Ruling 1061

Chapter 1061

It was about an hour later when Smore finally fell asleep. Arianne returned to the bedroom to a scowling, silently-sulky Mark sitting on their bed, radiating a kind of aura only found in bitter housewives.

She chuckled. “What?”

“You,” he grumbled. “You work during the day, and when you come home, you focus only on that little fella over there. Then finally, you go to sleep! What, am I just an appendage?”

Arianne climbed into the bed and underneath the sheet. She let out a satisfied, relaxed sigh before replying, “Well, are you saying I shouldn’t go to work, then? You agreed to this, though; no backsies. Besides, I think life is pretty good to us. I sleep with you every night rather than with Smore, you know, so honestly, I spend more time with you than with him. Now, you can’t possibly turn green over the attention I give to a child, can you? He’s your son.”

He laid down next to her and pulled her into his embrace. “Oh, you’re sleeping with me, alright. You go straight to sleep after coming out of the nursery, and then when the day turns bright, you wake up and go to work. What is the difference between me and a pillow? I’m basically just décor in your bed.

After a hard day at work, Arianne was too exhausted to listen to him complain. So, she cocked her neck and their lips met, effectively shutting him up.

It felt Mark up. He was just about to increase the intensity of his kiss when Arianne pushed him away. “I’m on my period.”

It was as though something cracked inside of Mark, causing him to freeze. “You’re kidding me.”

Arianne shook her head with a solemn expression. “Oh, I’m telling the truth. Came two days earlier than scheduled this month. Hmm… That’s not how you’d react in the past. I seem to recall you acting a lot more asexual? Why do I feel like you’re acting differently now?”

Mark suddenly yanked the sheet over his face. Then, a muffled and depressed voice came from under. “A man can’t be a complete ace as long as he’s alive.”

Arianne suddenly had the nagging feeling that she learned just a bit more “interesting” tidbit tonight. So, all these times when he acted celibate, it was an affectation rather than something genuine, after all. In fact, armed with her new knowledge, much of his past behavior made a lot more sense now.

Her instincts told her that, right now, her man wanted someone to comfort him, but Arianne had no idea how to do that. In the end, she snaked her hand around his waist and found the best sleeping position in his embrace before changing the subject. “So, Janice Bell. Finished probation yet?”

“No. I’ve extended it,” he answered casually. “Hasn’t finished her probation, and already she got into a conflict with her superior. It shows how socially immature she is. I might have helped her financially before, but it doesn’t mean I’m letting her in through a backdoor. Besides, I haven’t done any charity work for a long time.”

Arianne said nothing. The only problem she had with Janice was that Mark had let her touch Smore, and that time the two of them went shopping together. Of course, the shopping trip's purpose was still Arianne, as Mark wanted to buy her some jewelry.

After what Mary had told her, Arianne was more than confident in Mark's fidelity. Any guy as good as him would inadvertently attract a lot of female attention, and Arianne was sure Janice was not the first or last. As Mrs. Tremont, the mettle to accept this was simply a requirement.

Mark realized that the woman in his embrace was silent for too long, so he moved his cheek to take a glance at her. Arianne was already asleep.

He tucked her in and planted a peck on her forehead as the carnal urge inside him gradually subsided. Mark, admittedly, had always desired her.

On the next day, Jackson brought Tiffany to the company before making up an excuse to see a customer and left. After that, he went straight to Tanya's apartment.

Chapter 1062

Jackson pressed the bell for a good long while but no one answered the door. He began to suspect that Tanya was avoiding the door, despite being at home, simply because she noticed it was him.

He had just begun to brainstorm a workaround when Tanya's voice suddenly rang from behind him. "What are you doing here?"

Jackson turned. His sight landed on the food produce in her carrying bags and realized she had only gone to the market. "Got something to ask of you."

Tanya lowered her head a little, slightly nervous. “Um, o-okay… Let me open the door, and we can talk after we get in.”

The first thing that Jackson did after stepping into the unit was to look around and say, “I thought you’d married that Jett guy. So, why is he still letting you stay in an apartment unit you rented?”

Tanya had nothing to answer him. She didn’t know if Jett owned a house of his own or how much money he had in his bank account. All she knew about her supposed husband was that he, at the very least, owned a car. Quickly, she deflected the question with an inquiry of her own. “What do you need me for? Is it… about what happened before?”

