

N Destiny 171

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“Uh... Can I return it?”

“Fruits are non-returnable goods! Don't worry, miss. We provide top-grade Musang King so it's definitely of good quality.” sa “ | know that and | do trust that your goods are of good quality, but | don't need that many.”

“Miss, | really can't process a return for this. Fruits are non-returnable once sold!” On the other end, the owner tried hard to express his keenness to complete the sale.

Meanwhile, Anastasia was at a loss for what to do. “Alright, then. I'll make a phone call and get back to you.”

As soon as Anastasia put down her cell phone, she instantly grabbed the landline and dialed the number to the office of a specific man.

“Hello?” The man answered the phone in a low voice. “Did you order me a truckload of Musang King durians?” Anastasia questioned him immediately.

“Yup. You mentioned that you wanted the freedom to have durians whenever you crave them, so I'll help you achieve this wish today. You can have as many of them as you want.” Elliot spoke up and implied that the durians today were his treat.

However, Anastasia was quite speechless and she thought, Doesn't he realize that one can't have too many durians? It's fine to have some occasionally, but if too much is consumed in one day then there are a lot of side effects that would occur subsequently. The milder symptoms would be a sore throat and as for the worst-case scenario, one would even experience constipation!

“ | think you should return it. | can't finish that many. | just had one last night so | can't have too many at a time.”

“Why not?” On the other end, the man clearly knew nothing about durians. Although he was a knowledgeable man, there were also some things that he was totally clueless

of.

“That’s because durians can cause sore throats. I can’t have too much.” Anastasia could only try her best to explain, but the other side effect sounded slightly indecent so she

didn’t mention that.

“I never return any item that I’ve paid for. You can decide how you want to deal with it.” “But... You...”

“I have a meeting to attend now.” After Elliot said that, he hung up on her.

Meanwhile, Anastasia had to return the call of the fruit store owner, yet the purchaser of the items refused to pay heed to her words, so she was in a dilemma at the moment. In the end, she thought to herself, I guess I’ll just treat everyone to durians, then.

Subsequently, she reached out and dialed Felicia’s number to explain the situation. On the other end of the line, Felicia was elated. “This is a simple matter. I’ll arrange for everyone in the office to have one each.”

“Okay. Please make the arrangements, then, but don’t say that this is my treat. Let them know that it’s President Presgrave’s treat.”

Upon hearing that, Felicia burst into laughter. “Are you sure that you want to let them know it’s his treat?” “Yes, just say that. I don’t want to take this credit,” Anastasia insisted. “Sure! We’ll leave it at that, then.”

Ten minutes later, the fruit store owner happily distributed durians by the entrance of the office, and every staff member of the company who walked past was given one. This went on and no one was left out until every piece of fruit was gone.

After all that, Grace came back upstairs in good spirits and she held two durians in her hands. Anastasia expressed her gratitude as Grace excitedly mentioned, "Anastasia, do you know who treated us to this? It's President Presgrave! It's the Musang King variety too. Everyone's so happy."

At that moment, Anastasia tried to stifle her laughter. "That's great! I'm quite happy too."

After Grace had walked out of the room, Anastasia clutched at her stomach and placed her head on the tabletop. She was consumed with uncontrollable laughter and she nearly fell to the ground. | wonder what Elliot's expression will be like if he finds out about this?!

Meanwhile, in the meeting room at the Presgrave Group, the room was solemnly silent as Elliot sat at the head of the table. He gave out an air of dominance seen in a leader and under the illumination of the projector lamp, he clearly gave out the feeling of a strong president.

The people in attendance today were all the upper management team of the Presgrave Group, and each one of them was involved in running various large-scale projects all over the world. They had to report back to Elliot on the progress of their projects daily and there was no room for any errors or omissions.

The Presgrave Group was involved in various financial schemes worldwide, so the company was, in fact, much more than just a leading business in the country. After Elliot's appointment as the president, he had kept close control of the development of the company. He ended up leading the Presgrave Group toward a much brighter future than ever.

Despite the Presgrave Group going through several financial crises, the giant corporation remained strong and continued to sail through the waves of the corporate world.

The meeting ended at 11.30 AM and Elliot went back to his office after that. At that moment, Rey stood by his side with pursed lips, and he looked as if he had something to report on.

Elliot glanced at him and questioned, "What's wrong?"

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Rey had gone for facial expression management classes before but right now, he couldn't contain himself and laughed out loud. "President Presgrave, the truckload of Musang King durians that you ordered for Miss Tillman was distributed to the entire company. The problem is, Miss Tillman gave the credit to you."

Elliot's handsome expression stiffened slightly when he heard that. "Is that so?"

"Yeah. Anyway, everyone's full of gratitude for you." As soon as Rey finished saying that, he instantly covered his lips and burst into laughter before quickly stifling his laughter while he covered his mouth once again.

"It's fine to laugh." Elliot shot Rey a look. | just didn't expect her to be so generous and actually distribute everything. Suddenly, Elliot recalled something and he instantly took his cell phone and dialed his grandmother's number. "Hello, Elliot. Do you have something to talk to me about?" Harriet's voice rang out.

"Grandma, | would like to have lunch with you today. We haven't seen each other for days."

"I'd prefer to have dinner together. | have a lunch date today."

"What sort of lunch date is it? Can I join you?"

"It wouldn't be convenient." Harriet spoke up frankly.

"It's just a meal."

"Well, I'll be frank with you. | have a lunch date with Nigel and Anastasia today. | wanted to talk to them about their engagement the other day. I've decided that it's time to pick a date for them."

“Include me for the lunch date, then! | want to join the meal too,” Elliot responded with a smile. “Okay. | don’t mind you joining us, but don’t you dare mess things up!”

