

## Too Far 501

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Alex parked his car on the side of the road and after he was done with his thumbprint, he drove to the hospital again.

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A black SUV rushed into the night like a black panther out of Presgrave Residence. Anxiety was evident in Anastasia's eyes as she sat on the passenger seat. How can this be happening? Did he really pass out because of the two glasses of wine he had?

"Don't worry. Let's go to the hospital and check out his condition first." Elliot comforted her tenderly. When he heard the news earlier, he drove her out without a second of hesitation.

Over at General Hospital, Francis was placed on a stretcher and quickly taken to the emergency room. Naomi and her daughter followed behind while crying uncontrollably.

Naomi wept as she begged the doctor, "Doctor, you have to save my husband. You must save him!"

"Ma'am, we'll do our best." reassured the doctor as he shut the door of the operating room.

Alex, Naomi and Erica exchanged glances with each other; they were all silently praying for the same thing—a 'sorry, we have done our best' from the mouth of the doctor.

About fifteen minutes later, Anastasia and Elliot hurried over from the elevator. She glanced at the operating room where her father was still being treated and looked at Naomi and Erica. "When did Dad faint? Was he still conscious when he was brought here?"

"Anastasia, was your dad drinking at the Presgrave Residence? If you knew that your dad shouldn't be drinking, why didn't you stop him?" Naomi snapped at Anastasia as if Anastasia had caused Francis' to be admitted to the hospital.

Of course, Anastasia knew that her dad had two glasses of wine. Hence, all that was on her mind right now was guilt and regret. I should've stopped him...

"If something happens to Dad, know that it's all your fault!" Erica cried and scolded.

"It is indeed not advisable for President Tillman to drink any alcohol. The doctor suggested that it is best to not even drink a sip," added Alex.

Anastasia's figure shook with remorse, but a strong arm behind her supported her firmly while reassuring her, "Don't worry. Let's see how things go."

In the operation room, an emergency rescue was being carried out; the doctor put in all his effort to revive Francis. Though the doctor had shaken his head several times, he still tried every means possible to carry out a second rescue.

Fortunately, when they used the defibrillator for the second time, the still line on the machine had started showing weak signs of a heartbeat.

“Heartbeat’s back. The patient’s will to survive is strong.”

This time, Francis’ condition was considered a severe heart failure. If he had been a minute late, he might have not been able to survive. However, due to the prolonged cardiac arrest, the oxygen supply to his brain was insufficient, so he was now in a severe coma.

Even after a successful resuscitation, there might be a risk of him being in a vegetative state.

Two hours later, the exhausted doctors came out with layers of cold sweat on their foreheads.

“What happened to my dad? Is he still alive?” Erica was the first to ask.

“Did you save my husband? Is he still alive? Tell me!” Naomi acted like a desperate wife.

Anastasia also clenched her fists tightly and stared at the doctors.

“Since the patient has missed the golden hour, we’ve done our best. So far, the operation was successful, but due to the prolonged cardiac arrest, the patient’s brain was severely deficient in oxygen supply and that has caused a certain amount of brain damage. Please prepare yourselves mentally as the patient is likely to be in a long coma or at the risk of a vegetative state.”

“What?” Naomi’s entire body went limp, so Alex reached out to help her. When she raised her gaze to meet Alex’s, both of them expressed joy in the depths of their eyes.

Erica covered her mouth and looked distraught, but there was a flash of delight in her eyes.

Even if Francis was not dead, he would never wake up. This is exactly what they would want.

Anastasia was the only one who seemed to be drained of strength. Pain shrouded her face as she let tears roll down her cheeks.

Standing behind her was a heartbroken Elliot as he felt sorry for Anastasia. As a daughter, this is the last thing she’d ever want to hear.

“Francis! Francis...” Naomi began to cry and sat on the ground bawling while Erica hugged her as they cried together.

Not to forget the remaining ‘actor’ Alex, who also looked solemn. He glanced at Anastasia whose face had paled under the lights. Elliot, on the other hand, had been supporting her from the back and assisted her to the bench.

Now, how could Naomi miss such an opportunity? She rushed over suddenly and she slapped Anastasia before Elliot could even react. A burning sensation grew on Anastasia’s face, but the very

next second, a sturdy arm blocked her as Elliot questioned in a deep voice, “What do you think you’re doing?!”

“It’s you... You’re the one who did this to your dad! Why did you let him drink?! He had been fine taking his medications regularly! It’s all because of you! You Presgraves are guilty of killing my husband!” Naomi seized this opportunity to curse them hard.

This time, she even scolded the Presgrave Family.

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"Exactly! If my dad ends up in a vegetative state, you'll be overjoyed, won't you?!" Erica chimed in.

Anastasia's ears went deaf for a few seconds as finger marks slowly appeared on her pale face.

Elliot could not bear to see her in such a state anymore. He glared at Naomi and Erica with cold eyes, then warned, "I dare you to touch her again."

His gaze was murderous. If Naomi were not a woman, he would have definitely fought back.

Frightened by his aura, she took a step back as Elliot's gaze stopped her from acting aggressive.