Jackson nodded slightly. “Tell me the truth, Tanya. Did someone make you do all those things? If no one did, then how is it possible that the possible date of your baby’s conception is coincidentally close to the night that you faked an affair between us?”

Tanya began to clutch at the edge of her shirt. “No one asked me to, okay? I e-explained very well back in the hospital, right? I met Jett two or three times. We didn’t know each other that much, but um, one day, I asked him out alone, and we drank. And then an accident happened between us and I became pregnant. I-It’s all a coincidence, really!” she said hurriedly. “L-Look, I know it’s all my fault, all mine! I've done something that gravely betrayed you and Tiffany, I know, but please… Just let me live, okay? I just wanna live quietly with Jett, with my kid safely delivered. That’s all I’m asking. So please, let bygones be bygones…”

Jackson took in all of the little movements she made. Combined that with deliberate ambiguities in her statement and how skittishly and uneasily she was recounting her story, he was almost certain that Tanya was lying.

“Do you know? Alejandro Smith tried to save Tiffany on our wedding day and got himself into a car crash.”

She nodded. “Yeah. Jett told me.”

Jackson locked his eyes on hers. “If it wasn’t because of fervent, all-consuming love, why would anyone cast their life away for someone else? If the person who controlled you was Alejandro, then everything would make sense. Even the father of your child is Jett, a.k.a. Alejandro’s right hand man. The dots connect,” Jackson argued. “Tanya, stop lying to me already. Firstly, it’s because you can’t fool me. But secondly, it’s because Tiffany and I used to treat you so well. The least you could do to repay all this kindness is by telling me the truth.”

Tanya shook her head in sheer panic. “No! No, I don’t know anything, I swear! Please, don’t ask me about any of this! Just let me go! Let me live! I mean it. I know I’ve done wrong… But please have mercy on my baby and me…”

Her reaction emboldened Jackson to make explicit her conjecture. “Someone’s threatening you, aren't they? Alejandro is scared of the possibility of Tiffie knowing all the sh*t he has done behind her back, isn’t he? The Smiths are infamous for their unscrupulous, Machiavellian ways. You’re afraid that if you rat them out in any way, you, Jett, and your baby will be silenced.”

Tanya turned silent, her eyes avoiding Jackson’s.

He did not try to force more answers out of her. “Hmm, I think I got the picture now. But I do wonder why Alejandro would go to such lengths—to the point of putting his life on the line—despite only knowing Tiffany for a while and the two never moving past normal friends. Oh, well. I’ll be off.”

Tanya suddenly grabbed his wrist. “No, wait! What would you do? Would you tell Tiffany? Please—please don’t say anything to her! I didn’t tell you anything, I didn’t say anything, but he’ll—he’ll still kill us!”

Seeing Jackson frown, Tanya quickly let go. “Please, don’t tell her. Don’t tell Tiffany…”

Jackson hesitated. Admittedly, his true intention was to tell Tiffany the truth, but now, he could see that that would lead to a very devastating effect. He mulled over it for a while and finally made an offer. “I can keep this a secret from Tiffany, but in exchange, you’ll need to tell me everything you know about Alejandro. As long as word of my knowledge doesn’t pass on to him, you’ll be fine.”

Chapter 1063

Tanya clenched her jaw for a second, as though mustering her last ounce of courage before making an important decision. “I know very little of anything. All I know is that Alejandro pretends to be disabled and that he mentioned spending three years falling in love with Tiffany. All that he does is always for the same goal—he wants to break apart you and Tiffany. That’s it, that’s all I know. I’ve told you everything I know, so please keep this a secret from Tiffany. Please, because if she knows a single thing about this, I’ll be dead!”

Three years?

A name sprung into Jackson’s mind immediately: Ethan Connors.

Ethan was the one person Tiffany had loved for three years. He was also the man who made Jackson jealous.

Suddenly, it felt as though a hedge of brambles had grown all over his heart, stinging and prickling him with unease. If Alejandro was Ethan in disguise, then everything that had occurred finally made perfect sense.

How ironic it was that while Tiffany had loved Ethan for three years, Ethan used those same three years to finally reciprocate her feelings— after he destroyed her family and cost her a father.

Jackson returned to his company after leaving the apartment. When he met Tiffany on his way past the office area, he behaved normally and approached her with a bag of fresh fruits he had bought on the way there.

“Have some of these if you’re hungry during work.”

Tiffany took it with a smile, asking him, “How are you back so soon? I thought you were going to eat with your customer again.”