“Don't worry. | won't do that.” Elliot curved his lips into a smile. I’m not going to mess things up because this won't go to plan anyway.

in a blink of an eye, it was 11.20 AM and Anastasia glanced at her cell phone from time to time as she waited for Harriet to call her regarding the lunch date.

Just then, Anastasia’s cell phone rang and she quickly grabbed it to take a look. Indeed, it was Harriet on the line, so she took a deep breath before answering the phone. “Hello, Old Madam Presgrave.” ;

“Anastasia, you can come downstairs now. My car is about to reach the entrance of your company.” It turned out that Harriet had come in person to fetch Anastasia.

At that moment, Anastasia felt quite flattered and she revealed a smile. “Okay, I'll be downstairs shortly.”

Anastasia walked out of the entrance to see a black car parked by the entrance, and the dominantly displayed golden logo of the Rolls-Royce was unmistakable.

The driver personally got out to open the door for Anastasia as she expressed her gratitude. “Thank you.” “You're welcome, Miss Tillman,” the driver replied.

And so, Anastasia got into the back passenger seat and saw that Harriet was dressed elegantly in a dark purple dress lined with golden threads. The button of the dress was made out of ruby and it was clear to the eye that it was a hand-made, commissioned piece.

3 “Hello, Old Madam Presgrave!” Anastasia greeted Harriet. “It's been days since we last met. What happened to your finger?” Harriet instantly noticed Anastasia’s bandaged finger.

“It's fine. | accidentally hurt myself.”

“Was it a bad cut?”

“It’s not too serious. It’s just a minor cut.” Anastasia curled up her lips and smiled. Upon hearing that, Harriet nodded her head. “Try to be more careful next time.” With that, the elderly woman glanced out of the car window at the building in front. “Do you work here?”

“Yeah.”

“That’s great. Elliot has taken over your company, so it’s part of our family business now. It would be much easier for us to help you out in the future.”

Meanwhile, Anastasia felt quite uneasy. Elliot had not only taken over Bourgeois Jewelry Atelier for the sake of helping a lowly staff like her, but he had actually bought over the world-renowned QR International Group that backed the Bourgeois Jewelry Atelier brand.

“Old Madam Presgrave, I’m fine so there’s no need to go all the way out to help me,” Anastasia expressed her sincere gratitude.

“You don’t have to be shy, child. We are obliged to do that. I’m also trying to redeem myself by helping you. It makes me feel slightly better by doing so.” Harriet’s eyes were red-rimmed as she spoke. “I am forever indebted to your mother and there’s nothing I can do to fully repay her in this lifetime.”

Surprised, Anastasia asked, “Old Madam Presgrave, why would you say so?”

“You might not realize this, but both Elliot’s parents’ passed away at the same time back then and I had to single-handedly hold the fort for the entire Presgrave Group. At the same time, I had to bring up a young Elliot. At that point in life, I held all of my hopes upon Elliot, so if something bad had occurred to him, I would have lost the remaining pillar of strength in my life. Your mother’s ultimate sacrifice gave us the Presgrave Group that we have today.”

Anastasia's heart sank upon hearing that. She couldn't even imagine the state of Harriet's situation back then. The latter was a fifty-year-old woman trying to cope with the sudden loss of her son and daughter-in-law, and she had to step up to manage a multi-million company single-handedly. Furthermore, she had to raise a young grandson and back then, Elliot was her only hope.

Right now, Elliot had grown up to become an independent man and he ran the company well, so she could finally relax and enjoy a life of retirement.

"Your mother's a great woman and though I've never spoken to her before, she has a mighty and heroic presence in my heart."

Anastasia was also quite young-barely two years old-back then, so her impression of her mother was just the exceptionally heroic-looking woman in the photos. At that time, her father had just started up his business, so Anastasia was raised by her maternal grandmother. Two years later, her father had remarried and that was when Naomi joined their family. Naomi had brought along a daughter with her. After Anastasia's grandmother had passed away due to illness, her father finally brought Anastasia back home to care for her.

At that point, Harriet quickly halted the current topic as she didn't want to bring up Anastasia's painful past, so she smiled and asked, "Anastasia, why don't you make a guess as to who's the other person joining us for lunch?"

In fact, Anastasia was quite confident that it was Nigel joining them for lunch, but she could only act confused. "Did you invite another person to join us?"

"It's Nigel. I asked the two of you out for lunch with me to have a proper discussion. It was totally beyond my expectation that you were the little girl who saved Nigel back then. It must be fate!"

Anastasia curled up her lips and revealed a smile. "I didn't expect that he was your grandson either."

Harriet requested for Anastasia to explain the process of how she saved Nigel in detail, so Anastasia acceded to the former's request and thoroughly spoke about the ordeal. Anastasia also shared with Harriet some of her experiences with Nigel when they were overseas. Meanwhile, Harriet listened on and concluded in her mind that it was proof of Anastasia and Nigel's affectionate relationship.

As such, the elderly woman was very intent on bringing the couple together. Once

Anastasia was part of the Manson Family, then Harriet could naturally continue to provide support and compensation for Anastasia in every aspect.

At the moment, a gray-colored sports car was also heading in the direction of the restaurant. Nigel had received Harriet's phone call the previous night and she had instructed him to dress up well for lunch today, as Anastasia would be in attendance too.

As a result, Nigel had woken up early to go to the barber's, and he had gotten a stylish haircut for today's lunch date. His originally quite good-looking face was much more handsome and full of vigor than ever after all the grooming.

Presently, Nigel had arrived at the restaurant and remained in his car. Taking a look at himself in the mirror, he cheered for himself. "Nigel Manson, you must win Anastasia's heart today and get her to agree to your proposal. Good luck!"

