Ruling 1071

Chapter 1071

He told Mark about the results of the report, but Mark seemed skeptical. It could be that Mark had been mentally prepared to find out that Alejandro was actually Ethan, hence the skepticism when he heard of the test results.

After thinking about it for a while, Jackson contacted the nurse that had helped him to obtain the blood samples and said, “Did anything happen while you were helping me retrieve the blood samples?”

The nurse replied after a moment, “Yes, a man bumped into me. He was a tall man with a slender figure, quite handsome, who is normally with Alejandro. But the blood sample was still in my pocket when I reached out and felt it. I don’t suppose there could be something wrong? Why did you ask me to get Alejandro’s blood sample? Now that I’ve done it for you, shouldn’t you be buying me dinner?”

Jackson was dumbfounded. There was no way he could buy her a meal; he was handling some serious business, not courting ladies. “It’s nothing important. Remember, you mustn't tell anyone about this, otherwise the Smiths will definitely come for you. Just pretend that you don’t know anything. As for buying you a meal, I’m quite busy now, so I’ll transfer you some money. Go buy yourself something nice to eat. I better get back to work now, bye.”

Jackson hung up the phone before the nurse could even reply and then smashed his steering wheel. The man that the nurse had described was most likely Jett. He must’ve switched the blood samples. These Smiths truly weren’t easy to deal with!

It would be almost impossible to obtain another set of blood samples now that Alejandro would be on his guard most of the time.

However, as Jackson thought back, he wondered if the Smiths could have already realised that this Alejandro was not the real Alejandro? Would the Smiths allow a fake within their ranks? This matter was something that Mark could handle, as it was now out of Jackson's league.

At night, Mark drove his car into the Smith estate.

When Mark got out of his car, Melanie, who was standing behind Don, was attracted by him.

Mark Tremont was from the most powerful family in the capital. Both his appearance and the aura he exuded were outstanding, a level above the rest.

As Mark walked towards them, Melanie retracted her gaze. Don politely shook hands with Mark and said, "Welcome, my dear guest. Please come in."

Mark conducted himself professionally with his intimidating gestures, preventing others from being too friendly with him.

Don was a smart man as well. He asked Melanie to leave as they entered the living room and only spoke when he confirmed that there was no one else around. "Is something the matter, Mr. Tremont? From the look on your face, it doesn't seem to be anything good. I'm an old man now, so I can't take any surprises."

Mark only raised his hand in silence and Brian appeared from behind him to hand Don a file that had been prepared earlier.

Don put on his glasses to read the words on the file properly. He froze subconsciously when he saw ‘Ethan Connor’ written on the file. It was a file with details regarding Ethan’s time and location of disappearance, and even his height and blood type had been stated in detail.

Chapter 1072

After a moment, Don Smith put down the folder and looked at Mark without batting an eyelid. “Mr. Tremont, what’s the meaning of this? I don’t know this man. Who is he to you?”

Mark casually tapped on the table with his long fingernail, but his eyes flashed a hint of coldness. His thin lips raised as he spoke. “My father’s bastard.”

Don Smith’s heart throbbed in pain as he got slightly agitated, but he retained a straight face and ignored the pain to not prevent any slip ups. “So, this Ethan Connor… He’s your family? Never would I expect that the Tremonts would have a bastard in this area. You would probably know why he disappeared in South Africa, wouldn’t you? Are you… suspecting that he’s alive and has returned here?”

Mark snorted emotionlessly. “I’ve recently learned that your grandson, Alejandro, was with Ethan at the same location and had an incident at the same time as well. I never knew that it was public knowledge that Alejandro was a cripple, but now, it seems like there have been rumors that his legs are just fine; he has even had plastic surgery done. Are you not not even a little suspicious that this Alejandro isn’t the old Alejandro?”

Beads of cold sweat started dripping from Don Smith’s forehead. He held onto his chest. “Alonso...! ALONSO!”

Alonso immediately rushed towards Don Smith and fed him his medicine. Don Smith's condition stabilized after a moment.

Mark still maintained a straight face as he slightly turned his head to stare at Don Smith. "Was it something I said that offended you? You shouldn't have such big reactions—you're not as young as you used to be."