Jackson pushed the corners of his lips upward to make a weak smile. “I’ve already planned to have lunch with you, honey. No customer is going to change my schedule—especially when no one could override the eminent status of my wife. Anyway, I need to busy myself with my work for a bit. Look forward to a delicious lunch!”

Jackson rarely displayed overt affection towards Tiffany in the office, always preferring to frame their interaction with a veneer of professional seriousness. It was why his attitude today was especially out of the blue. Tiffany did not think much of it as a cover for something more profound, of course. She was just surprised by the extra display of love.

Then, since she was slowly drowning in the sea of her colleague's jealousy, she sheepishly had to urge Jackson to go away as quickly as possible.

Tiffany wanted to have barbecue for lunch, so Jackson brought her to a restaurant renowned for its barbecue without a second thought. Throughout their meal, Tiffany stuffed herself with food, while he quietly helped cook all of the meat slices for her.

Then, like a sudden bolt of lightning coming out of the sky, he asked, "How would you feel if Ethan suddenly came back?"

Tiffany's body froze against her wishes as her face rapidly turned white. Jackson never talked about Ethan, so to mention him suddenly was akin to goading her to think in that direction, which also meant that there could only be one possibility: Ethan came back.

Suddenly, the meat she had been enjoying just a few seconds earlier became revoltingly oily, and her stomach churned. She slapped her hand over her mouth and rushed into the bathroom before a series of gags escaped her throat.

Nothing came out, however. Tiffany stared into the mirror and watched an ashen-faced woman reflect back at her.

Calming her nerves took a long time. She found herself equally upset at the notion of Ethan being dead and of him being alive and returning to her life. She wanted her peaceful, happy life to be free from his haunting presence. She wanted to be free from the reminder of all the atrocities he had committed that had eventually befallen her. She did not need to remember her father's death.

When Tiffany finally exited the bathroom, she found Jackson standing outside, waiting. She walked toward him and asked tiredly, “Why mention him? Is he… is he back…?”

Jackson gently ruffled her hair. “No, babe. I just wanted to know if it was true that someone’s first love sticks in their heart as much as people say it does. I was just worried that I might be sharing a room with some other bastard in your heart.”

Tiffany’s eyes reddened before she swung a punch onto his chest. “You— you scared me! God! But… No, a person’s first love doesn’t always last forever in their mind. The only things he left me are pure nightmares… I don’t want to hear his name. I honestly hope I never hear his name again.”

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Jackson nodded and pulled her back to their table, beckoning her to finish her meal while he swept his troubles under his mental rug.

He regretted mentioning Ethan’s name and frightening Tiffany like that. To be fair, he had not at all expected her to take it so badly—and now he wished he could tell her with absolute conviction that Ethan died in South Africa. But things always refused to go as smoothly as one hoped.

The weekend came. Jackson sent Tiffany away to Lilian’s place for the day and promised to come back for her at night. Then, he went straight to the Tremont Estate.

He recounted everything he knew up to this point to Mark, who, for his part, took some time to comb through the information before saying, “It’s not that hard to find out whether Alejandro Smith is or isn’t Ethan Connors—we just need to do a DNA analysis. He’s currently staying in a hospital, right? That makes it easier to get a hold of his blood sample.”

“What if he is, without a doubt, Ethan?” Jackson demurred.

Mark’s lips thinned. “My philosophy has always been to leave people who aren’t troubling me alone, but to those who wrong me? I’ll hurt them, no quarters. Quite a simple life principle, really, and it’s one that cannot be deterred by a little blood relation between the transgressor and me. Hmph, I’m the one who wants him dead the most—and he should have been… back in South Africa.”

“Jackson, this is a crucial step that you simply must make,” Mark added. “I’m sure you already know this, don’t you? If he is Ethan, then you know that everything he does revolves around Tiffany. In other words, the one who’s most in danger isn’t me—it’s you.”

Jackson nodded. “I’ll have someone get to it as soon as possible. The people working for the Smith family are notoriously hypercautious, and their bouncers now protect the hospital that bastard is in. I’ll probably have to contact some healthcare workers I know to obtain his blood sample, then. I hope nothing sh*tty happens... Honestly, if he really is Ethan, it’s only gonna be a pain in our a**. ‘Alejandro’ is probably an even more bothersome character to deal with than plain old ‘Ethan’ because the former has the protection-through-association with the Smiths.”

“Either way, I gotta jet. Tell Arianne to tell Tiffie nothing about my visit, got it? I don’t want her to know,” Jackson finished.