"Mrs. Tillman, please calm down. Our priority is to save President Tillman at this moment." Alex came to drag Naomi away as he did not want her to cause any more trouble.

"Mom..." In truth, Erica was satisfied to see her mother slapping Anastasia.

Anastasia covered her cheek and remained silent. If it was not for the nerve-wrecking and guilt-inducing circumstances that she was in, she would not have stayed quiet about this.

"Does it hurt?" Elliot gently touched the side of her face that had been slapped.

"It's fine." Anastasia shook her head.

Elliot's eyes shot at Naomi once again like a dagger with a killing intent present through his gaze.

When Naomi's eyes met his, she instantly jumped up in shock as she quickly thought of an excuse. "I'm going to the bathroom."

As she returned, Francis' attending doctor, who was the Head of Neurology, came over and inquired, "What kind of medicine does your husband usually take? What's the dosage of the medicine? We found a residual pill in his mouth just now. Why is it there?"

"Doctor, my husband usually takes supplements for his heart. He came back today and felt uncomfortable, so he took a few more pills at a time. But before he could swallow the medicine, he fainted," Naomi explained while sobbing again.

Funny how the act of shoving pills down Francis' throat has now become a voluntary act of his, thanks to her great storytelling.

"He shouldn't have prescribed his own dosage. In cases like this, you should have sent the patient to the hospital right away, but you've delayed for way too long. That's why you missed the golden hour." After the doctor finished speaking, he left.

Although Anastasia was in grief, she was in a clear state of mind. She stood up beside Elliot and questioned while looking at Naomi, "Why didn't you send Dad to People's Hospital and took a detour to this hospital instead?"

Naomi was startled, but Alex came over and apologized, "I'm sorry, Miss Tillman. It's all my fault. I took the wrong turn because I was not familiar with the road to the nearest hospital, so I ended up here."

"I'm grateful enough that Alex came and took your father to the hospital. How dare you come at us for being late! Did you think I was going to harm my own husband?" Naomi turned around and retorted aggressively. "What about you?! When your dad passed out, where were you, and what were you doing?"

"She was busy preparing for her engagement, of course! Why would she even have time to care about her father?" Erica insulted.

"Your father is in a coma and in a vegetative state. The audacity to even still think about engaging! Aren't you afraid of karma? How could you even do such an awful thing at a time like this?" Naomi scolded again as if Anastasia becoming engaged was an unfilial thing to do.

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Elliot's eyes scanned the mother and daughter as their malicious intentions against Anastasia were getting clearer by the minute...

Alex, who was enjoying the show on the side, sneered inwardly. Elliot's dream of marrying Anastasia might as well be flushed down the drain now.

As long as Francis remained unconscious, Anastasia would not be able to marry with a peace of mind, which meant that Elliot could not be the son-in-law of the Tillman Family anytime soon.

"Are you done? Can't you see that she's already stressed out? What else do you want?" Elliot stared at Naomi and Erica with a cold gaze.

"Young Master Elliot, I'm sorry but Anastasia belongs to our family. I'm afraid that her engagement will be off," Naomi stated boldly.

"This matter is up to us to decide. You don't have the right to intervene." Elliot glanced at her coldly, not bothering to save any respect for her.

Naomi choked in surprise and looked at Anastasia. "Your father is in serious condition now. You can't get engaged without his presence!"

As long as Anastasia was not engaged, Elliot was not the son-in-law of the Tillman Family. Despite how powerful he was, he could not interfere in the affairs of their family.

She looked up at him and inquired, "Can I arrange for my dad to be transferred to your hospital?"

Even without her request, Elliot already had that plan in mind. Presgrave Hospital had state-of-the-art medical equipment and technology, so it was more likely for them to cure Francis.

"Sure. I'll make an arrangement right now." Elliot nodded.

When Naomi heard that, her expression fell and she immediately stopped them. "Your dad has just been resuscitated. Don't hassle him around!"

Anastasia took a deep breath and explained, "Presgrave Hospital has more advanced technology than other hospitals. It will be helpful for Dad's treatment." Of course, she assumed that Naomi also wanted to save her father, so she explained it to the woman nicely.

When Naomi heard it, she blatantly rejected the offer. "I don't believe in any hoax of better technology. I just don't want my husband to suffer again. He's merely just landed his foot back in the world; therefore, I will not allow you to move him around."

"Naomi, I know that you hold a grudge against me, but Dad's health is more important now." Anastasia was furious because Naomi insisted on going against her at such a critical moment.

Erica, who was beside Naomi, also spoke out to support her mother. "Dad is still weak now. Why do you have to torment him? If something goes wrong on the way... or if he encounters an accident, what will you do?"

Seeing that the mother and daughter insisted on not transferring Francis to another hospital, Anastasia could only hold back temporarily. Nodding as she compromised and said, "Okay, I will let Dad stay here tonight. We'll see how his condition is and transfer him after two days."

Once Francis was transferred to the ICU for monitoring, Naomi went in to visit for ten minutes as the representative. She sat in front of Francis' hospital bed and looked at his lifeless and pale face. She muttered coldly in her heart, I don't want you to suffer anymore. You should just go!

