

Too Far 321

Chapter 321

Anastasia opened her closet, and next to the neat suits was a row of dresses. She rarely wore dresses, but the handful that she had were definitely capable of stealing the show.

In the end, she had chosen a tight, long-sleeved gray polka dot dress with a form-fitting waistline and a nice ruffled hem that accentuated her exquisite body figure.

Since having her son, she had not been dressed like this for a long time as her daily outfit consisted mostly of T-shirts and jeans.

At around 6.00PM, the entire staff from the Department of Design had arrived and all of them were well-dressed for the party. The ladies, in particular, were vying for the limelight to flaunt their beauty, and Alice was no exception. Although Aliona would be the center of attention at the party, they might also have a chance to be seen by Elliot.

The daily office outfits were no longer their battlefield. On the contrary, tonight was the perfect time to present a different side of themselves.

Aliona was the first to arrive and her appearance was particularly eye-catching. Those familiar with international fashion trends could recognize immediately that the sequined pearl dress she was wearing was the Chanel show's latest fashion. Aside from that, people had also noticed the branded wristwatch and the necklace she was wearing. It was without a doubt that Aliona was the star of the show.

"Aliona, your watch is stunning. It must be exorbitant." Someone tried to flatter Aliona.

"Not really," Aliona replied with a gentle smile as she settled in her seat and the empty seat next to her must be reserved for Elliot.

People who already knew the price, like Alice, wouldn't have to ask because this wristwatch was a limited edition, with only a few available in the country.

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It was obvious that Aliona came from a wealthy family background, and her purpose to enter the company was not to compete with her but to secure a rich husband like Elliot.

"What do you guys know? This is a limited edition and it is not available for the general public," Alice said, intending to earn a good impression in front of Aliona.

Aliona said nothing but smiled as Alice's flattering had worked on her. Riley had raised her with extravagance, so all of the food that she ate and the clothes that she wore had to be the best.

And to repay her godfather, she was to take down the Presgrave Group by marrying Elliot.

At this moment, Anastasia had arrived at the entrance and people's attention was drawn to her. When she saw Felicia waving at her, she naturally walked toward Felicia and took a seat next to her.

What a coincidence; Anastasia's seat was the exact opposite of Aliona's.

"Hi, Anastasia. You have finally arrived," Aliona greeted politely.

"I'm late. Sorry about that," Anastasia apologized to everyone in the room. Under the lights, she lightly stroked her hair that was resting on her chest and that movement emanated an amorous atmosphere that stunned them for a moment.

Even if Anastasia seemed pitiful after being abandoned by Elliot, there was no doubt that she could marry into the purple with her gorgeous face.

Everyone had been used to the way she dressed in the workplace, so they never expected her to be as charming as a dazzling diamond after she was dressed up.

At that moment, Aliona's heart skipped a beat as Anastasia had given her a great sense of crisis tonight.

The fact that Anastasia was here would most likely undermine Aliona's presence, which was detrimental to her plan.

"Excuse me. I will be back in a moment," Anastasia said to Felicia and walked toward the restroom.

Seeing that, Aliona's expression changed. Then, she got up and headed toward the restroom as well.

Anastasia was slightly startled when she saw Aliona's figure reflected in the mirror while washing her hands in the restroom."

Aliona raised her head and brushed her long hair with her fingers to reveal her slender wrist with the branded wristwatch. Then, her red lips parted as she said, "Anastasia, out of goodwill, I think you will be better off leaving the party."

Right then, Anastasia's hand washing movement halted. She raised her head to glance at Aliona from the mirror and their eyes were locked on each other.

In that instant, Anastasia could sense the animosity that was coming from Aliona.

"Miss Dora, what do you mean by that?" Anastasia asked as she squinted her eyes.

Aliona crossed her arms and turned to face Anastasia. Her gaze looked intimidating. "Don't you understand what I said? There will be a lot of affectionate interactions between me and President Presgrave tonight. I'm afraid that you can't handle it," she bragged.

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In order to drive Anastasia away, Aliona did not mind revealing her dark side as she was threatened by Anastasia's beauty.

Anastasia stopped for a split second before discovering that this seemingly sweet and harmless girl had a dark side. "You two may go ahead and show off your affection. It won't affect me."

She elegantly caressed her long hair in the mirror and intended to leave.

When Aliona realized that Anastasia refused to leave the party, she reached out with her hand and clasped Anastasia's wrist. Aliona narrowed her eyes and warned, "Anastasia Tillman. I hope that you can leave so you don't disturb me and Elliot."

That in itself was already a threat.

Anastasia blinked her eyes a few times and abruptly broke free from Aliona's hands. "Don't worry, I won't disturb the two of you," she stated.

"Elliot's eyes are only on me now. Why do you need to be here and make a fool of yourself? So many people are watching!" The mockery in Aliona's eyes intensified as she had always felt malice toward Anastasia and now, there was no need to hide them.

The old saying is right. Never judge a book by its cover. I learned my lesson here. "Miss Dora, are you lacking in self-confidence? Are you afraid that I'll steal Elliot's heart?" Anastasia smirked. She wanted Aliona to understand that she was not a pushover.

