams.

Finally, the alarm rang and she immediately opened her eyes. Her dreams remained vivid and the last thing she envisioned was receiving their wedding invitation.

As she held her face, Anastasia was furious. Why did Elliot become a nightmare that she couldn’t get rid of?

After making herself a cup of coffee, she immediately sent Jared to school before rushing to her company.

It was only a few minutes away from her prize of full attendance, but she was extremely lazy to even fight for it. In the end, she was late and lost the prize subsequently. Feeling hopeless, she entered her office while drinking her coffee.

"Miss Dora received flowers again! And it's a big bouquet this time!"

"It must be from President Presgrave."

"Undoubtedly. Apart from him, who would be this generous?"

The two assistants who were chatting clearly knew that Anastasia was nearby and they raised the volume of their voices. "Miss Dora is so blissful now! Who knows that she might be our future lady boss?"

"Yes, she would definitely be."

Aliona's office did have a flower bouquet, but she was the only one who knew it wasn't from Elliot. Instead, it was from Riley. Everyone outside had assumed it was from Elliot and she didn't want to clarify because rumors could sometimes become true when they spread widely enough.

When Anastasia arrived at her office, she put down her bag and called Grace. "Please make me a cup of coffee."

She then turned on her computer and was determined to finish her work. She couldn't let Elliot and Aliona's relationship bother her any longer.

At 10.00AM, her office phone rang. "Hello, who's that?"

"Come to my office." A mesmerizing deep voice sounded from the other end of the call. Who else could it be besides Elliot?

Yet, Anastasia did not want to see him. "We can talk over the phone, President Presgrave."

"It's about work." He hung up the call immediately.

She stood up and left for his office while biting her lower lip, remembering that he was still her boss.

Elliot was standing in front of the floor-to-ceiling window in the president's office. He was dressed in a charcoal black suit with a black shirt on the inside today. The well-tailored suit highlighted his attractive waistline and broad shoulders, which made him appear fashionable.

Seeing that, she had no choice but to admit that he was the most handsome man in a suit that she had ever seen.

"Why are you looking for me, President Presgrave?" she asked straightforwardly.

Elliot's sharp eyes noticed that she appeared pale today and the dark circles beneath her eyes seemed to indicate that she had not slept well. Was it because of me? he wondered. At this moment, his heart ached for her.

"You did not submit any sketches this month. Why is that so? Are you not in the mood to work?" He did say he wanted to talk about work, though.

Anastasia's face turned paler when she heard that and she explained, "I took on a few higher-end projects. Hence, I didn't focus much on the regulars."

"Is that so?" Just after he finished his words, someone knocked on the door. "Come in," he said, his voice deep.

Felicia then pushed the door open and walked in. She was taken aback to see Anastasia in the office. "Why are you not coming in, Felicia?" he asked, squinting his eyes.

She walked over and set down the jewelry box she was holding. "President Presgrave, these are the matching bracelets you requested."

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Elliot nodded. "Just put it here."

Felicia looked worriedly at Anastasia, who was staring at the jewelry box on the table. Sneering in her heart, Anastasia assumed that this man was making a concerted effort to court Aliona. He even bought matching bracelets now!

"If nothing else, I'm going back to work now," she said indifferently. She didn't want to be here for another second.

"Take care, Anastasia. You don't look good." Looking at her from behind, he was concerned.

"I'm very good," she replied without even turning her head, "and I don't need your concern, President Presgrave."

He had invited her over solely to let her notice the matching bracelets—a goal that was now accomplished.

Just as she reached the door, she came to a halt and turned to face the man sitting on the sofa. With a profound tone, she asked, "I heard that you're dating Aliona, President Presgrave. Is that true?"

Hearing it from himself was way better than relying on the rumors.

"Who said that? Is there such a thing?" With a slightly raised brow, Elliot gave an answer that was neither admitting or denying the rumors.

That pricked Anastasia's heart. When she heard his evasive response, she turned around and walked away in determination.

He clutched his fist tightly as he watched her walk away. She looks really haggard; are my actions going too far?

She did not return to her office after leaving the president's office. Instead, she left the atelier and spent some time alone in the café next door because her thoughts were in a mess.

Meanwhile, Alice entered Anastasia's room with a cup of coffee in hand; she was eager to see Anastasia's pitiful state after being dumped. She did not expect the room to be empty and had intended to leave. However, at that moment, she saw a few sketches on the table and an idea popped up in her mind. Then, she examined the sketches and they stunned her right on the spot.

They were absolutely amazing. Based on the concept of the starry sky, the sketches were exquisite and finely drawn, as if they were natural creations.

An immense sense of envy filled her heart. She quickly took her phone and photographed the sketches before hurriedly returning them to their original location and leaving Anastasia's office.

When Alice came out, no one was around and no one noticed her presence either. Feeling relieved, she went straight back to her office.