Anastasia could only look at her father lying quietly through the glass window. During dinner, her father was still happily drinking and talking to her, yet now, he was lying in the cold ward sound asleep.

Elliot hugged her shoulders and comforted her. "Rest assured that I have arranged for a few doctors from Presgrave Hospital to check on him."

She looked at him with gratitude filled in her eyes. At a time like this, he was her warm and powerful pillar.

"Jared fell asleep, so I had Grandma take care of him."

Anastasia felt safe leaving her son at Presgrave Residence, so she nodded. "Okay."

It was winter outside, so the chill was still vaguely present despite the heater that was switched on outside the ward. Elliot took off his suit coat and draped it over Anastasia's body. Since she was in such a hurry to come to the hospital earlier, she only wore a sweater, forgetting her thick coat.

On the other row, Erica looked at Anastasia with jealousy. A rich and young master like Elliot was considerably by Anastasia's side, taking care of her every single need.

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However, when Elliot looked up and scanned over Erica and Alex, he exuded a dark and cold aura that made her feel pressured even from a distance.

How does Anastasia have such an ability to make him show her only his best side?

When Alex went to get water for Naomi and Erica, he also bought some for Anastasia. She took them and handed a bottle to Elliot, who was obviously reluctant to accept anything given by another man. Even if it was just a bottle of water, he felt uncomfortable.

When Anastasia saw his refusal to accept the water bottle, she set the bottle aside and opened the one in her hand before she took a few sips and handed it to him.

Only then did Elliot take it before he took a few sips of the water she had drunk.

Once Alex took a seat beside Erica, she could not help but hint, "I'm cold, Alex."

As soon as he heard that, he hurriedly took off his suit and gave it to her. Erica was wearing Alex's suit, but she did not receive the feeling she was looking for. Despite being a man, Alex was incomparable to Elliot.

Half an hour later, three men in suits appeared in the corridor while looking dapper with a scholarly aura. They went straight to Elliot's side and greeted him respectfully, "Hello, Young Master Elliot."

Elliot nodded in response. "All of you are here."

Anastasia was delighted to see Benedict among them. It seemed that these three were the doctors from Presgrave Hospital.

"We'll check on the patient's condition first, then we'll come back to you to discuss the details." After saying that, Benedict and the other two went to the doctor's office together.

Naomi seemed to have realized something and immediately got up to ask, "Who are these people and what are they going to do to my husband?"

When Anastasia saw her exaggerated reaction, she uttered lightly, "Just Elliot's friends."

Naomi thought they did not look like his friends but doctors instead. She then exchanged glances with Erica and Alex before sitting down.

"Naomi, there's a lounge over there. Do you want to go in and take a rest? It's quite cold here," Alex suggested.

With that, all three of them went over to the lounge.

As soon they entered, Naomi hurriedly looked at Alex and inquired, "The three people just now should be doctors sent by Elliot. Do you think they'll be able to cure Francis?"

"Let's not exaggerate our reactions for now. Elliot is here, so we shouldn't raise his suspicion," Alex reminded her that Elliot was not an ordinary person.

As a result, Naomi could only hold back her temper and reply, "We'll just have to risk it."

In the corridor outside, Anastasia noticed that Elliot was wearing only a shirt and a vest. She then asked out of concern, "Are you cold? Do you want to take a nap in the car?"

"I'm fine," Elliot reassured her and held her hand.

Anastasia felt the warmth of his palm, but she still returned the suit to him as she felt bad. She then snuggled into his embrace and the two of them shared his suit to keep warm together.

He hugged her tightly while his thin lips kissed her hair since he felt sorry for her.

“Don’t worry. The guys who just came are the leading cardiologists and neurologists in our hospital.”

As soon as she heard that, she saw a glimmer of hope and instantly felt relieved. At this moment, she realized how honored and lucky she was to have known Elliot.

After a while, Benedict came over. “Elliot, Miss Tillman, please come with me.”

Elliot reached out to hold Anastasia’s hand as they followed Benedict.

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In the conference room of the hospital, the three experts and the two doctors who revived Anastasia’s father earlier were present. Through their gaze, one could tell that they were looking at the three experts respectfully.

Following that, one of the doctors gave a detailed explanation of Francis’ condition.

“Miss Tillman, we’ve gone through your father’s analysis. It was unfortunate that he was admitted too late to the hospital. If he could have arrived ten minutes earlier, the situation would have been completely different.”

“Is it possible for my dad to wake up?” Anastasia asked nervously.

“Judging from his current situation, he is unlikely to wake up, but it’s not totally impossible. Nothing is absolute, but your father’s heart failure has caused various complications, especially his brain which is most affected. Therefore, the possibility of him being in a vegetative state is very high.”

The tears that Anastasia had been resisting suddenly rolled down her cheeks uncontrollably. As she heard their statement with closed eyes, she felt immense pain and despair.

Elliot took her hand and uttered in a deep voice, “Please think of some other ways you can save him.”

“There is a way, but it can’t be implemented right now. It’s gonna take a period of observation. We can’t undergo the brain treatment until the examination data reaches the ideal state.”