"Since you are so shameless and insist on staying at my welcome party, I can only say that you have thick skin." Aliona snickered, intending to provoke her.

Anastasia was completely speechless. Shameless? Thick skin? Me?

"The cost of this dinner comes under the Department of Design's expenses, and as a member of the said department, I am entitled to enjoy this benefit," Anastasia retorted as she arched her eyebrow. Then, she pushed the door open and left the restroom.

After Anastasia left, Aliona bit her lips in annoyance as she had never thought that Anastasia was nobody's fool.

After Anastasia returned to her seat, she pretended that nothing had happened.

"I just received a call from President Presgrave. He wants us to proceed with the dinner first," Felicia whispered to Anastasia.

Hearing that, Anastasia froze for a second. So, he is not going to show up?

Soon after, Aliona had also returned to her seat. Her eyes were locked with Anastasia's and there seemed to be an invisible war going on in the atmosphere. Since Aliona had exposed her true self, there will be no need for fake politeness toward Anastasia.

Is Elliot aware of Aliona's hidden side? Anastasia thought to herself. Anyway, it was not something she should be concerned about.

It was up to him to decide what kind of woman he was going to marry.

Right then, the food was served.

"Since President Presgrave has yet to arrive, I will welcome Aliona on behalf of our Department of Design. Cheers to everyone," Felicia stated as she stood up and held her cup.

Anastasia followed Felicia's lead and held her cup while she glanced at Aliona, who did not hide her gaze.

The long table that held more than twenty people was full of dishes and desserts as everyone had started to eat.

While everyone was eating, Aliona gave Anastasia a malice gaze and took out her phone to dial Elliot's number. When the other end answered, she asked in a deliberately affectionate tone, "Why haven't you come yet, Elliot? We're all waiting for you!"

Anastasia, who sat across from Aliona, could hear everything she said on the phone. After she heard the phone conversation, she couldn't help but reach for her wine glass and took two sips depressingly.

"Don't drink too much." Felicia leaned over and reminded her in her ear.

Only then did Anastasia realize she had almost finished the whole glass of wine. She looked at Felicia and gratefully nodded.

Ten minutes later, the waiter's greeting voice had drawn everyone's attention to the main entrance.

Elliot was late, but no one said anything. Under the lights, they could see that he was dressed neatly in a black shirt with suit pants and he walked elegantly toward their table.

The lights had cast a dark shade on his body, which made him look colder and indifferent.

"Sorry for keeping everyone waiting," Elliot apologized. Then, he gazed around and found the empty seat next to Aliona, so he walked to the seat directly.

However, when he noticed Anastasia was sitting across the table, his deep eyes flashed for a few seconds of consternation. She is surprisingly attractive and amorous tonight. Did she dress up specially?

A faint smile flickered in Elliot's eyes as if he could see through her intention to dress up beautifully.

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Anastasia's long locks were swept to one side as she glared into his ocean eyes. Her own eyes looked as though there were stars in them as they reflected the light on the room.

She also looked like a red rose that had emerged from a bed of snow—despite how thorny she was, she was a beauty that no one could resist.

Elliot's mood began to fluctuate violently because he could feel how strong her jealousy was.

"You are late, Elliot. Your punishment is to drink a glass." Aliona immediately brought a glass of red wine in front of him, and she smiled sweetly as she propped her chin in her hands.

"That is right! President Presgrave, you have to show us!" Alice was also fanning the flames.

Without saying a word, he picked up the wine glass and elegantly drank its content in one gulp. The light shone on the buttons of his French cuff shirt as the dark gemstones flashed a deep blue color.

In short, he was elegant, extravagant and fatally charming.

Anastasia's eyes were half-lidded as she gloomily brought her beer to her mouth. Everyone was watching the man across from her drinking as a punishment, but all she wanted to do was drink by herself.

While remaining in the same pose as earlier, Aliona was looking at him with eyes full of admiration. Elliot, on the other hand, was enjoying the punishment in front of everyone.

The entire scene was an eyesore for Anastasia.

Is my glass extremely small? Why is the glass empty after just a few sips? she thought grumpily. She could only pour herself another glass before bringing it to her lips again. Without Felicia noticing, half of Anastasia's beer bottle had already been emptied.

"Elliot, have something to eat!" After Aliona finished speaking, she reached over to place some food on his plate.

The man, however, only responded in a low voice, "I will do it myself."

Aliona could feel her heart jolt upon hearing his cold words. She didn't dare act casually with him after that. As Elliot took his fork to eat, his gaze shifted to the woman across from him who was moodily downing one drink after another.

Anastasia's eyes were fixated on one spot, but her drinking never ceased once.

At that sight, Elliot furrowed his eyebrows when he saw it and he reminded her, "Anastasia, don't drink too much."

She deliberately picked up the glass full of beer and raised it in his direction before she gulped it at one go again. After she drank it, she clicked her tongue and he could tell from her gaze that she didn't need him to worry about her.