He then pushed open the car door and got out of the car to enter the restaurant. Subsequently, the waiter greeted him and escorted him to the direction of the private room as he waited there.

Meanwhile, Harriet and Anastasia arrived at 11.50 AM. Throughout their journey, the latter was preoccupied with her thoughts as she tried to figure out how to explain the matter of the proposal to Harriet, so that Harriet could give up on the thought of making arrangements for their marriage.

As soon as they entered the private room, Nigel instantly stood up to greet them and he lovingly addressed Harriet, "Grandma, you're here!"

After he had said that, he directed his affectionate almond-shaped eyes toward Anastasia. "Anastasia!"

Meanwhile, Anastasia greeted him with a smile. "You're quite early today."

"I wouldn't dare to be late for lunch with you," Nigel responded wittily.

Upon hearing that, Anastasia couldn't contain herself and she laughed upon hearing his words. Harriet watched their interaction and she was secretly quite pleased. They are indeed a perfect match for each other. They look so compatible!

"What happened to your finger? Let me have a look at it." Nigel had noticed it almost instantly so he quickly reached out to hold her hand and check on her wound.

In response, Anastasia hastily withdrew her hand. "I'm fine. I accidentally cut myself while I was cutting some vegetables." "That's so careless of you. You should avoid cooking from now on. I'll treat you to your meals."

"No, Jared's not used to eating out."

"Come on and take a seat. Let's order our food." Harriet sat at the head of the table and the manager of the restaurant came in personally to take their order. At the same time, he introduced to them the restaurant's specialties. Anastasia sat there and listened to him introduce their fresh and imported, luxurious ingredients, which were all air-flown to the restaurant, and she realized by listening to the way the ingredients were obtained that this was clearly not a restaurant that could be afforded by the general population.

"Serve us one of each, then!" Harriet announced with a swagger.

Chapter 174 "Will it be just the three of you today?" the manager asked with a smile.

At that moment, Harriet suddenly recalled that there was another person joining them, so she quickly responded, "There will be four of us today."

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Instantly, Anastasia and Nigel exchanged looks with each other. Is there a mysterious guest? Who is it? Harriet, however, was busy chatting with the manager, so they didn't interrupt the conversation.

All of a sudden, a waiter pushed open the door from the outside and a strapping, tall figure walked into the room. He had his suit jacket in his hand, and he was dressed in a white dress shirt paired with black trousers. In short, his attire was minimalistic yet full of elegance.

Anastasia's beautiful eyes widened upon seeing the man, and she was quite stunned to find that he was here too.

The person who walked into the room was in fact Elliot-the man who had shamelessly mentioned he wanted to join the lunch date the night before.

At the same time, Nigel narrowed his almond-shaped eyes too. Why did Grandma invite him along? He's just going to ruin everything!

"Elliot, how come you're here too? Don't you have any lunch conferences to attend?" Nigel lifted his brows and asked questioningly.

Elliot pulled out a chair and purposely took a seat next to Anastasia before he responded with a smile, "Well, I wasn't invited to any lunch conferences, so I had no choice but to barge in and join your lunch date too."

"Pfft! I'm sure there are plenty of people keen to give you a treat." Nigel didn't believe a single word that Elliot said. Furthermore, Nigel was quite sure that his cousin must have purposely turned up to mess things up.

Meanwhile, Harriet smiled upon seeing both of her grandsons in attendance. "Elliot mentioned to me last night that he didn't have any lunch plans for today, so I invited him along."

At that moment, Anastasia turned her head to glance at the man in question, and she noticed that his handsome face had stiffened slightly. Elliot clearly didn't expect that Harriet would expose his lie.

In the end, he took his cup of tea into his hand and took a sip from it. At the same time, he peered across from the edge of his teacup, and his dark gaze went toward the woman next to him.

As for Anastasia, she purposely turned in the other direction as soon as she sensed his eyes on her.

“Anastasia, I’m sure that there’s no need to introduce this person to you, right? He’s my grandson, Elliot Presgrave. You guys must have encountered each other at the office, I believe?” Harriet asked with a smile.

Meanwhile, Anastasia had a slightly abashed look on her face as she spoke up guiltily. “Yes, we’ve met.” Not only have we met, but we’ve also even kissed more than once! It was mainly because of Elliot’s shameless personality, and that he had forcefully kissed her each time.

At that moment, Nigel reached out to hold Harriet’s hand. “Grandma, why don’t you hurry up and tell us the purpose of this lunch date today?”

Anastasia’s heart skipped a beat as she heard that, and she turned to look at Harriet. At the same time, Harriet glanced at Anastasia with a smile on her face before turning to glance at Nigel, who was seated next to Harriet. “Anastasia and Nigel, I’m very happy to know that the two of you are in a relationship, so I’ve asked the two of you out today to discuss the date for the wedding. That way, we can get the ceremony organized as soon as possible.”

At that point, Anastasia thought to herself, Elliot was right in his guess! Harriet has actually taken the proposal for real!

As for Nigel, he lifted his brows happily. “Sure! Grandma, why don’t you pick a date for us so that Anastasia and I can proceed with the wedding ceremony as soon as possible? Anastasia, how does that sound?”

Meanwhile, Elliot crossed his arms together and looked at the woman next to him with a slightly gloating look on his face as he waited to see how she was going to handle this.

On the other hand, Anastasia shot a resigned look at Nigel before she turned to speak to Harriet. “Old Madam Presgrave, Nigel was just fooling around when he proposed to me that day. Don’t take it seriously. We're just good friends.”

“What?! How can one fool around with a marriage proposal?!” Harriet stared at her with an aghast look before turning to look at Nigel. However, Nigel solemnly spoke up. “Anastasia, I was quite serious during the marriage proposal. I would like to take your hand

in marriage and have you as my wife. Please allow me to care for you for the rest of our lives.”

