

## **N Destiny 71**

### Chapter 71

Anastasia was grateful upon hearing Harriet's kind intention, but nonetheless, she shook her head firmly. "You have no idea how thankful I am to know that you've never forgotten about my mother, but I don't need you to repay me any favor. In fact, I only came here to say hello, not to accept any kind of offer."

An agitated Harriet seized Anastasia's hand. "Girl, your mother is gone, which makes it my responsibility to take care of you. Please! Let me treat you as my granddaughter."

Anastasia had no one else in her family other than her father ever since her grandparents passed away. Therefore, she couldn't help but feel touched in the face of Harriet's benevolent smile.

"Girl, just think of me as your relative whom you can visit once in a while, okay? I know you and your mother are both righteous ladies, and I'm not asking for a lot because all I ever want is for you to live happily and peacefully." Harriet sincerely gazed at Anastasia while looking forward to hearing her answer.

Soon, Anastasia eventually surrendered because she had no idea how to turn down the old madam. Although it was her first time meeting Harriet, she somehow had an intimate feeling that she hadn't felt for a long time. Thinking that she was blessed and fortunate to have a grandmother like Harriet, Anastasia nodded and responded, "Alright, Old Madam Presgrave."

Then, Harriet smiled happily and replied, "Great! Then, I have one more granddaughter now."

"Old Madam Presgrave, it's time for you to take your medication now."

"Oh yeah! I still have to take my medication, Anastasia. Please take a seat first or take a walk around the garden. I'll come to you later."

"Sure, please go ahead and take your medication." Anastasia nodded and watched Harriet leave, making her way to the garden as she was reluctant to head to the living room because she didn't want to see Hayley's face.

Meanwhile, Elliot was showing Hayley around the Presgrave Residence when they took a stroll in the garden. Then, he stared at her face with his piercing gaze and asked, "Why didn't you tell me that you came to visit Grandma, Hayley?"

Nonetheless, little did Elliot know that Hayley was actually just doing what she could

to protect her interest because she wanted to keep her position level with Anastasia. If she is going to make the Presgrave Family pay her back, I'm going to earn their approval to even the odds.

"I'm in love with you, Elliot. I want to take things further with you." Hayley gazed at the man with admiration as she completely bared her heart.

"Hayley, I'll make it up to you by giving you comfort and money," Elliot answered gently, knowing clearly what he was doing. Deep down, he was sure that he would only make it up to her without compromising his relationship status.

Meanwhile, Hayley was about to tell that he had been treating her really well lately by giving her everything she wanted, but unfortunately, she wanted more than that. "Elliot, are you in love with Anastasia?" She looked up and asked, her eyes filled with resentment and bigotry.

Nonetheless, Elliot only squinted without giving her an answer.

Hayley pretended to smile bitterly. "Well, Anastasia hates me, especially now that she knows we were once together before. Furthermore, she was violated in the past, which left her scarred and distrustful toward men."

Elliot's face froze for a few seconds. Deep down, he somehow didn't like to hear anything about Anastasia with any other man. "Alright, that's enough," the man replied, appearing a little absent-minded.

At that moment, she suddenly caught a glimpse of a silhouette coming in their direction from behind the bushes and quickly realized it was Anastasia. Thus, she immediately collapsed into Elliot's embrace on

purpose, tightly wrapping her arms around his waist. "Elliot, you're the first man I ever gave myself to, but I swear I will never fall in love with any other man in my life. I love you, Elliot."

He froze, keeping his head down with his eyes on Hayley as he was caught off guard by her unexpected confession. He calmly comforted her in panic and said, "Please don't do this, Hayley."

"No! I can still remember your kiss and your every breath that night, the way you went wild when you were on me..."

In the meantime, Anastasia was disgusted by Hayley and Elliot's touchy-feely interaction when she thought her walk in the garden would be peaceful and undisturbed. Oh gosh! Can't they pick some place else to do what they're doing? This is embarrassing!

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Elliot then pushed Hayley's hand off him and backed away, distancing himself from her while keeping his eyes on her face. "I know I must be responsible now that I have found you."

Meanwhile, Hayley looked like an injured kitten, pouting as the tears swam in her eyes. "Alright, I trust you, Elliot. You're the person whom I trust the most in this world. Therefore, all I ever want is to stay by your side throughout my life and go nowhere else. I want to be protected and feel needed by you."

A sympathetic Elliot patted her shoulder. "Alright, just stop crying, okay? You aren't going to look pretty with a tear-stained face."

Soon, she kept her head down bashfully like a flower and set her eyes somewhere on the bushes far away, feeling gleeful that Anastasia must have heard their conversation. At the same time, Elliot was able to detect movements behind him with his keen hearing as he shouted, "Who is there? Show yourself!"

Nonetheless, Anastasia had no intention to continue hiding, so she emerged from behind the bushes with nothing to fear. When Elliot saw her, his gaze was filled with complicated emotions because he couldn't help but wonder whether she had heard the conversation between him and Hayley.

