

## Too Far 381

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As such, Alex could only return to the office with Anastasia as he wondered why the lady wouldn't want to continue waiting until the rain stopped at the café. At the same time, Anastasia set her eyes on the rain outside the window, knowing that the road ahead of them was barely visible no matter how fast the windscreen wipers were working. Therefore, she believed it would take Elliot about half an hour before he arrived at her father's company. At the thought of that, she sent him a text message and told him to be careful. "Keep a cool head, Elliot. It's pouring heavily now, and it's too dangerous to drive."

However, Anastasia's message was met with silence as the man didn't respond. Therefore, she couldn't help but feel concerned about his safety while reprimanding him deep down for making her worried. You're sick, Elliot, so why won't you stay put and rest instead?

A few moments later, both of them arrived at Tillman Construction, whereupon Anastasia told Alex to return to the office and waited in the lobby. In the meantime, Alex could guess who she was waiting for as he wondered whether Elliot was really coming to meet her despite the heavy rain. After all, he would gloat over Elliot's misery if something ever happened to him on the way.

Meanwhile, Anastasia looked outside the window anxiously as she didn't see any car in sight. Nevertheless, she saw a black sedan coming her way in the rain fifteen minutes later. As the view slowly became clearer, Anastasia was able to identify Elliot's Rolls-Royce Phantom and heaved a sigh of relief until she realized there was a truck parked in the lobby not long after it was unloaded. Because of that, Elliot couldn't drive into the building and had no way of entering the lobby without getting wet.

Therefore, Anastasia anxiously looked around for the driver to get him to move the truck away, only to see the headlights of the man's car going out in the rain. Then, Elliot ran toward the building without even taking an umbrella with him, putting Anastasia on edge as she desperately scurried through the door and was greeted by the man's drenched appearance. At the same time, Elliot was happy to see her as she had been anxiously waiting for him despite his messy look.

"Why did you come here? Don't you know it's pouring outside?" Anastasia lectured the man.

However, Elliot reacted with a smile, looking at her with a tender expression on his face as water trickled down his hair. "Even if it puts my life at risk, I'll do anything just to see you."

Anastasia then took some tissue paper from her purse and wiped the man's wet hair, as well as the water droplets on his shoulder. Suddenly, she felt the man's arm wrapped around her waist shortly before she found herself in his tight embrace.

You..." Anastasia angrily looked up at Elliot.

"After all the mean things you said to me, you still can't deny that you care about me." Elliot fixed his eyes on her.

"I don't." She looked away guiltily.

"You do." He planted a kiss on the lady's forehead, not caring if there were people around them.

On the other hand, Alex was watching behind a pillar with his eyes fixed on the man and the woman during their lovey-dovey interaction in the lobby, clenching his fists without any idea that he was also being watched by someone from behind him.

It turned out that Erica had accidentally run into Alex and caught his jealous look when he was peeking at Elliot and Anastasia. Thus, she quickly approached Alex and seized his arm, stunning him as she dragged him to the stairs just next to them.

Upon closing the door behind her, Erica chuckled glacially and said, "You seem jealous, Mr. Hunter, but do you think my sister would even bother to look at someone like you? She is a snob who only has eyes for a rich and handsome man like Elliot."

"What are you talking about, Miss Erica? I don't quite follow." Alex refused to admit his feelings.

However, Erica had witnessed his earlier reaction. She replied, "You saw just how sweet my older sister and Elliot were back there, didn't you? However, you and I both know that you can never take Anastasia away from Elliot."

Hearing the lady's words, Alex was jealous yet helpless. After all, he had no choice but to admit Anastasia's feelings for Elliot, judging from the sympathy she was showing him for meeting her in the rain despite refusing to pick up his call in the café earlier.

What else can I call that if not love?

Erica suddenly approached the man closer, seizing his arm while giving him a coy look. "Anastasia and I are both sisters from the Tillmans, so why don't you consider dating me, Mr. Hunter? After all, I think I can be a good girlfriend just as much as my sister could be."

"Let's keep this civil, Miss Erica." Alex shivered in that instant.

Nevertheless, Erica didn't take her hand off Alex. Instead, she wrapped her arms around his neck in a seductive manner while resting her face on his shoulder. "My sister may not know how to appreciate you, Mr. Hunter, but I'm not like her. To me, you're simply the kind of man I admire and look up to."

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Alex kept his eyes fixed upon Erica, seemingly thinking about what to do with his next move. After all, he knew as well that he didn't stand a chance to get closer to Anastasia at all with Elliot by her side, but now that Erica was approaching him, he began to see it as an opportunity. "Miss Erica, I'm just an ordinary man without anything worth admiring, so I wonder what makes you like me so much." Alex let out a sigh.

"I'm not like my sister who only wants to marry a rich man. I, on the other hand, prefer to trust my own feelings when choosing my Mr. Right." Erica then looked at Alex seductively. "Mr. Hunter, you're exactly the type that I like."