At that point, Anastasia lifted her head and she saw Nigel’s expectant and loving expression. She couldn’t help panicking as she pursed her lips. All of a sudden, she couldn’t seem to figure out how to express her rejection with Harriet present. After all, she was mindful of maintaining Nigel’s reputation too.

As for Elliot, he reached out and took a sip from his cup. His dark eyes were deep and mysterious, and one couldn’t quite tell what was on his mind.

In fact, he was also waiting for the woman next to him to express her stance.

“Look, Nigel's sincerely in love with you, Anastasia. He’s a great guy and I do hope that you can consider him as a prospect.” Harriet tried to matchmake the two, as she really hoped that Anastasia could be a part of the family too.

All of a sudden, Anastasia found herself in a rut as she mumbled, “Old Madam Presgrave, I

“Anastasia, I’m sincere in my feelings. Ever since you saved my life, I made up my mind that my entire soul and self would belong solely to you.” Nigel took this opportunity to confess his true feelings. He also hoped that with Harriet present, Anastasia would no longer shy away from his sincere feelings.

Anastasia's pair of beautiful eyes shifted from left to right. She also pursed her lips for a moment before biting on her lower lip. At that point, she looked deeply troubled as she struggled to come up with a decision.

As for Elliot, he continued to hold his cup as he gracefully sipped some tea. His thick eyelashes formed a dense canopy and his eyes were covered thus masking the intense, penetrating look in them.

Anastasia suddenly turned to shoot him a fleeting yet pleading look, but she could only manage to catch his nonchalant look from his handsome side profile. He behaved as if this had nothing to do with him, and he clearly wasn't going to offer her any help at all.

She merely shot him a quick look before lowering her eyes. At the same time, she was quite frustrated as she grumbled to herself, What did I expect from him anyway? He's just here today to watch me make a fool of myself, or perhaps he's just here to have some fun.

"Anastasia, do you find it quite hard to accept Nigel's marriage proposal?" Harriet's warm voice suddenly rang out.

As for Nigel, the expectant look in his eyes was evident because he wanted an answer. It was obvious that he was mainly after a sincere reply from Anastasia.

Anastasia didn't blame Nigel for that because she knew that just like Elliot, Nigel's feelings toward her included a strong sense of gratitude. Even if he sincerely liked her, she couldn't accept him anyway.

"I'm sorry, Nigel, and I'm sorry, Old Madam Presgrave. I can't accept Nigel's proposal." Anastasia lifted her head and she had a clear look in her eyes as she spoke in a firm voice.

Meanwhile, the man seated next to her, who was busy sipping tea, revealed a slight and unnoticeable smile. "Why is that so?" Harriet exclaimed in surprise.

Nigel's heart sank but he wasn't angry with Anastasia, because he had all the patience in the world for her. He was determined not to back down despite her multiple rejections all this while.

“That’s because I have made up my mind to remain single for the rest of my life.” Anastasia’s firm voice rang out once again.

“Pfft!” Suddenly, the man next to her, who was initially elegantly sipping his tea, choked on his drink. He quickly covered his mouth with his large palm as he hastily turned his head to stare at her.

Meanwhile, Anastasia faced the stunned looks of the three individuals in front of her, and she explained in an exceptionally calm voice, “I already have a child and he’s my whole world. Old Madam Presgrave, I hope that you can understand my circumstances as a single mother. Even if I choose to remarry, I wouldn’t have another child because I want to focus my love and efforts on my son. I think Nigel deserves a better woman.”

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Anastasia knew that her words would definitely garner Harriet’s support. After all, the latter was a woman, so she would naturally be able to understand the situation of a mother’s refusal to build a new family with a kid in tow. If she conceived a second

child, then it was inevitable for the first child to experience some suffering.

Upon hearing that, Nigel instantly expressed himself, “Anastasia, Jared’s just like my own flesh and blood, and I’ll definitely treat him the same way as I would treat my own son. Also, I’m willing to respect your wishes and we don’t need to have another child. I’ll focus on raising Jared with you. What do you think of that?”

Meanwhile, Harriet was quite frantic though she didn’t show it. How can that be fine? Nigel’s father is not going to agree to that, and my daughter definitely won’t allow that too! The Manson Family line needs to be passed on.

At that moment, Elliot frowned and turned to speak to Nigel. “Nigel, stop being ridiculous. You have to respect your parents’ wishes too.”

“Elliot, I can make my own decision on this matter,” Nigel replied calmly, as he intentionally wanted to show Elliot how determined he was in pursuing Anastasia.

“Nigel, I’m very flattered by your sincere feelings, but I’ve made up my mind to remain single for the rest of my life. I’m not going to enter into a marriage with any other man, and you’re no exception.” Anastasia made her stance clear and there was no going back on her words because these were her actual thoughts too.

Elliot's expression instantly darkened as soon as she finished her sentence. He was seated next to her, and he turned to glare at her, “Miss Tillman, you shouldn’t speak so rashly just yet. You should give yourself some room for changing your mind just in case. Otherwise, it would be embarrassing for you if you changed your mind in the future.”

In response, Anastasia glared at him. “I’ll definitely do as I said, so there’s no need for you to be concerned, President Presgrave.”

Suddenly, Harriet was taken aback. What does Elliot mean by that? I don’t get it.

At that moment, their food arrived and Harriet noticed that the atmosphere seemed quite tense so she quickly gestured at Anastasia. “Come on, girl. Let's stop chatting and grab a bite. We can talk as we eat.”

“Here, Anastasia. Try this.” Nigel reached out and served some salad onto her plate over the table. Upon seeing that, Anastasia politely thanked him. “Thanks, Nigel. I’ll help myself.”