“Anastasia...” Hayley exclaimed.

Anastasia curled her lips and smiled glacially. “Carry on. Just pretend that I’m not here because I’m just passing by.”

“What did Grandma tell you, Anastasia?” Hayley immediately approached Anastasia, referring to Harriet as Grandma in an intimate manner.

“Why should I tell you?” Anastasia raised her eyebrow coldly.

“I’m just asking, so please take it easy,” Hayley responded with a brittle smile.

“Stop feigning innocence, Hayley. You and I both know what kind of person you are.” Anastasia wished she could just unmask Hayley’s hypocrisy and expose her true nature to Elliot.

Hayley seemingly abandoned her ego and tearfully apologized, “I’m sorry, Anastasia. – If it hadn’t been for me back then, you wouldn’t have...”.

Anastasia’s face turned pale as she coldly interrupted the lady, “Shut up! Don’t make me hate you even more.”

After being stunned, Hayley turned to Elliot for comfort. In the meantime, he knew which incident they were referring to and was able to tell from Anastasia’s pale face that she had experienced a nightmarish experience that she would never want to talk about again.

“Wait for me in the parlor, Hayley. I’d like to have a word with Miss Tillman in private.” Elliot spoke to Hayley.

Despite her reluctance to give them the opportunity to speak with each other privately, Hayley didn’t dare to risk rubbing Elliot the wrong way, so she decided to nod obediently and walk away.,

Watching Hayley leave, Anastasia wanted to ignore him after hearing Hayley mention her one-night stand with him. Ew! It's disgusting to even think about it. To imagine how he was wild when he was on top of Hayley really makes me want to puke. Soon, she began to conclude that his desire had made him eager and desperate when she recalled how touchy-feely he tried to be with her as well. I guess that's why people say men never behave themselves until the day they die.

"Anastasia, Hayley told me what happened to you, but since what's done is done, let's just put it behind you and move on." Elliot watched as she walked away and comforted her.

Anastasia stopped in her tracks, knowing what Hayley was up to. Deep down, she knew Hayley would only exaggerate her checkered past and made her story sound even more pathetic than it was to Elliot. Therefore, she couldn't help but wonder whether the man was showing her pity, but nonetheless, she wasn't about to accept his sympathy.

After all, the man, with whom she had a one-night stand, had done her mentality a great deal of harm, but fortunately, her son's presence managed to heal her trauma and almost made her forget what happened that night five years ago. For that, she didn't even bother to think about it, let alone bring it up.

"Worry about yourself, Young Master Elliot!" Anastasia grunted.

"In that case, what can I do for you?" Elliot fixed his gaze on the lady's pale face, his heart pounding.

"Yes, from now on, take Hayley with you and stay away from me." She walked away as soon as she finished her sentence.

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As he watched Anastasia walk away, Elliot could sense the tenacity and strong will from her despite her petite figure, which made him feel helpless. At that moment, a maid came over to him and announced, "Young Master Elliot, Old Madam Presgrave is waiting for you in the dining area."

While Elliot nodded and walked away with the maid, Hayley was on her way to the parlor but became lost in the huge garden. Therefore, she was forced to follow her gut while making her way out of there,

somehow finding her surroundings rather quiet. Then, she saw an ancient-looking pavilion not far away and thought that she could ask somewhere there for directions.

However, just when she approached, she heard an old lady's voice from behind the curtains. "Old Madam Presgrave, are you sure you're going to make Young Master Elliot marry Miss Tillman? What about Miss Seymour?"

Then, the old madam firmly replied, "My decision remains the same. The only woman whom Elliot should ever marry is Anastasia. As for Hayley, I'll make sure Elliot makes it up to her with money and comfort. For some reason, I just don't seem to click well with Hayley as I can't help but feel that she is a little too scheming and manipulative. Anyway, Anastasia is the only granddaughter-in-law I'll ever approve of."

Upon hearing that, Hayley held her breath in horror as soon as she recognized Harriet's voice. Oh dear! Despite the show I tried to put this morning, she is still not satisfied with me? What's worse is that she only wants Anastasia to be her granddaughter-in-law.

Hayley was overwhelmed by her resentment when she suddenly heard footsteps approaching her. Thus, she quickly hid in the bushes under a tree and tried to remain as still as possible.

"Are you looking for me, Grandma?" Elliot's voice was heard.

Harriet looked at her grandson and lectured, "What happened back then, Elliot? How did you end up doing something as absurd as having a one-night stand with Hayley?"

"I'm sorry, Grandma. I was set up and deprived of my sober mind to think straight."

"Well, you're taking the responsibility you should for your mistake, so I don't blame you for that, but how are you going to settle your issue with Miss Seymour?" Harriet -questioned her grandson harshly.

"I'm already doing what I can to make it up to her."

“Alright, I’m not going to interfere with your matter, but I want you to remember one thing-the only granddaughter-in-law I’ll ever approve of is Anastasia. If she agrees to marry you, she’ll become the Young Mistress of the Presgrave Family, but if she doesn’t, you better treat her right for your whole life,” she spoke to Elliot in an unwavering manner.