The man couldn't help feeling helpless and angry at her because it seemed like she was drinking herself silly.

"Aliona, you and President Presgrave must be having some sort of special relationship!" Alice brought it up to Aliona to start the conversation.

She knew that these were the kinds of topics Aliona liked talking about.

Just as Alice had expected, Aliona elegantly put down her glass and she smilingly boasted, "To tell you the truth, my dad and Elliot's father have been good friends for years. We are family friends."

Everyone was surprised when they heard her words. None of them had expected her to come from such an influential background.

For her to be the daughter of Elliot's father's good friend meant that Elliot and Aliona were definitely from the same status!

May, who was sitting aside, quietly let out a relieved breath and was glad that she had not told Hayley about this. If not, May was sure that Aliona would come for her if she were to offend Aliona in some way.

May knew that Hayley was one of the many of Elliot's admirers, and that she had not secured the position as Mrs. Presgrave. Seems like Anastasia is out of luck as well even after everything that happened between her and the president, she thought.

The joy in Aliona's eyes only went up a few notches when she turned to look at Anastasia.

Even though Anastasia didn't directly meet her gaze, she could feel how Aliona felt, now that Aliona had emerged as the winner.

"Miss Dora, let me pour you a drink. You can ask me anything about work that you don't know from now on. I will make sure to help you if I can." Alice took the chance to flatter Aliona.

Aliona had indeed fancied this colleague of hers, so she said her thanks.

"Miss Tillman," Alice suddenly called out to make Anastasia's presence known. She wanted everyone to look at Anastasia who looked like an abandoned wife. "What are you doing there drinking beer by yourself?"

Anastasia suddenly shot up from the seat instead of answering Alice. "I am going to the washroom."

"I will go with you," a worried Felicia offered after noticing that 2 beer bottles in front of her had already become empty.

She was somewhat baffled by how she didn't realize it when Anastasia had drunk so much by herself.

Anastasia took wobbly steps and pushed her way into a private room along the corridor. The private room was empty because the place had been fully booked.

Seeing how Anastasia weakly leaned against the door frame for support, Felicia quickly supported her and asked, "Are you okay?!"

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"I am fine," Anastasia answered with a nod of her head. All she wanted now was to have her own down time.

Seeing her like this, Felicia couldn't help but feel bad for her. "There is no need for you to do this to yourself."

"I really am fine." Anastasia forced herself to smile.

Meanwhile, everyone else was eating at the table when Anastasia's phone on the table suddenly rang. Elliot took a glance and he stood up to reach for the device.

There were 2 words on the screen—Mr. Hunter.

Why is he calling Anastasia? As he was annoyed to see the name, he unhesitantly rejected the call.

The sound of a message received soon came again. Back when Elliot had managed to unlock Anastasia's phone's facial recognition, he also took the opportunity to save his own face as a password

to her phone. Now that he was able to unlock her phone, he was instantly greeted by a message with words filled with concern.

'Anastasia, I heard from your Dad that you have a dinner event. Did you drink alcohol? Do you want me to come pick you up?'

A hint of displeasure flashed across the bottom of his eyes. Since when has she become so close to Alex?

Another message then came again. 'Tell me your address. I will be your chauffeur!'

Elliot's face was stiff as he stared at the screen of the phone and he eventually put the phone face-down on the table.

Aliona, who was sitting beside him, noticed how the man's handsome face had turned cold in an instant.

There was no way he would allow another man to take advantage of Anastasia after she had drank so much.

Even if she needed someone to send her back, Elliot was the only one allowed to do so.

"What is wrong, Elliot?" Aliona asked as she pretended to care.

Yet, he only replied casually, "Nothing".

Felicia kept Anastasia company in the quiet private room where Anastasia started to feel tipsy as the alcohol slowly took effect in her body.

"I feel so dizzy, Felicia." She raised her blurry gaze and pleaded in barely coherent words, "Can you take me home, please?"

"Sure! Let's go! I don't want to stay here any longer, anyway."

As Anastasia didn't feel like returning to the table after they exited the private room, Felicia had her wait by the exit while she went back to inform the rest of them. She also went to take Anastasia's bag.

After Felicia went back to the table, she loudly announced, "Anastasia is drunk. I will be sending her home. Enjoy the rest of your evening, everyone." She then turned to Elliot. "President Presgrave, we will be leaving now."

Instead of answering her, he looked to Anastasia's seat with squinted eyes, only to see that the beer bottles in front of her were all empty. Darn it, he quietly cursed. She drank 2 whole bottles without me realizing?

She felt like she was on clouds as she stood by the elevator and it was difficult for her to even stand. Felicia had to hold Anastasia to make sure she didn't fall as they waited for the elevator to arrive.

Back at the dining table, Elliot suddenly stood up by pushing his chair back. He was holding both his car keys and Anastasia's phone in his big palms as he announced, "Enjoy the meal. I am leaving."

Aliona's eyes widened at his sudden action, and she tried to call out to him, "Elli—"

He was already out of the restaurant and near the elevator then. Seeing the diminishing number on top of the elevator, he panicked as the expression overtook his stoicism and he rushed down the staircase beside the elevator.

