

A Ruling Passion – Chapter 21

Mark Tremont left early in the morning the next day.

Arianne Wynn had turned her closet inside out yet she could not find anything befitting to wear. This was the first time she felt the desire to go shopping. She invited Tiffany Lane, and they both headed to the mall together.

When Arianne went to pay, Tiffany's mouth formed an 'O' shape when she saw the bank service deduction text on the former's mobile phone. "Ari, that's a little too much. I've always thought that you're poor, but it seems like you're only pretending to be poor huh! You're a little rich woman!"

Arianne was reluctant to mention that the money was from Mark Tremont, simply replying, "That's nonsense. Let's go."

The gathering at night was located at Will Sivan's family beach villa.

When Arianne Wynn and Tiffany Lane arrived at the party, a crowd had already formed. Arianne was unfamiliar with most of the guests, having never met them. Will Sivan stood out the most among the mass of people, attracting her line of vision almost instantly.

"Arianne, it's been a while." Will Sivan went up to her and smiled, his handsome eyes stared at her without a blink, making her shy upon meeting his gaze.

"Yeah... it's been a while..."

The crowd around them teased, "Will, this is the real reason you're hosting this party, isn't it?"

"Yup, what about it?" Will Sivan did not hold back. He was joking, though it was not far from the truth. Arianne lowered her blushing face feeling like something pulled a heart string. Her heart was dripping in honey.

Tiffany Lane grabbed ahold of Ethan Connor from the mass of guests.

"Ari, this is my boyfriend, Ethan Connor!"

Arianne looked up to see Ethan Connor nodding at her as he greeted him.

Ethan Connor was gorgeous with his tall frame and handsome features. It was just his edgy and socialite character that Arianne found it hard to like his physical appearance. She gave him a small smile before she was pushed into the main hall with the rest of the guests.

The heater in the hall was turned on considerably high and the music was on full blast as well. Tiffany Lane was immersed in the scene once she entered the place, all while a bottle of fruity alcohol was forced her way.

“The alcohol percentage isn’t too high in this and it’s fruit-flavored. Don’t tell me that you’re going to have plain water. That’s a downer.”

Arianne took a sip. The taste of alcohol was truly faint as what filled her mouth was the rich taste of orange. She did not dislike it, thus she took another gulp.

Gradually, Arianne began to feel the heat and took off her jacket, tossing it on the couch, where Ethan Connor and Tiffany Lane sat already drunkenly inseparable.

Will Sivan whispered something into her ear but Arianne could not catch it. Stumbling, she fell into his embrace and she lost track of whatever that happened next...

When Arianne Wynn woke up the next day, she felt a slight headache. Turning around and opening her eyes, Will Sivan’s face was magnified right in front of her! Stunned, panic flooded her.

Arianne got off of the bed anxiously, realizing the clothes she wore had been changed somehow. She was obviously wearing a man’s shirt!

She had no recollection of what happened last night, although she could guess based on her current state.

Arianne had no idea what to do. This was also her first time staying out. If Mark Tremont knew about it, she was doomed!

Before everyone else woke up, she found her clothes and changed into them. Unable to find her jacket despite looking everywhere, she had no other choice than to wear Will Sivan's since it was snowing heavily outside.

Scurrying down the stairs, plenty of hungover people were still lying unconscious on the couch. It was imaginable how crazy last night was. Taking in this scene, Arianne's heart sank further as she hastened her leave.

On the flip side, Mark Tremont who was being driven to the airport rubbed the space between his eyebrows with much fatigue.

Chauffeur Brian Pearce caught his action from the rearview mirror and advised hesitantly, "Sir, why not postpone the trip? The departure time was changed yesterday, you've worked in the office through the night and now you're flying abroad without missing a beat. Your body won't be able to take it..."

"No need." Mark Tremont checked his mobile phone, thinking if he should make a call home when a news update popped out in his notification bar.

A headline flashed, prompting him to press into the article. His eyes were met with a high resolution photo of Will Sivan and Arianne Wynn lying entangled in bed!

The force of his palm nearly crushed his mobile phone as he spat through his gritted teeth, "Pearce, turn back home!"

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Brian Pearce took in his dark expression and deduced that something must have happened as he quickly made a turn. Every time Mark Tremont was enraged, it had to do with Arianne Wynn.

Arianne had just taken off her clothes back in her room of the Tremont Estate when the door was rammed open, making a hard bang.