Upon hearing the lady's words, Alex felt as if there was an electric shock that ran through his body. Although Erica was not considered a beauty like her sister was, Alex, whose nature as a man got the better of his rational mind, could not resist her advances.

In the meantime, Anastasia, who was still in the lobby, pushed Elliot aside after wiping the water off him and said, "Leave once the rain lets up."

"Alright!" Elliot nodded obediently.

"Come on, let's go to my lounge! It's cold out here." Anastasia took the man with her upstairs.

As soon as both of them arrived at a warmer place, Elliot took off his coat and revealed the dark shirt that accentuated his muscular physique beneath it. However, Anastasia looked away like she was trying to resist something. In fact, she was trying to resist the man's charming and masculine aura deep down so that she wouldn't fall further for him.

At that moment, Alex knocked on the door and entered the place despite knowing Elliot was around; he was going to deliberately ruin his private moment with Anastasia. After all, Erica was just a substitute to him since Anastasia was still the woman he loved. Nonetheless, Alex's presence had put a frown on Elliot's face as the latter immediately wrapped his arm around Anastasia while she made him some tea.

Before Anastasia could even finish making him tea, she lost her balance and sat on the man's lap with the tea bag still in her hand. Just as she was about to lecture him, she noticed the coldness that filled his eyes before she quickly understood that it was Alex's presence that put him on edge.

Okay, I guess that's the nature of men. They can't tolerate anyone else who sets foot on their turf, which is why this guy is trying to assert his dominance.

"You're here, Mr. Presgrave." Alex timidly greeted Elliot.

"I'll stay here and keep Anastasia company. You may attend to your work now, Mr. Hunter," Elliot coldly said to Alex.

"Alright!" Alex smiled, his face darkening the moment he turned around. It seems that Elliot really doesn't give a damn about my presence.

Soon, Anastasia rose from her seat and reminded the man to behave. "Keep your mischief in check while you're here. I wouldn't want to be caught in a lovey-dovey situation with you."

"What's wrong with that? Are you worried that Mr. Hunter is going to get jealous?" Elliot grunted in an annoyed manner.

"Alex is just an employee in my father's company. That makes us nothing more than colleagues," Anastasia explained herself.

While Elliot believed in the lady, his pride and jealousy wouldn't allow him to stand by and watch any man get close to Anastasia. Soon, he faked a cough and looked at the woman, trying to feel her concern just as the lady turned around and met his eyes.

"Don't worry. I took my medication today." Elliot assured Anastasia that he only had a cold, which persisted because of insufficient rest.

Soon, Anastasia poured him a glass of hot tea and said, "You're your grandma's only heir, so you should take good care of yourself, not to mention the fact that she is already in her twilight years."

Meanwhile, Elliot didn't feel happy when he saw her glacial look even though she still cared about his family.

"Please don't blame my grandma, Anastasia. I'm the one to blame instead." Elliot tried to shoulder all the responsibility.

Am I supposed to blame a six-year-old kid for that incident back then? Nah! As a mother with a son, Anastasia could empathize with Elliot's younger self and relate to the fear that was tormenting him.

"Can you still remember what happened back then?"

Elliot shook his head. "Actually, my grandma sought help from many psychiatrists and hypnotists for me at that time." He closed his eyes as soon as he finished his sentence, seemingly trying to find the memory that was lost in his mind.

Anastasia's eyes widened slightly before she seized the man's arm. "That's enough."

"I'm sorry. If I could remember something, maybe I'll know what happened back then." Elliot looked up apologetically.

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Soon, Anastasia recalled her father's words, remembering her mother had been urged to save an innocent life due to the urgent situation. After all, she knew her mother wouldn't have stood by and watched while a six-year-old kid was about to get killed. Convinced that everyone had an instinct of protecting the weak, she believed her mother was motivated by the same reason before she risked herself to save an innocent life.

"I don't blame you and your grandma." Nonetheless, Anastasia couldn't convince herself to let go of the past as Riley's words made her realize she could never fall in love with Elliot. After all, she couldn't get over the fact that he had indirectly caused her mother's death, which held her back from falling in love with him because she thought it would be unfair to her late mother if she did that. "We could be friends," Anastasia said.

Meanwhile, Elliot was annoyed by Anastasia's reply, finding it ironic to hear because he was just trying to comfort her a few moments ago.

Friends? No way! I'll never accept our relationship as friends!

"Well, I suppose friends can become lovers and marry each other later on. Don't you think so?" Elliot emphasized his point.

Anastasia looked away and replied, "No. We'll either be friends or strangers."

Despite her cold reply, Elliot was able to empathize with Anastasia, knowing that Riley had said many unpleasant things to her that made her reject him. "Alright, I respect your wish. We'll be friends then." Elliot took a step back, but not before he demonstrated his authority over her by giving her an order. "However, if you're ever going to marry someone, it's going to be me and only me!"