“How long do you roughly need?”

“About three months! During this period, we will do everything in our power to maintain your father’s treatment while he is in a coma.”

“Please prescribe him with whatever medication he needs. Money is not a problem,” said Elliot.

“We will, Young Master Elliot. We guarantee to provide the best available treatment for Mr. Tillman,” they replied.

With a question that had been lingering on her mind, Anastasia took the opportunity to ask, “Does my dad’s episode have something to do with his alcohol intake—specifically two glasses of wine?”

“Miss Tillman, if he only drank two glasses of wine, it would not cause his heart failure. We suspect that your father had ingested the medicine by mistake.”

“Yes. We found a small piece of residual pill in your father’s mouth and it is a poisonous drug for the cardiovascular system. Rather than strengthening the heart, it has the opposite effect. As for the exact properties of it, it will take two days for us to verify.”

“What?! My dad took the wrong pill?” Anastasia was shocked to hear that. Why would her father take the wrong pill?

“Perhaps you should inquire with someone who stays with your father about the situation and the kind of drugs he usually takes.”

“Okay. I’ll get to the bottom of it while I collect some samples of my dad’s medications for your inspection.”

“That would be great.”

“Elliot, it’s cold at night. We’ve arranged a room in the hotel opposite the hospital. Take Miss Tillman over to rest! Rest assured we’re here to take care of Mr. Tillman!” suggested Benedict.

Elliot nodded in agreement and looked at Anastasia. “Benedict and the others will guard here. They’ll inform us right away if something happens.”

Anastasia knew that treating her father would be a long battle that would take more than a day or two. She had to maintain her physical strength and body in order to take care of her father.

When they walked out of the hospital and entered the car, she was thinking about one thing—why is there even a chance for a poisonous drug within the reach of my dad, let alone mistakenly ingest it?

“Elliot, I want to head home and check on the kind of medicines my dad is taking.”

“Okay, I’ll drive you there.” He nodded.

On the other side, Naomi and Erica were in the lounge when Alex quickly walked in and informed them, “I heard from the doctor earlier that Elliot took off with Anastasia.”

“Where did they go?”

“Not sure, but I’ll take you guys home! Let’s come back tomorrow morning,” he offered.

An exhausted Erica then prodded her mother to leave. “Mom, let’s go! I want to sleep.”

With that, the mother and daughter decided to go home. Along the way, Alex asked Naomi if the pills were left at home which she then answered, “I only bought two bottles. One is in my hand now and the other is at your place. I didn’t leave any at home.”

“Hurry up and get rid of it! We can’t let anyone discover it,” he suggested.

As such, Naomi told him to stop by the road. She threw the pills into a nearby river and returned to the car and assured, “Don’t worry, Anastasia will never know what medicine we gave her dad.”

Erica, the other accomplice, also breathed a sigh of relief. “Anastasia definitely won’t suspect us.”

Elliot’s car was parked outside the gate of Tillman Residence. After keying in the passcode at the door, Anastasia found that the lights were still on. She also saw the driver, Joe, sleeping on the sofa. When



Joe heard the noise at the door, he immediately woke up.

“Miss Tillman, you’re back. What about President Tillman?”

“Why are you here, Mr. Bachelor?”

“When Madam left just now, she asked me to stay and watch the house, so I didn’t leave. How is President Tillman?”

Anastasia’s gaze turned serious as she inquired, “Mr. Bachelor, tell me about the situation last night when you saw my father passing out.”

“I sent President Tillman back home and left, but I suddenly recalled that Old Madam Presgrave gave a lot of gifts in the car, so I turned back. When I walked in with the gifts, I already saw President Tillman lying on the ground unconscious.”

“What about my stepmother and stepsister?”

“They were all crying in fear and I wanted to take President Tillman to the hospital, but Mr. Hunter came, so they took his car and left.”

“How much time had passed between the moment you witnessed it and the time you called me?” Anastasia inquired calmly.

“About fifteen to sixteen minutes!”

To investigate further, she took out her phone and checked the call log. When she added up the time it took for her to receive the call, the time it took Joe to process the situation and the time it took her father to be taken to the hospital, it came to more than forty minutes.

She checked the map and found that the time from home to General Hospital was about twenty-three minutes. Alex said that he had taken the wrong way, but did it really take him more than twenty minutes to detour? Why did he not take Dad to People’s Hospital, which was only ten minutes away from home? Why did he take Dad to another hospital after detouring for forty minutes?

Anastasia’s heart was full of doubts. She did not want to overthink Naomi’s motives and thoughts, but their unreasonable time on the road was the very factor why Francis missed the golden hour.

“Mr. Bachelor, do you know what kind of medicines my dad usually takes?”

“I only know one; he usually takes a pill to relieve his heart discomfort. After the last time he fainted, President Tillman took it with him every day, saying it was to protect his heart.”

After listening to Joe’s statement, she rose to her feet searched for the medicine in the cabinet. She could not bother much anymore as she went to the master bedroom on the second floor. In the cabinet, she found a bottle of heart medication that her father often took. Other than that, no other medicine was found.

