Ruling 1121

Chapter 1121

Janice's expression froze slightly into that of uncertainty. A few moments later, she recovered and held her palms together, bidding farewell. "If you'd excuse me…"

After she left, Mark yanked Davy into his office and lambasted, "You've got one job, Davy—just one! Your seat is right outside my office door, and you can't even guard my door? Since when have I ever allowed anyone to enter my space without my explicit permission? This floor is a restricted area, and unless it's something urgent, no one would be able to come in, got it? This is my last warning, Davy. If I see Janice Bell inside my office without my knowledge, you're fired!"

Davy was dumbfounded. "B-But, Sir, I've never seen you express any problem with this? A-And the two of you always seem so close, and so I thought you wouldn't mind something like this," he explained. "Then there's the fact that she has this charismatic way with people and knows the exact right word at the exact right time. It's not easy resisting a charming young lady like that! B-B-But I get it now. Next time, I definitely won't let her in anymore."

Mark drew out a long breath. "That's it. Get out now! You infuriate me!"

Cold sweat beads oozed out of Davy as he glumly and obediently returned to his post and continued to "guard the door." He might be Mark's personal assistant, but most of his days were spent idle rather than being busy. Mark gave him very few things, so all he ever did was arranging his boss's agenda-of-the-day or tidying the documents Mark required. As for the rest of his time at work, his job was reduced to staring into space, which was deceptively great but really just made him a glorified watchdog.

Janice, meanwhile, never threw away the button Mark had given her. Instead, she kept it in a safe, tight place, knowing full well the implication behind her choice. But it was something she did not regret because she could not help but admire Mark fervidly. Every time she saw him, she felt like she had

ascended into space filled with stars, and he was the most brilliant one in the galaxy. So many shone brightly, but none of them attracted her attention as much as him.

Arianne, bored during a break gap in the morning, sent Mark a message that began with a photo of the coffee she had just ordered. ‘The day’s early, and I’m free already. I guess I picked the right place to work. It’s not hectic here.’

Mark heard his phone beeped, but he ignored it and continued focusing on the documents in his hand. It could not be Arianne, he reckoned, since she never texted him on her own accord.

About 10 minutes passed when he finished reading his document. He decided to casually check his phone—before his fingers instantly flew into a frenzy as he typed his reply: ‘I’m so sorry, I was busy. I didn’t see your message. Drink less coffee please, Smore still needs your milk.’

Arianne read the message but opted not to reply. Prior to texting him, she read somewhere on the Internet that people always replied to their lovers’ messages instantly—a statement that aroused her curiosity enough to make her try. Unfortunately, he took way too much time only to lecture her about having coffees. It killed the mood to chat with him.

What Arianne did not know was that Mark’s eyes had been glued to his phone since he sent out his reply and was waiting for her message with bated breath. When he saw no reply coming, he could not resist calling her directly, “What are you up to now?”

“Nothing,” she replied nonchalantly. “I changed my coffee to juice, and now I’m scrolling through Netflix to see if there’s anything good enough to binge-watch. Aren’t you busy?”

The obvious answer would be “yes”, but in Mark’s mind, work was nothing compared to having the chance to talk to her. “Nope, not at all. Wanna have lunch together later? I’ll come and get you.”

Arianne’s lips quivered into a smile. “Sure. That’d be wonderful. I don’t think we had Italian for a while now, have we? Since you’re the one driving, I’ll let you choose the venue. It’d be best if you choose a place that’s between our companies, so we don’t have to worry about being late for the afternoon half of work.”

Mark was already looking up the perfect Italian restaurant with his laptop while answering through the phone, “Okay. Wait for me.”

The smile blossoming on Arianne’s lips did not subside even after she hung up. It aroused Robin’s curiosity, who asked, “Who was that, Arianne? Judging from that sweet smile, I’ll guess it’s your husband. Am I right?”

Arianne nodded. “Spot on. He’s coming to take me to lunch later.”

Robin was positively green. “How long have the two of you married? Why does it seem that marriage hasn’t dulled the sparks of romance between you two?”

Arianne did a quick mental calculation before answering, “It’s been a few years, I guess? All I remember is that it feels like a long time. We aren’t actually as romantic and sweet as you imagine, though, ‘cause this doesn’t happen all the time. I’ll go so far as to say only once every blue moon!”