Anastasia was rendered speechless by the man's words, thinking his domineering and possessive character hadn't changed one bit.

"The same goes for me. I'll marry no one else but you," Elliot soon added.

Anastasia's face blushed as her embarrassment overwhelmed her even though she didn't meet Elliot's eyes. "My decision to get married is none of your concern. The same goes for yours," Anastasia answered.

Elliot smiled and said, "Fine, we'll just stay single for each other for the rest of our lives!"

Fine, he wins. While Anastasia helplessly patted her forehead, Francis entered the building from the rain. When he heard Elliot was in the lounge, he quickly came over to greet him. "I didn't know you'd be here, Mr. Presgrave. Please make yourself at home." Francis approached Elliot to shake his hand.

"You're too kind, Mr. Tillman," Elliot politely replied.

"Anastasia, please receive our guest, Mr. Presgrave." Francis turned his attention to his daughter. Deep down, he sincerely hoped that her daughter would end up being together with Elliot upon leveraging the situation as a businessman. After all, Tillman Constructions would be backed by Elliot's powerful influence if they got together. Besides that, he believed his grandchildren and daughter would be loved and treated well by the people of the Presgrave Family, considering their guilt for his wife.

"Sure, Father. Please leave me to it," Anastasia answered. Just when Elliot was wondering how Anastasia would receive him after Francis left, he saw the lady looking at the rain that was letting up outside the window before she shifted her gaze to him. "Alright, the rain has let up. It's time for you to go."

Wait, what? Is this how she is going to receive her guest? By showing me the door? Elliot was rendered speechless. "I'm not leaving yet. I'm going to have lunch with you and accompany you to pick up Jared. Then, I'm going to have my dinner at your place later at night." In fact, Elliot had figured out his plan for the day. His phone rang just then, whereupon he picked it up and said, "I'm not going back to the office today. Please cancel all my meetings." Before Rey could remind Elliot about his work, the latter ended the call.

At the same time, Anastasia looked at the man with a stunned expression while wondering what he was up to. What's this guy thinking? He still has a ton of things to handle back in his office! "I don't need you to keep me company here, Elliot. Go ahead and attend to your business!" Anastasia didn't want Elliot to waste his time accompanying her, only to work overtime at night.

"It's okay. I'm willing to waste my time keeping you company." Elliot raised his eyebrows slightly, telling the lady with the tenacious look on his face that he wasn't about to give up. In the face of his stubbornness, Anastasia felt helpless without knowing what else she could do about it.

"Bourgeois is shifting to a new location, but we'll be keeping your office space nonetheless. You're welcome to work with us anytime." Elliot offered Anastasia to return to Bourgeois so that no other man would get close to her.

"I'm going to stay in my father's company to learn about business management for the time being." Anastasia revealed her plans to remain in Francis' company.

"Alright, I respect your decision," Elliot said in a chivalrous manner.

"By the way, who is Aliona? The client that I was supposed to meet belonged to her, but I was kidnapped after that." Anastasia mentioned Aliona to Elliot. Although she didn't blame her, she was still mad about what had happened earlier.

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Elliot was stunned. "Shouldn't you have dealt with your own client by yourself?"

"Nope! I was told by Felicia that the client was initially Aliona's to deal with when I confronted and asked her about that earlier, but since my design caught the client's eye, I was asked to take over the negotiation. Shortly after that, I was kidnapped by Riley's henchmen at the rendezvous, which was a café where I was supposed to meet the client." Anastasia's eyes were filled with puzzlement. "How did they know I was going to show up at that café and park in that specific spot?"

Elliot frowned and replied, "Aliona is the illegitimate daughter of my late father's good friend, Lucas Dora. He raised her abroad. While Lucas is a respected senior to me, I heard from my grandma that they were close to each other in their youth."

"She is Lucas' illegitimate daughter?" Anastasia knitted her eyebrows, although she had no contempt for Aliona.

"Lucas told me to take good care of Aliona, but I promise I'm going to investigate the matter with your client." Elliot didn't want to take any chances and put Anastasia in danger.

"Alright." Anastasia nodded, feeling hungry just as she looked at the clock and realized it was lunchtime. "There is a restaurant nearby. We can have lunch together, but you need to go back and do your work when we're done, okay?" Anastasia asked as if she couldn't wait for him to be gone.

In the face of the lady's reluctant look, Elliot smiled bitterly and said, "Alright, I'll leave when we're done with our lunch."

As the two of them left, Alex was watching them through the window in the office on the third floor. As he stared at Elliot's car while the man drove away, Alex clenched his fists because Anastasia no longer seemed to be the same person he had always known.

I guess Erica's right; Anastasia only has eyes for rich men. It's no wonder she doesn't even bother looking at me.

Upon arrival at the restaurant, Anastasia made several detailed remarks when placing orders for Elliot's meal, which indirectly revealed her subconscious concern for the man. At the same time, Elliot seemed especially happy with Anastasia's reaction, his eyes filled with tenderness and love.

