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Nigel held the ring up and passed it to her. "Just take this ring, then. I ordered it especially for you." "I can't. It's too expensive. I can't take it! You should keep it for yourself! It might come in handy in the future." She rejected him with a smile on her face. "You always do this. I just want to give you the best, but you always reject me. Can you be a little more superficial and money-minded, Anastasia? You should at least enjoy it when people give you expensive stuff." Nigel gazed at her with a rather exasperated look on his face. She smiled as she leaned back on the couch. She was surprised to realize that she had been sweating a little. I was probably too nervous when I was on stage. That makes sense since there were so many people in the crowd. Right then, Nigel's phone began to ring. He held it up to see that it was a call from his dad. "Hey, Dad." "Where are you?" Jonathan's voice sounded rather stern.

"I'm in one of the private rooms, Dad. Is anything the matter?" he asked. "A marriage proposal is a huge thing. Shouldn't you have discussed it with us first?" "I'm sorry that I made the decision on my own, but I'm sure you guys know how much I like Anastasia," Nigel replied in a rather apologetic tone. "We'll talk about this in the future. Your grandmother's looking for you now, so you should go to her!" Jonathan ordered. "Okay," Nigel replied before turning to Anastasia. "My grandmother is looking for me, Anastasia. Let's go meet her together. She'll love you." Anastasia didn't know what to say. I think Nigel doesn't know that I've met his grandmother before. "You go ahead! I need some time to calm down. I was too nervous earlier," she said with a smile. "Did I scare you?" Nigel hurried over with a bottle of water. "Here. Have something to drink." Anastasia twisted the bottle cap open and sipped on her water before urging him to go to Harriet. "Hurry up! Go look for your grandmother!" "Alright. You can just rest here, and I'll come back to you in a while, okay?" Nigel opened the door and

left after that. Anastasia felt a lot more relieved at once, and she gulped down a few mouthfuls of water before pressing her palm against her cheek. She could still feel it burning a little. I'm probably still blushing. Meanwhile, the party outside was still extremely happening. The proposal had hyped everyone up, and everyone was making guesses about Anastasia's family background. She probably has some impressive family background or connections. Otherwise, the young master of the Manson Family wouldn't have put so much effort into proposing to her! "I've never heard of the Tillmans, though!" A few of the ladies were chit-chatting among themselves as they tried to guess Anastasia's identity. "I saw her being friendly with Old Madam Presgrave earlier. I guess she might secretly be from some wealthy family!" another one said. "That's true. She's beautiful and sexy, but we just don't know what industry her family is involved in," someone else commented. Right then, some woman interrupted the crowd's words. "Oh! I think I know the lady who had been proposed to earlier." Few of the ladies spun their heads around to see a younger girl who had a wine glass in her hand. One of the ladies recognized who the younger girl was. Isn't that Old Madam Presgrave's god granddaughter from earlier? "Oh! Tell us about it!" The older women were busybodies, so they were desperate to hear all about Anastasia's past. "Miss Anastasia is just a regular jewelry designer from Bourgeois Jewelry Atelier. Her father owns a company that invests in building materials. Her family background is pretty normal. There's nothing special about her," Hayley uttered. "What? How could someone from a regular family receive a marriage proposal from Young Master Nigel?" one of the older women said. Hayley sneered. "She has her skills, of course!" The way she phrased her sentence made it easy for others to misunderstand the

situation. It sounded like Anastasia was using some other means to win the hearts of the rich. Judging by the looks of these women, they'll probably spread rumors about

Anastasia's regular background soon enough. Let's see how Anastasia's going to hold her head up then! Meanwhile, Anastasia glanced at the time. It was past 8.00PM, and she figured that it was time she left the private room and headed home. It wasn't good to be the center of attention for too long, so she thought it would be best to leave as soon as possible. However, the moment she opened the room door, she felt everyone around her turn to stare at her. Although most of them were giving her looks of admiration, she still preferred not to be seen. She didn't want to have the spotlight. In the end, Anastasia decided to leave without saying goodbye. She lifted the hem of her dress while walking toward the main door. At the same time, Hayley had been walking around in search of Anastasia as she wanted to know what Anastasia was doing. Coincidentally, Hayley caught sight of her target walking toward the main exit. Is she leaving now? Hayley was surprised.