Although Hayley couldn’t see the expression on the man’s face, she felt like she had just fallen into a pool of ice water. I only want to live a comfortable and wealthy life, but why won’t Anastasia stop getting in my way? No! I will not let Anastasia take away what’s mine!

Soon, she heard Elliot’s terse reply that sounded as if it was a sharp blade that plunged through her heart. “Okay.” So, Elliot has no plan to marry me from the beginning. Not long after that, she quietly sneaked away and ran into a maid, whom she asked for directions to make her way back to the parlor.

While lunch was ready a few moments later, Anastasia eventually decided to stick around due to her awkward schedule in spite of her initial reluctance to do so. After everyone had gathered around the dining table, Harriet politely told Hayley to dig in. “Please help yourself, Miss Seymour. Just make yourself at home.”

“Alright, Grandma.” Hayley smiled and nodded while hoping that the old madam was dead.

“You too, Anastasia. Help yourself.” Harriet gazed at Anastasia, as if she was her own granddaughter.

“Alright, sure.” Anastasia proceeded to help herself with the meal.

After lunch, Harriet went on to treat the two ladies to some dessert while Elliot made his way upstairs for some rest. Lying on the couch, the man appeared to be disturbed and distraught as he couldn’t stop thinking about Hayley and Anastasia. The most there is between me and Hayley is the one-night stand we had five years ago, but I doubt I’ll ever find the same breath I had with her that night from now on. For some reason, it seemed to Elliot that Hayley felt more like a stranger rather than someone he shared a strong chemistry with.

However, Elliot couldn't seem to forget the intimacy he had that night while the woman tearfully made futile efforts to resist him amidst the dark. Although she was only enduring his madness because he was under the influence of drugs, he could still remember the sweet moments during his intimacy with her until that day. Before he passed out, he even made a promise to himself that he would take full responsibility for what he did to her.

At that moment, Anastasia's face somehow kept appearing in Elliot's mind. For some reason, his intuition told him that the feeling he had with Anastasia was the one he experienced that night. Then, he took a deep breath to keep his imaginations from running wild. Anyhow, I'm going to make it up to these two ladies. While I must repay my debt to one of them, I'm bound by honor and my responsibility to make it up to the other.

Meanwhile, Anastasia was in the garden where she told Harriet that she had to leave for an important task later in the afternoon. In the meantime, Harriet decided not to make her stay, knowing that it wasn't easy for Anastasia to raise a kid all by herself. Thus, she quickly told the maid to send for Elliot and asked him to take her home.

When Hayley saw that, she immediately feigned that she also had an appointment with her friends as she wanted to leave with Anastasia. Since Harriet was just right in front of her, Anastasia had nothing to say since the old madam was allowing Hayley to do her thing

Harriet merely told the maid to bring the two presents to the ladies. Soon, the table in the parlor was seen with two premium bangles, but nonetheless, Harriet didn't specify which bangle was for whom. Instead, she smiled and asked, "Come and have a look, girls. Which one do you like more?"

Blinded by greed, Hayley was instantly able to tell which bangle was pricier and set her gaze on the shinier one. After that, she turned her attention to Anastasia and asked, "Anastasia, I like this one, but I don't think you'd mind, right?"

Anastasia calmly responded, "This is from Old Madam Presgrave, so you should probably ask her."

"No, I don't mind it. As long as you like it." Harriet nodded with a smile.

As Hayley took the box that contained the bangle she wanted, Anastasia looked at Harriet and inquired, "Old Madam Presgrave, this is exorbitant. I can't accept it."

Upon hearing that, Hayley was stunned as she thought that Anastasia was trying to embarrass her. Thus, she awkwardly placed the bracelet down and said, "Yeah, that's right! This gift is too expensive. I can't accept it!"

"No, they are not expensive at all. It's the thought that counts after all, so please accept them!" Harriet smiled gracefully like a benevolent sage.

On the other hand, Anastasia found herself caught in a dilemma because she could tell from the appearance of the bangles that they had a market value of about tens of millions. However, she knew that they were just small gifts to Harriet and was aware that the situation would turn ugly if she insisted on rejecting the old madam.

Therefore, she nodded and thanked Harriet. "Thank you, Old Madam Presgrave."

At the same time, Harriet sized both ladies up in a shrewd manner and eventually rested her gaze on Anastasia, thinking that Hayley seemed more like a petty snob who was greedy. Anastasia is such a graceful and decent lady, and there is no one else even more perfect than her to be my granddaughter-in-law.

While Hayley was a slave to greed and hunger for money, she had no idea that Harriet was actually testing her character. At the same time, Hayley didn't sense anything wrong with her behavior since she had never seen something so valuable since she was a kid, which was why she subconsciously tried to claim it as hers.

Not long after that, the two ladies entered Elliot's car that was parked in the courtyard just when Hayley tried to assert her dominance by riding shotgun. On the other hand, Anastasia sat in the backseat, thinking it was comfortable to sit there while searching for a suitable spot by the roadside to get off. After all, she would rather take a cab than share a ride with Hayley.