As soon as the waiter left the lounge, Anastasia turned her attention to the man and happened to meet his gaze, noticing his smiling face that was looking at her. In that instant, Anastasia paused in a trance for a few seconds just as she felt like she had been enchanted by his charming and magical eyes.

"Stop looking at me like that." Anastasia blocked her face.

"What's wrong? Can't I look at my future wife?" Elliot chuckled.

"You need to put a stop to your sweet-talking. I don't like to hear any of that." Anastasia appeared annoyed, but despite her feelings, there was nothing she could do to stop the man's sweet talk.

"I'd like to take Jared to a place that's fun this weekend. Would you mind lending me your son for a day?" Elliot asked.

"Where are you taking him?" Anastasia understood Elliot was inviting her as well, for she knew the man was counting on her son to make her go along.

"There is a club with several new children's programs, and I heard from a friend that they are worth a try. I'd like to take Jared there to let him experience some fun."

Anastasia hesitated shortly before she eventually agreed, thinking that it was time for her son to do something outside after staying home for so long. "Alright, go ahead then. Take Jared with you."

"What about you?"

"I'm going to spend my holiday staying at home." Anastasia was aware not to fall for the man's trap.

Nonetheless, Elliot wasn't desperate to win her heart over at all, but he knew that gaining her son's favor would help him achieve his goal even faster. "Have you realized that Jared and I look alike? We seem like a father and son, don't we?" Elliot intentionally asked.

As much as Anastasia was unwilling to admit it, she couldn't deny the fact that her son liked Elliot very much. "Well, that's because people who are handsome look alike," Anastasia replied, complimenting her son and Elliot at the same time.

As expected, Elliot smiled brightly upon hearing the lady's words. They left after finishing lunch, whereupon Elliot took her back to Tillman Constructions. Before she got out of the car, he reminded her to keep her distance from Alex. "Stay away from Alex."

However, Anastasia only looked askance at Elliot in an annoyed manner, feeling helpless with his possessiveness and jealousy.

Does he think that every other man goes around charming ladies like him? I only want to take over my father's company as soon as possible so that he can retire and enjoy the rest of his life.

"Drive safely," Anastasia said, reminding Elliot to be careful on the road before she opened the door and stepped out of the car.

In the meantime, Elliot knew Anastasia still had him in her heart even though she didn't reply to his last remark.

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It seemed that he should really keep his jealousy in line and give her some space and freedom.

After Elliot left, Anastasia returned to Francis' office to find Erica tugging their father's sleeve, buttering up to him.

"Dad, I swear I can do what Anastasia can. Please let me work here!"

"No. Cut it out and go home now."

"You're so biased, Dad. Hmph! You don't love me at all. All you care about is Anastasia," Erica whined as she turned around in anger, only to find Anastasia approaching. At that, intense resentment flashed across her eyes.

Meanwhile, Francis coaxed Erica when he saw Anastasia. "Okay, okay, we'll talk about this some other time."

"Anastasia, has Young Master Presgrave left? A few clients will be coming in the afternoon. You should get to know them."

Anger flashed across Erica's eyes upon hearing her father's words. Sure enough, Dad sees Anastasia as his only successor!

"Dad, introduce them to me too."

"Why don't you ask Alex to show you around first." Galled, Francis tried to send his younger daughter away.

To be honest, why would Erica want anything to do with the company? She had long wanted to leave, for she had zero interest in things that challenged her brain.

"In that case, I'll go and look for Mr. Hunter!" Erica now put her focus on seducing Alex.

As soon as Erica left, Francis turned to Anastasia. "Have you made up with Young Master Presgrave?"

Anastasia blushed right at that. She swore nothing could escape her father's eyes.

"Actually, we can't blame the Presgraves for this. What your mother did was out of instinct, and it has nothing to do with anyone. If she's watching, she'd want you to be with Young Master Presgrave."

"Why is that so?" Anastasia looked over to her father, confused.

"That's because the Presgraves' debt to your mother will have Young Master Presgrave treating you and Jared well for your whole lives. At the very least, he won't let you down or have an issue with Jared."

Thanks to her father's words, the sadness and hesitation within Anastasia had alleviated. Riley had merely said those words to separate Elliot and her.

In that case, why should she trust a murderer?! The one who deserved to rot in hell was him!

"I get it, Dad." Anastasia nodded.

"That's good." Just then, Francis' phone rang. He picked up the call and said, "Alright, we'll be there in five."

"Anastasia, come and have lunch with me."

With that, Anastasia followed her father to meet some of his important clients while Erica hung out in Alex's office, having no intention of leaving.

"Mr. Hunter, can you teach me accounting?"



“Erica, you can’t touch these papers.” The way Alex addressed her had changed.

Erica put the papers down right at that and sat down next to him, resting her hand naturally on his leg. “Are you available tonight, Mr. Hunter? Why don’t we have dinner together?”