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However, Hayley soon found herself distracted by a tall figure that appeared behind Anastasia. Hayley watched as Elliot walked past the crowd toward Anastasia, and a resentful glare surfaced in her eyes. She put her wine glass aside before following behind Elliot. She wanted to know why he was going after Anastasia. Anastasia had just stepped out of the hall when she heard a man's icy voice calling for her. "Stop there." She instinctively turned around to see Elliot walking over to her. He looked like a prince under the dim light, and his icy glare was fixed on her as he spoke to her in an interrogative tone. "Did you really say yes to Nigel's proposal?" Anastasia was too shocked to say anything for a moment. The whole proposal caused a huge commotion earlier, so Elliot must have seen it as well. Well... Forget it. I don't feel like explaining anything to him. "This is my business," she muttered while pressing a button for the elevator. At that moment, there were only a few waiters standing in the positions by the main entrance. None of the guests were anywhere near them. Elliot narrowed his eyes, and he looked as if he couldn't contain his emotions anymore. He grabbed Anastasia's arm before dragging her aside to a pathway that led to the balcony.

Anastasia was no match for his strength, so she stumbled along in the direction he was pulling her. She could only shout and flail her arms in anger. "Let go of me, Elliot!" But the man didn't seem to care at all, and he simply dragged her toward an empty balcony that was filled with all sorts of expensive plants. It was like a garden that no one knew about. Anastasia gasped for breath while throwing her arms around. The man pushed her into a corner before he leaned his head closer to her. They looked into each other's eyes, their faces close enough for the tips of their noses to touch. When she felt the man's warm breath on her face, she pushed him away angrily before scolding him under her breath. "Are you done fooling around, Elliot?" "Did you really say yes to Nigel's proposal? Are you going to get married to him?" Elliot's question

sounded somewhat gentle, yet there was a hint of iciness in his tone. If she told him that she had said yes, he was going to lose it. "Why is it any of your business?" She turned her face away from him. "Because we share secrets between us that others can't know about," he reminded her through gritted teeth. He made it sound like they really had something going on between them. "That's just because you're a pervert. I don't have any interest toward you, and there's nothing going on between us." Anastasia stiffened her neck as she voiced her disagreement. Her pouty lips looked especially attractive under the dim light, and Elliot had the urge to taste them. All of a sudden, anger flashed in Elliot's gaze

as he suddenly raised his hand and rubbed his thumb across her lips in a harsh manner. "This is the spot I kissed, Anastasia. I don't want other people kissing the same spot, not even Nigel." "You-" Anastasia attempted to protest. However, her lips had just parted to speak when the man pressed his hand against the back of her head before moving closer to her. Her mind went blank for a few seconds, and all she could do was let out a weak moan. For some reason, the man's kiss had some magical effect on her- it made her entire mind and body freeze, and it even triggered some embarrassing bodily reactions. She wished she could slap herself at that moment. "Wu..." Anastasia mumbled as the man brought her arms up above her head. He probably doesn't want to be slapped again, huh? She was starting to lose her patience as the guy continued to touch her. However, neither of them realized that a person was glaring at them with jealousy from behind the door. The person was hidden by a bunch of plants near the door, but she still managed to fix her deadly glare on them. Hayley only used to suspect that something was going on between them, but she finally saw it with her own eyes this time. Hayley saw Elliot and Anastasia entering together, and she watched as the man pulled the woman into his arms without any hesitation. Although Hayley couldn't hear what they were saying, she could see how Elliot and Anastasia's shadows often overlapped one another. They're kissing, she thought. The hall was just next door. Anastasia had just been proposed to, yet she's now sharing an intimate

kiss with the other young master of the Presgrave Family! Hayley felt a sharp ache in her heart that made her feel like she was about to lose her mind. How did Anastasia manage to seduce Elliot? How did she get Elliot to fall for her? Elliot's going for her even though he knows that Nigel has proposed to her.

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Right then, Hayley heard someone coming from behind her. She opened one of the side doors and left the scene as she no longer dared to stay there. The people who came in were a few guests who wanted to discuss business. They needed a quiet space, so they chose that balcony to talk. However, they didn't know that someone else had already taken the spot. Anastasia was about to lose her mind at this point. Is this guy trying to ruin my reputation? But Elliot finally released his grip on her, but he pressed his large palm against the back of her head to stuff her face against her chest. Anastasia had no choice but to stay in his arms as she didn't want others to see her there. Right when the three men entered the balcony, they noticed the people standing at the corner of the space. The three men were stunned to see a tall man standing around with a girl buried in his chest. Elliot shot the three men an icy glare before the three men could make sense of the situation. The three men immediately saw Elliot's face. Isn't that the young master of the Presgrave Family? "We're sorry for disturbing you. Sorry!" The three men immediately turned and hurried off. Once Anastasia was sure that they were gone, she lifted her head angrily. However, her movements were a little too fast, and her forehead struck the man's sharp chin. She gasped in pain before she gave him a furious glare, but all she saw in his eyes was a dark pool of emptiness

-it was like a well that didn't have a bottom. Furthermore, there seemed to be a layer of ice covering the deep well. "I want you to reject Nigel. Otherwise, I'll tell everyone about what happened between us," Elliot warned. "Elliot, you don't think that I'm going to marry you even if I rejected Nigel, right? You can continue dreaming if that's what you think!" Anastasia stormed out of the balcony after spitting her words at him. But she had walked a little too quickly, and she tripped on her gown before falling on the ground near the plants. "Ah..." She gasped in pain as her knee was injured again. The man parted his long legs and walked over to give her a helping hand. "Why are you always so clumsy?" he complained.