The atmosphere at the dining table immediately changed after that. Everyone was casting knowing glances at Aliona, whose face had visibly fallen.

They all knew who exactly Elliot had rushed for.

Anastasia might be the final victor after all.

Aliona was the only one who knew that he didn't have the slightest bit of interest in her despite the crazed rumors that had been going around these 2 days.

She had been overly confident. However, she couldn't understand why Elliot hadn't done anything to control the rumors if he still cared about Anastasia. It was at that moment when a thought dawned on her. Is he not doing anything to get Anastasia jealous?

Aliona's face instantly paled when she figured it out—she had been playing herself all along.

Felicia was using all her might to carry the wasted Anastasia across the dimly lit car park. A man's deep voice soon rang out from behind. "Please bring her to my car, Director Evans."

She turned her head to the sound of the voice and she saw Elliot walking toward them with his car key in his hand. He then unlocked the doors of his sedan before he opened the door to his car's backseat.

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A concerned Felicia caringly reminded, "President Presgrave, please take care of Miss Tillman."

"Leave her to me," Elliot replied in a low voice. Then, he opened the door to the driver's seat and got in.

Felicia couldn't help but rejoice as she looked at him driving off with Anastasia in his car. She already knew that he was the reason why Anastasia drank to the point where she was drunk.

A barely conscious Anastasia sat up in what she thought was Felicia's car. She held her forehead in her hand to suppress the excruciating headache as she said in the direction of the driver's seat. "Felicia, take me to any nearby hotel. I don't want to go home."

She didn't want her father and son to see her in such a terrible mood and if they did, she would be grateful to just not scare them with this side of her.

A voice answered from the driver's seat, "Is anyone taking care of your son?"

"My dad is home," she obediently answered.

Getting even dizzier as the car moved, she quickly slumped on the seat again.

As Elliot waited for the traffic light to turn green, he grabbed her phone with his long fingers and sent Francis a message in her name that she would be spending the night with a friend.

Francis' prompt reply that she didn't have to worry about her son came shortly after Elliot sent the message.

Anastasia might not have been in her right mind, but she was still capable of thinking and emotions. She started to mumble in her drunken state toward the driver, "Felicia, let me tell you a secret. Elliot is an *sshole! He is a bad, bad man..."

Elliot froze for a second as he was shocked that she was scolding him behind his back, but he soon tilted his head toward her and asked, "So, do you like him? Or do you hate him?"

"I hate him." Her voice sounded like she was on the verge of tears.

He was entertained by how drunk she behaved and he tried probing again, "You are telling me that you hate him even though you are drunk because of him?"

"I didn't drink because of him... I would be an idiot for liking him..." she mumbled and grumbled in her drunken daze.

Then, she sputtered again, "I hate him... He can like whoever the hell he wants to. It has nothing to do with me."

Anastasia didn't seem to have any idea what she was saying and she definitely had no clue where she was. The car was only filled with sounds that sounded like 'b*stard', 'trash' and 'I don't ever want to see him' before there was silence.

She seemed to have fallen asleep by then.

Elliot was somewhat heartbroken. I must have really hurt her this time, he thought.

As they came to another red light stop, he turned to look at the sprawled out figure in his backseat before he sighed. "I am sorry. This is all my fault. I shouldn't have punished you with something so stupid."

He drove them to a hotel owned by the Mansons, and as soon as he carried the drunk woman into the hotel lobby in his arms, the manager of the hotel immediately gave them access to the presidential suite.

Elliot gently placed Anastasia on the soft bed before he reached out to brush away a few strands of hair on her forehead. Then, he pressed a kiss on her forehead. "Sleep well. I will explain everything when you wake up."

Right as he placed the covers on her, her glassy eyes shot open to look at him.

She thought she was having a dream about Elliot again. Her head had been so occupied with him these 2 days that she thought what she was seeing was yet another dream she had been having.

"Go away... Go away... I don't want you in my dreams anymore." After saying that, she reached out to slap herself on her forehead a few times. It was as though she could make him disappear from her eyes by doing this.

Elliot couldn't help but be startled when she suddenly started slapping herself and he quickly pulled her into his chest to stop her flailing hands.

"What are you hitting yourself for?" he asked.

Her beauty was breath-taking as she was weak against his chest. With dishevelled black locks, the corners of her eyes and the fair skin on her face had been tinted with a pinkish hue due to the alcohol. His mind was giving him ideas as his gaze followed along the tip of her nose to her red lips, and to her beautiful collarbone.

Tonight of all nights, however, was when he couldn't lay his hands on her.

The fiery-tempered woman would probably snap his neck first thing the next morning if he were to touch her without her permission again.

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Elliot lowered his torso until his face was less than 2 inches away from Anastasia before he said in a hushed voice, "I was wrong, Anastasia. Can you please forgive me? I don't like Aliona. I like you."

"You are lying..." she rebutted through clenched teeth, her red eyes glaring at him.

