

N Destiny 591

Chapter 591

The child who addressed him as mister was in actuality his son, and to have gotten to know him as a stranger at first must feel terribly upsetting and regrettable.

Words could not describe the love he felt for his son. Elliot sensed that Anastasia was behind him, so he adjusted Jared's covers lightly and got up to leave.

Anastasia had been standing there for quite some time. She was dressed quite thinly so she was starting to feel a little cold. Elliot's large hands warmed up her chilly ones as he pulled her back to bed.

The next day, Anastasia received a call from Francis. He called to inform her that Naomi's court proceedings would begin on Tuesday and asked if she had time to attend. Naturally, Anastasia would make the time for it. She wanted to

witness Naomi's downfall in person and see if Naomi truly regretted what she did. Tuesday morning, after dropping Jared off at school, Anastasia and Elliot went over to the courthouse.

Francis was already there when they arrived, and he seemed to have worked through his emotions as he was a lot calmer this time.

At ten o'clock, Naomi was brought into the courtroom. Her hands and feet were cuffed, and her hair had turned gray in many areas. She looked as if she had aged ten years. When she saw the people sitting in the stands, she looked over at Francis with pleading eyes and her voice trembled as she called out, "Francis.... Francis..."

Francis looked at Naomi with nothing but pain. There was no love and no concern at all. Naomi glanced at Anastasia, but she knew that with her here, there was no way that Francis would take pity on her

and forgive her. Elliot was also sitting beside Anastasia, and compared to them, Naomi looked like she belonged in a different world entirely.

The proceedings started, and Francis' lawyer began to give an explicit account of what happened. Despite the cold and matter-of-fact tone he used to describe the sequence of events, it was still enough to shock and strike fury in the hearts of anyone who heard it. For the sake of money, Naomi was willing to betray her husband and even go so far as to make an attempt on his life.

The culprits behind the entire scheme were Erica, Alex, and Naomi.

Naomi sat stiffly in her seat as she heard the recount of what she had done. She saw Francis sitting there with his head lowered, and tears of anger and regret began to stream down her face.

She recalled how blissful she felt when Francis married her. He worked hard to build his empire, but he would always provide her a princely sum to spend every month. She was free to do whatever she wanted with it, and her daughter, the one she had hidden away all these years, was able to grow up happy and confident as Francis' daughter too.

Why did everything turn out this way in the end? Not only did she ruin her own life, but

she also ruined her daughter's youth and future.

Anastasia remained calm on the outside, but on the inside, she was hoping that her father would not plead clemency for this woman. She wanted Naomi to face the full consequences of her actions.

Francis did not do anything, but toward the end of the proceedings, Naomi turned to him and pleaded with a tear stricken face, "Francis, I know what I did was wrong, and I'm willing to bear the consequences, but please... please forgive Erica. I'm the one who taught her to do everything. She's not a bad person." Francis said nothing. Naomi had received an eighteen-year sentence. If she managed to stay alive until the end of her sentence, she would be an old woman in her seventies when she was released.

When she did not hear a reply from Francis, she screamed in tears, "Erica has treated you like a father for 22 years!

She's only 23 years daughter..." old! My poor

Francis did feel sorry for Erica because she was a child that he had raised, but when he glanced at Anastasia and recalled everything that Naomi and Erica had done to her all these years, he suppressed those feelings.

He had no right to forgive them on Anastasia's behalf. Anastasia was the only one who could decide whether Erica could be forgiven.

Though it went without saying that Anastasia would not do such a thing, and she would remain unmoved even if Naomi cried until her eyes bled out. She turned to Francis. "Let's go, Dad."

Francis nodded and left with Anastasia and Elliot. All of Naomi's hopes were dashed as Erica would soon be sentenced as well. If Francis refused to help, then her daughter would not receive any leniency either.

Naomi's crimes made it to the news. She had a short-lived moment of glory as the president of Tillman Constructions, and at the time, she had been incredibly smug about it to the press. Now, that only served to highlight just how far she had fallen.

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Elliot and Anastasia escorted Francis to his car and watched him leave before they headed over to their car.

That night, they had dinner at Presgrave Residence. When their wedding plans came up in conversation, Anastasia said to Harriet, "Grandma, I'd like us to keep a low profile for the wedding. I don't need a grand wedding and I don't want the reporters to report about our ceremony."

While it may seem amazing to receive high-profile coverage, it came with a lot of risks. Anastasia did not want their family's lives to be scrutinized. She just wanted to have a quiet and peaceful life.

Harriet was happy to accept the suggestion. Her biggest concern was not having the ceremony live up to Anastasia's expectations, but since it was a request from Anastasia herself, she would plan according to her wishes.