She took out more pills from several bottles of medicine in the cabinet. She wanted to clarify if the pills left in her father’s mouth were from the ones at home.

When all the pills were gathered, Anastasia requested Joe to cover for her. "Mr. Bachelor, I got some pills from home, but please keep it a secret from my stepmother, will you?"

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Joe could not help but feel a tug in his chest. He had always been loyal to Francis, so he naturally nodded affirmatively. "Okay, I won't tell them."

Just as Anastasia and Elliot were about to go out, they saw Naomi and Erica rushing in through the door. Judging from the luxury car parked outside, they must have assumed that it was Elliot's and panicked.

They did not expect Anastasia to come back at all.

"Anastasia, what are you doing here? Why are you running around instead of taking care of your dad in the hospital?" Naomi immediately questioned Anastasia out of her guilty conscience.

However, Anastasia answered coldly, "What's wrong with me coming back? This is my home after all."

Naomi choked at her reply, then saw Anastasia and Elliot walking toward the gate.

After the couple had left, she immediately entered the hall and saw Joe, who was about to leave. She hurriedly asked, "Joe, what did Anastasia do when she came home just now?"

"I'm not so sure. I came out to smoke earlier, madam. If there is nothing else, I will be leaving too." Joe quickly covered for Anastasia.

"She must be up to no good if she came home secretly." Erica gritted her teeth.

Once Anastasia sat in Elliot's car, she closed her eyes and calmed herself down for a few seconds before uttering, "I have a feeling this isn't entirely an accident. When Naomi and Alex took him to the hospital, they took way too long. It was the delay that caused him to miss the golden hour."

"Do you suspect your stepmother?"

"My dad treats her well. I really hope that she has nothing to do with this incident, but if I really find out that she plotted something, I won't let her get away with this." Anastasia gritted her teeth and clenched her fists as grief and resentment surged in her chest.

"Relax. If it's her, she'll definitely leave a trace." Elliot comforted her once again. Not only did he find Naomi suspicious, he also thought that Erica and Alex were problematic.

When Elliot took Anastasia back to the hotel, it was already 2.00AM before he knew it.

Back at Tillman Residence, Naomi was sitting on the sofa while panic took over her. She thought about what she had done at this moment and she suddenly got cold feet.

Well, what's done is done... it's either I go big or go home, then. Otherwise, things would become more troublesome. But... What did Anastasia do here? Did she suspect something? I thought the performance by Erica and I was convincing enough, even in front of Joe! No... there's no way they could have found out...

Maybe I'm just reading too much into this, Naomi told herself.

Meanwhile, Alex arrived at Hayley's little apartment and found her waiting for him. After a round of passionate tussling, she started asking him about Francis. All he divulged was that Francis had suddenly collapsed and was sent to the hospital for an emergency life-saving procedure.

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Hearing about Francis' situation, Hayley nodded. She was not angry when she sensed how wary and secretive Alex was toward her, seeing as the end she sought to achieve was for Anastasia and Elliot to call off their engagement.

With Francis still in a coma, Hayley doubted that Anastasia would continue with the engagement; it was not proper in light of the grim situation at present, and besides, the cheerful novelty of her upcoming nuptials would have already worn off by now.

Meanwhile, in the hotel, Anastasia could not sleep. She stood in front of the floor-to-ceiling window and stared out at the hospital across the road. Worry was evident in her eyes, and for each day that Francis stayed unconscious, she grew even more anxious.

Elliot sighed softly and wrapped his arms around her from behind. "Let's get some rest, shall we?"

She leaned into his arms. At this moment, his embrace was the only thing that kept her grounded when everything else in her life was tossed up in the air. Faith came with the sense of calm that suddenly

washed over her; she was sure that Francis would wake up soon.

She somehow drifted into sleep as Elliot held her through the night, but it was not a restful slumber. Elliot, on the other hand, hardly slept a wink, for he woke up as soon as he felt the slightest movement from her.

Anastasia woke up the next morning and heard Elliot speaking on the phone with Benedict, who had called to tell him that Francis' condition had not changed much since last night, though there were several tests that the hospital had scheduled for him.

"Anastasia, the facilities in the hospital are limited. We're going to need you to sign the consent form if we want to bring your father back to the hospital my family runs."

"I'll do it," she said firmly. "I don't care if Naomi objects to it. You can bring Dad over to your hospital for a thorough check-up and all other necessary procedures."

Elliot nodded and immediately gave instructions over the phone. "Bring him over to the hospital and run all the necessary tests."

Having taken her breakfast, Anastasia headed over to the hospital to sign the patient transfer paperwork. It wasn't until she saw her father being wheeled into an idling ambulance that she felt hope course through her. She prayed furtively that Francis would receive better treatment over at the Presgraves' hospital.

The ambulance had only just left when Anastasia's phone rang. She glanced at the caller ID, and upon seeing Naomi's name flashing on the screen, she knew that her stepmother had already found out about Francis' transfer to the Presgraves' hospital.

“What is it?” Anastasia demanded fearlessly, sparing no niceties as she picked up the phone.