Don Smith forced a wry smile and replied, "It's nothing… My body is just weak from old age. Plus, I've been a little exhausted from being worried about Ale's incident. As for what you've just said, I'm afraid that I have no knowledge of what you've just said. There's nothing unusual with Ale. Although he hid the fact about his leg, that is still the Smiths' business and I've already forgiven him. He's my grandson, my Ale; that's a fact. Whether you intend to confirm your brother's whereabouts or whatever, it has nothing to do with the Smiths."

Mark snorted coldly. "Are you aware of the reason for Alejandro's accident? How did he know that someone was about to harm Tiffany? He even managed to save her in time without caring for his own safety. To tell you the truth, that bastard of ours has wasted three years of Tiffany's love and care for him. I suppose he might've regretted his actions, as he tried to win her back tirelessly. Your grandson happens to have the exact same trait as the bastard—they both have the same priority level for Tiffany. Don Smith, are you really that sure of yourself? Or you're just too scared to find out? Scared to find out that Alejandro Smith is actually dead?"

Don Smith's investigation towards the relationship between Tiffany and Alejandro had never yielded any results, yet today, Mark has actually told him the truth. So, it has always been Ethan's endless pursuit towards Tiffany, not Alejandro's… In fact, the moment he had found out that this Alejandro was a fake, he had known that he had investigated in the wrong direction.

"I'm rather tired today, Mr. Tremont. I'll have to ask you to leave. We'll talk some more about business another day."

Hearing this, Mark stood up and adjusted his shirt. “In that case, there’s no need for us to discuss any further. I will use my own methods to find out if Alejandro is Ethan. I suppose you wouldn’t object to me doing so, unless you’re hiding something? I don’t suppose the Smiths would stoop so low as to take in another family’s bastard as their own successor.”

As soon as Mark walked out, Don Smith went on a rampage and threw whatever he could find angrily and said, “How dare this Tremont brat speak to me like that! He must be stuck in the delusion that his father is still the one in charge. This brat is too naive to think he could fight with me! The Tremonts shouldn’t have been placed in charge of the capital a long time ago!”

Alonso hurriedly consoled him and said, “Don’t be angry Don Smith. You’re not in any condition to be able to handle so much anger. The Tremonts have always been so arrogant. You’ve already lost to this brat’s father once before, but can you bear to lose to him again? However… from the sound of his tone, he seems to hate his younger brother, and his disappearance seems to be tightly bound to him. I believe Mark is only trying to confirm whether his younger brother is dead or alive. Whatever the case, I believe it was right of us to capture the young master. So what if the young master really is Ethan Connor? Wouldn’t he have an even more legitimate reason to go against the Tremonts? When that happens, everything the Tremonts have would belong to the Smiths.”

Chapter 1073

Don Smith’s anger gradually subsided as he listened to what Alonso said. He was right; there were no cowards in the Tremont family, even if he was a bastard. He never would have thought that the person who had pretended to be his grandson was originally a Tremont, but this revelation wasn’t a bad thing to him.

When Mark returned home, he did an unprecedented thing. Instead of heading for the shower straight away, he rushed to his study to call Jacson. “I’ve just gotten back from the Smith estate to interrogate Don Smit. He did react when he saw the file on Ethan. I was also able to discern from his behaviour that

he knows that the current Alejandro is a fake but chooses to accept and conceal the truth. This could also mean that the real Alejandro Smith is possibly dead. Now that the current Alejandro Smith is under the protection of the Smiths, it won't be easy to confirm if he really is Ethan.

Jackon's reply was more of a whisper as he said, "Are you serious? Have the Smiths really run out of successors that they are resorting to adopting another family's child instead? I heard that Alejandro was the last successor, which would mean Don Smith would treat Alejandro like a treasure, even if he were a fake and wasn't willing to play along anymore. We need to think of another way to confirm Alejandro's true identity; otherwise, I won't be able to rest easy."

Mark clenched his fist. "You're not the only one who wants to get to the bottom of this, so I'll think of something as well. No matter what, Ethan is… He's a Tremont. Alright, I'll hang up now. I know that you're talking to me without Tiffany's knowing.

Jackson replied shyly, "You have no idea how much weight she's gained now that she's pregnant. Her strength has also increased substantially, thanks to that. She could probably hammer me to death with her fists if I accidentally woke her up. Anyway, I'll wait for your news. I owe you one, Mark."