The wedding was to be held at the start of May on a private island within the country's borders. Around a hundred guests were invited.

While they did keep a low profile, Elliot still invested a lot of time and money into creating a lavish and romantic ceremony for Anastasia.

In the days leading up to the ceremony, Anastasia got busy too. She had a lot of decisions to make, such as choosing her wedding gown and the gown for the banquet at night, as well as other minute details for the ceremony. She poured her heart into preparing everything.

As for her guests, apart from friends and relatives from her father's side, Anastasia also invited Felicia and Grace. While she had friends overseas, she was mindful of the great distance and decided against informing them.

Spring was afoot and the lovely spring breeze came wafting in through the window. Anastasia began to feel a little drowsy. Jared was in school by now, and she had spent the morning discussing wedding details with the wedding planners. Once they left, she got a thin blanket and decided to take a nap on the couch.

All of a sudden, she felt a firm hand closing in around her shoulder, and she stirred awake to see a familiar face staring back at her. She nestled back down into his chest and fell sound asleep.

Elliot stroked her long hair and peppered it with kisses as he accompanied her while she napped. When Anastasia woke up from her afternoon nap, she found out that Elliot had brought a female bodyguard back with him.

She was Adriana Williams, a 33-year-old woman with impeccable fighting skills and a long list of credentials. In addition to that, she was also a very intelligent and capable woman who could help Anastasia with all manner of issues. She was going to assume the role of Anastasia's personal bodyguard and would be with her at all times.

Anastasia took a liking to Adriana thanks to her pair of trustworthy eyes. They made her feel safe.

“From now on, you must bring Adriana along with you wherever you go, so that she can keep you safe,” Elliot said. Anastasia and Jared were now his weaknesses because they were what he cared about the most.

Anastasia nodded agreeably. “Okay.”

Agentle spring shower began late in the afternoon, and when Jared came home, he pulled on his rain boots and grabbed an umbrella to go off and play in the garden.

Anastasia did not stop him. The newly hired servants were preparing dinner, so Anastasia joined Jared in the garden. However, her mind wandered for just a few moments and when she snapped out of it, Jared was gone.

She jumped to her feet in fear. “Jared? Jared... where are you?”

“Mommy! Mommy, look.” Jared stuck his head out of a nearby bush and showed her what he cupped in his hands—a kitten whose fur was soaking wet, and who was meowing weakly.

Anastasia was stunned. She watched as Jared carefully wrapped the kitten in his clean clothes and asked, “Mommy, can I keep it?” He was staring at her with imploring eyes that made him look as pitiful as the kitten in his arms.

How could Anastasia deny her son when he looked so sincere about this?

“Okay, you can keep it.” Anastasia nodded.

“Yay!” Jared was overjoyed. He did not continue playing in the rain anymore, but instead, he carried the kitten into the house at once.

This kitten probably had no idea that it was about to live its best life as it was soon to become a member of this household.

Soon, all the arrangements were made for the kitten to rest comfortably. Anastasia blowdried the kitten's fur and saw that it was probably a stray cat as it did not seem like a purebred cat. It looked like an ordinary cat, but it had a large pair of eyes that were quite adorable.

"Mommy, will Daddy agree to let me keep it?" Jared asked tentatively. He thought about how serious and proper his father was, and a man like him might not like having a kitten in the house!

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"It's okay. Mommy will help you ask him too," Anastasia assured Jared. With her help, there would not be any problems.

She knew that Jared did not know how Elliot would kill to give him everything in the world. All Jared was asking for was to raise a kitten, so there was no doubt that Elliot would agree.

The kitten was very docile. Perhaps it knew that it was incredibly lucky to have met such a kind and cute little owner, so it stayed in Jared's arms quietly and meowed once in a while.

Anastasia accompanied Jared down the stairs as they headed into the kitchen to find some food for the kitten..

At around half past six, they heard a car pulling into the driveway. Jared carried the kitten over to the door to wait and soon, he saw his father walking in.

"Meow!" As if it had sensed Elliot's dominating presence, the little kitten meowed pitifully and struggled in Jared's arms to try and escape.

"Ahh! Kitty, don't be afraid. This is Daddy. He won't throw you out," Jared cried out in alarm, but before he could grab hold of the kitten, it jumped out of his arms and fled out the door.

Anastasia came over and saw the kitten running off into the garden. She sighed as she thought about how upset Jared would be now.

Elliot walked over to Jared and bent down in front of him. "Were you raising that cat who ran out?"

"Daddy, I found the little kitten in the garden today and I wanted to show it to you, but it ran off." Jared's head was bowed in sadness. His eyes turned red and teary.

Elliot patted Jared on the shoulder. "It's okay. I'll help you find it." "Really? I want to come too, Daddy!" Jared exclaimed excitedly.