“Don’t think I don’t know what you’re up to, Anastasia! Who gave you the right to have your father transferred to another hospital? Your father is in no condition to be moved around willy-nilly! You better pray that he wakes up, because if he doesn’t, then you’ll have hell to pay!” Naomi snapped belligerently on the other line.

“I’ll take full responsibility for anything that might happen,” Anastasia replied curtly. “He’s my father, and I want him to wake up more than anyone else, especially you.”

“Save your false sentiments for the fool who will believe it, Anastasia. You just want your father to die so that you can take over his company. That’s it, isn’t it? I know exactly how that mind of yours works, you wench! You’ve been eyeing his company all along!” Naomi accused, twisting the situation to make it sound like Anastasia was the one with ill intentions.

Anastasia was so enraged by this that she trembled. She knew Naomi was only razzing her up, but her blood still boiled all the same. “I don’t care what you say. All I want is for Dad to get the best treatment there is.” She decided to ignore the wretched woman after this.

“I refuse to let my husband be treated at Presgrave Hospital. I don’t feel good about it, and I demand that you have him sent back to the General Hospital at once! You hear me?!” Naomi roared.

Without another word, Anastasia ended the call and turned to address Elliot, who had been standing at the side all this while, “Let’s go.”

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Presently, Naomi gritted her teeth as she sped over to the hospital. “That useless wench hung up on me!”

“Mom, what do we do? Presgrave Hospital has state-of-the-art facilities and some of the best doctors in the world. If Dad regains consciousness after receiving treatment there, then all our efforts will be for nothing!” Erica wailed.

“We’re going to Presgrave Hospital right away. I’m going to bring my husband back to General Hospital no matter what!” Naomi seethed, making up her mind to use the wife-card to her advantage.

Over in Francis’ most trusted law firm, Alex was in the middle of a conversation with a middle-aged man. On the table was an agreement with a bank card laid on top of it. “I heard that you’ve racked up quite a lot of gambling debts, Mr. Smithers, but I’m sure that the money in there is enough to help you tide things over,” Alex pointed out matter-of-factly.

“Looks like you came prepared, Mr. Hunter. How is President Tillman doing?”

“Due to the delay in administering immediate medical treatment, President Tillman has been declared comatose, and he might never wake up again.”

Colin’s eyes lit up at this. Knowing that the deal was sure to be risk-free, he happily reached for the agreement and the bank card while demanding, “I want two percent of the shares in Tillman Constructions after I see through the deal.” This was the perfect opportunity for him to get rich, and he would be a fool to not seize it.

Alex had the authority to agree to this proposition, and he knew he had to, seeing as switching out the will was the most important part of the entire scheme. “Very well. In that case, we’ll be on the same side from now on,” he replied, nodding.

Then, Colin went over to the safe and took out the old will Francis had made, then tore it into pieces in front of Alex. Having done so, he slipped the new one into the safe.

A satisfied smile played on Alex’s lips. At last, the will has been successfully switched. Now, Naomi and Erica stood to inherit sixty percent of Tillman Constructions; that translated to a good seven hundred million in assets and liquidity.

Meanwhile, over at Presgrave Hospital, Francis was sent into one of the check-up rooms to run several tests. Anastasia waited anxiously in the hallway with Rey, who stood behind her to keep her company while Elliot went back to the company to handle important work matters.

“Would you like to sit down, Miss Tillman?” Rey asked, looking at the woman with concern.

“No, I’m fine,” Anastasia muttered tiredly as she shook her head. She prayed furtively that the tests would show positive results.

Just then, a nurse stationed on this floor came up to them and said, “Miss Tillman, two of your family members have arrived and they’re waiting outside the entrance. They’re really anxious. Should I let them in?”

Anastasia frowned. She didn’t have to ask to know that the ones throwing a fit outside the entrance were Naomi and Erica. She wanted Francis to have these tests done without interference, so she instructed the nurse, “Keep them outside and do not let them in.”

“Very well.”

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The nurse had only just walked away when Anastasia turned to address Rey, “Could you go with the nurse and see what’s the fuss about?”

“Of course. I’ll get right to it,” he agreed and hurried toward the elevators.

Naomi’s aversion toward Presgrave Hospital isn’t just because of my relationship with the Presgraves. What is she so afraid of? Is she worried that Dad will receive better medical treatment here? Anastasia wondered grimly.

Presently, Naomi and Erica were arguing with the security guards in the Presgrave Hospital lobby.

“I’m warning you—if I don’t see my husband by the end of the day, I’ll have this hospital torn down!” Naomi threatened at the top of her lungs.

The security guards eyed her steadily, completely unaffected. They highly doubted that the likes of her had the power to demolish the Presgraves’ hospital building.

“Hand my father over right now or I’ll sue every single one of you! I’ll expose you for being accomplices to a kidnapping crime!” Erica had unfortunately her mother’s affinity for dramatics and somehow associated volume with intimidation.

“I’m sorry, but this is a private hospital, and I’m afraid you can’t just have your way. You are not allowed to enter until further instructions say otherwise.”