Mark patted his shoulder in consolation. “I understand very well. Don’t worry.”

After leaving the Tremont Estate, Jackson put his plan to action. He hesitated a bit before deciding that, in lieu of requesting help from doctors he knew, he would ask a nurse to help. A bigshot like Alejandro would have a specialized doctor meant only for him, meaning other physicians would likely be barred from coming into contact. Nurses, however, were different. Jackson figured that they presented a choice with lower risks.

Thankfully, the skills perfected from his old life as a lady-killing Cassanova came into handy. He might have deleted all of the contacts of the opposite sex in his phone, but he was still more than capable of charming someone right there and then with live performance.

Several sweet nothings later, Jackson had successfully enticed one of the junior nurses to agree to his request. He watched the girl hold the medical tools for blood sampling before disappearing into Alejandro's ward.

He waited patiently. He would have his evidence soon.

Inside, the nurse adeptly made her way to Alejandro's bed and began to roll up his sleeves. "Let's see—Patient Number 16. Hey there, how are we doing today? Alejandro Smith, right? Your blood sample is required."

Alejandro was wide awake. He furrowed his eyebrows and questioned, "Didn't one of you take my blood yesterday? I didn't think medical check-ups needed to be this frequent."

The nurse was slightly taken aback, but she was nonetheless unperturbed. "That so? Well, maybe they need your blood for another kind of test, then. Not that I'll be told; all I know is that the doctor wants it, and I have to get it. Speaking of which, I'm sorry about your injuries. They are quite severe, frankly, and might not recover until at least half a year later."

Alejandro said nothing as he watched the nurse take his blood before leaving. Then, he summoned Jett, who was standing guard by his door, and ordered, “Something is fishy with that one. Those who come to collect my blood are always a few specific people, but she came out of nowhere. Follow her and see what she wants to do with it.”

Out of the necessity to maintain his disguise, Alejandro was always uber-alert to things like this. He knew that his blood could betray him because no matter what skin he wore, he was still Ethan Connor deep inside.

Jett honored his order by hurrying to the Chief Nurse, who was very well-versed with Alejandro’s health-check agenda. Instantly, she answered, “No blood-sampling has been scheduled today.”

A sense of dread instantly rose to Jett’s mind. Quickly, he swiped two test tubes filled with blood from the nurses’ counter and hurried away.

The Chief Nurse gawked at his antic, dumbstruck. One of her juniors, meanwhile, asked very softly, “Um, he took Number 19’s blood. What now?”

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The Chief Nurse was just as helpless. “What can we do? Does anyone from the Smith family look like someone we can go up against? Urgh, just extract another blood sample from that patient.”

Jett caught up with the nurse and bumped into her before swapping the blood sample in her pocket with the one he had swiped earlier.

“Excuse me.”

The nurse rummaged through her pocket out of habit before drawing out a sigh of relief at finding the sample intact.

Jett stood still at his spot and waited until the nurse was farther away. He only resumed following her after she turned into another corner.

He watched the nurse pass the sample to Jackson and quickly hurried back to Alajendro’s ward. “Mr. Smith, Jackson sent that nurse, who gave him the blood sample. I’ve switched out your blood with another sample before she could get it to him without the nurse noticing.”

Alejandro’s mien turned icy, muttering, “Suspecting me already, huh? That’s sooner than I thought. What went wrong? They shouldn’t have caught on so soon…”

Jett was feeling a little antsy. He started wondering if he should mention how, while bringing Tanya to do some checkups, they had come face-to-face with Jackson and Tiffany. In the end, he decided against it—he had no reason to throw himself under the bus right now, and he should work to protect himself.

“Maybe it’s the fact that you’re not actually disabled that roused their suspicions? After all, Master Don found out about who you are just by going off of that little discrepancy, didn’t he?” Jett suggested before adding, “You know, going to rescue Tiffany all on your own was quite a massive oversight on your

part. She even continued her wedding with Jackson on the very next day and has not once come to pay you a visit once. Was it all worth it?"

Alejandro's eyes darkened slightly, his mood getting worse as he said, "There's no need to ask whether or not it was worth it when it's something I owed her. I wouldn't have regretted anything, even if I died that day. And you're wrong— it's not that she doesn't want to visit me, it's that Jackson forbids her from doing so. I know her."

Jett sank into a stunned silence. Was the Alejandro Smith before him the same unscrupulous, cutthroat Alejandro he had known? He had now resorted to willingly deluding himself, all for a woman.