Robin, however, misinterpreted her caveat as Arianne being humble. “Oh, please. Stoking the warmth and sparks of love over such a long relationship is no small feat. Mr. Tremont must be an exceptionally good man to be able to match one of the nicest people I know.”

An exceptionally good man? Arianne smiled without agreeing or refuting Robin. Was Mark a good person? Arianne could not tell. She could not even help wonder if she herself could qualify as ‘a good person.’” After all, defining what “goodness” was would always be a fool’s errand because the lines that set a ‘good person’ apart were drawn in shifting sand.

Chapter 1122

Outside an abortion operation studio in the hospital, Alejandro sat on his wheelchair and waited quietly with Jett loyally standing beside him. Melanie was in the middle of the surgery.

The little thing which came without his blessing would soon be removed. Alejandro had thought that he would be unperturbed by the entire process, and indeed, that was the case when they arrived at the hospital in the morning or when Melanie was doing a series of pre-surgical checkups.

Then his wife was sent into the studio, and he suddenly became restless and troubled. He thought of how Tiffany and her large baby bump looked like. He remembered Smore’s cute little face. He did not hate kids—he just hated the idea of fashioning posterity from his unsightly, ignoble blood.

“Mr. Smith, what if Don Smith found out about this? I mean, he might be able to tell from tiny details of Melanie’s recovery, since we’re all living under the same roof, which makes it very hard to conceal the effects of this abortion…” Jett voiced his concern.

Alejandro's mind was too occupied to worry. "So? So what if he found out? The kid would be gone already by then. What's he gonna do?"

Jett opened his mouth and closed it again. For some reason, he began to pity Melanie. A marriage that could not brook the existence of a perfectly healthy child between them had gotten to be the most morose thing in the world.

Suddenly, Alejandro asked, "When's Tanya's expected to deliver?"

"Sometime around spring. I don't actually remember the details."

'Spring. Of course, that would most likely be the season the fruit of Tiffany and Jackson's union would come to their world…'

A few beats later, Alejandro broke the silence in the air and ordered, "Go inside, tell the doctor to stop the operation now. If, of course, it hasn't started yet."

Jett was stunned, but his inaction only lasted for a second before bolting through the door of the operation studio, crying, "Stop! Stop the abortion!"

It was an early-term abortion, so security surrounding the operation was hardly as stringent as those performed for later trimesters.

The nurse in charge of anesthetics was so shocked by Jett's sudden exclamation that she dropped the needle onto the floor. Melanie, too, jerked in surprise. "W-What did you just say, Jett?"

Jett enunciated every word as clearly as possible. "Mr. Smith regretted his decision. He wants the kid to live!"

Melanie could not believe what she was hearing. Her eyes reddened. "Is... Is that true?"

Jett nodded firmly. "Yes. He said it himself!"

The doctor exhaled a sigh. "I see. That's perfectly acceptable. The child is projected to be rather healthy and normal, after all. If you consent to this decision, ma'am, you may return home now. I wish you good luck carrying the baby."

Melanie came out of the surgery studio to see Alejandro already moving away, pushing his wheelchair forward. She strode, catching up to him, before holding onto the handles and pushing the wheels along.

"Oh, Ale!" she exclaimed, her voice blithe. "Thank you. Truly."

Alejandro suddenly halted the wheels with his hands, causing the wheelchair to lock into place. Confused, Melanie asked, "What's the matter?"

Chapter 1123

“All I did was to back out of a decision I made, and you’re already so obnoxiously thankful for it?” Alejandro snapped. “Seriously, thanking me for something like this? Do you honestly see this as some kinda royal pardon? Despicable. You’re Melanie Smith née Lark, the princess of the Lark family. You have no reason to kowtow to anyone! And you should have fought me harder and never agreed to abandon that child.”

His words baffled Melanie, especially since he was the one who had taken both hard and soft power to make her bend to his will. “What are you saying? I… I didn’t wanna start a fight with you because of the baby. Regardless of how I wanted to be a mother, if you insist on not wanting a kid of our own, I’ll still defer to you for the sake of our future together.”

“Ha. That wasn’t your way of telling me that you’ve fallen in love with me, was it?” Alejandro jeered.