“My husband is in there right now! Why am I not allowed in?! I bet that scheming little wench Anastasia put you up to this, didn’t she? Tell her I demand to see her this instant! Go!” Naomi ordered scathingly, her voice shrill as she shoved the sturdy-looking guard in front of her.

At that moment, Rey drew close to the scene of the fiasco. Recognizing him at once, Naomi barked, “You’re Elliot’s assistant, aren’t you? Bring Anastasia out right now!”

“Miss Tillman is currently with President Tillman while the doctors run the necessary tests on him. Please refrain from causing a scene here,” Rey pointed out sternly, frowning.

“She has no right to transfer my husband here! I’ll make her pay if anything happens to him.”

“That’s right! If my father’s condition worsens after this, it’ll be all her fault,” Erica chimed in hotly.

Rey raised a brow and said with forced patience, “I assume that both of you are unaware that Presgrave Hospital has the top-of-the-line facilities and the finest medical team, which will be of great

help to President Tillman’s condition and subsequent recovery. There is absolutely nothing for you to worry about,” Rey explained.

However, Naomi panicked even more when she heard this. It was precisely because she knew about Presgrave Hospital’s advanced facilities and world-class medical team that she did not want Francis to be here.

“You don’t even know what Anastasia is plotting! She’s only after her father’s company, and no one else wants him to die more than she does! I don’t feel safe leaving my husband in her hands. She’s up to something, and trust me when I say it’s nothing good!” Naomi snapped belligerently.

Upon hearing this, Rey grew grim and countered, “Mrs. Tillman, I suggest you refrain from casting aspersions on Miss Tillman’s character. She will be Mrs. Presgrave soon, and she is President Tillman’s daughter. I can assure you that she bears no ill will toward him.”

“Well, how do you know she isn’t just a wolf in sheep’s clothing? Do you know her better than we do?” Erica bit out angrily.

“Miss Tillman will have an insurmountable fortune to her name once she becomes Mrs. Presgrave, so why would she come after Tillman Constructions? The both of you, however, are acting highly suspicious right now,” Rey pointed out sardonically. He was Elliot’s assistant, and being demanding aside, the job also required a sharp and analytical mind.

Naomi gaped at Rey speechlessly, and jealousy flashed in Erica’s eyes. When did Anastasia gain superiority over us?

Just then, Rey's phone rang, and he quickly picked up after glancing at the caller ID. "Yes, President Presgrave?"

"Throw those women out of the premises right now. I don't want them making a scene there," came Elliot's curt reply. While he was not at the hospital, he had gotten word about Naomi and Erica being there and causing a scene in the main lobby. He was admittedly bearing a grudge against them, especially after Naomi had slapped Anastasia in the face last night. That alone was enough to make him want to ruin their lives.

Rey answered solemnly, "Yes, sir." Then, he shot the security guards a look and instructed, "Escort them out of the hospital at once and do not let them come back in again."

The security guards leaped into action at once. Before Naomi and Erica knew what was happening, they were held by the arms and frog-marched toward the lobby exit.

"Hey! What are you doing? Let me go right now!" Naomi hollered.

However, no one heeded her warning, and just like that, the mother-daughter duo was thrown out the door. Following this, the security guards fell into formation and stood in a line of six, effectively blocking the women's way into the building.

"How dare that useless little wench treat us like this! If she thinks she's so great, then why doesn't she just kill me already?" Naomi seethed.

Humiliated and not wanting to turn into the butt of the joke now that she was thrown out of a hospital, Erica quickly grabbed her arm and urged, "Mom, we should go."

Naomi had no choice but to leave with her daughter. Once they burrowed into their car, Erica pulled out her phone and called Alex.

"Hello?"

"Alex, Anastasia had Dad transferred to Presgrave Hospital! We tried to bring him back, but security threw us out. What do we do now?"

"What? How could you have let her take him away in the first place?"

"We didn't let her!" Erica argued. "She signed the transfer paperwork this morning while Mom and I were away from the hospital. What if the medical team at Presgrave Hospital manages to save him from his comatose state?"

"I'd only just switched out the old will. It'll be the end of us if President Tillman wakes up, so you have to make sure he never does!" Alex ground out icily.

"What the hell do I do now?"

"Continue pressing them until they hand over President Tillman, and you have to find out his current condition no matter what," Alex urged.

"Okay." Erica hung up and glanced at Naomi, saying, "Mom, I think I have a way that might just work. We could call the press and have them expose Anastasia. We'll make it sound like she has taken Dad

away so that she could kill him and claim Tillman Constructions all for herself. Then, we'll use the subsequent public discourse to force her into handing Dad over."

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Naomi pondered on this and decided that it was a viable option. Now that Anastasia had Elliot to protect her, she was untouchable. Calling the press on her and painting her as some greedy spawn who only wanted to take the company for herself would undoubtedly disrupt her life to some extent.

"Alright then. We'll just use the press and have her facing backlash afterward," Naomi said, agreeing with her daughter.

Erica knew a couple of reporters from various media companies, and she decided to have the powerhouse among them cover the news.

In the guest lounge of the press company, Erica and Naomi explained to the person they were meeting about how Anastasia was after Francis' fortune.