“Watch what you’re doing. We’re at the office.” Despite saying so, Alex didn’t move his leg away.

Erica had been missing the comfort of a man lately, and she was beginning to find Alex pleasing to the eye. “Does it scare you to live alone, Mr. Hunter? Would you like me to keep you company?”

At that, she whispered into his ear, “We can do anything you like!”

Alex’s body stiffened upon hearing that, and he looked over at Erica. Though she wasn’t as beautiful as Anastasia, she wasn’t unattractive either. Naturally, how could he resist the temptation when she was offering herself on a silver platter? He was no gentleman anyway.

Anastasia was like a flower on the edge of a cliff, difficult to pick. Plus, now that Elliot was by her side, it was even more impossible for him to get close to her anymore. Hence, he decided to settle for second best.

Marrying Erica was also an effective way to obtain Tillman Constructions’ equity, after all!

“Erica, do you really like me?” Alex looked at Erica with a blazing gaze as he held her hands.

Erica went soft in an instant and fell into his arms. “Of course! You’re so capable. Plus, my dad thinks highly of you, and even my mom likes you too!”

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As shrewd as Alex was, he naturally knew what Naomi saw in him. From now on, he’d work with this mother and daughter duo to secure Tillman Constructions for themselves.

After Elliot returned, he immediately had Felicia come to his office. He wanted her to dig into Aliona’s client and why did the kidnapping happen at the café’s parking lot.

Naturally, Felicia didn’t dare be dismissive of it. She promptly asked Aliona for her client’s profile, which Aliona passed to her.

“Aliona, how did you meet this client?”

At that, Aliona acted all docile. “She came to me first. We met at a banquet.”

“Are you familiar with her?”

“No. Is everything alright, Felicia?” Aliona feigned concern.

“Yeah. You can go back to your work.” Felicia thought she shouldn’t let on more. It seemed that she’d have to visit that client herself.

After returning to her office, Aliona couldn’t help heaving a sigh of relief. In actuality, she had been having a tough time lately, for the failed kidnapping caused her godfather to be detained. Riley’s

subordinates even delivered a message to her, saying that she'd have to continue the rest of the path on her own.

She loathed Anastasia. She had believed winning Elliot's heart was a piece of cake when she was living abroad, but ever since Anastasia entered the picture, all Elliot cared about was that woman.

Meanwhile, Felicia met up with the client that afternoon. Since Aliona had talked to the client and colluded the story before the meeting, Felicia couldn't find anything.

With that, she reported it to Elliot and sent him the client's profile while she was at it.

Elliot fixed his gaze at the profile as he thought about Anastasia's kidnapping. Surely something had gone wrong somewhere, especially when his bodyguards noted the kidnappers had been stationed in the parking lot twenty minutes prior.

Elliot then ordered Rey, "Dig into this client." She was in her early fifties. Judging by the woman's age, she was likely Riley's acquaintance, and Riley must've had her lure Anastasia to that café where his men had been waiting.

The whole thing made sense when he put it that way.

On the other hand, Aliona asked for leave in the afternoon to meet up with Lucas.

Aliona was all composed upon seeing Lucas at the café. "Lucas, my godfather's been taken into custody now. From now on, you have to aid me in the rest of my plan."

"Hand me my son's footage, or I won't help you." Lucas rebelled.

"Are you forgetting your position? Your son and his footage are in our hands. Now that my godfather has handed all the power to me, I can do things however I please." Malice laced Aliona's eyes as she held the cup in her hands.

Lucas felt livid as he clenched his fists, but he was like a heaving old dragon being grabbed by the throat, unable to resist.

"What exactly do you want me to do?"

"Find me a chance to get close to Elliot so that I can get pregnant and birth his child," Aliona announced shamelessly.

At that, Lucas couldn't help dissuading her, "Now that your godfather's been taken into custody, why don't you take over his business? We can make a good deal, and you don't have to worry about anything for the rest of your life."

"Just how much would you be able to give me? From what I know, your son has used up almost all of your wealth. Can you give me five billion? If not, there's nothing we can talk about." What Aliona was asking for was daylight robbery. What was more, she was planning a way out. Once she gave the Presgraves an heir, she'd have more than a mere five billion!

"It's not that easy to get close to Elliot."

“That’s why I need you to give me the chance.” Aliona bore into him. “Think about your family and your son’s future!”

Alas, Lucas knew he could only give in. “Alright! I’ve been organizing a charity event lately, and I’ll invite him then. Meanwhile, you should find an opportunity to get close to him.”

“Good! I’m sure you know what to do if Elliot asks about me!”

“Relax! I won’t sell you out when my son is in your hands.” Lucas closed his eyes. What a bitter end to his life.

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With that, Aliona left. Now, all she could do was wait for Lucas’ news before she took the next step. She had to bear Elliot’s child quickly, for Riley was still waiting for her to bail him out.