As she sat on her seat and looked at the sketches, she had an evil intention in her heart. She assumed the sketches were what Anastasia was working on for the upcoming jewelry show. Things would be interesting if Anastasia was caught plagiarizing, Alice reasoned.

She already had a plan in mind. Using her phone, she contacted a designer from the company's competitor who happened to be preparing for the same jewelry show as well. She wanted the designer to upload the sketches at first instance and save them as source files as she knew that for Anastasia, the sketches were only the first drafts. When the plagiarism issue came to light, the time the source file was uploaded to the computer would be the deciding factor.

And the designer that Alice contacted did the same. After making a few minor modifications, she immediately sent it to the factory to have the finished product made and displayed at the exhibition counter before Anastasia could do anything.

In the meantime, at the Department of Design, Aliona's phone rang. She glanced at the caller and walked out of her office before she switched her phone to silent mode. She didn't answer the phone until she was out of the atelier. "Hello, Father. Sorry, it was inconvenient for me to pick up your call earlier."

"Have you received the flowers that I've sent?"

"Yes, but Father, don't do it again in case Elliot notices."

"It's not a big deal; I merely wanted to express my concern. Aliona, is there any progress between Elliot and you?"

She happily curved the corners of her mouth in response. "Obviously. I believe he is now attracted to me. I'll be able to finish the mission in no time."

"Did Anastasia hinder you?"

A sense of arrogance flashed through her eyes. "Father, she can't hinder me at all. I overestimated her earlier."

"That's good, as long as she doesn't get in the way of our plan," Riley replied in his deep voice.

"I'll follow the plan and get what we want as soon as possible, Father, which is to sleep with Elliot, get pregnant with his child, and force him to marry me." Aliona couldn't wait to prove her attractiveness and take the credit before Riley.

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Riley was like a father to her in Aliona's heart.

"Good girl. I didn't take care of you in vain. Well, I will wait for your good news." He was also in a good mood as he had confidence in his beautiful goddaughter.

"Don't worry, Father. You don't have to be concerned about me," Aliona replied confidently.

In the office, Anastasia had decided to bury herself in work. However, she found herself lacking inspiration after just a few strokes on the paper.

At that very moment, her cell phone rang. "Hello?" she said as she picked up the phone.

"Anastasia, our company is holding a welcome party tomorrow night. Are you available?" Felicia asked over the phone.

"Is this Aliona's welcome party?" Anastasia inquired while she scowled.

"Yes. President Presgrave has agreed to hold the party as well. I was thinking that you might have to look after Jared. So, if you don't have time—"

For some reason, Felicia had hoped that Anastasia would refuse to attend the party.

However, Anastasia wanted to see how Aliona and Elliot showed off their relationship, so she briskly answered, "I am free. I will join."

"Anastasia, it's just a bunch of people getting excited and talkative. You really don't have to join." Felicia did not want Anastasia to get hurt since there would be a lot of interaction between Elliot and Aliona.

Anastasia understood that Felicia was being thoughtful. But why should I avoid them? I am not afraid. I ain't afraid of anything.

"Felicia, I am available. I will be there." She didn't want to miss out on this welcome party.

After hanging up the phone, Anastasia checked the clock and realized that it was already 4.30PM—it was time to go and pick up her son. Before she left, she glanced at the landline phone, as if she was anticipating something to happen, but she quickly shook it off and proceeded to leave.

As soon as Anastasia picked Jared up, he was disappointed. "Why is Mr. Presgrave not coming with you, Mommy?" he asked.

With his words, her heart became bitter. She didn't know how to tell Jared that his Mr. Presgrave would no longer be coming to pick him up.

"Mr. Presgrave has been very busy lately, so you may not see him for a while," she comforted Jared as she turned to him and smiled. "I came to pick you up on time today. Where do you want to go? I will accompany you."

"I want to go to the playground," Jared replied.

"Okay. Playground it is!" Anastasia said since she had decided to spend some quality time with Jared tonight.

Anastasia finally came home with Jared, who was exhausted from playing, at around 9.00PM. The little boy took a bath and promptly fell asleep, after which it was time for Anastasia to return to work after putting her son to sleep.

She sat in front of the window with a cup of tea in her hands. Her mind was usually clear at this time and inspiration came easily to her, but at this moment, her mind was occupied by a strong and domineering figure.

It was Elliot again.

Anastasia was speechless. She stared at the sky and knocked her head frantically. "Why do I keep thinking about him? Show some guts, Anastasia. This kind of man is not worth thinking about anymore," she said to herself.

She turned her head around and intended to rise to her feet, but her gaze was drawn to the wall beside the door. Last time, Elliot pressed her against the wall and forcefully kissed her. Then she turned to look at the bed where he had made a pass at her.

"Elliot, you b*stard. If I were to miss you again, I would be an idiot," she cursed as she clenched her fists and gritted her teeth.