Mark's tone turned slightly impatient. "What's with this owing? It's not like you to speak to me so politely… Alright, bye then."

The trip to the Smith's estate and back was quite far, so Arianne was asleep by the time Mark returned home.

After he showered, Mark crept into bed and carefully helped drape a blanket over Arianne without waking her up before closing his eyes and falling asleep.

The next day, Tiffany pestered Jackson into collecting their marriage certificate, saying that a marriage wouldn't be complete without it. Jackson had been tortured quite badly recently, so he had already put aside collecting the certificate for quite a while now. He was already bound to her with the marriage ceremony, the ring on her finger, and the little one in her stomach; there was no running for him now.

Tiffany had always been unhappy with his tendency to delay things. "What do you mean? Are you saying that there's no need to collect the certificate since I won't be running away? If you decide to abandon me and remarry, it would still be your first marriage. You must think that it's so convenient for you, right? RIGHT?!"

He hurriedly explained. "It's not like that. I've just been quite exhausted recently, which is why you're so unhappy with the way I've been handling things recently. Didn't you say you want to collect the certificate? Let's go get it now before going to the office, alright? I think you should rest a little longer, now that you're getting a little grumpier than usual. Best if you'd be willing to start using your maternity leaves. I'm sure your temper would go back to normal when you've given birth…"

Tiffany stared at him angrily. "You just want me to leave you alone while I rot away at home, right? Are you worried that I'll disrupt your business by sticking close to you? Well, you can dream on! We're sticking close to each other everyday, especially while I'm pregnant!"

Jackson shrugged helplessly. "Fine, forget I said anything. You can say whatever you want. I won't argue with an unreasonable pregnant lady like you since I've done nothing wrong."

Chapter 1074

When he got into his car, he drove directly to the civil affairs office. Tiffany sat beside him restlessly, her hands constantly moving, fiddling with everything she saw while tidying her hair occasionally. Suddenly, she noticed that the glove compartment wasn't tightly shut through the edge of her eyes, and she saw a

piece of paper partially sticking out. She reached out to open up the glove compartment and pull out the piece of paper. Jackson braked immediately without warning, causing her to hit her head unprepared.

In a flash, she had made out a few words on the piece of paper—"Paternity Test."

Before she could take a better look, Jackson had snatched the report away from her. "Y-you… Don't touch my stuff…"

Tiffany flinched and looked at him, her suspicions growing when he evaded her gaze. "What do you mean? Haven't I always touched your stuff whenever I wanted to? What have I not touched yet? Jackson West, what is with that paternity test? Whose is it? If you don't tell me everything today, I'll change your son's surname!" Most importantly, he was only concerned about the test report even after she had knocked her head. Something was definitely wrong with him!

Jackson's palm began to sweat. How was he going to explain that the test report belonged to Mark and Alejandro? There was no way he could tell her the truth, but he knew she wouldn't stop grilling him until he gave her a reasonable explanation. He tore up the report and threw it out of the window. "It's.... Mark and Smore's test report. It's not as simple as you think. I haven't told you about it because I was worried that you would tell Arianne about it and they'd end up in an argument, understand?"

He had no choice but to use his best friend as a shield at that critical moment.

Tiffany only partially believed him. "Mark and Smore? Are you telling me that Mark secretly had a test done on his own son behind Arianne's back, and then asked you to collect that report? How could he do that? Arianne has never gotten close to any other men except for him. What's he being suspicious about?

Jackson laughed as he said, “Exactly what I said to him. Smore is definitely his own flesh and blood, hence he’s asked me to take care of the report personally. Yet, you’ve managed to get a peak at it before I could even get rid of it. You won’t tell Arianne about this, will you? I know that you’re close friends, but if you do tell her about this, Mark would never forgive me for it, so please just pretend not to know anything.”

Tiffany snorted at him. “You men and your cunning plots. No wonder Arianne has always said that you guys are constantly up to no good. I can see that she’s right! How dare you guys do such a thing. Are you going to do the same thing to me behind my back one I’ve given birth? You don’t have to do it in secret; I’ll do it myself so that you men don’t have to get suspicious of everything!”