Meanwhile, Harriet suddenly lamented, “Anastasia, it must have been destined for us to meet, so I sincerely hope that we can come together and become family members.”

Chapter 176 “I’m blessed to have made acquaintance with all of you too.”

“Your mother sacrificed herself to save Elliot and you saved Nigel’s life while overseas, so I’ve already regarded you as my family after these two huge acts of kindness.”

Suddenly, Nigel was caught by surprise as he lifted his head and exclaimed, "Grandma, what did you just say? Anastasia's mom saved Elliot's life? What happened back then?"

Meanwhile, Harriet turned in his direction and replied, "You've been overseas all these years, so it's quite normal for you to be unaware of this incident. Elliot was kidnapped when he was six years old, and Anastasia's mother sacrificed her life to save him. We're forever indebted to Anastasia and her family."

Nigel's eyes widened in surprise as he couldn't quite believe his ears. It was beyond his wildest dreams that Anastasia and Elliot also had such a great act of kindness linking the two of them. Is that why Elliot steadfastly stays by Anastasia's side? Is he also intent on repaying Anastasia for everything that she had done, just like me? Elliot's actions of taking control of the QR Jewelry Group and the current situation with him being permanently stationed at the office of Bourgeois Jewelry Atelier clearly is his way of repaying Anastasia for her great act!

Suddenly, Harriet mentioned, "I need to go to the washroom."

"Old Madam Presgrave, I'll go with you!" Anastasia quickly placed down her cutlery and got up to escort Harriet from her seat. Meanwhile, Harriet happily walked with Anastasia to the washroom.

As soon as the door swung shut after them, Nigel turned to Elliot with a sharp look in his eyes. "Elliot, are you pursuing Anastasia?"

Upon hearing that, Elliot answered the question without flinching. "Yes." "Are you just trying to repay her kind act, or are you truly fond of her?" Nigel interrogated Elliot bluntly.

"Both of the reasons are valid to me." Elliot voiced out in a low voice. In all honesty, he was indeed quite reluctant to go after the same girl as his cousin.

"I went after Anastasia first, so you shouldn't fight me for her affections." Nigel said that while clenching his fist tightly.

"Precedence doesn't mean anything in this. The deserving person of her affections should be whoever that's more capable. Or perhaps, to be more accurate, she's the one who gets to have a say."

“In that case, let's compete equally for her affections and see which one of us manages to win her heart. If you succeed, then I'll acknowledge her as my sister-in law, and vice versa if I win. What do you say?” Nigel bluntly announced that they should compete equally with each other. As such, if he failed in his bid and the other party was Elliot, then he would admit his defeat graciously.

After all, Nigel knew that he was not as capable as his cousin, but he refused to give up without a fight and he wanted to try and make a bid at it.

“Alright. Let's compete equally, then!” Elliot agreed to this solution as this was the best way that wouldn't affect their kinship.

Shortly after that, Harriet and Anastasia came back from the washroom, and the two men immediately acted as if nothing had happened. They continued to enjoy their meal and sip from their teacups, and the confrontational vibe from earlier dissipated without a trace.

“Anastasia, I would like to propose a toast with this cup of tea in place of champagne.” Harriet held a teacup in her hand and walked toward Anastasia.

Extremely flattered, Anastasia quickly got up to toast Harriet. “Here's a toast to you too!” “Next time, bring Jared over to our house to have some fun. I would very much like to meet him,” Harriet announced. “Sure, I'll bring him over to pay you a visit once we're free.” Anastasia agreed without any hesitation.

Just then, Anastasia was engrossed in enjoying her meal when she suddenly sensed someone serving something to her plate. She assumed that it was Nigel but it seemed to be coming from another direction, so she looked up and found out that it was Elliot looking at her. It turned out that he was the one who had served her some food.

Instantly, she anxiously glanced at him and shot him a warning look. She didn't want to appear too intimate with him around Harriet.

Meanwhile, Nigel saw everything and he couldn't contain the desolateness that arose within him. He felt as if he was one step behind in everything. He couldn't help wishing that he had taken over the Bourgeois Jewelry Atelier so that Anastasia could work for him and subsequently, he would be able to

court her every day during working hours. However, she was now Elliot's subordinate and he had the perfect opportunity to take advantage of the situation.

At that point, Nigel was quite downcast so he found the meal quite bland and tasteless. It felt as if every bite turned to sawdust. Finally, the meal ended and Elliot took a look at the time before mentioning to Harriet, "Grandma, I'll head back to the office now." "What? Are you leaving so soon?" Harriet was quite surprised to hear that.

"Yes. I'll send Miss Tillman back too, since we're heading in the same direction." As soon as Elliot finished saying that, he turned to Anastasia, who was still in her seat. "Let's go," he urged.

Meanwhile, Anastasia was momentarily stunned before she quickly grabbed her bag and bade Harriet farewell. "Old Madam Presgrave, I'll see you next time."

Chapter 177 With that, Anastasia turned to Elliot and casually commented, "Thanks for the kind offer, President Presgrave." However, Nigel hurriedly got up from his seat and offered, "Anastasia, I can give you a ride."

At that point, Anastasia quickly turned around. "Nigel, do stay on and finish the meal with your grandmother. I'll catch a ride with President Presgrave as we're heading in the same direction anyway."

After that, Nigel could only watch helplessly as the two of them left together, and he couldn't contain the desolateness that rose up within him. Is Anastasia interested in Elliot?

Upon entering the elevator, Anastasia keenly sensed that the man next to her was in a horrible mood. Elliot had a dark expression on his face and it was as if he had suffered a huge loss in his business. Instantly, she became quite reluctant to catch a ride with him so as soon as the doors to the elevator slid open with a ping, she turned to him and immediately said, "President Presgrave, thanks for your offer but I'll just catch a cab."