"It's none of your business." She pushed his hand away before limping away from him. Would I have fallen down if he hadn't dragged me here? It's all his fault. Elliot pulled his phone out and dialed a number as he watched her walking away. "There's a girl in a gray evening gown who's coming down now. I want you to prepare a car to send her home." After giving his orders, Elliot tugged on his tie. His every move gave off a cool and intimidating aura, which made others fear and admire him at the same time. He was simply too eye-catching. When Anastasia got downstairs, the hotel manager came up to her. "Are you heading home, Miss? We're providing private drivers for our guests tonight." She had just been worrying about how she would get a cab in the area, so she immediately nodded after hearing what the manager said. "Yes. I'm leaving now." "Follow me, please." The manager pointed toward a car, and he opened the backseat door for her to get in. She felt much more relaxed after entering the car. I should've rejected this invitation from the start. I shouldn't have come. Anastasia managed to leave the event, but she had offended quite a few people that night. She hadn't just triggered Hayley; she had also infuriated Leah. Leah was going all around the place while asking for information related to Anastasia—she wanted to gather all the knowledge that she could find about Anastasia. Soon enough, one of the lady guests there told Leah that Anastasia was just a regular jewelry designer from a normal family. Anastasia wasn't the type of girl who could meet the standards of the Manson Family at all. This reinforced Leah's belief that she would eventually be the one to get married to Nigel. She wasn't about to let other girls snatch him away from her. Hayley, on the other hand, was trembling in rage. When she thought about how Anastasia and Elliot had made out with each other, she felt as if someone had stabbed her in the chest. Meanwhile, Harriet gazed at her grandson, Nigel, with a look of surprise. They were having a chat in one of the rooms. "Did Anastasia really save your life, Nigel?" "Yeah! I wouldn't be here today if it weren't for her, Grandma. That accident was too dangerous. I would have been blown into pieces if she hadn't dragged me out of the car," Nigel replied in a firm voice.

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Harriet instantly pressed her palm against her chest. "Alright. You need to stop scaring me like that." "Calm down, Grandma." Nigel immediately went over to rub her back before smiling. "Do you think Anastasia would make a good granddaughter-in-law, Grandma?" Harriet let out a sigh in her heart. Us Presgraves will forever be indebted to the Tillmans. Anastasia's mother saved one of my grandsons, while Anastasia saved my other grandson. They've done too much for us. "Do you really like Anastasia, Nigel? What about her? Does she like you?" Harriet asked curiously. "Of course. We've been together for nearly two years now, and we're really close to each other," he replied.

"If that's the case, then of course I would support the idea of you going after Anastasia. You can get married to her and take good care of her son," Harriet uttered. "How did you know she has a son, Grandma?" Nigel was surprised. "I'll tell you about this in the future. Anyway, I just hope you get married to her, Nigel." Harriet let out a hearty laugh. It didn't matter which one of her grandsons got married to Anastasia because the Presgraves would take good care of Anastasia as long as she entered the family. Right then, one of the hotel staff members opened the door to lead a tall, handsome figure into the room. Elliot had arrived. The moment Nigel saw his cousin there, Nigel gave Harriet a firm pat on her shoulder. "Thank you for your support, Grandma. I'll make sure to turn Anastasia into my wife and your granddaughter-in-law," he said in a loud voice. "Great. I'll be waiting to attend your wedding. Don't make me wait for too long!" Harriet replied. "I won't," Nigel promised. Then, he flashed a smile in his love rival's direction. "You should look forward to my wedding too, Elliot!" he uttered confidently. Elliot found a spot to sit down before sending a stern glare in Nigel's direction. "Say that again when she

agrees to marry you.” “She already said yes to my proposal,” Nigel replied arrogantly. You’ll have to take a step back this time, Elliot!