Melanie froze, finding herself hard-pressed to reply to him. The mocking tone stung her right at heart, making the answer “yes I have” too embarrassing to vocalize. Of course, he was right that theirs had always been a political marriage completely without any relationship foundation. From the first time they had met each other, their marriage, all the way till now—it was, in truth, only a very short time. If one discounted the shortcuts made possible by love-at-first-sight, asking anyone to build a bond over such a short time would be preposterous. Even if she admitted to him that she had fallen in love at the first moment they met, Alejandro could never believe it, could he?

He would still denigrate her, mock her, laugh at her. Because in this marriage, the only person who fell in love, at first sight, was Melanie alone. Alejandro’s heart had never experienced even the faintest ripple.

A few moments later, Melanie chuckled. “Oh, heavens, no. But we are husband-and-wife, right? There are more stakeholders than ourselves—there are our families to worry, too. Am I wrong for also taking them into account?”

Alejandro missed out on the pain hanging just at the corner of her lips, nor did he wonder about what might have crossed her mind before she spoke.

Melanie had more or less collected herself on their way back to the Smith Private Manor. Alejandro was right—maybe Melanie should have reverted to her role as the princess of the Larks in all of her haughty, self-entitled glory. Maybe Melanie should not have acted so deferentially to Alejandro, who made it clear that he hated her this way.

Her thoughts drifted to the baby inside of her—still alive and not taken away—and she felt a bit better about her state. “I would like to tell Grandpa and my parents about my pregnancy.”

It was not a request. She was the Lark family's princess, so she did not need any approval from Alejandro.

“Whatever,” came his flat answer.

It hurt, but Melanie managed to plaster that crack in her emotions. “Now, since you’re focusing on your recovery and have become a bit less busy, I thought of bringing you to my hometown in Ayashe sometime in the near future. With Jett accompanying you, it’ll be a smooth sail,” she suggested. “The last time I went home, my parents had told me how much they looked forward to seeing you, too, being their son-in-law and all. You should hang out with my family more, yes?”

Snippy irritation began to surface in Alejandro’s mien. “Can we talk about this some other time?”

Melanie let the conversation die instead of continuing.

Her future was becoming more apparent to her the more time passed. If she wept, she would weep alone. The joy of raising a child of their own would be hers alone, too.

Her future was bleak and pathetic. And yet, despite it all, Melanie had no plans to leave him. Even if his heart was made of ice, Melanie was sure that time could melt it.

It was noontime. Mark called Arianne and told her that he was waiting downstairs.

On her end, Arianne went into the bathroom for some light touchups. She only went out of the restroom after making sure it was all perfect.

Folk wisdom dictated that a lady would usually endeavor to look her best in front of her beau—Arianne certainly began to exhibit that in front of Mark. Just remembering how little she cared about her appearance in the past embarrassed her enough to avoid thinking back about their past interactions. Honestly, she had not given her presentation that much thought back then because she never imagined that they would one day be husband and wife.

Arianne got into her car after descending the stairs. She was just about to put on her safety belt herself when Mark suddenly turned to her and did it for her. It was a small, tender act, but it made Arianne's heart race.

It dawned on her that both of them had never experienced the normal, gradual stages of love transitioning to marriage. Since they had gone straight to marriage, could all of these little moments just be romantic reparations for what they had missed?

Mark's attention remained glued to Arianne rather than on the road after fixing her seatbelt. He stared at her closely before pointing out, "Your lips are still too darn red. Remind me to get you a lighter shade next time."

'But it was only because I'd deliberately touched up my makeup before seeing you!' Arianne thought to herself. Did he really just chastise her immediately upon seeing her?

She sneered and pushed him away. "Uh, eyes on the road, Mister. The lipstick's gonna run when I eat anyway, so don't get too hung up about it."

A slight smile shadowed his lips, and he returned to driving his car.

From her angle at the passenger seat, Arianne could not help but sneak several glances at him. She had never carefully watched him drive before, but now it became unmistakable just how… hot he was. His profile was flawless—his nose was tall, firm, and chiseled to perfection. His thin lips were slightly pressed against one another, drawing him a dignified air. His fingers, shapely and well-defined, laced around the steering wheel as he made his every spin and turn with profound dexterity.

Somehow, Mark managed to infuse the mundane act of driving with a bit of grace and aplomb.