"Why?" Elliot shot her a look. Why?! It's because you're obviously in a bad mood so I'd better avoid courting trouble!

“It's not a big deal. | just want to catch a cab;” Anastasia lifted her head and replied before quickly walking off in the direction of the street. Suddenly, a large palm reached out and possessively grabbed hold of her wrist before dragging her to the direction of a car. Elliot pulled open the door to the front passenger seat and gestured for her to get into his car.

Meanwhile, Anastasia frowned. This guy is too domineering! Can't | go back by myself without catching a ride with him?!

In the end, Anastasia ended up getting into the car and Elliot entered the driver's seat too. Subsequently, the black car drove off and merged slowly into the traffic.

Anastasia was quite perplexed as to why Elliot suddenly lost his temper but despite racking her brain for the reason, she couldn't quite figure it out. He was an unfathomable individual and his emotions were quite unpredictable most of the time.

All of a sudden, Elliot's low, interrogating voice rang out. “You mentioned earlier that you intend to remain single for the rest of your life. Are you serious about that?”

At that point, Anastasia was stunned and she turned her head to stare at his handsome side profile. Similarly, he turned his head too and shot a look at her.

“Of course I'm being serious! | have no intention of getting married anyway.” Anastasia wasn't accustomed to telling lies and she was quite happy and content with the life she had with her son right now, so she found it pointless to add trouble to her peaceful life.

Getting married didn't necessarily guarantee a blessed life and likewise, remaining single didn't mean that one's life would definitely be an unhappy one.

“If Jared also likes the guy who pursues you, then would you still maintain your stance of not getting married?” Elliot continued to direct questions at her. Coincidentally, their car came to a stop in front of the traffic light, so he kept his piercing eyes on her.

Instantly, Anastasia realized that the person Elliot was referring to was himself.

She gulped and turned her head in the other direction to look out of the window. At the same time, she shook her head firmly. "I don't plan to get married. I plan to raise Jared by myself."

Suddenly, Elliot felt a sharp, stabbing pain in his heart upon hearing her words. She knows that I'm referring to myself and yet, she still insists on giving such a ruthless reply.

"Anastasia, could you consider things from another person's point of view? Don't keep hiding in your own world and avoid another's feelings." Elliot spoke through gritted teeth as he directed his deep eyes at her. He seemed to be extremely angry at the moment.

Meanwhile, Anastasia turned her head to look at him. His current expression was exceptionally forbidding and his gaze was full of frustration.

"Elliot, you don't even know what I've been through and you don't know me at all, so don't you dare jump to conclusions about me!" Anastasia was also slightly angered at that point and after finishing her sentence, she remained quite annoyed so she continued on her tirade, "I told you this before. I don't need you to repay me for anything, so could you please suppress your feelings for me? Nothing will come out of this relationship. Stop the car. I want to get out of the car."

Meanwhile, Elliot, who was holding onto the steering wheel, evidently tightened his

Tip. There had never been any woman who could easily trigger his anger with just a few mere sentences.

However, he didn't pull over. He continued to keep his eyes on the road and his anger suddenly dissipated as he calmly responded, "I'll send you back to the office."

At that point, Anastasia was stunned so she turned to look at him, who was currently busy driving by her side. She could feel the coldness and the distant feeling that came from within him, and she thought, Have I gone too far with my earlier sentence?

"Elliot, why don't you tell me about you and Hayley? I would like to know more." Anastasia tried to change the topic.

However, unexpectedly, she had hit a sore spot and this was a topic he had no intention of bringing up, so he coldly responded, “I don’t want to talk about it.”

In the end, Anastasia had no choice but to keep her mouth shut. She found Elliot quite unpredictable indeed.

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By then they had arrived in front of the company, so Anastasia instantly voiced out, “Why don’t you pull over right here? I’ll get down now.”

It was the peak hour during lunch, so she didn’t want anyone to see her getting out of Elliot’s car. Upon hearing that, Elliot pulled over and Anastasia quickly grabbed her bag and got out of the car in a rush.

It was quite obvious that she was afraid of being seen by anyone else. Meanwhile, he continued to drive in the direction of the underground parking lot.

As soon as Anastasia got back to the office, she received a phone call from Felicia saying that the client was quite pleased with her design, so there were no changes necessary. They could now proceed to send it to the factory to get it customized. Felicia had also confirmed with the client the details of it, such as the grade of the diamond preferred, so Anastasia felt quite relieved.

At that moment, Grace walked in with her cell phone in hand and there was an excited look on her face. “Anastasia, look at this! The news of President Presgrave’s treat of Musang King durians from yesterday has gone viral! Furthermore, it’s one of the top three trending topics. The title is “The president of the Presgrave Group treated their staff to Musang King durians. They are so fortunate!”

Meanwhile, Anastasia was significantly speechless. After all, it wasn’t even a significant piece of news, but the media had deemed it important enough to publish it. The news published was in fact detrimental to Elliot, as it definitely reflected badly on his esteemed status.

Right before work ended, Anastasia realized that it was time to go and pick Jared up from school. Suddenly, her landline rang and she subsequently picked up the phone. "Hello, who's on the line?"

"Come to the underground parking lot." An abrupt male voice rang out.

At that instance, Anastasia hesitated for a few seconds before mentioning, "President Presgrave, there's no need to bother with this. I can go and pick Jared up by myself. I've hurt my finger too and I can't cook for you for the time being, so I would like to take a break for one week."

Essentially, this meant that Anastasia didn't want to see the man for the coming week. "Are you avoiding me?" Elliot's voice deepened and it turned colder too.