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"Yes, it does." Elliot glanced at the bangle on Hayley's wrist and nodded.

“Grandma treats me pretty well and seems to like me a lot.” Hayley intentionally made sure Anastasia heard her words, for she wanted the latter to know that she was important to Harriet.

“Just make sure you keep it with you.” Elliot shifted his gaze to the rear mirror and observed the lady in the backseat through the reflection. Anastasia continued to keep her eyes outside the window, and the side view of her face made her seem like a sacred goddess who was worshiped by many.

At last, Anastasia grew tired of staying in the car. The moment they made it to the road, she then spoke to the man in front of her. “Please pull over, President Presgrave.”

Elliot pulled over by the roadside and looked at the lady with a frown. “What’s wrong?”

“I want to get out of the car now.” Anastasia finished her sentence and swiftly opened the door, stepping out of the vehicle without a single thought of hesitation.

Upon witnessing Anastasia’s reaction, Elliot was stunned as he wondered whether she was reluctant to accept his ride, but Hayley was happy to see her leave since that meant she could be alone with the man. Nevertheless, Elliot got out of his car the next moment, leaving Hayley in surprise as she watched him catch up to Anastasia. At the sight of this, she couldn’t help but feel overwhelmed by her bigotry even more, thinking that Anastasia was trying to seduce Elliot on purpose.

On the other hand, Anastasia noticed Elliot catching up to her but decided to ignore his presence. She then found a suitable spot and stood there as she tried to hail a taxi.

“I can drop you off at your destination, so why are you taking a taxi?” Elliot frowned unhappily.

“That’s none of your business. Just take Hayley with you and leave,” Anastasia looked back and answered.

“I’ll take her home and drive you to the office after that,” Elliot replied with a deep voice that sounded like he was trying to coax her.

“I don’t like sharing a ride with that lady, so it’s either me or her whom you’re

driving. Take your pick.” Anastasia jutted her chin in a haughty manner.

Elliot paused briefly even though he was no stranger to her unreasonable attitude. Soon, he seized her wrist and said, “Anastasia, can’t you be more reasonable?”

However, Anastasia retracted her arm in frustration. “I can be reasonable to anyone but you! Take your hand off me now!” At that moment, a taxi arrived before she . opened the door and sat inside, leaving Elliot with an annoyed frown on his face. Oh, man! This lady is really a stubborn one, isn’t she?

In the meantime, Hayley was still mad at Anastasia even though the latter had already left, feeling disgusted with her coy behavior. Isn’t she acting like such a drama queen right now? When Elliot returned to the car, she instantly noticed his darkened expression and immediately seized the chance to play on his heart strings. “Did Anastasia leave because of me? If I had known earlier, I should have taken a taxi instead.”

“Nonsense. She just has something important to attend to back in the office.” Elliot’s eyes seemed to have become gentler.

Hayley pretended to let out a sigh. “Anastasia and I can never be as close as we used to be back then, and I’ll never be able to make it up to her for the harm I caused her ever again.”

Elliot comforted the lady and said, “Whatever it was, it’s already over. Let’s not bring it up again.”

“Anastasia has hated me for five years, which is as long as I’ve blamed myself for. In fact, when I think about how she looked after her violation every night, I feel like slapping myself in the face. Why? Why did something so cruel happen to her?”

Meanwhile, Elliot tightened his grip on the steering without himself knowing it when he heard what Hayley was saying. At the same time, he couldn’t help but wonder whether Anastasia had ran into some sick pervert who put her through so much suffering

On the other hand, Hayley wouldn’t stop emphasizing how much Anastasia was hurt and violated in hopes that she could make Elliot lose interest in her. After all, she believed that no man would ever

accept a woman who had been violated by another man, but little did she know that she was wrong about how she thought Elliot would

think.

In fact, Hayley's emphasis on Anastasia's stigma only made Elliot feel even more sympathetic for her. Instead of feeling disgusted by Anastasia, he was driven by a

strong urge to protect her more than ever. Also, his perception about Anastasia had changed from his initial reluctance of marrying her to his willingness to make her his wife, but nonetheless, he somehow failed to win her heart over.

"What's done is done, so let's not talk about it anymore. Just make sure you don't beat yourself up for that and move on." Elliot comforted Hayley while staring at the lady's guilty face.

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At the same time, Hayley forced some tears out of her eyes and pretended to wipe them off with her hands until they arrived at the mansion. Then, she gazed at the man in excitement and asked, "Elliot, would you like to come inside and have a cup of tea before you go?"

"No, thanks. I have a meeting to attend later." Elliot turned the lady down.

"Well, it's not going to take you long to enjoy a cup of tea, plus I feel a little lonely being here by myself."

"As I've told you before, you can always invite your family to move in with you if you feel lonely," suggested Elliot.