“That’s great. I’ll be waiting for your good news, Nigel.” Harriet patted Nigel on his shoulder while looking at him with joy-filled eyes. “I’ll go look for Mom and Dad now, Grandma.” After finishing his words, Nigel gave Elliot a long, thoughtful stare before heading out of the room. Harriet turned to her other grandson while talking to him with a bright look in her eyes. “I had no idea that Anastasia was the one who saved Nigel in the past, Elliot. Our family’s fate is really tied to Anastasia. You should let her be with Nigel, Elliot! I told you to marry her in the past, but you didn’t want to do it anyway.” Elliot lifted his teacup to sip some tea before replying. “Okay,” he answered. “Do you like Hayley? Do you want to marry her?” Harriet asked in a curious tone. “No,” he answered. “That’s fine, then. You can provide her with some material compensation. Hayley’s a little too manipulative. I don’t really like her.” Harriet was straightforward with her words, and she had always been good at reading people. Elliot nodded, and Harriet let out another sigh. “Anastasia’s finally going to be a part of our family. I’m so happy,” she said. If Harriet knew that both of her grandsons had fallen for Anastasia, perhaps she would’ve felt a little more troubled. After about 30 minutes, Anastasia arrived home. She took a shower and changed into her pajamas. Francis had left by then, so she sat on the couch with Jared in her lap, and they watched some Animal Planet together. The time she spent with her son felt calm and peaceful, yet Anastasia found herself losing focus as she watched the show. All she could think about was the nasty stuff that Elliot had done to her that day. I can’t believe he forcefully kissed me twice in one night. How unlucky can I get? “Who are you thinking about, Mommy? Is it Mr. Presgrave or Mr. Manson?” Jared turned his head to stare at his mother. Anastasia immediately tried to explain herself. “It’s neither one of them! I’m thinking about my work!” Anastasia was still thinking about Elliot even as she was trying to go to bed at night. I’m so annoyed. He’s occupying my mind even when he’s not by my side. It was a new day the next morning.

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Anastasia was in high spirits as she sent her son off to school. After giving Jared a flying kiss, she hailed a cab to head to work. Once she arrived at the office, she put all of her focus into her work. She managed to reply to a few emails before going off for their morning meeting. Felicia had been rather pushy about launching new products for the company, and the design department had to produce the latest designs that would help with their sales. During the meeting, Felicia praised Anastasia for her work as Anastasia’s designs had received great feedback from the general public. Her designs were a good match for the market, and it was already the hit product in many stores. Even so, she took her compliments without being too arrogant about it. After that, Felicia made another announcement. “The finance department just gave us a call. They told us that they will release the prize money a little earlier this time, so it’ll probably be out by this afternoon. You guys should check your bank account in a bit, Anastasia and Alice.”

Alice turned her gaze toward Anastasia all of a sudden. There was an unfriendly look in her eyes. Anastasia noticed it, but she just ignored it as she didn’t know what Alice was trying to do. After the meeting, Anastasia returned to the office. Soon enough, she heard the notification of her bank account. She opened it to see seven zero’s. Oh my god. I didn’t expect the finance department to be so enthusiastic about handing out money. They deserve a huge thumbs up. Anastasia felt much more motivated to work after receiving the cash prize, and she finished three drafts all at once. She was even

satisfied with all three of them. Right then, her landline began to ring. "Hello?" She picked the call up. "Hello? Is this Anastasia? I'd like to tell you some inside news. Elliot was the one who arranged for you to win the prize. If you were relying on your own skills, you would've gotten third place at most. You'd never get first place with your standard." Anastasia's expression changed immediately. "Who are you? How do you know about this?" "It doesn't matter who I am. What I'm telling you is the truth. You only got this prize because of Elliot. He was the one who called the chairman of my company. You can ask him if you don't believe what I'm

saying. Most of the competition's judges as well as the organizing committee know about this." The man ended the call after that. Anastasia was still in a daze, but she could feel her face turning hot. She could hear her ears ringing as if someone had given her an invisible slap. It's true. Elliot was the one who gave me this prize. I didn't truly deserve all of this cash. Her entire body felt like it was boiling, and she could feel her heart pounding harder than usual. She grabbed her phone and walked out of the office without any hesitation. Alice had been sitting by the window, and she spread her lips into a cold smirk when she saw Anastasia storming out of the office. Will she still claim the cash prize for herself now? Alice thought. After what happened with Ben previously, Alice managed to contact him to ask for some inside news regarding the prize. Then, she contacted another one of the internal managers to help her make that call. Alice wouldn't allow Anastasia to become more recognized than she was-ideally, Alice wanted this whole incident to go viral so that Anastasia's name would be ruined. Anastasia took a deep breath after arriving at the elevator. She decided that she wouldn't take the money anymore. Even the trophy felt like a form of embarrassment to her. If Elliot's going to use such manners to thank me, I'm not going to accept his good intentions at all. Once Anastasia got to the president's office, she knocked on the door. "Come in," said a man's deep voice. She pushed the door open to find Elliot sitting in the office. It seemed like he was extremely busy because there were piles of documents covering his table. "Were you the one who pulled strings for me to get the prize that I received? Tell me the truth." Anastasia smacked both her hands on his desk as she tried her best to remain calm and rational about the situation. He took a long gaze at her, and he realized that he didn't have the ability to lie to her at that moment. So, he gave her a soft nod. "Why did you do that? Were you trying to thank me? I don't need you to do that, Elliot. From now on, I don't need you to give me any special benefits in the company. I don't need you to get involved with anything that I do at all, okay?" She sounded like she was begging him by the end of her sentence.