Jackson sighed in relief. It seemed that he had managed to dodge a bullet. “Well, shall we go collect our certificate now? Today’s weather… seems alright…”

Tiffany pulled his ear and said, “I almost hit my head unconscious when you braked all of a sudden and all you care about was the test report. Do I mean so little to you that your best friend is more important than me? I’m very disappointed in you! What was the point of me hitting my head when you would have to explain yourself to me anyway? Do you think it was necessary? You did it on purpose, didn’t you?”

Jackson was in so much pain, the color on his face changed. “I’m sorry… Madam… I really am sorry…! Stop pulling my ear please, otherwise our photo won’t look nice with my red ears!”

Chapter 1075

When they left the civil affairs office after collecting their marriage certificate, Tiffany delightfully put the red booklet into her handbag with care. “Such a good day today. Shall we go somewhere nice for lunch?”

Jackson rubbed his ear, which was still throbbing in pain. “Sure, as long as you’re happy, we’ll do whatever you want…”

She glared at him. “What do you mean by as long as I’m happy? Does that mean you dislike eating with me? I’m telling you now, Jackson West, don’t pull your face in front of me constantly. If you’re not happy about something, say it. Don’t make it look like I’m always pushing you around! If my daughter turns out to be ugly from all the times you’ve had me stare at your gloomy face, I’m blaming you for it!”

Jackson did not dare to neglect her warnings and immediately carried her into the car. “Alright, alright, I’m smiling now, ok? Let’s go and eat whatever you want for lunch. I’m not unhappy. Spending time with you is the best thing that could happen to me. I’ve still got a meeting to attend in the office shortly, so I’ll end the meeting as soon as possible and bring you out for lunch, ok?”

Finally, Tiffany smiled. “I’m not trying to be unreasonable with you, but you’ve been acting so strange recently. Whether it’s at home or at the office, I’ve caught you spacing off a few times now. Is there something in your mind? You can tell me, you know. Although I’m not smart, I could cheer you up!”

Jackson felt embittered. “It’s… It’s nothing. It’s just some stuff at work. It’s nothing, don’t worry about it.”

Back at the office, Tiffany secretly told Arianne about the paternity test report, despite being told not to. She highly doubted that Jackson and Mark’s friendship would be ruined because of this; she only wanted to be open with Arianne. She criticized Mark while she was at it.

When Arianne heard about it, she spit out the water that she had been drinking, splattering half of her desk. She looked at the gazes from her colleagues who had seen her slip up and shyly apologized as she quickly put down her glass and wiped off the water with a tissue. Of course, she would not believe that

Mark would secretly carry out a paternity test on Smore. The report Tiffany saw was most likely between Alejandro and Mark.

While she condemned Jackson for throwing them under the bus, she felt sorry for Tiffany as well. Tiffany had been so open with her, yet she could not do the same to her.

She casually replied, “It’s fine, I know all about it actually.”

Tiffany was shocked but maintained her composure shortly after. Arianne was no fool; how could she not find out that Mark had done a paternity test behind her back? Anyway, all was well. At least, there wouldn’t be any misunderstandings.

…

At the hospital.

Chapter 1076

Don Smith dismissed everyone else from the ward. “Mark Tremont came to see me last night.”

Alejandro tensed on the bed. “So?”

Don Smith stared fixedly at him. “You’re one of the Tremonts, aren’t you? But Mark Tremont won’t let you live. Otherwise, you wouldn’t have ended up in Nafaeth with the real Alejandro, then assumed his identity.”

“What are you trying to imply?” Alejandro replied in a non-committal manner. “I have no intention of hiding my past. However, I see no need to mention it. The Tremonts and I have nothing to do with each other.”

The old man clicked his tongue. “Are you that unfeeling? After everything that Mark has done to you, you’ve never considered taking everything that belongs to you? When the time comes, both the Tremonts and Smiths will be yours. Don’t you have any ambition?”

Alejandro suddenly smiled. “I’m aware that the Smiths were once involved with the Tremonts, but they’ve parted ways long ago and everyone has been minding their own business. You just want to use my position as a Tremont to unite the Smiths and Tremonts once again, as a Smith, don’t you? There’s a hint of revenge there. However, you’re overestimating me and underestimating Mark. He was only eighteen when his family was involved in that plane crash. Plenty of people were eyeing the Tremonts, but no one has been able to touch them. Finally, he, an eighteen year old greenhorn, managed to take over. Does he really look like a greenhorn to you? What if I told you that he single-handedly orchestrated that plane crash?”