"I've told them about it before, but they don't think they'd be used to living with me here." Hayley's knee-jerk reaction was to lie because she would never want to share everything she had with the family she hated. After all, they had brought nothing else but pain and suffering into her life, which was enough to justify her resentment toward them.

“Persuade them to keep you company then,” said Elliot. He then took a look at his watch and continued, “I have to go now.”

Despite knowing that it wasn't possible for her to make Elliot stay, Hayley lost herself in the man's charming smile before she eventually mustered her courage and leaned closer to hug and kiss him. Nevertheless, Elliot was one step ahead by resisting her with his palms when he could sense her breath just a few inches away. Then, he gave an unwavering stare and said, “Get out of the car now!”

In the face of the man's cold rejection, Hayley had no choice but to step out of the vehicle in embarrassment. As she watched Elliot drive away with her face flushed, she couldn't help but wonder why the man had no lustful desires for her.

Does he have another woman by his side?

Hayley couldn't help remembering the hickey on his neck from the other day. If the hickey did not come from Anastasia, it was definitely from someone else.

On the other hand, Anastasia was killing boredom by reading her text messages in the taxi, only to be surprised when she saw her replies to Nigel that she didn't – remember typing herself. She tried to recall what had happened the day before and remembered that she was in the shower around 9.00PM. While she didn't think her

son could have replied to Nigel, Elliot was the only possible suspect since he was at her place. Was it him? Yeah, I think it was probably him! Damn it! How dare he deprive me of my privacy and reply on my behalf?! Anastasia's intuition told her that it was Elliot who had texted with Nigel behind her back. However, she was later amused when she read Nigel's confession. After all, she had already gotten used to his confessions as he had been doing that pretty often in a sentimental manner.

In the meantime, Anastasia arrived at her office just in time to attend the meeting held by Felicia to discuss preparations for the jewelry exhibition next week. While Alicia and Anastasia's masterpieces were both nominated, Felicia hoped they could both win an award for the sake of the company's reputation. However, that also made Alicia and Anastasia competitors in the jewelry fair. Alicia appeared confident in the meeting, but despite the woman's provoking gaze, Anastasia remained unbothered and determined because of the lucrative prize.

While Bourgeois was situated in the east, it was overshadowed by a building that was none other than Presgrave Group. In fact, it towered among the clouds like a pillar that stemmed from the ground to the sky. Due to its height, the other buildings that surrounded it looked just like obedient followers who bowed down to their leader. At that moment, Elliot was sitting in his chair in the meeting room at Presgrave Group, looking like a king on his throne. Nonetheless, there was barely any emotion seen on his handsome face as he stared blankly in an absent-minded manner despite his stern appearance.

“President Presgrave... President Presgrave?” The finance departmental head called out to Elliot because he needed his approval right after presenting his proposal.

Soon, Elliot took his eyes off where he was looking and turned his attention to his subordinate with a glacial gaze. “Please tell me the issue again.”

Upon hearing that, the finance departmental head was surprised as he quickly cleared his throat and repeated his presentation, but fortunately, Elliot was finally paying attention this time.

As soon as the meeting was over, Elliot stood in front of his window and cast his eyes on Bourgeois, feeling helpless about how distracted he was thinking about Anastasia. Damn! This is the first time I’ve ever lost myself in my train of thought. Soon, he took a look at his watch and returned to the intercom before dialing a number. “Get ready and come with me to Bourgeois.”

“Alright, President Presgrave.”

Meanwhile, Anastasia was already done with her tasks for the day half an hour before she got off work. She was getting ready to leave and pick up her son from school

when she heard her telephone ringing. Thus, she answered it and said, “Hello?”

“Please come to my office.” The man’s magnetic voice could be heard.

“What’s the matter, President Presgrave?” Anastasia’s tone implied her reluctance to see Elliot.

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"It's work-related." Elliot finished his sentence and hung up the call before Anastasia could do so.

Meanwhile, Anastasia had no choice but to make her way to the president's office. Upon knocking on the door and entering the office, she was greeted by the sight of the man who was wearing a white shirt. There was an attractive look in his eyes which seemed like they were trying to charm her. She walked closer and asked, "What are your orders, President Presgrave?"

Elliot looked at the woman calmly. "Are you confident with your design in the jewelry fair this time? Do you think you'd be able to win the prize?"

"Of course, I'm confident." Anastasia curled her lips and smiled.

"I've raised the prize from 100,000 to a million, so if you can win the prize, the money will be all yours." Elliot sluggishly lay back in his chair, his eyes lighting up like a charming womanizer.

In the meantime, Anastasia couldn't help but think about Elliot's alternative careers if he wasn't a businessman. He could even be a superstar in the entertainment industry with

his good looks. On another note, Anastasia was confident that she could win the reward worth one million; she was even planning to save the money for her son so that he

wouldn't have to worry about his future later on. "It's about time. I need to make a move now." Anastasia implied that she had to get going.

"I'm almost done as well. Let me give you a ride to pick Jared up."

"There's no need for that, but thanks for the offer anyway." Anastasia turned down Elliot's kind offer.