Turning around in surprise, she met eyes with Mark Tremont's raging gaze. She pulled over the jacket to cover her front, as she was currently wearing nothing. Her voice trembled when she asked, "Why are you home..."

The fury in Mark Tremont's eyes burned brighter when he saw the garment that she was clutching was a man's jacket.

"Remove it!"

Arianne knew what he was referring to but she had nothing on since she was going to shower. If she removed the jacket, then...

While she was caught in a quandary, Mark Tremont was already in front of her, pinching her chin.

"Are you going to do it yourself or do I have to?"

Arianne Wynn wished for none of these options, silently keeping a death grip on the garment.

Losing his patience, Mark Tremont yanked the jacket covering her and threw his phone in front of her.

"Thought that I've left huh? Are you so impatient to get into his pants?!"

Arianne's gaze fell on the screen, taking in the photo of her and Will Sivan which didn't leave much to one's imagination, she felt like she was hurled into an icy pit.

Not in a thousand years would she have thought that someone would take their photo last night or that it would make it into the headlines so quickly. The heading was unsightly, not only was she and Will Sivan embroiled, Mark Tremont got involved too!

Her relationship with Mark Tremont was also exposed, being called improper. The incident where she took the knife stab for him, the day of the campus function, was reported as well. The article even doubted the morality of Mark Tremont taking care of her.

The news pushed all three of them to the cusp of public opinion with Arianne Wynn taking it the hardest.

“I’m sorry...” Arianne covered her chest with her hands. Humility and the photos complicated her emotions. Other than apologizing, she did not know what else she could do to help the situation.

Her mobile phone rang suddenly, but she dared not answer the call. Other than Tiffany Lane and Will Sivan, no one else would call her at this time.

“Answer it!” Mark Tremont ordered.

Bracing herself to retrieve her phone and answer the call, Will Sivan’s voice sounded, “Ari, are you home already? I can explain what happened last night. Are you upset? Ari?”

Arianne wanted very much to know but not a word escaped her lips when she saw Mark Tremont’s forbidding face. In the next moment, Mark Tremont had tugged her phone away and flung it to the wall.

A gasp later, Arianne was pushed onto the bed with Mark Tremont caging her from above. She was wrapped in his senses, her nerves and fear hitting their peak, as she pleaded with a sob. "Don't do this..."

"Don't you like this? Crawling onto another man's bed right after I leave! I wouldn't have allowed Will Sivan back for a family visit if I'd known! Tiffany Lane should be sent overseas as well!" Mark Tremont's tone was piercing as if it came from the underworld. He pinned both Arianne's arms above her head mercilessly, his strength causing her to pale from the pain, which he was oblivious of.

Looking at the ravaging man above her, Arianne was suddenly hit with the realization that this day, which she long dreaded had ultimately come. She was not surprised, but her heart ached knowing Will and Tiffany were innocent.

"Are they forgiven if I go through with it..."

"What did you say?" Mark Tremont stopped his actions and looked at her.

Arianne did not repeat herself, certain that he had heard her clearly.

The distance between them was so close that his breath emanated against her lips. However, his tone was at freezing point. "Do you think that I'll touch what others have laid their hands on?"

Right now, he thought that she was filthy...

Arianne felt like her heart was forcefully ripped apart just then, her breathing seemed to have stopped altogether.

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Mark Tremont got up and left in disgust. “You’re not qualified to negotiate with me!”

The room door was slammed closed, the loud bang sent shivers through Arianne. For the first time in ten years, she felt like her world had collapsed.

Mark Tremont’s enraged words echoed in her ears, truly frightening her. Arianne tried her best to call Tiffany but for the entire afternoon, but the only reply she received was the busy line tone.

Arianne panicked. Could Mark Tremont have forced them away?

She clenched her jaws and went to his room. This was her first time entering directly without knocking.

The room was smoky. Mark Tremont was still seated on the chair in front of the French window but this time, he had his back facing her. The ashtray beside him was brimming with cigarette butts and ash. His back was laced with a sense of melancholy.

“Please... don’t do anything to them. It’s my fault. I know that I’m wrong...” Arianne cried while she begged him. Will Sivan’s departure abroad the last time was only a warning, she could not bring herself to imagine what Mark Tremont would do to them when the case this time was much more severe.

“Heh... You’re willing to do anything for him, aren’t you?” Mark Tremont did not turn around, his tone was alarmingly distant.