After receiving the sample, Jackson quickly submitted it for a test. Due to the urgency of his answer, Jackson had it go through premium processing.

Arianne had not known anything about this until nighttime, when she noticed a new wound on Mark's arm when he was in a towel after his bath. "What's that? The little wound in your arm? People usually only have that sort of thing when they get their blood sampled or something, right?

He did not answer her. Instead, a slight smile surfaced on his face. "You used to shy away from me if you ever found me topless, Ari. And now, not only do you watch, but you watch me closely? You even found the little hole made by a needle."

Seeing him dodging her question fanned Arianne's curiosity even more. "Hey, I'm asking you a question here! This isn't the time to do a checkup, either. So what's going on? Jackson came to see you just now too, so what exactly are the two of you doing so secretly behind my back, huh?"

He sighed with resignation before explaining, “We need to see if there’s a connection between Alejandro and Ethan. That’s it. The result should come in, at earliest, the morning after tomorrow. I urge you not to tell Tiffany anything about this, please. She’s steadily moving further along into her pregnancy, and even Jackson has to exercise extra caution.”

Arianne did not expect the boys to move in so quickly, but she had to agree that it was, indeed, the fastest way to get to the bottom of it. It seemed ludicrous that Alejandro, the heir to the Smith family, was actually Ethan, but too many interlocking connections bound the two of them, making the conjecture hard to dismiss.

She sighed. “No, I won’t tell Tiffany anything. I know that deep in her heart, she still possesses one last slice of mercy and wishes that Ethan didn’t die, but she also fiercely wishes that the two of them never will never cross paths again. If Alejandro really is Ethan in disguise, Tiffany would be so terrified; she might even faint. Nope, I’m not doing something as stupid as that.”

Her words spurred a thought in Mark. “You’re right. Tiffany has always seen Alejandro as ‘just’ Alejandro and never once connected him with Ethan. She even spent a lot of time with him, too. If she found out that she’d been hanging out with Ethan all along, I can imagine how much of a shock it might be to her. Of course, none of this is currently within necessary consideration; that would be after the result comes out. Before that happens, all we have are conjectures and nothing concrete.”

Chapter 1066

“Do you hope that Alejandro is really Ethan?” Arianne suddenly asked.

Mark fell silent, slightly unsure of what she meant when she asked him this question.

Having received no reply, she did not continue her question. “I’m going to check on Smore. You should get an early night.”

Mark returned to his senses when he heard the room door close. Tonight, he had been abandoned once again. Ever since Aristotle’s arrival, his presence had been relegated into extra space in the house. Even Mary seemed more important than him. At least, Arianne would ask Mary about Aristotle after work every day, and he wasn’t of any use at all! The weekend had finally arrived and Arianne was still the same, her world revolving around Aristotle.

A tinge of jealousy rose from within Mark’s heart. How could he possibly sleep in peace now? In the past, he could always call Eric and Jackson to go out for a drink with him. Now, however, Eric was gone and Jackson was busy taking care of the pregnant Tiffany. He had a wife and a son too. Everything was different now.

He opened a bottle of liquor, sat in front of the French windows, and drank, all alone, depressively. In fact, he knew why Arianne had asked him that question. She was undoubtedly asking him if he hoped that Ethan was still alive.

Did he? Ethan was his only sibling, his half-brother who shared the same father. He was also… the Tremonts’ shame. He had considered co-existing in peace, but Ethan refused. That’s why he wanted to kill him.

He didn’t want Ethan to become Alejandro. He didn’t want Ethan alive in this world, in any shape, form, or identity. However, he did not respond to Arianne’s question because he was afraid of seeing the disappointment in her eyes. He had never been a kind man.

Unbeknownst to him, he ended up finishing half the liquor bottle. His throat burned from the strong alcohol, as he had been drinking too fast. In the end, the burning sensation was masked by the sweet

smell of alcohol. The after-effects of drunkenness after consuming alcohol was the most addictive thing in the world.

When Arianne returned to the room and found him drinking alone in front of the French windows, she was shocked. It was as if he had reverted to his old ways, where he used to do this and would mostly sit alone after coming home, drinking. Then, he would drunkenly beckon her to him and say all sorts of strange things to her. Usually, he would be in an indifferent state under these circumstances.

She did what she never dared to do in the past—she strode forward and snatched the glass of alcohol away from him. “Stop drinking. It’s late, why are you drinking?”