Don Smith was stunned. “Looks like the Tremonts aren’t any less filthy than we Smiths. Mark Tremont is certainly a vicious mastermind. I could tell from our first meeting. So, are you scared? Are you afraid of death? Is hiding under the shell of Alejandro’s identity and living your life out in peace all you want? But Mark will never let you go. He’s already said it—he’ll use everything he has to find out if you’re really Ethan Connor or not. What if he really finds out that you’re Ethan Connor? You’re the bast*rd that he mentioned. He is never going to let you stay alive.”

Alejandro took a deep breath and replied in a voice full of determination, “He won’t do it. Arianne will never let him hurt me again. As long as I leave him alone, he will not try to shoot me again. The only reason why he’s trying to figure out if I’m dead or alive is because he’s helping Jackson West. I came

back for Tiffany Lane. If you need me to, I will play my part as Alejandro Smith and be him from now on. If you want me to oppose Mark Tremont, you can forget it. I don't plan on wasting the rest of my life on this matter. Life is too short. I'll love the ones that matter. That's enough for me."

Don Smith was extremely upset, now that his plans had amounted into nothing. "Mark didn't try to kill you just once, did he? Are you going to just take it, like that? Or are you still holding out on the hope of him acknowledging a ba*tard like you? Are you going to wag your tail and give everything belonging to the Smiths to him then?"

"Enough!" Alejandro snapped. "Do you even know what I've done to him? I was more cruel to him than he ever was to me! And because of that, I've walked the path of no return and hurt those whom I never wanted to hurt at all. It's enough! I shouldn't have received the Tremont name when I was born, but my mother's feelings were misplaced. That's how my life ended up at such a tragic start. It doesn't matter if I'm Ethan Connor or Alejandro Smith, I don't want to have anything to do with Mark Tremont or the Tremonts anymore. Forcing me into it is useless. And if you use Tiffany Lane as a threat again, I will send you straight to hell before your time arrives!"

Don Smith felt slightly terrified when he saw the vicious look in Alejandro's eyes. He didn't have much time left on earth, and his only grandson had been replaced by a fake too. This fake was the only hope he had left. That way, the Smiths would not end up in the hands of an outsider. At least, this fake had Alejandro's face and his official position as a Smith. He had no other option…

Following a long pause after their confrontation, Don Smith finally compromised. "Fine, you don't have to go against Mark. But you can never let him find out about your identity as Ethan Connor. You can only ever be Alejandro Smith. Tiffany Lane is married and so are you. What are your plans now? What are you going to do to prevent the exposure of your real identity, without affecting the alliance between the Smiths and Larks? Take advantage of your time on this bed and think about it. Think about it carefully. Does loving someone mean having her for the rest of your life, or granting her happiness? If you take her away, you will undoubtedly bring her pain. You will be exposed sooner or later. She doesn't love you at all, so you might as well let go and live your life out with Melanie in peace. Solidify the alliance between the Smiths and the Larks."

Chapter 1077

Alejandro gave no reply. He knew that Tiffany didn't love him anymore. He had missed out on three years, which was equivalent to an entire lifetime. He would have to use the rest of his life to make up for letting her down over the past three years. He just simply refused to believe that the girl whose eyes were once filled with him and him alone had fallen in love with another man, just like she had once loved him.

He just couldn't accept it… He didn't want to sever their connection. He would rather give everything up and have her instead. Was that so wrong?

One month later.

Alenjandro's surgery was complete and he had returned to the manor.

He had lived the life of a convict throughout the entire month. He was under surveillance by Don Smith's men at all times. They weren't just watching him, but also taking precautions against Mark's men to prevent them from finding proof of his identity as Ethan.

During this time, Don Smith stayed in the capital and personally managed business there. Alejandro showed no signs of objection. Now, he had no choice but to simply act as Alejandro.

Melanie took care of him meticulously. In fact, she pretty much handled his food and daily necessities personally. She was once a proud girl who hung high above the heavens like the sun, yet she seemed very obedient and compliant in front of him. He couldn't make sense of it. His heart never moved for Melanie.