Before she answered, he spoke again as if in self mockery, “You don’t have to tell me. I know the answer.”

He then tossed an agreement on the floor. “Sign it and I’ll consider.”

Arianne hurried over to pick the paper up and signed it without hesitation. It was only when she had penned her signature that she saw the big heading on top of the page staring right back at her, ‘Marriage Agreement’.

Stunned, Arianne was filled with emotions for a fleeting moment before she instantly understood that for Mark Tremont to assume innocence in this incident.

It would only make sense to marry her in order to shut the public's mouth.

"Get out!" Mark Tremont shouted.

He had not expected her to sign it so decisively. Rage engulfed him once again. He was apprehensive that he would not be able to control himself if she stayed for another second...

Indeed, she was willing to do anything for that man!

Arianne opened her mouth but before she could make a sound, Mark Tremont got up and pushed her away, leaving without a single glance.

Mark Tremont sat in his car and picked up his phone to dial a number.

"How's the investigation?"

The person on the line answered, "Sir, there were too many people at the party last night. It's difficult to filter each individual. We're unable to determine who did it for the moment. It looks like a scandal but really the finger is pointed at you..."

That much, Mark Tremont had expected. "Hah, cover it up. Stop the investigation if you can't find anything. Let's wait for 'him' to turn himself in."

Brian Pearce slowed the car. "Sir, miss is behind us."

Mark Tremont glanced at the rearview mirror and saw the petite frame who was running after their car. Frustration rose within him as he hung up the call and glowered.

"Ignore her."

Brian then continued to drive at normal speed once again.

Arianne grew terrified as she saw the car travel farther. She had signed the marriage agreement but he did not promise her anything. He had not agreed to let Will and Tiffany go and if he did keep a rein on them, she would not be able to live with herself for her whole life.

Stepping on gravel, Arianne suddenly lost her balance and suffered a harsh fall. The skin on her palms and knees grazed from the rough surface, exposing red and raw blood.

Mark Tremont, who saw what happened, scowled and coldly instructed, “Stop the car!”

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Arianne gasped from the pain. Just as she was about to pick herself up, a pristine pair of high quality custom made leather shoes appeared before her eyes. Mark Tremont’s apathetic voice came from above her head.

“You have two minutes.”

Arianne looked up into his deep orb eyes and carefully probed. “Can you... let them go now?”

She did not catch the disappointment that flashed across the bottom of his eyes. What he wished to hear was not this.

“You’re wasting my time if that’s all you had to say after chasing after my car so recklessly.”

Mark Tremont went back to the car without a pause after speaking. His forceful slam of the car door frightened Brian.

“Cancel my return ticket for next week. I’ll take over the overseas branch myself.”

Brian Pearce was hesitant. “Sir... You won’t be able to come back for at least three years then... Are you sure you want to cancel it?”

“Do what I say!” Mark Tremont’s lips were pressed into a thin line as he closed his eyes and rested against the seat.

Arianne Wynn stood on the spot until the car vanished from her sight. She was still dazed, her heart felt empty. She had a premonition that she had now truly lost everything

Three years later, in the large meeting room of Tremont’s subsidiary tower of London, the jarring ringing of a mobile phone rang. Causing everyone to hold their breath and peek at the icy man seated at the chief position.

His assistant spoke softly from the side, “Mr. Tremont, it’s a call for you.”

The man’s gaze darkened. “Hang up.”

He was rather displeased with the assistant's lack of shrewdness as the meeting he was currently in was an important one.

The assistant steeled herself and explained, "It's madam..."

Madam...

Of course, he knew who the madam was. It was his wife, Arianne Wynn.

Mark Tremont took the mobile phone from his assistant and announced, "Let's end it here for now. We'll meet again at four in the afternoon. Dismiss."

The personnel were surprised. Their boss who always prioritized work, had actually postponed such an important meeting for his wife's phone call.

Mark Tremont replied to the call after he left the meeting room. A familiar voice came from the other end of the line. "Are you busy? I... I have something to ask you..."

Arianne Wynn was still as cautious as ever when she spoke to him. Mark Tremont was curious about the matter that compelled her to call him for the first time in three years.

“Speak...”

“Tiff is getting engaged. She and her fiancé are thinking about returning to the country. Can you allow her back?” Arianne was nervous.

Three years ago, Tiffany Lane and Will Sivan were sent out of the nation and were prohibited from ever coming back in his lifetime.