"It just rained and the garden's covered in puddles now. I'll help you find it, okay? You stay right here and wait, and I'll bring it back to you." Elliot's deep voice was

firm. "Okay. Thank you, Daddy Jared nodded happily.

Anastasia took one look at the finely dressed man who was about to scurry around the humongous garden looking for a spooked little kitten and assumed that it would be a tall task for him, so she said, I'll come with you.

"I'll go. You stay with Jared," he declined the offer after glancing at his sweet wife. He took off his suit jacket and walked out in his shirt.

Anastasia crouched down to comfort Jared. "Jared, we'll do our best to look for the kitten, but if it ran out of the garden, it would be very hard for us to find it. Do you understand that?"

Jared nodded. Even though it had only been a few short hours, he had grown quite fond of the little kitten..

He fervently hoped that his father would find it.

Meanwhile, Anastasia was taking pity on her husband. The garden was covered in puddles while the grassy areas had all turned to mud, and Elliot had always been a clean freak..

For the sake of his son, he was willing to go out and look for a little kitten even though he would be caked in mud and dirty water.

Time slowly crept forward as Elliot searched from the front gardens all the way to the back. His sharp ears picked out the weak meows of the young kitten and he kept following after it, but the kitten seemed to be frightened by him as it kept running away.

“Don't be afraid. I just want to bring you home to live with my son.” All Elliot could do was crouch down and remain motionless as he called out to the kitten who was still darting around in the garden.

The little kitten had experienced warmth and love from a human today, and it yearned for the feeling of being protected and loved..

Therefore, it dragged its drenched little body out of the bushes. It was too young -perhaps only recently weaned, and it cried out helplessly as it stared at the towering man in front of it.

“Come over here, little guy,” Elliot called out as he extended his hand to the kitten.

The kitten was wary at first, but eventually, it walked over slowly, taking each step with great care until it finally stood in front of Elliot. Elliot reached out to stroke its tiny head before holding it snugly in his large, warm hands.

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Elliot had chased the kitten all across the garden. He did not realize that in the process, his socks and shoes were soaked, the bottom of his pants was stained with grass, his shirt was speckled with water droplets, and even his perfectly-styled hair was hanging limp thanks to rainwater that dripped off the trees.

Yet, at the same time, he was giving off a gentle and loving aura that had a different kind of allure to it. At the entrance hall. “Kitty! Jared spotted the little kitten in Elliot's arms and gleefully rushed over.

Anastasia saw the state that Elliot's clothes were in and she felt bad for him. While Jared reached out to take the kitten, she reached out to brush a few blades of grass off his shirt before saying, "Go up and take a shower first!" "Okay. Elliot kissed her on the forehead, 'Daddy, can I keep it?' Jared asked at once. "Of course

"Let's give it a name then!"

"I'll let you decide on its name. You can tell us later at dinner, Elliot said. Jared was over the moon. He hugged the kitten close and said, "Okay! I'll bring it back to my room now."

Anastasia had prepared a clean and cozy little bed for the kitten. "We'll need to go and buy some cat food tomorrow. Anastasia chuckled. "I'll get Rey to send some over later." Elliot was even more diligent.

Anastasia chuckled once more. It seemed like Elliot was going to spoil Jared way more than her. "Come with me while I take a shower." Elliot grasped her hand and pulled her upstairs.

Anastasia could only follow along behind him, but once they reached the room, she herded him into the bathroom while she picked out a set of clean clothes for him.

Once Elliot went into the bathroom, Anastasia walked over to his closet and rummaged among his casual clothes before picking out a gray T-shirt and a pair of loungewear licen pants. She liked the way he looked in these sorts of casual home attire.

He looked a lot warmer and more welcoming in these clothes, in comparison to his typical formal work attire. However, when it came to Elliot, he looked attractive no matter what he wore, and Anastasia loved him in every outfit.

He had everything that she admired in a man.

Anastasia set the clothes down on the couch and took a seat to wait for him.

Soon, she heard footsteps behind her and she turned around to see a man walking out with a towel around his waist. Despite seeing his body every night, her heart would still skip a few beats and her

blood would still start rushing through her veins whenever she saw him like this. She muttered shyly. "Here are your clothes."

Elliot walked over with a sly smile. "I want my sweetheart to help me put them on."

Anastasia covered her mouth to muffle her laughter. "No thanks."

However, Elliot was persistent. He stood

in front of her and said, "Help me, sweetheart." In the end, Anastasia had to look up at his

sculpted and statuesque body, and she

feasted on it as she helped him get

dressed.