A rather stunned look surfaced on Elliot's face as he stared at her. All he had intended to do was to help her-he had never wanted to hurt her.

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"I'll tell the finance department to take their funds back, and I'll return the trophy to the organizer. I don't need your generosity." Anastasia turned to leave after finishing her words, but the man behind her stood up immediately. "Wait," he barked. Her body froze before she turned to look at him. "Is anything else the matter, President Presgrave?" "I'll not meddle with your work-related stuff, but I would still like to care for you and Jared personally," he uttered in a clear manner. "There's no need for that. Thank you." She rejected him firmly. "What about Nigel? Would you take his help if he offered it to you?" Elliot shot her an angry glare. "He and I are friends, while I'm just your subordinate at work. We're practically strangers if we don't work together," Anastasia replied flatly. She turned to leave once more. Strangers? Elliot took a while to digest her words. I don't want us just to be strangers. I finally have a

clear understanding of my feelings toward her after last night, and I'm not about to let her go. I know that she didn't truly say yes to Nigel's proposal; Nigel doesn't even know about her past.

Anastasia's past made it hard for her to be with any guy as her heart was protected by an invincible shield. Although his grandmother had told him to give up on her, he had just realized that it was too late at this point. He had fallen in too deep, and he couldn't tear himself away from this woman anymore. After that, Anastasia headed downstairs to meet Felicia. She told Felicia everything about the reward, but Felicia didn't seem too impressed. Is she an idiot? Felicia thought. Why would she want to let all of this go? Even if Elliot was the one who had gotten her this trophy and money, she should just appreciate her luck. "No. I don't want this money, and I don't want the trophy either," Anastasia insisted. "If you do this, your reputation will be ruined as well. Everyone will know about how you relied on connections to get your prize. Are you sure you want to sacrifice your reputation for this?" Felicia asked. "Do I have a choice? The whole judge panel knows about this, and I feel like a joke to all of them. I'd

rather they laugh at me for one month than for the rest of my life," she explained. Felicia didn't know what else to do, so she let out a sigh. "You're the most stubborn person I know. Sure, I'll gladly hand the trophy to someone else. I'll get this done for you!" "Thank you, Felicia," Anastasia uttered happily. After Anastasia returned to the office, she felt like she had just come back from war. Her entire body was sore. She sipped on some water and zoned out for a while. Right then, she noticed someone sending flowers to the front entrance of the office. Soon enough, Grace pushed the office door open with a smile on her face. "The flowers are for you, Anastasia." Anastasia didn't need to think to know who had sent her the flowers. She eyed the relatively pricey blue roses as she felt a headache forming. She had no choice but to take them in. After bringing the flowers to her desk, she gave Nigel a call. "Hey! Did you get the flowers? Do you like them?" Nigel asked with a smile. "Stop sending me flowers, Nigel. I'm serious. It affects my work." Anastasia didn't want to attract too much attention to herself. "Can't I give you flowers?" He sounded rather hurt. "We can keep in contact, and we can have meals together, but I just don't want you to send flowers, okay? It's a request," she replied. "Deal. I'll buy you lunch today, then. I'm at the building opposite your company. I just started renovating my office," Nigel explained with a smile. "Fine! Let me buy this meal." Anastasia was speechless. "Okay. I'll see you later," he replied. By 11.30AM, Nigel was already waiting by her company's front door. When he was there, a black car came to a halt in front of him, and Rey walked past him with a stack of folders in his arms. Rey walked over to greet Nigel when he saw Nigel's car. "Good afternoon, Young Master Nigel," Rey greeted. Nigel smiled. "Are you here to drop off some documents?" he asked. "Yeah! President Presgrave is working here," Rey replied. "My cousin has a huge office, yet he insists on working in your company. I wonder why..?" Nigel asked

in a thoughtful tone. i Rey pushed his glasses up while smiling. "I don't know the actual reason for this."

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"Cool. You should go ahead, then. I'll be here waiting for my girlfriend to have lunch with me." The two men waved goodbye. Rey had just walked into the office lobby when he saw Anastasia heading out with her bag. "Are you going for lunch, Miss Tillman?" "Yeah!" She beamed at Rey. Rey took the elevator up to the eighth floor. When he saw Elliot sitting by the desk, he told Elliot about what he saw. "I bumped into Young Master Nigel downstairs, President Presgrave. He came over to bring Miss Tillman out for lunch." Elliot had been signing some papers, but one of his strokes turned crooked after he heard his assistant's words. He frowned as he completed his signature. After Nigel and Anastasia got to the

restaurant, Nigel told her about the renovation that was going on in his office. "I prepared a space for you, Anastasia. In the future, you can always go over to my office if you need some inspiration at work. I'll make sure that the design of the place is really trendy and aesthetic," he said.