Elliot squinted and stared at her without blinking. "I promised my grandma to look after you and your son."

Although Anastasia had no problem getting along with Harriet, she didn't feel the same way with Elliot, so she rejected him once again. "We don't need you to look after us."

Ten minutes later, Anastasia made her way downstairs and stood by the sidewalk to flag down a taxi when a black silhouette pulled up in front of her. Then, the car – window rolled down as Elliot said firmly, "Get in."

However, Anastasia responded with an unfriendly gawk. She found him annoying because he wouldn't stop following her despite her rejection.

At that moment, a taxi pulled up before Elliot's vehicle and Anastasia promptly pulled open the door before entering it. As soon as the taxi started moving, Elliot followed right behind the car in his Rolls-Royce Phantom.

As Anastasia turned around and eyed the tailing vehicle coldly, she cursed in her heart and questioned the man's intentions in a frustrated manner. What is this guy trying to do?

By the time Elliot arrived at the school gates, he saw Anastasia entering the school shortly before she came back out while holding Jared's hand. When the little boy saw the handsome man leaning against his car with his eyes on them, he happily let go of his mother's hand and greeted him in excitement by saying, "Mr. Presgrave." He then scurried toward the man the moment he finished his sentence.

Needless to say, Elliot happily crouched down and embraced the child with his arms. The next second, he carried the boy and allowed him to sit on his muscular arm with immense joy. At the same time, they were approached by a father and son who asked, "Jared, is this your father?"

Jared looked at his classmate and shifted his gaze to the man, ready to shake his head in response just when Elliot smiled and replied, "Yes, I'm Jared's father indeed." While Jared was stunned to hear that, Anastasia, who was walking closer, glared at the man and grumbled to herself about his questionable motive to pose as her son's father.

As soon as the father and son left, Jared turned his attention to Elliot. "Mr. Presgrave, can you be my daddy for the time being?"

“Do you really want me to be your dad?” Elliot asked.

“Of course!”

“No way!” Anastasia interrupted the man and the child’s conversation, berating Elliot for echoing her son’s childishness.

“Mom, my teacher said there will be a parent-child program this month, and everyone will bring their father along. Therefore, I’d like Mr. Presgrave to do me a favor and act as my father for the time being so that I can participate in the program.”

“Isn’t there a program for mothers to attend with their children?”

“There is one, but only girls get to attend that program with their mothers. The boys have been told to participate in this event with their fathers,” Jared answered.

After hearing her son’s explanation, Anastasia was surprised that Jared’s kindergarten didn’t consider those children who were fatherless, but she didn’t blame the school for that.

Elliot replied firmly, “Alright, I’ll take part in this parent-child program with you.”

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“Awesome!” Jared happily nodded.

“Jared, perhaps we should invite Mr. Nigel instead. What do you say?” Anastasia reckoned that Nigel was a better choice.

“Nigel just took over his company, so he won’t have time to attend the event.”

“Let me ask him and see what his plan is.” Nonetheless, Anastasia reckoned it was necessary for her to ask.

“No, Mommy! Fred just heard that Mr. Presgrave is my father, so if Mr. Nigel comes with me, our cover will be blown.” Jared disagreed.

After hearing her son’s explanation, Anastasia felt helpless while cursing Elliot deep down inside for telling the others that he was Jared’s father. Why would this fella falsely admit that he is my son’s dad?

Elliot smiled and said, “I’ll play my role as your father well.”

“I look forward to that.” Jared clapped his hands.

“Come on, I’ll treat you to a fancy meal.” Elliot then opened the car door and was about to put the boy inside his car when Anastasia came over and grabbed her son.

“We’re good, President Presgrave. I’m preparing dinner tonight.”

Upon returning to his mother’s embrace, Jared looked up and gazed at Elliot. “Mr. Presgrave, would you like to come to my house and try my Mommy’s cooking? She is a very good cook...” The child was about to show a thumbs-up, but he was blocked by his mother’s hand.

While covering Jared’s mouth with her hand, Anastasia looked at the man and replied, “My cooking sucks, so I don’t think I should count you in.”

Elliot gave a smile and answered, “I don’t mind that.” He then sympathetically shifted his gaze to the child whose mouth was being covered by his mother’s hand. “Stop doing that to the kid.”

It was only then did Anastasia realize what she was doing and quickly took her hand – away from Jared. After that, the boy gasped for breath and blinked at his mother.

“Mommy, why are you lying about your cooking? You’re a good cook.”

Upon hearing Jared's words, Anastasia looked helplessly at her son, feeling rather frustrated that he had just exposed her right in front of Elliot due to his naive nature. Alas! I guess I can't blame my son for telling the truth. After all, I've always taught him not to lie, and I'm pretty confident with my cooking skills as well.

"Mr. Presgrave, Mommy is going to buy some ingredients to prepare for dinner. Do join us." The child looked up shortly before he entered the car without giving Anastasia a chance to say no. Nonetheless, Anastasia soon realized she should perhaps treat Elliot to a meal when she recalled the time that he had helped her, as well as his willingness to do Jared a favor by attending the parent-child program with her son. Therefore, she followed Jared and got into Elliot's car, whereupon he drove them to a nearby shopping mall.