He was too tall, so when she tried to pull the T-shirt over his neck, she had to get him to bend down. Anastasia slowly and carefully put on each article of clothing, while Elliot's eyes stared greedily at her. His eyes were full of love and affection it was the way he looked whenever he drowned in his love for her.

By the time Anastasia was done helping him get dressed, she was as red as a

lobster and could no longer look him in the eyes.

Elliot cupped her face with his hands and pressed her down onto the couch as he kissed her. All day long, he had not been able to stay focused on his meetings as all he could think about was her.

His heart felt empty whenever she was not around, and he wished that he could keep her by his side forever. His kiss almost sucked the life out of her. They were on the verge of taking it further when Anastasia finally regained her senses. 'It's time for dinner. Jared's still awake!'

"Sure. Once Jared's asleep, we'll continue where we left off." She managed to talk him down, so all Elliot could do was stare at her longingly while he tried to calm himself down.

Although they had not gotten married yet, it dawned on Anastasia that they were basically living as if they were, and Elliot had already nearly used up all six boxes of condoms that he bought last time.

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These were also the happiest days of Anastasia's life, and her complexion became even rosier than usual. It was true that a woman in love would glow.

A short while later, Rey came and dropped off some cat food. From now on, the little cutie was a member of the family, and it may never know how lucky it was to meet its new owner.

During dinner, Jared thought of a name that he thought suited the little kitten's appearance. 'Let's call it Bella.' Anastasia checked and saw that it was a

female kitten, so the name seemed apt.

The kitten was now Jared's precious little Bella.

The next morning.

Jared left for school reluctantly, and Anastasia got Adriana to take the kitten to the vet. It would need to be given a thorough bath and checked for fleas and worms, as well as get its vaccine shots.

A few hours later, Adriana brought Bella back all clean and groomed. It was not of any particular pedigree, but it was still adorable.

Bella sat still on the couch while Anastasia continued picking out wedding options beside it. Soon, Bella crawled onto her lap and curled up for a nap.

Anastasia chuckled at the sight. She had dreamt about raising a cat when she was young, but she had not had the right to raise a pet in that house. Now, her son would be the one who fulfilled her dream on her behalf instead!

This led her to recall her life five years ago. When she first left the country, life was tough for her. The country she had left to did not allow abortions, and it was one of the darkest periods in her life. This turned out to be a blessing, as she did keep her son, and when he was born, his existence mended the holes in her heart.

When she was nineteen, she met a few people who were of great help to her. They were students who had been properly enrolled in the design institute, unlike her, who had to fight hard to find a way to get in.

She succeeded because she received help from them, but due to certain reasons, they had to separate again. However, the times she spent with them were filled with joy and laughter.

They were a pair of twins-Mason.

Sullivan, the older brother, and Katrina Sullivan, the younger sister. They spent three years together at the

design institute. Anastasia's mind began

to drift off under the warm afternoon

sun.

All of a sudden, her phone started ringing. It was an unknown number calling, but she answered anyway. "Hello, who is this?"

“Who do you think I am, Miss Anastasia Tillman, the designer at Bourgeois?” It was a breezy male voice that spoke with a hint of teasing.

A bulb lit up somewhere in the recesses of Anastasia’s mind, and she exclaimed, “Mason Sullivan? You’re Mason Sullivan, right?”

“Yep! Where do you think I am right now?”

“Where are you? Are you back in the country?” Anastasia asked excitedly. She had just been reminiscing about the past when she received this call!

What an uncanny coincidence.

“Yeah, I’m back. I’m here at the department of design office at Bourgeois right now, and I found out that you used to work here.” “You’re working for Bourgeois?” Anastasia

was surprised at yet another coincidence.

“Mhmm! I just joined not too long ago.” Mason was pretty happy too. “I’ve been meaning to look for you but I couldn’t find you at all.”

“I’m sorry. I’ve changed my numbers quite a few times and we haven’t been in touch for so long.”

“It’s fine! We’ve reconnected now, haven’t

we? Are you free to come and meet up with me today?”

“Now?” Anastasia asked as she checked the time.

“Now works too! It’s about time we sat down for a good talk, old friend.”

“Okay. I’ll let you know when I reach Bourgeois.” Anastasia decided to meet up with him.

“Sure.”

After hanging up the call, a thought occurred to Anastasia and she went upstairs to get two spare invitation cards. She wrote down Mason and Katrina’s names on them.

Since Mason was back in the country, Katrina should be too, so she wanted to invite them both to her wedding. Anastasia headed off with Adriana serving as her driver.

Once they reached Presgrave Group, Anastasia gave Mason a call, and two minutes later, she saw a man in a suit rushing out in excitement-it was Mason.

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Twenty-eight-year-old Mason was a lively young man who exuded an aura of someone who would accomplish great things in the future.