Meanwhile, in Hogland, Hayley removed her bandage for the first time a week after her surgery. Now that her face was no longer swelling, the surgery results were visible.

Her originally slightly square face had now become oval. Her double eyelids were still swollen, but her nose had become taller, her lips were now prettier, and her jawline was now perfect.

Hayley got ecstatic at that—she was finally beautiful. Though it wasn’t as good-looking as Anastasia’s all-natural face, she was certain it wouldn’t be far off from Anastasia’s.

Once her swelling was gone entirely, she’d be able to see Elliot!

What she didn’t expect was that the results were far better than she had expected, and she’d be able to go home after a month.

Hayley looked into the mirror to find her profile and features similar to Anastasia’s. She smiled at that, her gaze laced with triumph.

What will Anastasia think when she sees my face? Will it disgust her?

Then, she wondered if Elliot would accept her and suddenly fall in love at one point once her face had healed entirely and was at the peak of her beauty.

Surely the night five years ago was unforgettable to him. If he suddenly had the urge to revisit the feeling, only she would be able to give it to him.

“You’re stunning, Miss Seymour. A perfect ten,” said the agent beside her.

However, Hayley suddenly stopped smiling, and the happiness was gone in a split second. The praise did nothing to delight her.

Her face was shaped according to Anastasia’s. Simply put, praising her would be like praising Anastasia, and this displeased her.

Worse, this discomfort would only remind her of Anastasia’s perfect, all-natural face whenever anyone praised her.

At night, after showering Jared, Anastasia planned to watch some TV and relax when her phone rang all of a sudden. She picked it up to find Elliot calling.

What is he doing calling this late?

However, she still answered the call nonetheless. "Hello?"

"Can I hang out at your place?"

"Right now?" Anastasia checked the time at that to find it was already 8.30PM.

"I just finished a business dinner, and I'll be passing by your place on my way home. I want to see you."

"Didn't you just see me yesterday?"

"To me, there isn't a second that I don't stop thinking about seeing you." Elliot became the embodiment of Mr. Romantic.

Anastasia, on the other hand, was rendered speechless.

Surely he would already have a child by now if he used this effort to court another woman!

"Alright, come up then." Finally, she said yes.

An elated Elliot responded, "Right away!"

Just like that, a regular night turned exciting following Presgrave's sudden visit.

Right after that, Anastasia got up to make tea and cut up some fruits.

Five minutes later, the doorbell rang. She checked the peephole, and sure enough, a certain someone was standing outside of her apartment.

She opened the door only to find he hadn't come alone, but also brought tons of stuff with him! The most eye-catching thing would be the latest set of Legos. Elliot carried two sets in his hand while Rey followed behind him with four more.

"Why did you buy so many?" Anastasia didn't know how to react upon seeing this.

"Jared loves them."

"You're going to spoil him," she pointed out frustratingly.

"Why don't you come in as well, Mr. Osborne?" Anastasia invited Rey in.

However, how dare he stay when his boss had come to spend some quality time with Miss Tillman? He'd like to live a couple more decades, after all. "No, thanks. I still have something to do. You two have a nice chat."

Jared thought he heard noises outside and came out, exclaiming when he saw the lego sets on the couch. "Wow! I love you so much, Mr. Presgrave!"

At that, he threw himself into Elliot's arms, leading Anastasia to shake her head. This guy has bought Jared over completely.

"You'll have to promise me one thing now that you've taken my presents. Listen to your mom, and don't ever make her upset."

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"Okay, I'll definitely listen to Mommy and not make her angry." Jared nodded.

"Good boy. Go on, have fun!"

With that, Jared picked a set of Legos he was most interested in and went into his room. Meanwhile, Anastasia stored the rest of the presents in the storage cabinet. Although Elliot looked visibly better now, she still asked out of concern, "Have you gotten over your cold?"

"It's all gone now," Elliot said with a smile. "All thanks to you."

Anastasia lowered her head upon meeting his fathomless gaze. "I didn't do anything, though."

"You don't have to. You just have to smile more at me. It works better than any medicine in this world." Elliot smiled. Not even a sliver of aloofness could be found on him whenever he faced her.

Abashed, she handed the bowl of fruit to him. "Quit yapping and have some fruits!"

Elliot handed her a banana out of the blue, asking, "Want one?"

Anastasia took it from him, but she suddenly blushed. "No thanks."

Elliot got what she was thinking immediately and guffawed. "What in the world are you thinking? Is your little mind constantly filled with lewd thoughts?"

Anastasia's face flushed bright red at that. Yes, she had overreacted, but he had clearly done it on purpose, hadn't he?

Elliot laughed at her for quite a while before finally helping himself to the fruits. Just then, he looked somewhat lustfully at her. "Feel free to come at me if you have any needs in this regard."

"I don't." Anastasia rolled her eyes straight at him.

Elliot only smiled, looking like an incubus, hot as hell.