Then, she told her son to wait in the car with the man while she did a quick round of shopping and returned with a bag full of groceries that could last them for the night. Before they returned to Anastasia's apartment,

Upon arrival, Anastasia somehow felt that her house was too small with Elliot around. After all, she had always thought that an apartment unit with two rooms and a living room was big enough for her and her son.

"You could keep Jared company while I prepare in the kitchen." Deep down, the only thing Anastasia wanted was to prepare the dinner as soon as possible so that Elliot could leave shortly after.

Meanwhile, Jared reckoned he was old enough to be independent without needing anyone's company, so he told Elliot to give Anastasia a hand. "Mr. Presgrave, why don't you help my mom out in the kitchen? I'm going to do my homework now."

"Alright, go ahead then!" Elliot set his eyes on the petite figure in the kitchen.

As soon as Jared returned to his room to do his homework, Elliot walked toward the kitchen to offer Anastasia some help, but little did he know that she was approaching the refrigerator to grab something at the same time. Therefore, both of them came face to face with each other at the kitchen's entrance just before Anastasia bumped her head on the man's chest, but fortunately, Elliot was quick enough to wrap his arm around her slim waist and pulled her toward him. Shocked by what just happened, Anastasia wanted to back away but accidentally tripped over the threshold at the kitchen's entrance. In

that instant, her knee-jerk reaction prompted her to grab the man's hand just as he snaked his arm around her waist even tighter this time. With that, she found her arms tightly wrapped around the man's muscular waist as well.

The next second, Anastasia freed herself and backed away frantically. Then, she berated Elliot in an annoyed manner by saying, "Can't you just sit on the couch

quietly? You're creating a mess here."

In the face of the lady's mean scolding, Elliot felt sympathetic for himself, thinking his kind and innocent intention should be repaid with something else better than her mean scolding. I came by to see if she needed help and saved her from falling twice, but all I get is her harsh scolding. He then squinted and asked, "Do you need help?"

## Chapter 79

"No, I don't." Anastasia frowned while giving him a reply.

Thus, Elliot returned to the couch and sat down, keeping an eye on the lady as she prepared a meal for all three of them in the kitchen. At that moment, he somehow felt as if there was an energy in the small apartment that rid him of his tiredness and made him feel relaxed.

Within an hour, Anastasia made Jared's favorite mushroom chicken, several vegetable dishes, and corn soup made with bone broth. On the other hand, Elliot remained seated on the couch while watching her for that one hour, somehow feeling he couldn't have enough of it the longer he kept his eyes on her. What's wrong with me?

Meanwhile, Jared intentionally hid in the room because he wanted to give Elliot and his mother some private space so that they could grow on each other. Deep down, he wished that Elliot could be his father one day. Despite the child's young age, he could tell that his mother only treated Nigel as her friend, thinking that she had no intention of marrying him at all. Therefore, he was trying to see whether Anastasia would fall for Elliot instead.

When Anastasia served the dishes, she coldly stared at the man who was sitting on the couch in a graceful and handsome manner. "Dinner time." Then, she went to her son's room and knocked on the door to tell him that dinner was ready.

Jared opened the door and looked back at the man on the couch. "Mr. Presgrave, let's wash our hands and get ready for dinner!"

"Alright." Elliot took Jared to the washroom and made sure he washed his hands properly. Then, he walked toward the dining table and was greeted by the sight of those appetizing dishes. Although they were all home-cooked dishes, he found them even more tantalizing than the food from a five-star restaurant.

In the meantime, Anastasia wiped her hands and stepped out of the kitchen before she caught sight of the man laying the table. She started digging in after making sure that her son was able to pick up the dishes and place them on his plate.

"Help yourself, Mr. Presgrave." Jared placed some dishes on Elliot's plate. "How is my mom's cooking, Mr. Presgrave?" he asked.

- "Not bad."

"You should drop by more often and join us for dinner then." Jared told the man.

"Sure!" Elliot answered almost immediately.

Anastasia, who was chewing her food, nearly spat it out as she looked at her son in puzzlement. What's wrong with my boy? Why is he trying to make my life so hard? It's tiring enough for me to come home from work after a long day, and now I'm supposed to cook for one more guest? Like hell I'm going to do that.

"Mr. Presgrave, can you raise my mom's pay? The boy looked at the man with his smiling eyes.

Upon hearing that, Anastasia paused when she was eating and stared at Elliot who was sitting opposite her, wondering if he would really raise her pay. Soon, the man looked at Jared and directly answered, "Sure, I'll raise her pay tomorrow." Then, Anastasia pondered for a while and realized the next day was the fifth of the month, which was the day that she usually received her pay. Therefore, she couldn't help but think to herself if Elliot would keep his word.