He glanced at her moodily and stayed silent. The silhouette of his perfect face seemed almost unreal under the dim light, making his current emotions unclear.

His reaction made her feel very apprehensive. It had been awhile since he had reacted this way. She closed the liquor bottle and put the glass away. She ignored him, turned off the lights and went to bed. According to her experiences, one should never offend a drunk man, especially Mark.

Of course, she couldn’t fall asleep. She was wondering why he had been drinking and why he had reverted to his old ways…

Suddenly, a black shadow enveloped her. She widened her eyes instinctively and tried her best to confirm that the person on top of her was Mark. However, that revelation did not relieve her, as he had been behaving very strangely tonight.

Chapter 1067

She could feel his alcoholic breath drawing closer and closer towards her. She turned her head to the said. “What are you doing? Go to sleep if you’re drunk. I’m tired…”

He suddenly caught her chin and forced her to look straight at him. Neither of them could see each other’s expressions clearly. Arianne’s heart was still racing. Every time she tried to leave, he would tighten his hold on her. She was left with no choice but to submit to his will. She did not want to show up at work on Monday with bruises.

Her soft lips were sealed. Her mind was muddled by the alcohol in his breath. Actually, he was still the same Mark, but for the fact that he had tried his best to put on a face that she liked in front of her. She didn’t know what she did to draw his ire. Was she not supposed to ask that question, or was she not supposed to snatch his liquor glass away?

Finally, he broke away. She heaved large, labored breaths to take in some fresh air. She was close to suffocation. Kisses were supposed to be beautiful and romantic. Why did they feel like they could crush her? Or had he used too much force?

She really didn’t want to debate with a drunk man. The only way was to wait until he was sober the next day, then talk. Catching him off guard, she used her petite body to her advantage and slipped away. She jumped off the bed and bolted towards the door. She had just put her hand on the door knob when she felt something tighten around her waist. Then, her feet were lifted off from the floor.

She struggled. “Don’t do this… You’re scaring me!”

Mark tensed and put her down. Just as she was about to reach out and open the door again, he forcibly pulled her back and put a hand on the door, pushing her up against the door with his body. He lowered his head and looked at her. “Ari, you’re being a very bad girl,” he said in a hoarse voice.

Arianne felt her legs buck as she leaned back against the door. Why did these words sound so familiar? Images from her past flashed across her mind. Had she grown too arrogant from his good graces? Had he decided that he wouldn't tolerate her anymore? She had long felt that he had changed into a completely different person. Now, it seemed that he hadn't changed at all… He had only been playing along with her after her pregnancy.

His kiss landed on her neck. His hot breath made her neck itch. She was too afraid to move. Her body stiffened, as if she had been bound by some sort of curse. This display in this dark room seemed no different from more than ten years ago. She felt slightly absent-minded. Did they really have a baby together, or was she simply dreaming?

"You're only allowed to be with me tonight. If you ever use Smore to neglect me again, I'll send him away and have him raised on his own! I've taken care of you for more than ten years, what gives a damned kid the right to cut me off?"

Arianne wasn't sure if she should laugh or cry when she heard this. It wasn't a dream. She had a baby with him. He was only jealous and had simply grown rude and unreasonable because of it…

From the moment her nerves tensed to her momentary relaxation, her entire body had lost its strength. Only her masseters were left unaffected. To punish him, she went on her toes and bit him on the neck, hard. However, he stayed silent and continued holding her tightly.

Her heart stopped when he carried her and collapsed onto the bed. His zealotry both shocked and terrified her. At the same time, it excited her too, just a little bit. She was the only woman to have seen him this way, right? As it turned out, this man who was usually cold and silent, and never smiled had this side to him as well… And only she knew!

The next morning, Arianne was woken up by Tiffany's loud yelling. Jackson had probably arrived too. She washed up and went downstairs.

It would seem that Mark had long been aware of Jackson's arrival. He woke up early and was in the living room, chatting with Jackson with Aristotle in his arms. Tiffany's belly seemed even more obvious than ever, yet she still managed to take large steps when walking around. Her every move seemed unimpeded by her pregnancy.

Suddenly, Jackson eyed Mark's neck and asked, "What's up with your neck? It's all red."

Mark touched it instinctively. "Nothing, bitten by a cat."

Arianne shot him a glare. Hadn't he given her a scare last night? Biting was considered a light sentence. Besides, how could it possibly be still red and swollen? She had only bitten him last night!