Anastasia got up and went to gather the laundry hanging on the balcony, not daring to take another look at him. By the time she came back in, Elliot had slouched on the couch, looking weary.

Instead of watching TV, he fixed his gaze on her while holding the tea she had brewed for him.

It had unknowingly reached 9.30PM, and Anastasia looked toward the man who had been hanging around for nearly an hour. "It's getting late. When are you going to leave?"

"Can I sleep in your bed tonight?" Elliot got greedy.

"No." It was a hard pass.

At that, he sighed disappointedly. "Your bed to me is the best cure for insomnia, and my head has been hurting lately..."

Anastasia wasn't sure if he was lying or not, but when she looked at him, he was rubbing his temples, looking like he seriously had a throbbing headache.

Her heart ached for him again when she thought about how she had angered him to sickness a few days back.

"How are you going to shower and sleep when you don't have a change of clothes?"

"I have some clothes in the car. I'll have Rey bring it up!" Elliot said it as though he had come prepared.

Instantly, Anastasia thought she had fallen for his trap. This man had specially come to sleep over!

"Fine then! Have him bring it up for you!" She agreed to let him stay over in the end.

Elation immediately surged within Elliot's fathomless gaze. "Okay."

Soon, Rey came delivering Elliot's clothes—there was a suit for the next day and a set of cotton pajamas. Sure enough, he had planned to come over from the very beginning.

With that, Anastasia went to tuck Jared in, leaving Elliot to shower and go to bed himself.

Jared had so much fun with the Lego set that he exhausted himself, falling asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow. With that, Anastasia got out of bed to check if Elliot had also gone to bed.

However, the lights in the living room were still lit, and Elliot was slouched on the couch after his shower, watching TV in his black night robe.

"Why haven't you gone to bed?" Anastasia asked as she hugged her arms, feeling chilly. It was already winter. Wouldn't he catch a cold in such thin clothes?

Elliot reached his hand out to her in response. "Come here."

Anastasia knew she'd surely be taken advantage of if she went to him.

Surprisingly, she didn't reject him. Instead, she deliberately sat a little far away from him. At that, Elliot got up and sat right next to her before pulling the woman into his arms.

"Watch TV with me for a while, will you?" Elliot asked softly.

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Anastasia couldn't help but soften as she leaned against his chest while listening to his solid, unavoidable heartbeats.

Elliot turned his head to plant a kiss in her hair. What an amazing feeling it was to have her back in his arms again.

His broad chest gave her a strong sense of security, making it seem as though there was nothing she needed to be afraid of. When had she started liking this feeling!?

The couple watched the business channel together. Then again, it only suited someone like Elliot, for she began to nod off very quickly. What was more, she was very snug being in his arms.

Just like that, she closed her eyes before she knew it, and sleepiness crept up on her. Soon after, she started breathing evenly.

At that, Elliot turned off the TV and carried her up.

However, Anastasia shot wide awake and instinctively wrapped her arms around his neck, looking at him with somewhat amorous eyes. "Where are you taking me?"

"To sleep."

"I'm sleeping with Jared." She had no intentions of sleeping with him!

However, Elliot still carried her straight to the master bedroom. "Makes no difference."

How could it be the same!? Anastasia's drowsiness was immediately gone, and she made her way to the door as soon as Elliot put her down. However, he grabbed her immediately and pulled her into his arms, forcing her to face him.

Anastasia's hair was let loose as a result, and her milky white velvet nightgown made her face innocent yet alluring. It surely would be the death of him.

Elliot gulped, looking as though he was trying his best to hold back something.

Anastasia caught the possessiveness in his eyes, and she immediately warned, "Don't you d—" Just like that, he made her swallow the word 'dare'.

Admittedly, Anastasia couldn't say no to his kisses every time. It carried a strange yet tingling sensation, making her want more despite feeling abashed.

Suddenly, he let go of her and asked in a husky voice, "Do you want it?"

"No!" Anastasia denied her desire stubbornly, but deep down, she wanted to give it a go. She wanted to see if she could accept his approach. Not only that, she wanted to see if the trauma he evoked would come back.

She didn't want the trauma from five years ago to haunt her for the rest of her life, for she wanted to experience the joy of being a woman too. However, she still pushed him away while saying, "It's really late. You should turn in early."

Jared's still at home, for heaven's sake!

Elliot was merely asking. After all, she had to want it herself. If she didn't, he wouldn't force her even though he was on the verge of exploding.

Anastasia scurried into Jared's room, but she couldn't stop thinking about Elliot, his kiss, his breath, and his gaze.

The following morning, Anastasia opened her bleary eyes to find a pair of angelic eyes staring at her.

"What is it?" She sat up and kissed her baby boy.

"Mommy, I'm going to be late for school," Jared said solemnly.

"Huh? Isn't today Saturday?"

"Nope. It's only Friday!" Is Mommy dreaming?