Then, he held her face between his palms. "I am not lying." His voice sounded extremely sincere.

She slowly blinked at the man in breathing distance from her. Taking in the handsome features on his face, she couldn't help but acknowledge the reason why so many women fell for him. He had a face that no one could ever get tired of even after looking at it everyday.

The charmed look in her eyes made Elliot's breath quicken as he looked at her. His gaze then fell to her slightly quivering pink and pouty lips. They looked like they were quietly inviting him to press his lips on hers.

His self-control and reasoning that he had always been proud of disappeared in a puff of smoke. He didn't want to hold back any longer and he started listening to his heart as he slowly leaned in. The woman dazedly blinked at him before a sudden discomfort in her stomach slapped her as she made a gagging noise.

Just like that, Anastasia started to painfully hurl her dinner tonight onto his chest.

His eyes went wide at that and he quickly gave her gentle pats on her back to help her throw up more comfortably.

Elliot couldn't help but feel upset as he wondered if he was so visually unappetizing that she started puking after looking at him.

Even then, the woman had no intention to stop. She lowered her head to vomit on her own chest before turning around to hurl on the bedside floor. She puked so much that there was bile after she had emptied her dinner. After she was done, she weakly lay on the bed with her pale face down before she passed out.

Elliot took off his top and gave the front desk a call to inform them to give him another room.

An attendant soon came to handle the procedure and when the other suite was ready for them to use, Elliot carried the now unconscious Anastasia to the new room.

A few of the young attendants were blushing as they looked at him. They left the room after they had helped Elliot and Anastasia change rooms, and they couldn't help but silently exclaim about how handsome and sculpted he was. He looked like the protagonist who had stepped right out of a novel!

Elliot cleaned up in the big bathroom of the presidential suite before he brought the woman on the sofa inside.

Through her barely conscious mind, she was somewhat aware that she was soaking in warm water one second and in a soft bed the next. She was so deep in her sleep that she probably didn't remember covering Elliot with the contents of her stomach.

Elliot sat on the sofa and stared at the sleeping woman with predatory eyes. Even though Anastasia was covered with a blanket, she was still seductive to no end.

Someone—that would be Aliona—was going to lose sleep tonight. Not only did she fail to seduce Elliot, she was stupid enough to reveal her hidden side to Anastasia. It was a miscalculation on her part.

In the middle of the night, Anastasia was so thirsty that she called out to no one and nothing in particular. "Water... I want water..."

The man on the sofa opened his eyes instantly and he strutted over to the bed. After hearing what she wanted, he quickly brought a glass of warm water and fed it to her with her in his arms.

Anastasia refused to open her eyes throughout the entire time. After drinking the water, she suddenly leaned into the warmth of his embrace as she wrapped her arms around his waist. She then buried her face into his chest as she drifted off to sleep.

Seeing that, Elliot placed the glass down and caressed her long locks before he lowered his head to kiss her on the forehead. He was reluctant to let her go.

She continued to sleep in his arms for the rest of the night until the first ray of sunlight came shining into the room.

As Anastasia was disturbed by the brightness in her eyelids, she let out a frown before finally opening her eyes.

The first thing she saw was a white bathrobe and she slowly looked up. She seemed to be hugging onto someone...

She felt as if she had been electrified in that instant. She quickly pulled her hands away and exclaimed, "Why are you here?!"

Thousands of thoughts began flying through her head then. Didn't I come to the hotel with Felicia? Why did I wake up with Elliot in my arms?

"Where is Felicia?" She lowered her gaze and saw that she had been changed out of her dress and into a bathrobe. She didn't feel like she had anything else other than the fluffy white piece of cloth. "My —my clothes... Who changed me out of my clothes?" she stammered.

Since he had no other choice but to tell a white lie, Elliot answered, "You threw up last night. You were changed out of your clothes by...Director Evans."

Anastasia was drifting between dream and reality when a strong arm carried her into the wide backseat of his car.

Elliot didn't know what to expect if he were to tell Anastasia that he was the one who changed her out of her dirty clothes.

She immediately covered her arms over her chest and questioned him with suspicious eyes, "Why are you in my room? Where is Felicia?"

"Director Evans went home to rest. I am in charge of taking care of you now," he answered in a low voice.

Her sharp gaze then darted to the bathrobe he had on before her heart seemed to come to a stop for a moment. "You..." she stuttered. "Why are you in a bathrobe?"

Was Felicia even here last night? she panicked. Did Elliot put me in this bathrobe?

He casually reminded her then. "You threw up all over me."

When Anastasia heard that, her cheeks started heating up. She did vaguely remember puking, but she had no recollection of what or who she did it on.

She had no choice but to believe Elliot for now.

In a cold voice, she chided him as she turned to look the other way. "I don't need you to take care of me. You can leave now!"

"Before I go," he calmly mentioned, "I want to explain about the rumor regarding Aliona and me that has been going around these 2 days." He didn't want the misunderstanding to continue being dragged on.

"You don't have to. There is no need for that." Not wanting to spare him the time of her day for him to give his excuses, she flipped open the blanket and got out of bed.