Chapter 1124

As though noticing Arianne's attention, Mark quickly turned to meet her eyes briefly. "What are you looking at? Is there something on my face?"

Arianne averted her eyes guiltily. “Excuse you! I wasn’t looking at you. I was looking at… Er, the beautiful scenery outside your window! Look at the weather today—it’s great! It’s not snowing! It’s a bit cold, though.”

He raised his eyebrows in skepticism. “And what’s so different about the scenery from your window and mine, huh? Is it so great that you had to try to look past me for it? Should I apologize for blocking your view?”

Arianne’s tongue was tied in embarrassment. Why did he have to expose her like that?

They arrived at the fancy Italian fine-diner Mark had booked. When they stepped through the door, Mark placed his hand on his hip to form a small loop for Arianne, who naturally hooked her arm through it.

Her heart was beating fast. She had to admit that going on a date definitely brought some highs.

Arianne deliberately picked a glass of juice as her drink, heeding Mark’s advice. If he forbade her from drinking coffee, then even stronger liquor like red wine must also be off-limits. Red wine was, after all, still alcohol and should therefore be avoided by a breastfeeding mother.

To her surprise, Mark stepped in. “No, scrap that. She’ll have red wine as well.”

“I still need to breastfeed Smore at night, don’t I?” Arianne questioned. “Isn’t alcohol bad for that?”

“Just drink moderately. By the time you get home at night, the alcohol in your body should already be gone. There’s no need to tarnish your fine-dining experience with a mere juice just for breastfeeding’s sake—red wine isn’t even hard liquor. If you’re really that worried, you could always just let him drink some of your stored milk. We still haven’t run out of that supply.”

She nodded in agreement. Drinking a little bit of wine should not hurt. There was still half a day for her metabolism to detoxify the alcohol.

Then, out of the blue, Mark suddenly pulled out a little intricately-designed black box from nowhere and placed it in front of her. “It’s for you.”

Arianne’s heart raced again. Did her man learn some tricks or two from Jackson or what? When had he evolved into this? He rarely gifted her anything like that in the open!

She opened the box carefully and found a ring inside. An eye-attracting diamond sat as the centerpiece, flanked by several smaller diamonds. It was the sort of striking design that would attract anyone’s attention.

“Do you like it?” he asked.

“O-Oh my god, y-y-yes!” Arianne started to stutter. Why a ring all of a sudden? And to have it fit her finger! She waited for Mark to delight her with even more romantic, face-burning things after seeing her reaction.

“Okay. Good.”

‘…That’s it?!’

Frankly, Arianne did not mind his lacking skill in romantic words because more of her attention was focused on how familiar the design looked. It was not at all mainstream, but Arianne kept getting the nagging feeling that she had seen it before—on paper in its design’s phase, perhaps. She wondered if it was just from her wealth of experience in fashion designing—maybe she had come across a design like this before. Still, the box bore no insignia or brand name, so she could not whence it came.

Chapter 1125

Arianne was still perplexing over the origin of this ring when Mark pointed out, “I designed it myself a long time ago. Revamped a bit and had someone craft it for three months. I only decided to give it to you after I was satisfied enough.”

His admission reminded Arianne—she had seen its design plan in his study when she was still a kid! This was why she felt as though she had seen it before!

Back then, Arianne had imagined the ring to be something Mark had designed for his future wife. How would she have known that the same ring would one day fall on her hand?

Fate was an enigmatic mistress. By her machination, Arianne’s life was bound to Mark’s for this lifetime.

She closed the box carefully, clearly not intending to wear the ring right there and then. She was afraid of losing it during work.

Mark was a little displeased with her action. In fact, his handsome face became stormy. “You’re not gonna wear it?”

“Well, I don’t want to lose it…”

“I can always hire someone to remake it if you lose it.” He countered in a low voice. “Wear it.”

Arianne was a little uneasy at how quickly his mood changed, so she obeyed him and put the ring on. Since she had graceful, lean fingers, the ring fit her beautifully. It was a gift that truly satisfied Arianne.

Lunch break was a relatively short time frame, so it was only enough to have a meal and nothing else before the two hurried back to their respective companies.

Very satisfied with Mark’s “performance” today, while Mark pulled his car over at the company's ground floor, Arianne moved forward and planted a kiss on his lips on her own accord. Before she could reel away from him, though, Mark’s arm shot forward and wrapped around her shapely waist, pulling her in as he kissed her supple lips.