Arianne knew that this was her punishment from Mark Tremont and dared not revolt against him. However, it had been three years. It was rare for Tiffany to ask something of her. So this was why she plucked out her courage and made this call.

There was a slight halt in Mark Tremont’s steps, as he looked positively grimmer. She had come to him because of an issue like this.

Not receiving his response, Arianne panicked slightly. “I was the one who wanted to go to the party back then, it has nothing to do with Tiffany. It’s unnecessary for you to vent your anger on her. She and Will have spent three years abroad. Can’t you let them off the hook? Please...”

Suppressing his rage, Mark Tremont replied in a low tone, “I’ll be back in three days. We’ll see how you act.”

When he hung up, he kicked the corridor wall.

The assistant behind him turned pale from the scare, afraid to stay near him.

Arianne Wynn stared at the screen of her phone in a trance. He was coming back?

Three years ago, he had left so swiftly and had not returned since. She had thought that he did not want to see her again for life.

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Finally digesting this information, Arianne Wynn was actually more nervous now than when she was on the call. She darted downstairs.

“Mama Mary, please give the house a good cleaning...”

Mary was surprised since Arianne was usually not bothered with such matters.

“What’s up, Ari?”

Arianne could not pinpoint if she was feeling happy or scared. "He's... coming back."

Mary was bewildered for a moment, before realizing who Arianne was referring to. Grinning with her eyes. "Really? Sir is coming back? That's great. You guys haven't seen each other since being married three years ago. It's good news that he's coming back. I'll have the house cleaned thoroughly. Don't you worry."

Returning to her room, Arianne tidied up the messy sketches scattered all around. She was working in a fashion design company having just passed her probation. She was usually busy and her room was a reflection of that. Mary dared not mindlessly clean her room as she had no idea how to organize her sketches.

Now that Mark Tremont was coming back, Arianne did not want him to see her messy side.

On the day of Mark Tremont's return, Arianne had specifically asked Butler Henry for his flight time and went to the airport with a sufficient amount of time to wait for him.

He had left during the frigid winter, the season was the same for when he was coming back... Arianne felt like these three years had been a dream, passing in the blink of an eye.

Amidst the bustling crowd, Arianne caught the outstanding tall figure right away. Just like three years ago, he was still eye catching and poised. She was, however, stunned when she saw the woman hooked around his arms, he did not come back alone...

When Mark Tremont and the woman came close, Arianne could hear their whispers. "Mark dear, keep me company at the hotel tonight okay? I'm scared of being alone..."

"We'll see." His answer was cold yet it exuded his rare patience.

Arianne impulsively felt the urge to run away. Right before she turned around, Mark Tremont's gaze fell on her. It was without surprise, his gaze was without emotions. He merely asked, "Why've you come?"

Arianne was caught at a loss. It was as if he was saying that she was unnecessary.

"I... I..."

Unable to form a sentence, she could not even say that she was here to pick up her friend. He would see through her lies easily, for she had no friends at all.

Mark Tremont ignored her and spoke softly to the woman beside him, "Be good, go back to the hotel first..."

The woman was young, bubbling with youth. She wore a white fur coat paired with playful high heeled boots, her gaze and smile demanded attention. Her exuberance was a stark contrast against Arianne's gloom.

"Okay. You've gotta come and be my company tonight, okay..." The woman took a curious glance at Arianne.

Mark Tremont tugged a smile. When the woman was some distance away from the crowd, he recovered to his distant character and headed outside.

Arianne tailed behind him without a sound. Brian Pearce was waiting outside. When they got into the car, both were silent as well. Arianne had no right to ask who the woman was, not like Mark Tremont would explain who she was.

When they were nearing the Tremont Estate, Arianne spoke up, "When can Tiffany come back?"

Mark Tremont's attention was on his mobile phone as his long fingers danced across the screen. He was replying to text messages, specifically that woman's text messages.

"I've said, it depends on how you act." He looked annoyed, as if speaking another word to her would revolt him.

Arianne dared not ask any more questions, habitually keeping quiet.

Mark Tremont was still on his phone and replying to texts during dinner. Arianne had no appetite, dropping the cutlery after a few mouthfuls.

“I... have to work overtime tonight. See you.”

She did not want to be a sore thumb nor an obstacle that stopped him from going to see that woman.

Mark Tremont did not raise his head but he looked quite displeased. “What company asks their employee to work overtime when they’ve taken leave? Do they still want to be in business?”