“Alex, I need to tell you something. Promise me that you’ll think about it and you won’t get angry, okay?”

Alejandro restrained his gaze and frowned when he saw Melanie’s cautiousness and deliberate attempt to butter him up. “Tell me.”

She knelt by his knee, her eyes barely suppressing her glee. “I’m pregnant.”

His gaze immediately turned cold. “Get rid of it. I don’t want children.”

Her face drained of color. Despite anticipating this reaction from him, her heart still throbbed. “You… Can’t you think about it? If grandfather finds out, he’ll never let me abort it, nor will my family.”

He reached out and tilted her chin up towards him, then stared at her with an ice-cold glare. “Then don’t let them find out. I’ve promised to give you anything you want, except this. It cannot happen.”

She was shocked and upset. She smacked his hand away and rose to her feet. “This baby is all I want, Alejandro Smith. You are too cold-blooded.”

Alejandro stared out the window listlessly. The steady trickle of water from the fountain in the courtyard seemed never-ending. “Then stay away from me.”

Melanie took a deep breath and forced her tears back into her eye sockets. “You’re my husband. How do you expect me to stay away from you? Divorce?”

He paused. “Are you threatening me?”

She didn’t answer. Her meaning was clear.

Suddenly, the room door was pushed open. Don Smith walked in. “Ale, how are you feeling? Are you feeling any discomfort after the surgery? You should let Melanie keep you company and move around more often. That would help with your recovery.”

Alejandro looked at Melanie then at Don Smith. Suddenly, he understood why the old man had suddenly changed his mind and allowed him to get treatment for his legs. He owed Melanie twice over now, from Tiffany to his legs.

“Mm.” His response was indifferent, but his emotions were in a mess.

Chapter 1078

Melanie opted against telling Don Smith about her pregnancy. She forced a resolute smile on her face. “I’ll take good care of Alex, grandfather. I’ll definitely help speed up his recovery. I’m not good with managing business, so we’ll have to trouble you for the time being. Get an early night’s rest. I can take it from here.”

Don Smith nodded, feeling pleased. Then he turned around and left.

Melanie put her sadness away and carefully asked, “Shall I help you with your bath?”

Alejandro glanced at her still-flat belly. “Tell Jett to do it.”

She gritted her teeth. “What’s wrong? I can’t look at your body now? You’ve never tried to hide it before.”

He didn’t answer. Instead, he drove the wheelchair to the bedroom door. “Jett!”

Jett pushed the door open and walked in, but when he saw the ashen look on Melanie’s face, he was shocked. He paused and said, “Sir, Don Smith has summoned me. Please excuse me.”

The atmosphere turned cold. A short while later, Melanie let out a soft scoff and grabbed Alejandro by the arm. He did not object anymore. He propped himself up and put a great deal of his weight on her.

The pair remained silent during his bath, the atmosphere reaching an ice-cold temperature. Thanks to the steam from the hot water and the effort she had to exert, Melanie’s forehead was breaking into sweat. The white, fluffy sweater that she was wearing was moist from steam too; her clear and white cheeks were now rosy-red.

“Is it worth it?” he asked, unable to help himself. “You can ask for a divorce. I’m completely fine with it.”

Her hand stiffened in the midst of her work. She kept her eyes away from him. “Is that any of your business? I’m happy to do it. I now understand how easy marriage and divorce are to you. I’m very disappointed, but I haven’t lost hope. I won’t pin my hopes on having you love me like you love Tiffany. It’s hard enough to find someone to love and have them love you in return, and spend the rest of your life within one lifetime; there’s no need to ask for both. Having one of the two is good enough. I just want to know one thing… You’re clearly worried about the consequences that will come of our divorce. Why would you rather go through with it than spare the baby in my belly? This is your baby too. You have to at least… give me a reason!”

Alejandro turned silent again. He didn’t know why either. Was he objecting to having a baby with a woman he didn’t love, or was he simply reluctant to have his tainted, worthless blood inherited by the next generation? The child may hold the Smith family name by birth, but the blood flowing through its veins could never be changed.

He used to hate the Tremonts, who’d let his mother down, and envied Mark for his legal position as the eldest son. Later on, it suddenly didn’t matter to him anymore. His hatred turned into ash. Mark didn’t do anything wrong.