Anastasia wondered what his position was in Bourgeois. Could it be the head of design position that Felicia mentioned? That was an even higher rank over Felicia.

Anastasia got out of the car and Adriana immediately came to stand beside her. Mason’s breath caught in his throat as he watched Anastasia approaching him.

Clearly, the Anastasia he remembered was the young woman he met at the design institute, the one in the bleakest period of her life. She was entirely different from this elegant and refined woman who was flashing him a brilliant smile.

“Anastasia, you’ve changed so much! |

could hardly recognize you.” Mason could not take his eyes off her.

“Thank you! A lot has happened in the

three years we've lost touch. Come, let's grab a bite to eat. My treat.” “Okay, let's go!” Mason noticed Adriana. and asked with a smile, “Is this your

friend?”

Anastasia nodded. “Yeah, she's my friend. This is Adriana.”

“Nice to meet you,” Mason greeted her politely.

However, Adriana simply responded with a curt nod. Mason felt a little awkward, and he thought that this friend of hers was a little cold!

Anastasia nudged Adriana. “Adriana, I'm going to get something to eat with my friend. You'll be alright by yourself for a little bit, yeah?”

“Miss Tillman, this...”

“It's fine,” Anastasia assured her.

However, Adriana simply said, “I'll go with you, but I'll keep out of your way.”

Mason caught their conversation and

could tell that Adriana behaved more like a bodyguard or an assistant. “Okay!” Anastasia did not stop her from joining them. The three of them headed

to a nearby restaurant.

Adriana took her orders from Elliot as well, and now that Anastasia was having a meal with another guy, she informed him at once.

Right at that moment, in the middle of a solemn meeting at Presgrave Group, Elliot's phone vibrated with a new message notification. He was listening to one of his employees give a presentation, but after glancing at his phone, he picked it up immediately.

“President Presgrave, Miss Tillman came to Presgrave Group to meet with a male friend.” This message was followed by a picture of Anastasia walking with a man.

Elliot's eyes narrowed. There was nothing out of the ordinary about the two people

in the picture, but his heart felt a pang nonetheless..

Why did his sweetheart come to Presgrave Group but not look for him? Why did she come to meet some other guy instead? Why were they having a meal together?

Elliot grew more and more frantic with each thought.

“Do you know who he is?” Elliot typed back.

“His name is Mason Sullivan, a new hire at Bourgeois.”

Elliot waved Rey over. “Look into this person’s identity and background.”

Throughout the meeting, Elliot could not focus at all. He kept staring at the picture on his phone, and soon, Rey passed an iPad over to him with a resume on display.

Elliot studied it carefully, and once he saw where Mason had graduated from, he realized that this must be one of

Anastasia's friends from the design institute overseas since their tenure of study overlapped.

Mason Sullivan, Head of Design at Bourgeois..

Elliot gave a small sigh. He knew very little about the five years Anastasia spent overseas. All he knew was that it was the hardest period of her life. She was pregnant and alone in a foreign country. Anyone who helped her back then was equivalent to her savior.

Did this mean that this man was also one of the people who extended a helping hand to her back then?

If that were the case, there would be no way for Elliot to get involved in their relationship. He did not want Anastasia to be mad at him.

At the restaurant. After taking a seat, Mason stared at Anastasia and commented wistfully, "It's great that you no longer have it so hard anymore."

"Thank you for all your help back then. You helped me survive the darkest period of my life," Anastasia declared gratefully. "Is your younger sister, Katrina, back as well?"

"Yeah, she's back home and currently working as a model."

"She does have the talent for it. I'm sure she'll do well as a model," Anastasia said with a smile. Katrina was a very pretty girl.

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"She has always been drawn to the spotlight, which is the total opposite of me. She used to be rather childish and would have said a lot of hurtful things in the past. | hope you didn't take it to heart."

“Why would I?” Anastasia smiled. It was all in the past.

Katrina knew that Mason wanted to date her, so Katrina put a stop to it and even hurled insults at her while she was pregnant. Even so, Mason ignored his sister’s protests and continued to take very good care of her. She was all alone in a foreign country, and sometimes she had no other choice but to accept his caring and thoughtful gestures to survive.

There was once when Jared had a high

fever, and it was Mason who accompanied her through it all. He carried Jared and ran down many blocks of streets until they found a doctor who

could attend to Jared. Thankfully, Jared managed to pull through.

That was the most frightened and distraught that Anastasia had ever been, and it was him who ignored his sister's objections and did everything he could to help her.

Therefore, no matter how Katrina treated her, Anastasia would not take it to heart. “Anastasia, where’s Jared? | haven't seen him in so long!” Mason exclaimed. “He’s in class right now. He’s already four! I’ll bring him to meet you some time.” Anastasia chuckled.