Anastasia nearly spat her tea out of her mouth. She looked up and stared at him with a rather helpless expression on her face. "Why did you prepare a room for me?" she cried. "If you no longer want to be a designer in the future, you can just work with me. I'll give you a high-paying job." Nigel was already planning for the future. "Are you trying to headhunt me now? Designing is the only type of work I'm capable of. I don't know how to do anything else." "That's no big deal. I just acquired a jewelry store, so you can always work there." Nigel looked her in the eye for a moment before his eyes lit up. "That's right! Why didn't I think of that earlier?" "Stop being so stubborn, Young Master Nigel. I don't think we'll even be able to remain as friends if you continue acting like this. I just want us to be friends I don't want you to give me anything else." For the rest of their meal, Nigel continued to find ways to convince Anastasia to work at his company, and she got really frustrated by the end of it. After lunch, Anastasia got back to her office just in time to have

Alice barge into her room with a cold smirk on her face. "I heard you returned your trophy. The entire company knows how you won the competition now. Don't you feel ashamed to continue staying here?" Anastasia looked up at her. "You were the one who got someone to call me this morning, right?" Alice hadn't expected Anastasia to be smart enough to realize this, but Alice didn't bother to hide anything. "Ah, this world is truly filled with people lacking both skill and intellect!" Alice let out a hearty laugh. Anastasia felt her face turning red at the other woman's offensive words. "We're still colleagues, so I don't want to argue with you. Please leave now." Anastasia held the door open for Alice to leave. "I'll make sure you leave this company soon, Anastasia." Alice wasn't afraid to reveal her true intentions. Anastasia responded with a sneer. "We'll see if you have such skills," she replied. Alice shot her a side glare before she left. The more Anastasia thought about it, the angrier she felt. I might have gotten third place if Elliot hadn't messed with this thing. Ah! How frustrating. She had been checking her drafts when Grace knocked on the door and came in with a girl behind her. The girl was dressed in all sorts of branded clothes and accessories. "This girl says she wants to see you, Miss Tillman," Grace announced. Right after that, Grace scanned their visitor with a look of admiration in her eyes-the girl was carrying one of the latest models of a branded handbag! Anastasia eyed the girl with a look of surprise. She didn't know who the girl was at all, so she stood up out of courtesy. "Hello. Can I know why you came to see me?" Leah scanned Anastasia's office for a while before her gaze landed on the blue roses that had been placed on a chair in the corner. A hint of jealousy flashed in her eyes before she turned to stare at Anastasia with a haughty look. "Let me introduce myself. My name is Leah Hart, and I'm here to talk about your engagement with Nigel." Anastasia immediately understood the situation. She isn't a guest. She's here to cause trouble. Before Anastasia could say anything, Leah took out a silver card before throwing it onto Anastasia's table. "Here's 10 million. I want you to leave Nigel." Anastasia froze as she stared at the silver card and the disdainful look in the woman's eyes. For some

reason, Anastasia felt like she was being shamed and offended. She pushed the card back to the girl. "I know you have a lot of money, Miss Hart. But I don't need this money."

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Leah curled her lips into an icy smirk. "I've asked around about you before coming here today, Anastasia. You're just a regular jewelry designer and a single mother. You'll never be able to earn 10

million even if you worked for the rest of your life.” “Well, I’m not a money-minded person. You need to stop using your wealth to shame others. Take your money with you! If you like Nigel, that’s between you and him. Don’t drag me into this.” Anastasia stood up as she didn’t want the other woman to look down on her. Leah frowned as she took a good look at Anastasia. Although Anastasia was dressed in her work outfit, she still looked extremely pretty and youthful. She had the typical sexy but innocent look that most men fancied. “I heard that you saved Nigel in the past, which is why I’m being relatively nice to you. However, I also want you to know that Nigel’s parents and mine have already made plans to matchmake Nigel and me. You won’t be able to stop us, so you should just step back for your own good.” A confident look surfaced in Leah’s eyes as she spread her red lips into a scornful smirk. Anastasia wasn’t sure if what Leah was doing was considered nice since Leah had used her money to shame her the moment Leah entered her room. She was mocking me from the moment she walked in. Even if I don’t get married to Nigel, I wouldn’t want him to marry a woman like her, Anastasia thought. “I’m sorry, but I’m really busy, Miss Hart. You can leave now if you have nothing else to say.” Anastasia didn’t want to waste time with her as there wasn’t a point in doing so.