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She strode forward, acting as if nothing had happened, opened his collar, and checked. One look at it and she jumped in fright. For some reason, the area around her bite now had a red, swollen bite mark. It was a ghastly sight.

She returned to her senses and asked, "Maybe you should put some medication on that? It's all red. Your skin must be overly sensitive…"

Mark stared at her flirtatiously. “No need, it’ll get better on its own. My skin isn’t usually that sensitive, but it becomes sensitive after alcohol and getting bitten… It’ll be fine tomorrow.”

Jackson immediately understood, guessing, “You two have gone overboard with your games…”

Arianne blushed. “What are you saying…”

Tiffany’s laughter was the most abrupt of all. “Stop pretending. Your pretense only confirms it. We’re all adults here. There’s nothing wrong with some dirty talk, haha…”

Jackson changed the topic with a straight face, saying, “By the way, Mark, I have something to do tomorrow morning. Could you take Tiffie to the office for me? I won’t have time to drive her. Don’t worry about taking her home after work, I can do that myself.”

“Mm,” Mark replied, but didn’t say anything else. Arianne knew that Alejandro’s DNA results would be out tomorrow.

Tiffany found it too troublesome. “Why are you asking him to pick me up when he lives so far away? I can drive myself to work, you know. You just don’t have faith in my driving skills. It’s been so many years. I’ve been able to survive without you, haven’t I?”

Jackson chuckled, “Just in case. It’s always a good idea to be careful.”

Jackson and Tiffany stayed back at the Tremont Estate for a meal. Aristotle insisted on being seated at the dining table, probably because of the extra people and merriment. His little hands grabbed everything around him. Eventually, he ended up breaking a bowl.

Tiffany giggled and asked, “Isn’t it time for the little guy to have solids? Hasn’t he had anything else, aside from breastmilk and water?”

Arianne nodded. “Yes, I haven’t been able to deal with this lately. I think it’s about time we introduced him to solid food.”

Tiffany scooped some soup with a spoon and fed Aristotle. Aristotle was so happy that he flailed his hands around.

“See, he’s teething already. There’s a small tooth growing out. He can have other food now. Look at how greedy he is. He’d swallow my spoon whole if he could.”

Arianne took the boiled lobster on the table, peeled it, and fed a little bit of its skin to Aristotle. Slowly, Aristotle would be able to have other kinds of food in the future, and she wouldn’t need to pump breastmilk for him every single day.

After the meal, Mark and Jackson went to the study, probably because they had something to discuss, which would be inconvenient for Tiffany’s ears.

Tiffany, of course, grumbled, “Ari, do you think they’re keeping something from us? What are they talking about behind our backs?”

Chapter 1069

Arianne pretended to play with Aristotle. “It must be something work-related. Mark is used to discussing business in the study. Men have a lot of bad habits that will never change. We’ll just have to get used to it.”

Tiffany curled her lips. “You’re right. Hey, your husband is taking me to work tomorrow. Are you jealous?”

Arianne smiled helplessly. “Why should I be jealous? Of you? A pregnant lady? Of course not. I’d be enraged if it were any other woman, but you? Even if Mark himself drove the car, I’d let you sit in the front seat, no worries… We’re best friends, aren’t we?”

Tiffany suddenly peered sneakily towards the staircase and lowered her voice. “Ari, Jackson suddenly asked me a question while we were eating at a restaurant once. He asked if I’d be affected if Ethan came back. Even though he explained that he was trying to figure out if my first love would be unforgettable, it still didn’t feel right. He knows what Ethan has done to me, and he’s never mentioned Ethan in front of me before. He’d never bring Ethan up just to question me over something that doesn’t really matter. I wonder…”

Arianne’s heart sank. Tiffany may look like a bimbo, but she was still a woman. She had moments of meticulousness too. She paused thoughtfully and said, “Maybe he cares about you too much, that’s why he asked. He’s a man who is used to flirting around and was suddenly made into an honest man because of you. Of course, he’d be worried if you’re still hung up over another man. He used to play around with feelings, so now, it’s his greatest worry. Don’t worry about it.”

Tiffany still felt uneasy. “Ari, be honest with me. Do you think there’s a chance that Ethan might come back? I trust you most of all. You’d never lie to me.”