Despite her rejection, Elliot continued to say, "Would you believe me if I were to tell you that the rumors are fake?"

Anastasia's grip on the front of her bathrobe tightened at that and she let out a smile. From him giving flowers with a pair of couple's bracelets to Aliona to him walking out of a restaurant with her, how could any of what she had seen with her own eyes be fake?

"Thank you for taking care of me the whole night, but I don't care who is involved in the rumors regarding you. I am going home now." Anastasia started looking for her bag after she said her piece.

However, the man couldn't possibly let her leave. Elliot stood up and grabbed her by her wrist, and the already lightheaded Anastasia swiftly fell into his arms.

Her face was red with anger as she looked at the relentless man. "You—"

"Don't even think about going anywhere before you hear out," he commandingly interrupted as his arms tightened around her.

His domineering tone made her bite her teeth as she gritted, "Do I have the choice to not listen?"

“No.” Elliot locked his eyes on Anastasia before he asked without beating around the bush. “Answer my question first, then. Why did you pick up Jared with Alex on Wednesday? Have I ever crossed your mind when you were spending time alone and flirting with him? You can’t even be bothered with picking up my call when you are with him, huh?”

Anastasia froze when she heard his words. She hadn’t expected him to know that she had gone with Alex to take Jared from school.

As for her not picking up his call, she had actually placed her phone on silent when he called. She didn’t call him back after that because she didn’t see the need to do so.

Elliot continued before she could even muster a reply. “That was why I purposely gave Aliona a bouquet the next day. I purposely didn’t clear up the rumor. I intentionally went to the restaurant that you were at to let you see us. I purposely called you to my office to see my order on the pair of couple’s bracelets. Everything I did was because I was jealous of you and Alex. I only wanted to punish you for making me angry, do you understand?”

Anastasia couldn’t think of what to think after listening to him rambling on. He started the rumors just because of that one time Alex and I picked up Jared together, and didn’t take his call afterward?

After lagging behind for a full minute, she was suddenly curious about the whereabouts of the other bracelet. “Did you give out your couple’s bracelet?” she asked.

He grumpily flicked her on the forehead at that moment. “It is in my drawer. Come and get it from my office tomorrow.”

“You are giving it to me?” she asked, shocked. Isn’t it supposed to be for Aliona?

“Who else other than you has the right to wear a couple’s jewelry with me?” His dark eyes were looking down at her all in crankiness.

She hadn’t given him an answer yet when a smile suddenly appeared on Elliot’s face. “Why did you drink so much last night?” he teased. “Were you jealous?”

“W-Who said I was drinking because of you?! Can’t I drink because I want to?” After having been found out, Anastasia meekly argued with him as she tried to struggle out of his hold.

Even though she eventually broke free, she was back in his embrace a second later.

The man gently rubbed the back of her head as he let out a resigned sigh beside her ear. “Alright, now. You don’t have to be jealous, and I won’t get mad from now on. Let’s reconcile!”

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Anastasia started to shove Elliot away out of guilt, which left Elliot with no choice but to release his grip on her.

She immediately turned to hide from him. Only God knew about the thoughts that she had about Elliot and Aliona for the past 2 days and if Elliot was a mind reader, Anastasia would definitely die from embarrassment if he was a mind reader.

She didn't even want to think about how she cried and wailed like an abandoned wife in the middle of the night because of him.

Still, thinking that it was better for her to explain herself so that Elliot would not misunderstand the relationship she had with Alex, Anastasia started, "I didn't pick up your call because I put it on silent mode before my dad dragged me to the board meeting. Dad and I went to the construction site in the afternoon without our car. I was almost late picking up Jared, and so I asked Mr. Hunter to send me over."

After hearing the rather normal explanation, Elliot let out a satisfied smile, and he haughtily snaked his arms around her waist from behind. Then, he started coaxing her in a voice that was thick from sleep. "It was my fault. Can you please forgive me?"

Since she did not want to get intimate with him so soon, she subconsciously tried to pry his hands away. However, not only did she not succeed at moving him away, his hold on her had only tightened as he even rested his chin on her shoulder. "Can I tell you a secret?" he asked suddenly.

Anastasia's eyebrows were knitted together as she inquired, "What is it?"

"The car that you entered was my car. The person who brought you to this hotel was me. And the person who changed you into a bathrobe was also me."

She could feel her last string of sanity snap after he said those words. She had already guessed that he was the culprit behind everything that had happened up until now.

"Let me go! What did you do to me?" The blood had rushed up to her cheeks and to the tip of her ears. She was planning to let him off the hook for making her angry, but he even went as far as to see her with nothing on!

Elliot chuckled upon seeing her reaction. "Don't worry," he reassured her. "I am a man of integrity."

"You are a prick!" Anastasia retorted.

Deciding not to piss her off any further, he sighed provocatively next to her ear. "I better take a cold shower to calm a certain body part of mine down after you held me for the entire night."

She instantly understood his words, and she stayed frozen in the same spot.

The man then walked toward the bathroom while she went to sit on the balcony sofa.