“You...” Leah felt anger boiling in her. Why isn’t Anastasia taking this seriously? Isn’t my wealth and status enough to make her afraid of me? “How rich and powerful you are is your business, Miss Hart. I believe in a society governed by laws where all people are equal. You’re not above nor below me, so you have no right to use your money to mess with my life.” Anastasia made a firm statement. Leah was speechless once more. “You... You must have lived under a rock this whole time, Anastasia. That’s not how the world runs.”

Anastasia’s expression darkened once more. “If you wish to talk about how smart you are, please do it somewhere else. Stop disturbing my work.” Shame spread across Leah’s face. She didn’t know how to deal with Anastasia since Anastasia didn’t seem threatened by her at all. “Leave Nigel, or I’ll do something bad to you.” Leah pressed her hands on the table as she gave Anastasia a malicious glare. Anastasia wasn’t afraid and simply stood up to speak to her from the same eye level. “You seem pretty confident, Miss Hart. Why don’t you tell me once you win Nigel’s heart? You seem pretty confident, anyway. There’s no point in threatening me now.” “You...” Leah’s face turned red as Anastasia walked to the door and opened it for her. “Here you go, Miss Hart.” Leah glared at Anastasia once more before she charged out and slammed the door behind her. Anastasia let out a long sigh-she finally understood what Elliot meant when they last spoke at the dinner party. Elliot had told her to stay away from Nigel, as he had said that she would offend other people if she didn’t do so. It seems like I just offended one of those people. Why did I go to that party at all? None of this would happen if I didn’t go to the event. Anastasia had just returned to her seat when her phone rang. It was a call from her father. “Hey, Dad.” “Are you free, Anastasia? I want you to go somewhere with me,” Francis said. “Is it something important, Dad?” “Um, it’ll be helpful when you manage a company in the future. I’m reaching your office in a while. You should take the rest of the day off and come with me!” he ordered firmly. “But Dad, I...” she protested. “This is a good opportunity, Anastasia. I don’t want you to miss out on this. Come down!” he said. again. She took a look at the time. It was 2.50PM, and she had just sent her drafts to Felicia, so she didn’t have much left to do. Eventually, she gave Felicia a call. “I’d like to take the rest of the day off, Felicia.” After applying for her half-day off, she grabbed her bag and headed downstairs. Meanwhile, Rey looked at the man who was screening through documents in the president’s office.

“President Presgrave, Mr. Lehmann took over the presidential role this time, but he seems to have his own contact when it comes to building materials. I think you might need to go there to greet them on your own.”

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Elliot shut his files and glanced at the clock. “Let’s go!” Anastasia questioned her father the moment she got in his car. “What’s this important thing you’re talking about, Dad? Why do you need me to be there?” “I’m bringing you to an auction. Our company hopes to acquire one of the projects being offered. At the same time, I also want you to observe the process so that you know how it works when you take over the company.”

Anastasia blinked. Isn’t he planning a little too far ahead into the future? “You’re still young, Dad. It’ll be at least another ten years before I take over anything!” She let out an exasperated laugh. “I just wanted to have you prepared a little earlier so that you wouldn’t be too confused when you actually take over the company. I really want you to understand this industry.” Francis was a man with foresight. Furthermore, he had been feeling weaker in recent days—he had to admit that he was growing old. Anastasia had no choice but to go along with her father’s plans since it was what he wanted her to do. The auction was a grand event held in some company, and Francis led Anastasia over to meet up with his assistant before they entered the hall together. They all found seats toward the back of the room, and Anastasia watched as more people walked in. This seems like a really huge auction. Will Dad’s company get a chance? She held a water bottle up and sipped on her drink while glancing at her surroundings. She was relatively curious about her surroundings, and she glanced around the room for a while before her gaze landed on two people who were entering the room. Anastasia was close to spitting her drink out on the person in front of her, but she shut her lips just in time to swallow the liquid in her mouth. It wasn’t just big bosses with huge bellies who were entering the room—there were also people of other shapes and sizes. The two men who had just walked in, for example, had lanky and tall figures that gave off a different aura. It was Elliot and Rey. Both of them were dressed in suits, and their sharp appearances had a huge impact on everyone who was glancing around the room.