Seeing his refusal to answer, Melanie did not pursue her question. Instead, she simply bent down and helped wipe him down. Her back grew stiff from wiping him for too long and she had to stretch it out in pain.

Alejandro reached out and took the towel away from her. “You can go. I’ll do it myself. I’ll call you later.”

She could see that he was pretty much clean, so she followed his request and stepped out to take a breather.

She was very curious as to why he had been staring at that fountain outside the window the whole time. There was nothing special about it. The Smith Estate in Ayashe had one just like it.

Suddenly, she spotted a figure underneath the shadow of the tall statue at the center of the fountain. It wasn't too clear, but she could see it—it was Lynn. Her heart filled with a sense of annoyance. She turned around and walked out. "What are you doing here?"

Lynn straightened her cuff, clearly uneasy. "I… Nothing."

Melanie, who was dressed in only a sweater, shivered beneath the cold night wind. She held her arms together, which made her feel much better. "You… How long have you been with Alejandro?"

"Not too long," Lynn answered honestly. "I'm not always with him anyway, just a normal bodyguard."

Chapter 1079

Melanie refused to believe it. She had seen Alejandro unbutton Lynn's lapels with her own eyes. "Tell me the truth. I won't cause you any trouble. You have no need to be afraid of me."

Lynn shook her head again. "It's really nothing. Whatever you saw that day, it wasn't like that. He has never touched me. He has only asked me to stay because he wants me to do something for him that involves my ties to Jackson West."

Melanie immediately understood. "I understand. He has asked you to break Jackson and Tiffany up, hasn't he?"

Lynn hung her head and did not say too much. She was in a wealthy man's courtyard. The more she talked, the easier it would be to make a mistake.

Melanie silently let out a sigh of relief. At least, Lynn and Alejandro weren't having a torrid affair. "Has he asked you to do anything lately? You don't have to keep it from me, I just want to know. I won't get involved. I'm nothing but a tool to grant him benefits. I have no right to meddle in his personal affairs."

After a bout of hesitation, Lynn replied, "No, he hasn't called on me since that day. He doesn't really speak to me, unless he has an order. I will follow his instructions until he tells me to stop. You just just listen and avoid meddling at all. That's a good move. It's good to stay silent and act as Mrs. Smith."

Melanie didn't answer. She turned around and went back into the house. According to the weather report, it would start snowing in just a few days. The weather was particularly cold. Her legs were going to freeze soon.

After putting a fresh set of clothes on Alejandro and helping him lie down, she let out a long sigh. "You should rest. I'll ask Jett to come in and take care of you. I'll sleep in the guest room." She paused then continued, "I think it is best if we… carry on acting like husband and wife on the surface. Even after your leg heals. I've suddenly realized that some things cannot be forced. However, I cannot choose the marriage that I want, and neither can you. Let's just try to get by. We'll live our own lives from now on and avoid asking too much about each other. However, we should avoid ugly quarrels too."

Alejandro remained silent as he watched the door close. This wasn't a bad idea.

Late at night, the Tremont Estate.

Arianne was woken up by some strange noises by the door. After a clear evaluation, she frantically leaped off the bed and opened the door, disregarding her slippers.

Aristotle was lying sprawled on the ground, dressed in his flimsy pajamas and smiling at her. She quickly scooped him up and went back to the nursery. Mary was fast asleep and completely unaware that she had forgotten to close the door. Aristotle, who now knew how to crawl, knew how to escape.

She surmised that Mary had probably been exhausted from taking care of Aristotle over the past few months, so she couldn't bear to wake her. Instead, she carried him back to her room, stuffed him under the covers, lay on her side, and fed him. "The cot should be pretty high for you, right? How did you manage to get down from that? Did you fall and hurt yourself?"

Aristotle slowly drank his milk. His little arms and legs mischievously kicked and grabbed, waking Mark up as well. He suddenly noticed Aristotle's presence under the covers with him and turned on the lamp on the bedside table. "What is he doing here?" he asked, bewildered.