Her mind was still a little fuzzy in addition to her headache, but at least she finally had an answer for something on her mind.

The rumor about Elliot and Aliona that had been circulating around was false, but it was true that Anastasia was losing her mind these 2 days. The tears she had shed for him were also true and her jealousy was so raw that there was no need to wonder whether it was real or not.

What... What is wrong with me? I think I have fallen for him. She then lifted her chin to look at the sky wordlessly. How can I have fallen for him?!

Soon after, Rey brought a white dress that Anastasia eventually changed into before Elliot had him send her home.

As she sat in the car Rey was driving, she was in the midst of daydreaming when she suddenly thought of something she wanted to ask him.

“Mr. Osborne, did you and Elliot go to my son’s kindergarten Wednesday afternoon?”

Rey had seen how she and his boss interacted earlier in the hotel room and he guessed that they had probably reconciled.

He answered with a smile, “Yes. President Presgrave was excited to fake a coincidental meeting with you, but you had already picked up Jared with another man in tow. The president was exasperated! I remember how dark his expression was when we went back.”

Was he really that mad? Anastasia wondered.

Since he thought that he needed to help Elliot say something, he continued, “I believe that the president has already explained to you about the matter regarding him and Miss Dora. Please don’t misunderstand him, Miss Tillman. President Presgrave was only venting his anger. He truly does care about you and has no other intention than to ensure that Miss Dora is well.”

Anastasia was somewhat embarrassed to hear these words coming from Rey.

Rey left right after he dropped her back home. As her father had some business to attend to, she was the only one who kept Jared company and she did not even realize the silly grin that remained on her face.

Jared suddenly noticed the smile and he curiously asked, “Mommy, what are you smiling about?”

“Oh?” She quickly covered her face with her hand. “Was I smiling?”

“You did!”

“It is probably because I am in a good mood.”

“Did something happen that made you happy?” the boy asked with a tilted head.

She didn’t have an answer to his question. All she could do was to rub him on his head thereafter and say, “I will tell you next time.”

Chapter 329

However, this incident hadn’t been all that bad. At least, she had clearly seen who the real Aliona was and would be aware to keep a distance from Aliona at work in the future.

There was no need at all for someone with a background like Aliona to work at Bourgeois, which meant that she only came for one reason—Elliot!

However, Anastasia understood why women would try their best to woo Elliot.

Hayley had just stepped out of the car at the international airport when she took a deep breath before retrieving her phone to give him a call.

It took 7 seconds before the seductive male voice came from the other end of the call. "Hello, Hayley. Is anything wrong?"

"Elliot, I'll be going for a vacation abroad for about 3 months. I wanted to say goodbye."

"Alright, go ahead! Be careful on your way there," he reminded her.

She then mysteriously added, "Elliot, you might see a different me by the time I return."

"Is that so? Alright. Stay safe out there."

A hint of disappointment flashed across her face at that. Elliot had been putting on a ceremony with her as of late where she couldn't feel anything other than him treating her like a normal friend from his words.

"Okay, I will! I will miss you," Hayley added sweetly, but all he said in reply before hanging up was, "Mm. I am hanging up."

She was only more disappointed because of his curt reply, but her disappointment soon turned into determination when she thought about how much life she had ahead of her. For one, she still had plenty of chances to change her fate since she would be a brand new person by the time she returned to the country.

"Let's go, Miss Seymour!" There was a small group of 3 people by Hayley's side.

She turned her head to look at them and asked, "Did you bribe enough? I want the best surgeon."

"We did," a middle-aged man within the trio answered her. "We have hired the best plastic surgeon. Your satisfaction is guaranteed."

They did the best they could with the generous amount Hayley had paid them.

"Good." She started walking into the airport before she saw a mirror beside her. She clenched her jaw when she turned to look at her ordinary face. She detested her face; to her, it was because of her lackluster features that she couldn't get Elliot to admire her. She was sure that she would be the one receiving Elliot's love if only she had Anastasia's facial features.

In order to get the man to be hers, she wasn't scared of the dangers and side effects that might come with the procedure. All she wanted was for Elliot to love her. It could be a shallow love that lasted only for a while, but she didn't mind it at all.

Hayley's love for the man was too deep for her to back out now as it was the kind of love that made her lose sleep at night. Constantly disturbed by the image of Elliot and Anastasia in her head, she never had a good night's rest ever since she came back from the birthday banquet. The mere thought of them being loving to one another and how Anastasia managed to get all of his attention was enough to drive Hayley crazy with jealousy.

She needed a different face in order to have Elliot.

As to whose face she wanted to have, she wasn't interested in the faces of all the beautiful celebrities out there. She wanted to have the face Elliot loved—she wanted Anastasia's face.

A pleased, yet somewhat menacing smile appeared on Hayley's face as she moved her gaze away from the mirror.

On the other hand, Elliot was sitting on a sofa in his villa while his 4 bodyguards reported to him as they stood in front of him.

"President Presgrave, Riley Presgrave has been insistent on not leaving the country. We have given him a warning as you have instructed."