“Sure! I’m sure he’s quite a looker now. He was so cute as a baby, so he’ll definitely grow up to become a handsome man,” Mason praised.

Anastasia thought about Elliot. If Jared grew up to look like his father, he was going to be an incredibly handsome man indeed! “How did you end up working in Bourgeois?” Anastasia asked out of curiosity.

“| was headhunted and invited to take the position, and | have a lot of faith in Bourgeois’ future development as a company, so | decided to come back to the country. | never thought our paths would cross like this again, but | ended up seeing your name at the office.”

“That’s right, | used to work for Bourgeois.” “Used to? Why did you resign?” Mason asked.

Anastasia's eyes gleamed with happiness. Then, she finally remembered about the two invitation cards, so she took them out and passed it over to Mason. "Here, I'll be getting married soon, so I hope you two will come and attend the ceremony."

Mason stared at the invitation cards for a

very long time before taking them. There was a flash of dejection in his eyes. "You're getting married, huh?" He flipped the card open as he said that. Once he saw the name written inside, his eyes flickered. "Elliot Presgrave? Your fiancé is Elliot Presgrave?"

Anastasia knew that he would be shocked. She nodded and said, "Yeah, my fiancé's name is Elliot Presgrave."

"Bourgeois' owner, the president of Presgrave Group, Elliot Presgrave?" Mason chuckled somewhat bitterly as he bid goodbye to his fleeting moment of joy earlier.

Sometimes, even when one reunited with the person they longed for, one still did not get a second chance, because someone even better—a man even more powerful than one—was now by that person's side.

"Yes, that's him. He's also Jared's father." Anastasia nodded and shared a secret. Instantly, Mason's eyes flashed. "What?! He's Jared's father? That b*stard?"

Anastasia nodded and pursed her lips. "Mason, you shouldn't say that about him. It was all an accident back then." "But... but what he did left you with so much pain, and so much despair... that you even tried..." Mason did not dare continue.

Mason had saved Anastasia once. It was when she was five months pregnant. She had lost all hope and attempted to take her life by jumping off a bridge. Mason was the one who jumped into the river and rescued her.

Therefore, in his eyes, the man who got

her pregnant was an irresponsible

bestard.

Anastasia sighed and urged him softly. "Mason, just leave the past in the past. I'm really happy right now." Mason's fists tightened. "Why do your

want to marry him? Is he trying to get

custody of Jared? Is that why you have to

marry him?"

Anastasia was taken aback but she shook her head. "No. A lot of things happened between us, and he has expressed a lot of regret about the past. We're truly in love."

"Does he know the disaster he brought onto you? Does he know everything you suffered through five years ago all alone in a foreign country?" Anastasia never mentioned the past to Elliot because she considered it an ill-fated low point in her life, but now that Mason showed up, those memories began to resurface again.

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"Mason, it's not his fault. If he had a choice five years ago, he wouldn't have hurt me either." Anastasia sighed.

"I don't know how he managed to gain your forgiveness, but... my heart aches for you." It was spelled out in Mason's eyes too, just how much sympathy he had for her.

"Thank you, Mason, but I've come out on top now. Oh, let me congratulate you for joining Bourgeois!" Anastasia raised her glass. Mason sighed. "We'll be there at your wedding ceremony. I wish you well, always."

“What about you? Are you married?” Anastasia asked out of concern for her friend.

Mason glanced at her before chuckling bitterly. “No. I haven’t found the right one.”

The only woman he had ever liked was seated in front of him right now. Back then, his sister refused to let him go after her and did everything she could to stop him. This led to Anastasia working for QR Group and him moving to a different country, and they fell out of contact as a result.

“There’s no rush. You’re still young. You’ll find someone,” Anastasia said reassuringly.

“I hope so too, but I’ll leave it up to fate. There’s no point trying to force things.” Mason picked up the card and glanced through it again. “You wrote this, right? I recognize your handwriting.”

“Yup!”

“Your handwriting still looks as amazing as ever.” He looked up at the woman in front of him, and affection filled his eyes once more.

“Did I know? If it hadn’t been for my sister coming between us, I would’ve tried to date you, and we might’ve....” Mason was halfway through his sentence when he heard someone with a deep voice calling out, ‘Sweetheart!’ Anastasia looked up at the man approaching them and she got a little nervous. Why is he here?

However, she recalled that he was the one who gave Adriana her orders, so it was. Only natural that he would be the first to know where she was and who she was with.

He probably heard what Mason had been trying to say, because otherwise, he would not have used such a mushy term in public.

“You’re here.” Anastasia gave him a sweet smile as she stood up to greet him. Then, she introduced him to Mason. “Mason, this is my fiancé, Elliot.”