Mark had wanted to do this for a long, long time. Heck, he wanted to do this since before their lunch. He was against Arianne painting her lips too red because he was afraid of other men seeing and because he worried he would not be able to control himself when he looked at it. Arianne’s snow-fair skin always made every kind of lipstick popped.

Their kiss lasted what felt like a lifetime until Arianne's alarm set off. She had the habit of setting alarms on her phone to remind her of work.

When staring at her cherry-red cheeks, Mark's eyes seemed to become more and more dilated. In a husky voice, he croaked, "See you."

Arianne nodded and opened the car door before scurrying up the stairs. The warmth of his touch still lingered on her lips. Her heartbeats had not recovered their original, slower pace.

She had only just returned to her desk when Mark sent her a message: 'Outside tonight?'

She gawked at the message for a good few seconds. What the hell was that supposed to mean? Was he asking if they should spend their night in a hotel?

At that thought, Arianne quickly glanced around her surroundings guiltily to make sure that no one was watching her. She sighed a breath of relief when that was confirmed and replied, 'Are you sure? I am worried about leaving Smore at home.'

'What's that to worry? Mary's watching him,' Mark replied immediately. 'And this doesn't happen all the time. I'll come to you after work, and we'll get dinner. Then we get a hotel room."

Chapter 1126

Suddenly, Robin walked over. “Arianne, I’ve settled your sketches. Do you need me to come up with a sample this afternoon? Mr. Yaleman needs it in the afternoon, the day after tomorrow.”

Arianne quickly turned off her phone and tucked her hair behind her ears awkwardly. “Uh… Sure. Thank you. You can start on the sample in the afternoon. This one’s a little complicated, so you’ll need some time. Do it early so you won’t have to do overtime.”

Robin’s keen eyes spotted the ring on her finger. “Wow, Arianne, your ring is beautiful. The diamond is huge. It must have been expensive. I didn’t see you wearing it this morning. Your husband must have given it to you during lunch, right? Mr. Tremont is so romantic.”

Arianne smiled. “Go on, go to the workshop, and start on the sample. You’ll have to support me.”

She felt very uneasy the entire afternoon due to Mark’s message. Her mind would always wander off into strange territories. This was her first time going to a hotel with him, and she felt quite excited and a little nervous. Perhaps daily life had grown too vanilla, so some spontaneity made it feel fresh.

Later on, Tiffany gave her a call. She had initially intended to ask her out for dinner, but she had already promised to meet Mark. Thus, she had no choice but to reject her request. She did not want to discuss rescheduling with Mark. He wouldn’t agree and only get angry.

Tiffany was apprehensive. Arianne rarely rejected her. “Where are you going tonight? You can bring Smore along if you’re worried. I didn’t go to work this afternoon, and I’m bored. What’s going on? Can’t I ask you out for a meal anymore?”

Arianne got up and found a secluded spot, then whispered, “No, I’ll go out with you another time. I really do have something on. I… Have an appointment.”

“An appointment? I’m pretty sure it’s not with your block of wood,” Tiffany teased. “Do you have a side piece somewhere? Won’t Mark kill you if he finds out?”

“Who else would it be, except him?” Arianne replied helplessly. “However, now that you’ve mentioned it, this is a first… It took me out for lunch this afternoon and gave me a ring that he’s designed himself. Has Jackson taught him a few tricks? He never does these things. It’s making me nervous…”

“No way! He can be romantic too?” Tiffany laughed presumptuously. “I don’t know if Jackson’s been teaching him in secret, but it’s good that he’s enlightened. Have fun tonight then, I won’t meddle. I’ll talk to you some other time.”

Arianne checked the time on her watch at the end of the call. It was 4:30PM and close to quitting time. She had lost the mood to work. Her mind was completely filled with thoughts of Mark Tremont! She didn’t know what magical powers he had, to have reduced her to such an absent-minded state for the entire afternoon. However, every time she thought of him, she couldn’t help feeling overjoyed. This was such a wonderful feeling.

It was finally the end of the workday. She called home and informed Mary that she and Mark would not be coming home tonight. Mary didn’t ask why but agreed gleefully. She even assured her that she would take good care of Aristotle.