The man who had joined them in the lounge was the editor-in-chief. He did not care about the truth, only about the buzz that such news would bring. The issue would become a subject of dispute among the public, which was the most valuable outcome.

But neither Naomi nor Erica told the editor-in-chief a vital piece of information, which was that of Anastasia and Elliot's engagement. They had only painted her as a scheming no-good wench who had been vying for Tillman Constructions.

"Very well. We'll be more than happy to expose this woman for you. It's a matter of life and death, after all. I'll head on to write the article right now, and we'll feed it to the public. Once the backlash starts kicking in, she'll cave under the pressure and return your sick and comatose husband and father."

"Please hurry with the exposé on Anastasia. She's far too vicious to get away scot-free like this. We're talking about my husband and Erica's father here. How could she be so cruel as to stop us from seeing him?" Naomi cried, looking anguished as she buried her face in her hands.

"We'll finish the write-up and publish it as soon as possible. Can't have someone so downright heartless to her own father do this without repercussions, can we? Do you have any pictures for the column?" Timothy, the editor-in-chief of the press, asked.

"Yes." Erica fished out her phone and pulled up the candid shot she had taken of Anastasia in the conference room last time. She had been bored and decided to take several pictures for her own amusement, only to find that she had taken one where Anastasia was sitting next to Francis.

Upon seeing the picture, Timothy nodded in approval and said, "That's a good one, and the public will perceive it as Anastasia being eager to get close to Francis for the sake of taking over the company as CEO." He stared at the picture for a moment longer, and he had to admit that Anastasia was stunning. With her perfect features and warm smile, it was hard to believe that she was capable of doing something so underhanded.



This could give rise to another hot topic. Anastasia was like a rose in full bloom in that picture, but concealed within her was greed and fierce ambition to take Tillman Constructions for herself, and apparently, she would stop at nothing to achieve that goal.

Naomi and Erica were like a pair of thieves when they left the press company later that day. Now that they had done their part, all they needed to do was for the press to do their dirty work and ruin Anastasia's reputation.

Meanwhile, Francis had undergone a series of check-ups at Presgrave Hospital, and Elliot came rushing back just as the doctor was reporting the medical findings to Anastasia.

The atmosphere in the conference room was grim as Theodore Dugray, the Head of Neurology in Presgrave Hospital, announced, "Your father's condition is worse than we presumed and based on the tests we ran on him, we found that his brain is severely damaged. Self-recovery is nearly impossible, and while surgery is the best option we have, he does not meet the requisite standards for us to carry out the operation immediately. We'll have to keep him under observation for at least three months before we draft out the surgery plan."

Anastasia had been wound up so tightly over the last few days that she almost snapped after hearing the news. She clapped her hand over her mouth as tears spilled down her face. I didn't know Dad's condition would be so serious. Is this it? Do I not get to see even a glimmer of hope for this situation to turn around?

At the sight of this, Elliot quickly handed her a piece of tissue, a gentle gesture that did little to soften the impact of the hard news. He felt his heart twist when he saw how devastated she looked, but there was nothing he could do to take the pain away from her.

"Do not give up, not while there is still hope," Elliot said to the doctor.

"We'll come up with the best solution to save Mr. Tillman," the doctor promised.

Another doctor who had come in with Theodore's small medical team added, "Miss Tillman, preliminary checks have led us to believe that your father will remain in a comatose state for the rest of his life if he does not undergo surgery. That said, the chances of him regaining consciousness after the surgery are slim, and we'd like you to be mentally prepared for any unfavorable outcome."

She nodded weakly. She knew that almost all the odds were against Francis now, but she wouldn't give up on even the slightest chance to save him. She took a deep breath and asked, "Have you found any traces of the pill I brought in my father's oral cavity?"

The doctor from the laboratory shook his head and answered, "We've compared the samples and found that the traces of the pill in your father's mouth are different from the pills you brought."

"So you're saying that the pills he last took not only did not help with his condition but also caused him to go into cardiac arrest?"

"Yes. The pills he ingested are lethal to the human heart, and if we were to go by pharmaceutical standards, these pills would be considered highly poisonous. More importantly, we have deduced based on the lab tests that this was not the first time your father has taken these pills; he might have taken them for days prior to his cardiac arrest."

Anastasia's fists clenched under the table, and her palms hurt where her nails dug into them. She was almost certain that Naomi had plotted this against Francis, and the motive behind such a deadly move more likely than not had something to do with Tillman Constructions.

Francis had on several occasions mentioned that he would leave the company to Anastasia. He even joked about having his son take over the reins back in the hospital the other day. Anastasia thought about this, and she wondered if his intentions to deprive Naomi and Erica of getting their share in the company led the woman to commit such a horrendous act.

Knowing Francis, his sentiments for Naomi as her husband prompted him to put his guard down around her. He wouldn't lie to her about any plans he might have for his commercial or personal assets. As such, he definitely told her about the successorship of the company.

Right now, Anastasia would give up succeeding the company if it meant her father could be saved and live out his best life. However, it was all too late. Francis' body had gone into shock, and he was as good as brain-dead.