Elliot glanced at Mason and caught his eye before pulling the chair out. As he sat down, he placed one of his arms on the back of Anastasia's chair and indiscernibly crowded into her personal

space. It was like an animal staking his claim on its territory, but either way, the message was clear.

Anyone could have gotten the message from a mile away, and Mason was no fool either. He greeted Elliot politely, "Nice to meet you, President Presgrave."

"Nice to meet you too," Elliot replied with a faint smile.

"Elliot, this is Mason Sullivan. He's a good friend | met overseas." As Anastasia said these words, she emphasized the words "good friend" and stared at Elliot with a warning look in her eyes.

Only Elliot would understand the warning in her eyes. She was warning him to not get jealous of Mason and to treat him with courtesy out of respect for her.

Elliot blinked in response as if promising that he would be a good boy.

"Thank you for taking care of Anastasia while she was overseas," Elliot thanked Mason.

"Not at all. It was the right thing for me to do." Mason nodded and looked at the couple in front of him. He sincerely meant it when he said, "Anastasia, President Presgrave, | wish you two all the happiness in the world."

"Thank you. You and Katrina must come to the wedding!" Anastasia said with a smile.

"We'll be there." Mason checked his watch and said, "I should get back to the office.. There are still a lot of things | need to get the hang of. | look forward to working with you, President Presgrave."

"Likewise," Elliot replied with a nod. There was nothing else for Mason to say, so he got up and left.

As soon as he was gone, Anastasia turned to Elliot. "You're not allowed to think of Mason as your enemy. He helped Jared and me a lot while we were overseas, and when I was giving birth to Jared, he was the one who waited outside the delivery room.

He's also the first person who held Jared." Elliot's heart clenched tightly, and he nodded solemnly. "Okay. I will take good care of him at the company."

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"Mmhm!" Anastasia sighed and said, "Those years I spent overseas were the hardest period of my life, so anyone who walked with me through those years and cared for me, will always be someone that Jared and I owe a lot to

"I'm sorry, It's my fault. I should've found you five years ago. Elliot blamed himself for everything. Five years ago, he did go back to try and find the woman, but the employees at the Abyss Club were a mess. and he did not try very hard either. He ended up getting tied up with the company's affairs and had to run around the globe for over a year before finally coming back.

It was in that year that he realized he could not forget the woman from that night, so he decided to search for her once more. He decided to use the watch to find her. As long as a woman showed up with that watch in hand, he would know that it was her.

However, he never would have expected that Anastasia would have thrown the watch away that night, and it would end up in another woman's hands.

"Forget it. Let's not talk about the past anymore. We should look toward the future," Anastasia consoled him before resting her head against his shoulder. "The three of us have reunited now, and we won't be apart ever again."

Elliot clasped her hand tightly and promised, "We'll always be together, forever." He took her out to lunch, and in the afternoon, he accompanied her to a nearby shopping mall to take their mind off things. Back at Bourgeois, Mason returned to the office and gave his sister a call to inform her about the wedding ceremony.

“What?! Anastasia’s future husband is the president of Presgrave Group, Elliot Presgrave? You must be kidding!” Katrina exclaimed in disbelief.

“Why would I kid about something like this? I even met him just now.”

“So what you’re saying is, the child Anastasia gave birth to back then is his as well?”

“Yes, he’s the father.”

“Wow, Mason, you've hit the jackpot then! If it hadn’t been for you, the Presgrave Group's little heir would have drowned with his mother. He wouldn’t have been born at all! Did Elliot Presgrave offer to give you a raise?”

“Don't talk like that, Kat!” “Huh? Why not? Elliot Presgrave is loaded anyway. Shouldn't he repay you in some way?”

“That’s enough, Kat. Don’t bring this up ever again. I’m just glad that I ran into Anastasia once again and know that she has a good life now.”

“You haven't had a girlfriend all these years because of her, but look at her. The moment she shows up, she throws a bunch of wedding invitations at us. That’s so unfair for you!”

“Enough of that. She invited you too, so are you going?”

Til go! Of course, I’m going! I want to see

Elliot Presgrave in person! I heard that he’s an incredibly handsome man,” Katrina commented. “Fine. We'll talk later.” Mason ended the call and his thoughts began to drift again.

It was six years ago when he first saw a girl sitting in a park with her luggage in tow. Winter was nearly upon them, but she dressed in so very little that it made others take pity on her. He saw the stickers on her luggage and decided to talk to her.

When she looked up at him, her clear and breathtaking eyes were full of caution.

She asked him for directions to the design institute, and he just so happened to be a student there, so he was happy to oblige. She kept thanking him for it.