Hearing that, Elliot asked, "Has he gotten in contact with anyone lately?"

"He has met up for meals with a few of his old friends. There is nothing beyond that."

"Keep a close eye on him. I want to know every move he makes in the country." Elliot's gaze sharpened dangerously as he gave his bodyguards the instruction.

His parents' death had been a lesson. Riley was far more evil than Elliot could ever imagine. He was sure that Riley still held a grudge from the time when he was chased out of the country by Elliot's grandmother. There was a big possibility that Riley intended to cause harm to the Presgraves now that he was back.

This was why Elliot couldn't be lackadaisical with monitoring the man since he also had his ways to plant eyes on Riley, who had been abroad.

When the weekend came, Anastasia spent a normal, but heartwarming day with her son. For someone who lived a normal life like her, getting to live everyday peacefully and happily was the ultimate joy of life.

Chapter 330

"Mommy, when is Mr. Presgrave coming over to eat with us? I miss him so much!" Jared was in bed refusing to sleep as he yearned to see Elliot again.

Looking at his longing expression as she sat in front of his bed, Anastasia really didn't want to give the young boy any false hope. She was afraid that Elliot would leave them again someday.

Even though his rumors with Aliona turned out to be false, Anastasia didn't have the confidence that it wouldn't come true with the next woman he met.

"Jared, you can miss him, but would it be alright if you miss him in your mind?"

The young boy didn't reply and instead stared at her with big, clear eyes. "Mommy, do you miss him?" he asked in return.

There was no way she could lie as she looked into her son's innocent eyes, so she nodded and confessed, "Yup, I miss him too."

"Can you court him then, Mommy? We can always be together with him if you manage to marry him!" The child encouraged her as he let out a series of silly laughter.

My son is worried about this for me! she mused, her cheeks turning red. She then reached out to caress him on his head. "Come on, leave the adult matters to the adults. You are too young to worry about this. Time to sleep!"

Jared had no choice but to obediently close his eyes then. As she looked at her son's face, her heart started beating faster when she realized how much he looked like Elliot with each passing day. Just what is going on? she thought.

Every line and shadow on his face looked like Elliot's, only mini-sized. It was as though Elliot and Jared were father and son.

After she made sure that she had properly covered Jared with the blanket, she went back to her room and spent the quiet night letting thoughts pass through her clear mind.

She felt tingly and numb all over when she recalled how she had vomited all over herself and Elliot, and even let him wash her. How could I let an adult man bath me?

Thinking of that, she felt so bashful her whole head seemed to have turned red.

Monday came after a well spent weekend. She went and had a chat with Jared's teacher after she sent him to his classroom. According to the teacher, Jared was a polite and mature boy. Not only was he not afraid of being in a new environment, he had also shown high intelligence. All the other kids in his class liked him.

Anastasia felt relieved after hearing the teacher's words. She was happy that her son had a good personality that attracted people to him.

After the visit to the kindergarten, she made her way to Bourgeois. The first place she went to after entering the Department of Design was Felicia's office. Felicia had also just arrived moments ago and when she saw Anastasia walking in, she put down the cup of coffee in her hand to ask Anastasia with a smile, "How was your Saturday night?"

Anastasia's face instantly felt hot at that. "Don't even mention it, Felicia," she whined.

Felicia could tell that their relationship was back on track when she saw how Anastasia was acting, and she couldn't help but feel happy for her friend. "Truth be told, I always had a feeling that President Presgrave isn't someone who would so easily have a change of heart. You should have faith in him."

Anastasia couldn't say anything in regards to that. It was only Elliot's punishment for her, after all. Even though it seemed like a terrible joke now that she looked back at it, it was for a fact that she had been through a miserable time because of the incident.

She felt just like a mardy woman who had been cast aside.

"Felicia," Anastasia sincerely called out to her. "Thank you for taking care and protecting me all this time."

"I like being friends with genuine people." Felicia quietly threw her a compliment.

Hearing that, Anastasia smiled with her lips pressed together. "Thank you. You can ask me if you ever need my help with anything. You don't have to hold back."

“Sure! Just don’t forget about me when you become Presgrave Group’s lady boss,” Felicia jokingly said.

The color quickly came back to dust Anastasia’s cheeks again and she held her head and laughed, “Stop teasing me, Felicia. You can’t joke about something like this.”

Felicia only disregarded Anastasia’s words and continued making fun of her. “Why not? It might just happen one day. I have to build a good relationship with you before that day comes.” She had a strong feeling that her words might come true in the end.

Felicia’s assistant knocked on her door right this moment. The person was carrying a whole stack of files in her hands as she walked in. “Felicia, all these will need your signature before 10:00AM.”

Not wanting to disturb her any further, Anastasia automatically went and pushed the door open to return to her own office.

As Grace poured her a cup of coffee, Anastasia clicked open the file that she used to save her drafts. The inspiration she had lost two days ago had seemingly returned to her in that instant.

It made her heart cold. She was terrified of how it felt when she thought she had lost her inspiration. Her skills and creativity were her money maker!