Anastasia would’ve never expected to bump into Elliot in such a noisy and crowded place. Is he here for the auction too? She watched him as he slithered through the crowd. He hadn’t noticed her at all, and he simply followed Rey over to take seats at lower tiers of the hall. In the end, Elliot got seats in the front row—Anastasia watched as he sat down beside a severely balding man. They looked like they were discussing something. Anastasia couldn’t stop herself from standing up in curiosity. However, Francis tapped her on the shoulder. “Sit down, Anastasia. The meeting is starting soon.” If Elliot is here for the auction, then the rest of the bosses can just take a break, she thought. Do they still have a reason to be here? Dad’s company won’t stand much of a chance either. But after a few minutes, Anastasia saw Elliot standing up. By staring at his back, she could tell that he was fixing his suit. Rey stood up beside him, and they both shook hands with the bald man beside them as they continued chatting for a while. The bald man reached his hand out to send them off—he looked as if he were sending gods off to heaven. Perhaps Anastasia had been staring at the man for too long, for the man suddenly looked up. Both of them exchanged glances, and the man froze instantly. He narrowed his eyes to stare at her—he hadn’t expected to see her in a place like this either. Things made a little more sense when he saw her father beside her. Anastasia and Elliot gazed at each other for a while more—one of them had eyes full of curiosity while the other one had a rather cryptic look. Elliot suddenly decided to stay and turned to

address Rey. "Find us a spot to sit," he ordered. After that, Elliot walked over to the seats one row above where Anastasia was standing. When Rey saw Anastasia, he gave her a friendly wave, and she smiled back at him. As she turned around, she found herself staring at the familiar face of a man who had just sat down. Since Anastasia's father was around, she couldn't really say much to Elliot. Furthermore, the auction was about to begin.

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On the other hand, Anastasia never thought about what the person on stage was saying. She instead wanted to ask Elliot what he was doing here, but with her father there, she had no way of chatting with Elliot. "Do we have hope, Dad?" she asked her father softly. Francis shook his head in reply. "Beats me." At any rate, his company was also participating in the bid. While it wasn't clear whether they had any chance to win, Lady Luck was recently smiling on him. Every time he felt like there was no hope, his company would ultimately be chosen. It meant that Francis had to give it a try, no matter what. Meanwhile, Elliot was staring at the long, flowing hair that covered the woman's attractive back. The persistent gaze on the back of her head made Anastasia feel extremely uncomfortable. There were four projects up for bidding today and the one that Francis had his eye on was the second one. After the company that won the first bid was announced, the second bid quickly followed and he couldn't help clenching his fists in anticipation. Upon hearing the name of her father's company among the bidders for the second project, Anastasia had also tensed up as she hoped that her father would win the bid.

On second thought, she shouldn't have too much hope. "After extensive investigation and comprehensive consideration, we have decided to award the bid for this magnificent project to the following company-Tillman Constructions! Congratulations!" the host onstage announced loudly. As Anastasia's head spun, Francis slapped his thighs. "We got it!" Sure enough, his luck was fantastic! On the other hand, she could see several conflicted, incredulous, and even unreadable glances aimed at them. At this moment, someone in front of them harrumphed loudly, "How could such a small company win

such a large bid? They must have used their connections to get someone strong to back them up!" As Francis' expression turned ugly, Anastasia had to swallow her resentment on her father's behalf as well. What was that person talking about?! "Look at how good my luck has been recently, Anastasia. We have won the tender for such a large project!" Francis happily told her. Anastasia was happy for her father as well, but it was at that moment when her mind screeched to a halt as she couldn't help looking over her shoulder at Elliot. Elliot coincidentally met her gaze while she stared at him curiously, doubtfully, and with surprise. After glancing at her, he stood up and walked away with Rey following behind him. By that point, Anastasia's speculation was much clearer as she hurriedly stood up and left the room through a side door, after which she jogged toward the main entrance. In the lobby, Elliot was quickly heading off with Rey. Making a mad dash after them, Anastasia stopped at the lobby doors and reached out to block their path of retreat. "Was it you, Elliot?" she questioned loudly. "Did my dad win the bid because of you?" Her mind was buzzing. Why does this man show up everywhere? Why does everything have to do with him? Staring indifferently at her, he answered, "It has nothing to do with me." "I don't believe you. Why did you come to the bid, then?" Anastasia persisted. "I have no need to explain myself to you." Elliot narrowed his eyes like he was looking at a stranger. "It was you, wasn't it? My father's company wouldn't be strong enough to win the bid otherwise! Tell me whether it was you!" There was only one answer that Anastasia wanted. "Please stop making things difficult for President Presgrave, Miss Elliot."

Rey was finding it difficult to watch the interaction. “What are you hiding? Why don’t you dare to tell the truth?” With bright eyes, Anastasia glared at Elliot, not letting him go. “I don’t need your interference with my family matters, Elliot Presgrave. Don’t you understand that?” She was truly shocked. How could it be so difficult for her to refuse his repayment? Rey suddenly interrupted, “Your father’s company wouldn’t have been able to survive all these years

without the help of President Presgrave, Miss Tillman.” “Shut up,” Elliot warned Rey. Nevertheless, Anastasia lost all of her strength to fight. Did that mean that Tillman Constructions had always needed Elliot’s help? Did that also mean that the expansion of Tillman Constructions in these few short years was not because of her father’s luck and hard work, but because there had always been someone aiding Francis behind the scenes?