"He crawled over here on his own and scratched the door," she answered helplessly. "Thank goodness I woke up. What if he crawled to the staircase and fell? Mary is old and she hasn't been able to have a good night's sleep after taking care of Smore for the past few months. She must have been over exhausted tonight and didn't even realize that Smore had escaped. Although, I'm more worried about how Smore managed to escape from his cot. He must have fallen, but it doesn't look like he has cried, and I can't find any bruises. Smore has grown up a little now and he doesn't cry or fuss at night anymore. Maybe we should bring the cot here? Mary can take care of him during the day, and I can watch him at night. It's not too bad. It's not too tiring."

Hearing this, Mark anxiously checked Aristotle's forehead, arms, and every other part of his body. Upon ensuring that he was unharmed, he heaved a sigh of relief. "Fine, it's a good idea. We can even take

turns at night. The baby isn't too worrisome these days. It's best to be safe. Even if we find a new nanny to take care of him, Smore won't be able to get used to her. You feed him. I'll move his cot over here."

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Arianne grabbed him and held him back. "Mary is sleeping. Why would you move the cot now? Let's just try to get by tonight. Can't you have someone move the cot tomorrow? Go back to bed. He's not going to disturb my sleep by drinking milk. I'm going back to sleep too."

Mark's brain had gotten fuzzy from sleepiness. He had not considered that. He grunted in reply and lay back down on his bed to continue sleeping. Aristotle shifted his tiny body. He faced his head towards Arianne, suckling on her milk, and placed his foot on Mark. His father turned his head to the side, opened his eyes and smiled at him. Then, he indulgently held his chubby little foot.

Arianne smiled when she saw this. Mark may seem annoyed by the fact that Aristotle wasn't born a girl on the surface, but his body language remained honest.

The next morning, Mary hurriedly knocked on the door. "Sir, Madam. It's a disaster! Aristotle is missing!"

Mark got up and opened the door. "He's here with us. He crawled over in the middle of the night. We'll take care of him at night from now on. You must be exhausted from taking care of him these past few months."

Mary was close to tears. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry. It's all my fault. Perhaps it was because of the snow last night. It was so cold, so I slept like a log. Is he okay? The cot is so high; how did he manage to get down?"

Mark shrugged. “Don’t know. Don’t worry. It’s fine. You’re getting on a bit, and taking care of a baby would be torture.”

“Perhaps it would be appropriate if you dock my pay for a few months?” Mary asked carefully. “How could I possibly have made such a mistake? What if something happened to Aristotle? I’d never be able to pay for it.”

Mark was beginning to suspect that he looked too stern and had scared Mary. He smiled for the first time ever. “It’s really alright. It’s a small matter, so no need to blame yourself. Children learn to crawl when they’re older. He’ll learn to walk soon, so accidents will happen. Have someone move the cot over to our room during the day. You’ll still have to take care of Smore in the daytime. He’ll sleep in our room at night.”

Mark’s leniency caused Mary to burst into tears anyway. Fatherhood had changed him a lot.

After Arianne woke up with Aristotle and brought him downstairs, they found the garden covered in a blanket of snow. She put Aristotle down excitedly and ran out to play in the snow, smiling like a kid. Aristotle crawled by the doorway pitifully, his tiny face growing red with anxiety as he babbled and cried out non-stop. He was obviously very interested in snow too.

Arianne caught herself on time and made a tiny snowball, then gave it to Aristotle. “This is too cold, so you can’t play with it. Just look at it, okay? Mommy’s going to be so exhausted if you catch a cold.”

Aristotle immediately lowered his head and bit into the snow ball. Arianne cried out in alarm and the neatly-dressed Mark promptly lifted Aristotle into the air in the next second. “Why are you eating everything? Your teeth haven’t finished growing yet.”

Arianne threw the snowball away and patted her hands. “It snowed heavily last night. I’m pretty sure that the weather is going to stay the same over the next few days. We can have a snowball fight this weekend. Tell the staff to leave a piece of land with snow for us when they clean up the garden. You’re leaving already? I don’t think it’ll be easy to get a cab today. I’ll carpool with you. Wait for me. I’m going to change.”

Mark handed Aristotle over to Mary and straightened out his clothes. “I’ll drive you to work from now on. You don’t have to take a cab. It’s almost the end of the year and time for Brian to go back to his hometown to have blind dates. I’ll have to drive myself for a while.”