Elliot was a scumbag and she did sympathize with Aliona because Aliona had no idea how shameless this man was.

For Elliot, forcibly kissing someone was as casual as eating a piece of cake.

Lying on the bed, Anastasia thought about Harriet's birthday banquet and the romance that Elliot gave to her in the bamboo forest at Harriet's place. His kiss, his eyes, and his sweet words. Was it just an act on his part?

He also said that in the eyes of a lover, even if she looked like a pig, she would be the most beautiful pig in his eyes. If Anastasia remembered it correctly, he had mentioned it just a few days ago!

However, he had already fallen in love with someone else in the blink of an eye.

Hmph, I should never believe what a man says.

She even remembered that Elliot said he wanted to bribe her.

And he also mentioned that he only wanted her.

In the past, whenever Elliot sweet-talked her, she just took them as a passing wind, but at this moment, every word he had said was ringing in her ears.

When he kissed her, Anastasia had thought that this man genuinely liked her, which was why he went to such lengths just to make a pass at her. Was all of these just an illusion? Perhaps I was overthinking things?

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Anastasia could feel her heart clenching tighter and tighter in the darkness. Then, something warm swam in her eyes whereby tears were gushing forth uncontrollably in the next second.

Before she could react, tears rolled down unexpectedly and landed on her knees. Staring at the watermark on her gray pajamas, she froze for a few seconds.

Why? I never cared about him, but why am I crying for of this b*st*rd?

However, when she realized that once the tears started, there was no stop to it. Her mind was overwhelmed with Elliot's words and his kisses; the moments when her heart throbbed and her face blushed because of him. Elliot, you b*stard. I have never seen anyone worse than you. You are the worse b*stard ever.

Anastasia grabbed a tissue and wiped her tears harshly. She didn't want to even shed a tear for him, but her tears seemed to have a mind of their own.

By the time she finally returned to her senses, the tissues were all gone. So, she bit her lips as she was slightly annoyed. Look at me now. I am behaving like a whinger! Who gave him the right to turn me into this different person?

She cried nonstop that night until she eventually fell asleep at midnight.

The following day was Saturday. After Anastasia finished making breakfast for her son, she contacted her father and asked Francis whether he would mind looking after Jared for the evening as she needed to attend a dinner party, to which he agreed without hesitation.

While Anastasia was preparing breakfast, she decided to take Jared to the oceanarium later that day. She could forget about everything else whenever she was with her son.

Meanwhile, Aliona was getting ready at her apartment. As tonight was the company's welcoming party for her, she needed to look her best. Her custom-made evening gown had arrived in the morning and with its hint of sensuality, the silver-white evening gown was exquisite and charming.

Tonight, she had another purpose other than looking beautiful. Such an occasion was the ideal opportunity for her and Elliot to take their relationship further. As a result, she intended to get drunk later and let him take her home.

When Aliona closed her eyes and thought of his stunning face, a tingling sensation spread across her body. Since childhood, she was strictly disciplined by her godfather, thus she was still a virgin. Aliona felt blessed that her first time could be devoted to a man like Elliot.

Even if the company's scandals were fake, she would make it happen sooner or later.

It was 4.00PM when Anastasia and Jared returned home from their trip to the oceanarium. Francis had already arrived and was waiting for Jared with toys, snacks and fruits.

"Grandpa!" As soon as Jared entered the door, he ran into Francis' arms and acted coquettishly.

“My little pumpkin,” Francis whispered as he hugged Jared. As if he was hugging the future’s hope, the fondness that he had toward Jared flowed from Francis’ eyes and heart.

“Dad, I’ll leave Jared to you. I might be home late in the evening,” Anastasia said to her father.

“Don’t worry. I got this. I’ll stay at home with Jared and we won’t go anywhere.” Francis didn’t want to go through the previous incident again as he had developed a trauma because of it.

Not long after she returned to her room, Anastasia received a call from Felicia. The party was scheduled for 6.00PM and the venue was a posh downtown restaurant, which had been entirely reserved for Aliona’s welcome party.

“Anastasia, please dress beautifully,” Felicia reminded Anastasia before hanging up the phone as if Anastasia could save anything tonight by wearing something lovely.

Nope. Even if I were to wear something nice, it’s only for my own pleasure and has nothing to do with anyone else. What am I going to do with a stunning dress? To win over Elliot’s heart?

Sitting in front of the dressing table, Anastasia carefully examined her face. She was the pinnacle of female beauty at the age of twenty-four; her face was full of collagen and she had soft red lips with ink-black silky hair. She was stunning even without makeup, except for her slightly swollen eyebags.

After ten minutes of meticulously putting on the makeup, the young girl in the mirror had turned into an ethereal beauty from the perfect light blush, curly hair and rosy lips. In the end, Anastasia finished the look with a pair of earrings that perfectly complimented her sweet oval face.