Mason then helped her find a place to stay, and when he asked for more information, he finally realized that she was not enrolled in the design institute, but just someone who came because she was determined to study design.

He had to break the news to her that the design institute never accepted students who did not enroll the traditional way. However, she looked at him with a pair of steadfast eyes and said she had no other option now. She had to get into the design institute.

She had heard about a genius designer who had been admitted into the design institute on special consideration, and she believed that she could too. Mason was moved by her determination.

He decided to help her approach the institute's administration. Half a month later, he brought her designs to his lecturer's office and kept pleading for his lecturer to make an exception for her, but he failed every single time.

Mason did not give up, and neither did she. Just as he began to develop feelings for her, he found out that she was pregnant, and his heart came crashing down as well.

It was around that time when she lost all hope in life. The design institute refused to make an exception for her. Throughout those dark times, he stood by her and watched as she struggled in the darkness of her despair, and every time, he would reach out to pull her back up with the strength to face the world again.

That girl's resolve touched him to the core. He sympathized with her and fell in love with her, but his sister found out about it and tried to stop him from seeing her.

In the end, while being seven months pregnant, Anastasia brought over a hundred designs to his lecturer's house, and she finally moved him. He made an exception for her and allowed her to enter the design institute as a student.

She was incredibly gifted. Despite her abject situation, she created masterpieces that took everyone's breath away.

Outside the delivery room, he gingerly carried the child she gave birth to in his arms. At the same time, the doctor chewed Mason out because her amniotic fluid had nearly dried up by the time they arrived at the hospital, and the baby would have suffocated to death had they been just a few minutes late.

Right at the moment, all Mason could think about was his desire to look after this mother-and-son duo, even if his family protested against the relationship.

Three days after the delivery, Mason was the one who took care of Anastasia and her son while they were cooped up in a tiny room. By the time the baby was about to celebrate his first birthday, she graduated.

At the same time, his family came over and did their best to stop him from ever seeing her again. He was called back home for three months and when he finally returned to where she lived, all he saw was a letter that she had left behind. She was gone, and they lost contact.

The last time he saw her was in a photo of one of QR Group's ceremonies. She had become a chief designer and was accepting an award. Her smile was dazzling and confident, and she looked like a brilliant star shining in the sky.

She had grown strong and confident, and she found her footing in life, while he left for a different country.

Life worked in mysterious ways.

They were finally in the same city again, but now that they managed to see each

other once more, she had already found the love of her life and was about to get married.

Anastasia was in a reverie at the restaurant.

The sunlight flitted through her hair and her eyes a sparkle that made them seem like diamonds.

Elliot only had eyes for her while she seemed to be caught in her thoughts, though he did not know what they were. "Let's eat. The food's getting cold," he reminded her gently.

Anastasia exhaled slowly. All this talk of the past dredged all those feelings back up again. In fact, she felt incredibly guilty over the manner of Jared's birth too. Before he was born, she was not a good mother.

She had hated his existence and had tried to prevent him from being born. She had also even tried to take her own life before.. "Can you tell me what's on your mind?" Elliot asked softly. He was truly worried about her.

"When I was pregnant with Jared, I really did not want to keep him. I tried searching for a place to get an illegal abortion done and I even tried taking my life" Anastasia's eyes glittered with tears. She did not know why she was spilling all these horrid details about the past to him.

Elliot's heart felt like it was being squeezed. He sat beside her and pulled her into a hug, "I'm so sorry. I'm the one who caused all your suffering."

"I don't know how I managed to pull through back then, but Mason was my savior." Anastasia looked up at him and said, "You need to be good to him, okay?"

Elliot nodded. "Yes, I'll make sure he has a good career with the company."

“Everything I have today, and the fact that I was able to meet you, is all thanks to the help he gave me back then. If it hadn’t been for him, I might’ve drowned

in that freezing river that day.” She poured out all the memories that she had locked away. He held her even more tightly as he kissed her hair. There was nothing he could do about her past, but he would do his absolute best to make it up to Anastasia and Jared in the future.

Once they left the cafe, Elliot and Anastasia went to pick up their son. The sun was beginning to set, and they watched as he came running out to them.

Both of them felt their heart surge with joy. “Daddy! Mommy!” Elliot reached out and carried Jared with one arm while using the other hand to hold Anastasia’s. “Let’s go home.”

In a bar in the city center, before opening time, a man was sitting at the bar, drinking alone. His long and slender fingers picked up the faceted glass and brought it to his luscious lips before he downed it in one go.

Once he finished drinking, he slammed his fist on the table and everyone around him jolted as if his fist had slammed into their chests.

“Damn it! Who on earth is she?!” The man’s cool voice was laced with frustration.