Arianne lowered her gaze. “Tiffie, back when Ethan escaped to Nafaeth, Mark sent men to end him. In the end, they couldn’t find him, dead or alive. No one knows for sure if Ethan is dead or alive, or if he’ll come back. The only thing we can do now is to live our lives in peace. No one knows what’ll happen in the future. Who knows when misfortune will arrive, so why worry about it before it’s even here? So what if he comes back? You’re now Jackson’s wife.”

Tiffany paused. “I suddenly remembered something.”

Arianne looked curious. Tiffany chewed on her fingers and mumbled, “Jackson and I haven’t registered. What is this? It was delayed because of that accident. I have to hurry and make some time for the registration, or he and I aren’t legally husband and wife.”

Just then, Jackson arrived downstairs. “Tiffie, will you be coming with me, or staying here to chat with Arianne? I have something to take care of. We’re going to have dinner at my mother’s place tonight.”

Tiffany looked at Arianne, then back at her man. She hesitated for a moment and chose the latter. “I think I’d better come with you.”

Arianne smiled. Tiffany, who once stuck to her and her alone, was finally sticking to her man.

Arianne waited for Mark to come downstairs, then said, “Give me an update when the results are out tomorrow. Tiffie seemed a little suspicious too. She has asked me, but I couldn’t bring myself to tell her the truth.”

Mark nodded. “Jackson has asked me to take Tiffany to the office tomorrow, as he was afraid that she might find out. If Tiffany doesn’t go to work, she would keep in contact with him. He doesn’t dare leave her at home. That way, he’d never be able to excuse himself to do anything else. By the way, about the renovations for the old Wynn Mansion, the weather has been bad lately, so it has been pretty delayed. However, progress isn’t bad. I’ll bring you along to have a look when it’s ready.”

Arianne perked up when she thought of Wynn Mansion. As her spirits lifted, she put on a favourable expression and asked, “You really don’t want me to put any medicine on your neck?”

Chapter 1070

Mark stared at her with a half smile on his face. “Would you like me to take a vaccine too?”

The corners of her lips twitched. “Are you really going to treat me like a cat? You’re the one that scared me first! Who told you to drink and fly into a drunken rage?”

He looked completely innocent. “When did I go into a drunken rage? I was showing my displeasure. I’ve mentioned it to you before, but you didn’t care about the problem! How could I possibly get drunk with that amount of alcohol? I’ve already mentioned your constant neglect towards me, more than once.”

Arianne was immediately rendered speechless. It’s true, he had mentioned it, but she didn’t really pay much attention to it. He had always held a lofty and resolute presence in her eyes. He was loathed to receive anyone’s consoling and also loathed receiving value. He clearly looked down on everyone from the top of the world, but he actually needed her attention?

She sighed. “Fine, I won’t do it again. I never thought that you were that kind of a person.”

His sensitive nerves were pricked. “What kind of a person? What kind of a person am I? Why does it sound like you’re scolding me?”

She giggled. “What are you thinking? What I mean is that you’ve always been lofty and beyond compare since I was eight. You were lonely and resolute. You didn’t need anyone and didn’t care about what anyone thought. Receiving anyone’s pity was beneath you, so you really didn’t need my concern. What made you suddenly think that I was neglecting you? It’s just unexpected…”

Mark stared at her. His gaze softened. “I’ve only ever hoped for your attention.”

Arianne’s heart skipped a beat. She widened her eyes in mild shock. Her long lashes trembled slightly. This answer was too outrageous to her!

He lifted his hand and stroked her face. “We’ve suffered together from the very beginning, then began relying on each other with our guilt… This world would hold nothing of value to me if you hadn’t appeared. Do you know how it feels to have a glimmer of light appear in total darkness? You are that glimmer of light. The light in my heart.”

She felt as if something just wasn’t perfectly right, as if something was missing somehow. She knew that he had mentioned this before, that she was his savior. However, what was missing? She didn’t know. Or perhaps his answer sounded far too romantic and lacked a spark from a normal person.

Furthermore, he was still keeping something from her. There was still some distance between them.

The next day, Mark collected Tiffany, according to plan. Jackson went to collect the DNA report.

Jackson wasn't sure of what he was feeling when he saw the results. Alejandro and Mark were not related by blood. That also meant that Alejandro wasn't Ethan. Despite his relief, he was still apprehensive about Alejandro's sudden appearance in getting close to Tiffany, especially when Alejandro was willing to give up his life for Tiffany. This made him very uneasy. Furthermore, there was still what Tanya had said… Three years, Alejandro had loved Tiffany for three years. It seemed far too suspicious.