Anastasia slapped her head at that. She had trouble sleeping the whole night, no thanks to Elliot. Right, Elliot! He had stayed over for the night. At that, she asked with a smile, "Is Mr. Presgrave around?"

"He is! He's waiting for you in the living room."

"In that case... Ask him to send you to school! I'm really sleepy." Anastasia wanted to be lazy this once.

"Okay!" The little guy headed out, beaming.

"Mr. Presgrave, Mommy still wants to sleep. Can you please take me to school?"

Of course, he was more than happy to, smiling as he said, "Sure! Go and pack your bag. I'll let your mom know."

"Okay."

Anastasia, who was still half-awake, happened to be shifting into a snug position so she could go back to sleep when she heard the door open. Then, she heard footsteps approaching her, and with that, she reached her hand out to pat his leg while saying dreamily, "Hurry up and go to school, Jared!"

Jared?!

Elliot chuckled under his breath, somewhat frustrated. This woman sure dared to take advantage of him.

At that, he bent over and leaned close to her. "Sure, I'll send your son to school. You have to kiss me in return, though."

Startled, Anastasia shot wide awake and reflexively covered her sleepy face. "I have morning breath!"

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"I don't mind that." Elliot inched closer after saying that, and Anastasia reflexively stretched out her arms, giving him a peck on the cheek. "Please take Jared to school for me. Thanks."

He swiftly pulled her into his arms, causing her to nuzzle her face against his chest as he nibbled her neck while stroking her hair.

The intimate scene commonly shared between married couples got Anastasia's heart beating wildly and her face suddenly flushing scarlet.

Just then, his husky voice traveled to her ear. "You really tortured me last night."

At that, he even bit her ear teasingly, causing her to jolt and shove him away while blushing. "Get the hell out of here, Elliot!"

After successfully interrupting her nap, Elliot headed out, finally content.

Meanwhile, Anastasia went back to sleep with peace of mind, knowing that Elliot would take Jared to school. It seemed she could only be this at ease when leaving Jared in his hands, right?



On the other hand, Alice came to a café nearby Bourgeois after answering a call. Upon seeing the person waiting at a table, she approached them while looking around cautiously. “Why have you come looking for me?”

“I want to thank you for the sketch you gave me last time. I’m really pleased with it. Here’s the situation now; our company has decided to use this sketch to file a lawsuit against Bourgeois and ruin their reputation.” The woman went straight to the point.

Alice’s expression changed a little upon hearing her words. “I thought we agreed on only filing a plagiarism lawsuit? How come you’re suing Bourgeois now?”

“Well, Bourgeois has taken too many of our clients. Hence, my boss has decided to take a long shot and use this opportunity to sue Bourgeois for infringement. The bigger, the better. We’re not only going to ruin the designer’s reputation, but also destroy Bourgeois’ business.”

Alice frowned at that. She didn’t think this far in the beginning, but who’d have thought her actions gave the rival company such a massive advantage?! “What do I get from this? Am I not getting anything when I’ve done you guys such a big help?”

“Of course you’d get something in return. I’m here discussing this with you, aren’t I? My boss said to give you a hundred thousand as compensation. After this is all over, you can come straight to us as our deputy director. What do you say?”

“You’re only giving me a hundred thousand? I took a huge risk by stealing such a good sketch, and all I get is a hundred thousand? You’ve got to be kidding me!” Alice was no lamb; she was going to bag a sweet deal. Besides, the rival company was surely only painting a rosy picture, offering her a spot in their company! All she wanted was what she could get her hands on.

“Alright, fine! I’ll propose half a million to my boss, but that’s the most you’re going to get.” At that, Jacqueline Sherman, designer for Bourgeois’ rival company, called her boss to negotiate the deal. After a few words, she hung up and said to Alice, “My boss says he can do half a million. That is as far as he’ll go.”

“Deal.” Alice was pleased with the amount. After all, apart from getting the money, she could have Anastasia expelled from the jewelry design industry.

“From now on, only you and I know about this plan. No one else can know about this,” said Jacqueline gravely.

“Of course. You can count on me.” Alice was confident that no one would know she was behind this. She then asked curiously, “When are you guys making your move?”

“We’re all set to go. Our lawyers will go to your office latest by this afternoon.”

Alice left the café with a malicious smile. Even if Anastasia was currently on leave, she was still Bourgeois’ designer. As long as this incident blew up, that woman would have no place in the jewelry design industry any longer!

However, she didn’t know about Elliot’s debt to the Tillman Family. Hence, she believed the Presgraves would think otherwise of Anastasia once this incident blew up.

Hmph, say goodbye to marrying into the Presgrave Family, Anastasia!

Alice had been bottling her hatred for Anastasia for far too long, and it was high time for a good drama.

That day, everyone had just returned to Bourgeois from lunch at 2.00PM when a group of men in suits entered the lobby and headed straight to the office, looking stern. At that, the leading man shouted, "I'd like to speak to your director!"