Anastasia wasn't one prone to self-deception, so she responded, "Yes. From now on, we shouldn't meet up unless necessary. That would be the best for both of us. Goodbye."

After Anastasia said that, she hung up the phone. Subsequently, she decided to go and pick Jared up.

And so, she hailed a cab to his school and as soon as she entered the school compound, his teacher exclaimed in surprise, "Oh- you're Jared's mother, right? Why are you here? Jared's father came and picked him up earlier."

"What?!" Anastasia was caught by surprise. Elliot came before me to pick up my son?! What the heck is he doing?! How can he do that? Darn it!

At that point, Anastasia could only grab her cell phone and dial Elliot's number. Fortunately, he swiftly answered the phone. "I picked Jared up and we're having dinner."

"Where are you taking my son to? Send him back home right now."

"Make your own arrangements for dinner. I'll sort out Jared's meal." After Elliot said that, he hung up immediately. Meanwhile, Anastasia was at a loss for words. He took off with my son and I'm not included? Gosh!

Suddenly, she received a phone call from her father. “Hi, Dad.”

“Anastasia, are you free this Friday night?”

“What's up?”

“It's my company's twenty-fifth anniversary this Friday, and I would like to invite you and Jared along to join in the celebration.”

“Sure, I'll take Jared along then.” Anastasia was definitely attending it, so she agreed to the request. “Great! Make sure to dress up nicely on Friday night. I'll introduce you to some of the company's management personnel.” “Okay!” she replied.

After she got off the phone with her father, Anastasia contemplated the situation. She was in fact quite reluctant to bring Jared along to such occasions, because Naomi and Erica would definitely be in attendance and she didn't want Jared to meet them.

In the end, a lonely Anastasia ended up having a dinner of sandwiches by herself in a tiny restaurant. Each bite she took of her meal, she pretended as if she was biting into Elliot's flesh. How dare he take off with my son? How annoying!

In the end, Anastasia got back home at about 7.30 PM and watched the clock tick by as she waited for Jared to arrive home. Meanwhile, her thoughts were filled with Elliot and she recalled everything that he had done to her. Suddenly, she felt her face gradually flush red. What's going on? Why do I keep thinking of that man? He's such a horrible and despicable person!

At about 8.40 PM, the doorbell sounded and she practically leaped up from the couch as she hurried to pull open the front door.

On the doorsteps, Jared held Elliot's hand and the boy happily greeted her, “Mommy, we're back!”

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"Where have you guys been? Why are you back solite? Anastasia glared at Elliot angrily as he spoke. Meanwhile, the man couldn't help but smile. "I brought Jared to get some dinner and then we went to an arcade nearby. Jared had a good time."

"Mommy, it's really fun. | want to go again!" The boy was clearly quite drawn to the arcade and it was still on his mind.

"Okay, we can go there and have some fun next time when I'm free. Now, it's time to go back and freshen up, then you need to get ready for bedtime." After Anastasia had said that, she turned to Elliot and voiced out, "President Presgrave, it's quite late now so | won't keep you any longer. You should go back."

"Mommy, couldn't you allow Mr. Presgrave to come in and have something to drink?" Jared suddenly felt that Anastasia was quite heartless to kick Elliot out just like that.

Upon hearing that, Elliot chimed in as he didn't want to leave just yet, "I won't stay on for too long."

In response, Anastasia nodded after considering the fact that he had spent the night having fun with Jared. "Okay. Come on inside to have something to drink."

Anastasia noticed the sweat on Jared's forehead, so she walked into his room to get his pajamas. "Jared, let's get you ready for bed first."

"Mr. Presgrave, I'll go and take a shower now."

"Go on." Elliot then sat on the couch. Anastasia's house wasn't exactly a mansion, but it was warm and cozy. He couldn't help wanting to stay on longer as it was very comfortable here.

Meanwhile, Anastasia helped Jared freshen up, and she listened to him talk about the fun he had at the arcade. Furthermore, Elliot had allocated four bodyguards to keep a close eye on the boy, and he had done a great job at making sure of Jared's safety.

Although Elliot had taken off with Jared without her permission today, Anastasia was surprisingly at ease with it and she wasn't worried about Jared being in Elliot's care. Since when did | develop this trust in him? Anastasia herself hadn't even realized this.

After Jared was finally done in the shower and he had also washed his hair, he ran out dressed in his pajamas to Elliot's side. Holding a Rubik's Cube in his hand, he asked, "Mr. Presgrave, could you show me how to solve this?"

Elliot took the Rubik's Cube in his hand and the little cube suddenly seemed to come alive in his hands as his slender fingers deftly rotated it. His actions were quite elegant and dashing and into time, he had completed all six sides of the Rubik's Cube.

Anastasia walked past while putting away some clothes, and she couldn't help silently applauding as she saw Elliot's speed at solving the Rubik's Cube. Indeed, this man is great in every aspect. If Jared interacts with him and learns from him, then perhaps he will turn out to be very smart too! Suddenly, Anastasia came to her senses. What sort of nonsense am | thinking about? | can't possibly hand Jared over to Elliot for him to bring up!

Right on the dot at 9.30 PM, Anastasia turned to Jared, who was sitting on the couch. "Jared, look at the time. What are you supposed to be doing by now?" she prompted.

The boy then lifted his head to glance at the clock on the wall and puffed up his cheeks. "Mommy, can | have another ten minutes, please?"

"No, it's time for you to read a bedtime story and then go to bed. Mr. Presgrave needs to go home too. It's getting late now." Anastasia's main purpose was for Jared to stop bothering Elliot so that The man could leave.

However, Jared glanced at Elliot with a torn look in his eyes. "Mr. Presgrave, I'll go to bed now."