After dinner, Anastasia began washing the dishes in the kitchen while Jared took Elliot to his room and played with him. By the time it was 8.30PM, Anastasia looked at the man who was sitting on her son's bed and told him the time, implicitly suggesting that he should leave. "It's getting late, President Presgrave.

Then, Elliot rubbed Jared's head and said, "Alright, it's time for me to go."

"I'll see you during the parent-child program, Mr. Presgrave!"

"Sure! I'll be there." Elliot promised the child that he would be present on that day.

When Elliot stepped out of the apartment unit, Anastasia pointed to a bag of garbage and gazed at the man. "President Presgrave, please take the trash out for me. There is a dumpster at the entrance."

Despite his status as the Presgrave Family's great son, Elliot took the trash with him without complaining at all, and it melted Anastasia's heart a little. Well, I guess he is quite a nice person, although he may be somewhat domineering at times.

## Chapter 80

At that moment, Anastasia received a call from her father. "Hello, Dad."

"Anastasia, your new house is ready, and I'll send someone to help you move your stuff there in two days. After all, that's going to be your home, so you need to make sure you're comfortable with it."

"Alright, I'll pack everything and be ready in two days."

“Anastasia, I’m sorry about what happened to Jared last time. That wouldn’t have happened to him had I been more careful.”

“It’s alright, Dad. What’s done is done, so don’t take that to heart.” Anastasia comforted Francis, thinking it wasn’t her father’s fault at all.

“Alright, when you’re done moving, we should probably have a meal together.”

“Sure! I’ll put Jared on the line with you, Dad.” Anastasia passed the phone to her son and proceeded to pack her clothes.

The next morning, the entire office was filled with an energetic atmosphere because

it was the day that everyone would receive their pay. Bourgeois was one of the few et companies that could provide promising careers and attractive salaries to its

employees, but ever since it was acquired by the Presgrave Group, everyone received an increment in their basic pay which made it even more lucrative.

At 8.00AM, most of the employees in the office received a text message informing them that their salary had been paid. At the same time, Anastasia also heard the notification alert from her phone, whereupon she opened the text message that mentioned her pay and bonus worth 68,000 combined. Although she had almost been taken advantage of by John, she was glad that he eventually paid everything he was supposed to; she was naturally happy about this because of the commission she was entitled to. After all, her basic pay was only slightly more than 10,000 without the commission. At that moment, she couldn’t help but feel sad for herself when she recalled the reward worth 1,800 that she had lost earlier.

Not long after that, Anastasia received another text message. When she opened and read it, she learned that her bank account balance had an extra 100,000. Wait a second. Did I just receive 100,000 from the company? Is there some kind of mistake made by the Finance Department? Anastasia was left with her eyes wide open, wondering where – the money came from since the commission was already included in her pay. Thus, she decided to confirm with the finance department in case it was a mistake as she

didn't want to be disappointed. As soon as she called the finance department, her call was transferred to the director's office.

"Hello, Director Evans. I'd like to ask about my salary because I just received an extra 100,000. Is there a mistake or something?"

"I knew you'd ask, Miss Tillman. Actually, the first transaction is your monthly salary while the subsequent one was made to you under President Presgrave's order, but I'm not sure about the exact details either. You might want to ask him yourself."

In that instant, Anastasia could only hear buzzing in her head, finding it hard to believe that she just received 100,000 from Elliot. Why did he give me so much money? She then hung up the phone and called the president's office.

"Hello?" The man's magnetic yet sluggish voice could be heard.

"Why did you give me 100,000?"

"I promised Jared to raise your pay, so here it is," explained Elliot.

Anastasia was stunned because she didn't think Elliot would really raise her pay by giving her an extra 100,000. While she would've been fine with accepting a few thousand or more, she found it hard to justify accepting 100,000 from the man. Since she was afraid that there were strings attached to the huge amount of money,

she immediately thought of the times when she reckoned Elliot was taking advantage

- of her. Thus, it instantly occurred to her that him paying her such a huge amount of

money was not a good sign.

“I’ll wire the money back into your account. I don’t need a pay raise from you because I’m satisfied with my normal salary.” Anastasia refused to accept Elliot’s raise.

“Well, think of it as the payment for the meals then. I’m going to drop by for dinner pretty often from now on.”

“What?! You want to drop by my house for dinner? Are you kidding me? Since when did I agree to let you join me for dinner again and again?” Anastasia was speechless.

“I’m paying you 100,000. Is that not enough for you to prepare my share?” Elliot didn’t seem to understand Anastasia’s rejection.

“It’s not about the money; I don’t want to cook your share in the first place.” Anastasia grunted.

“Have it your way, but I’m still going to visit for dinner whether you accept my

money or not. By then, don’t you dare to accuse me of being a freeloader.” Elliot finished his sentence and hung up the call.

Anastasia was rendered speechless while wondering what Elliot was up to. Is my cooking so good that he can’t stop thinking about it? No way! Judging from the excuse he is using to give me the money, this man is doing more than just to repay me. At the thought of that, she decided to withdraw the cash and give it back to Elliot later that afternoon.