“Go on, then. It's great to get into the habit of maintaining a healthy lifestyle!” Elliot praised Jared.

In the end, Jared was elated with the encouragement and he happily went to his room. Anastasia went along with him and tucked him into bed. Subsequently, she adjusted the air conditioner temperature before shutting the door behind her.

The man on the couch had unbuttoned the first three buttons on his shirt, and his delicate collar bones were revealed. At the same time, Jared was not around, so Elliot's expression changed because right now, he could focus his eyes on the person he wanted to look at without any restraint. His primitive gaze was quite explicit.

“Let's have a chat.” Truth was, Elliot wanted to continue the topic they hadn't quite finished in the car from earlier. He wanted to talk to Anastasia about her vow to remain single for the rest of her life, because he was adamant to dispel that notion from her mind.

Meanwhile, Anastasia saw that Jared had fallen asleep and she wanted to take a shower and turn in for the night, so she tidied up the living room and spoke without lifting her head. “I'm not in the mood to chat. You should go home.”

Upon hearing that, Elliot narrowed his eyes. The light from the chandelier illuminated his figure and he seemed to exude a cold elegance from within. He looked like Prince Charming who had just come back from a ball.

“Can we talk about Jared's father? | would like to know more about him,” Elliot suddenly commented in a low voice.

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wanasia suddenly paused in her action of wiping the table and her expression changer slirati This was a topic that she didn't want to talk about either, so she rejected outright, “I don't want to talk about that.”

“It's all in the past, so you should be open about it and let it go. Jared's old enough now, so there's no need to be so fixated upon it,” Elliot advised her. He thought that Anastasia's decision to remain single from now on was due to the hurt she had experienced in the past.

On the other hand, Anastasia knew that he was just being kind and wanted to comfort her, but she didn't need that at all. She lifted her head and stared at him with clear eyes and she reminded him, “President Presgrave, it's quite late now.”

However, Elliot remained seated on the couch and he looked at her with a deep expression before placing his elbows on the armrest. He then nonchalantly tapped his long and slender index and middle finger on the couch, and he didn't seem to have the intention to leave at all.

“Elliot, it's nearly ten now. How long are you going to continue this?” Anastasia could only urge him to leave. Doesn't he have to go home and get some sleep?

At that point, he finally got up and then he purposely left his car keys on the couch. He then headed in the direction of the entrance before turning around to speak to Anastasia, who was in

the living room, “Hand me my car keys please.”

Anastasia glanced at the car keys on the couch and she quickly grabbed them to bring them to the entrance, but he refused to take them from her too. In the end, she could only take a step out of the house and reached out to hand them to him.

Suddenly, Elliot stretched his arm then she was dragged out of the doorway by him. Instantly after that, she was engulfed by a man's scent as a strapping figure approached her. At that moment, she could feel her body stiffen significantly. Anastasia lifted her head, and her eyes met Elliot's smoldering look. The aggressiveness in his eyes was quite obvious too.

Right after that, he leaned forward and pressed a steamy, hot kiss on her lips, and he didn't give her a chance to reject him at all as he pushed on aggressively.

For a moment, Anastasia was quite breathless and slightly stunned from his prolonged, aggressive kiss. After she had come back to her senses, she tried to push him aside but at that point, Elliot placed his

head against her forehead and his warm breath hit her cheek as he panted slightly. "It is only now that I'm content enough to leave the place."

Meanwhile, Anastasia angrily lifted her head to glare at him. So he's not content to leave without taking advantage of me?! What's on his mind anyway? It seems to be full of obscene thoughts!

"Just leave!" She shoved him hard and turned around to walk into her room. Subsequently, she slammed the door shut after her. At that moment, her heart thudded frantically and she could still taste him on her lips. How?

she couldn't comprehend her feelings. What's up with me anyway?! | don't seem to hate it and surprisingly it feels quite pleasant?!

Anastasia seemed to be in a daze and she quickly forced herself to dispel the thoughts in her mind. After that, she grabbed her clothes and went to take a shower.

At the same time, she was adamant not to invite Elliot into her house from now on. After all, he was a beast who couldn't seem to keep his hands off her. He's so rich and it wouldn't take much effort for him to get any woman he's after, so why does he refuse to leave me alone?

That night, Anastasia had trouble sleeping as she lay on her bed and her thoughts kept going to the kiss she had with Elliot by the door. At the same time, she realized that he was indeed a cunning person. He had purposely left his car keys on the couch to force her to bring them out for him. As such, he took advantage of the situation subsequently. How annoying! Undeniably though, he's really good at being provocative.

One would find such a man hard to resist if the person didn't have a firm heart. However, Anastasia trusted that she could definitely resist the temptation and she wouldn't be affected by his provocations at all.

Meanwhile at the Tillman Residence, Erica finally had something to do. She could finally prepare for the twenty-fifth anniversary of her father's company. On that day itself, she intended to dress up in a pretty dress and wow the crowd by being the most attractive person in attendance. This was a great chance for her to showcase herself and she definitely wouldn't let it go to waste.

At that moment, Naomi was in her room and she was busy discussing with Francis the allowance for her attire for the event. She intended to get a stunning gown for Erica so that Francis' image could be upheld.

Finally, Francis relented after her countless pleas and whines, and he decided to allocate an allowance of two hundred thousand for the mother-daughter duo to doll up for the event.

Naturally, Naomi found the amount insufficient, but it was good enough that she had managed to gain this amount from Francis. She decided that she would take Erica and pick a gown the next day as well as the day after that. After she had heard Francis mention that he had also invited Anastasia to the event, Naomi decided that she had to make sure that Anastasia didn't steal the show. Erica simply had to be the only star of the show.

The next morning, Anastasia chatted with Jared about them attending the anniversary dinner as she sent him to school.