Arianne couldn’t shake this feeling that Mary knew what was going on…

She arrived downstairs at her office building. Mark hadn't arrived yet. She wanted to call him and ask for the time of his arrival, yet felt that it seemed inappropriate. Would that make her seem too eager?

The winter winds wreaked havoc in the streets. She tightened her collar. Her face and hands, which were exposed to the elements, were beginning to feel uncomfortable in the cold weather. She waited for ten more minutes, then received a call from Mark. "I still have some work to do. I'll need about half an hour more. Wait for me at the office."

Arianne agreed. She ended the call but did not go back upstairs to wait for him in the office. Instead, she took a 500-meter walk to a nearby shopping mall. It seemed like a good idea to shop around while waiting for time to pass.

Her eyes were naturally drawn to anything related to children ever since she became a mother. She instinctively shopped around for children's things in the shopping mall. Aristotle would be learning to use a baby walker soon, so as she walked around a baby product store, she paid special attention to baby walkers. Suddenly, a staggering, cute little girl, who had just learned to walk, bumped into her leg out of nowhere.

She bent down and helped the little one up. It was a charming little girl. She was dressed in a light pink teddy bear jumpsuit, with two little buns on her head. She looked like she had just learned to walk, the kind that would stumble every two steps. Her large, wide eyes blinked continuously. She looked very cute.

Chapter 1127

Arianne's heart exploded from cuteness. She finally understood why Mark wanted a daughter. The joy of having a daughter was completely different from having a son.

“Pumpkin, where did you go? Come back to daddy.”

Arianne stiffened. She turned to the side and found Will Sivan’s astonished gaze. Everything had changed in time, but they still looked the same, save for a sense of maturity throughout the years.

She jumped in fright when she heard his voice. She thought that his voice sounded more like a stranger’s. She never expected such a coincidence…

“When… did you come back?” She got up and asked calmly after a short pause.

Will took a deep breath, strode forward, and picked up the little girl. “I just arrived a few days ago. I’m here to visit relatives. I’m not staying long. What a coincidence… I never thought that I’d run into you here. Are you here to shop for baby things? I came back in a rush, so I couldn’t contact you or Tiffie…”

Will knew that she had a baby, and she knew that he was married with a baby too.

Arianne smiled. “I’m waiting for someone, so I was just looking around. Tiffie is pregnant. You can set up a meeting with her if you have the time. Is this your daughter? How old is she? She’s cute.”

Will looked at the little girl in his arms. His expression was just as gentle as ever. “Almost eleven months. She’s learned to walk much earlier. She is good at running around now. Your baby… should be younger than my daughter by a few months. I know…”

It had been so long, but Arianne still couldn't bring herself to act as if nothing had happened in front of Will. She simply couldn't continue the conversation after a few simple niceties.

Noticing her silence, Will spoke up again. "Has Mark been good to you? I can tell. Thank goodness, everything's fine."

Arianne felt a twinge of bitterness in her heart. The bitterness came from her youth, buried in bygone days. The feelings they once had could never be returned, even if they were now friends. "Yes, he's been very good to me. You should be doing quite well too. Your daughter is adorable."

Will was about to reply when a beautiful woman approached them. "Will, is this a friend of yours?"

Arianne realized that the woman, who had suddenly appeared, was Will's wife. "We're old college mates," she quickly explained. "We happened to run into each other, so we exchanged a few words. I have something to attend to. See you." Then, she feigned a sense of calm as she turned around and left. She didn't want Will's wife to find out about their past. No woman could accept it. She only wanted everyone to live in peace now.

Will stared at her for a very long time as she left.

The woman next to him took the child from his arms. "That's Arianne, isn't it?"

Will snapped back into his senses and nodded. "Mm, how did you know?"

The woman lowered her gaze, concealing a flash of sadness in her eyes. “I could tell from the look in her eyes. She’s beautiful, so beautiful that it makes her so unique. You’ve always had finicky tastes. You’ve never spared any other woman a second look, aside from her. Maybe I shouldn’t have come over so soon. I should have given you more time to talk.”

Will frowned. “She and I are in the past. There’s no need for you to feel uncomfortable. We’re leaving once we’re done with business, so there’s no need.”

The woman lifted her gaze at him. “I’m not uncomfortable. You’re the uncomfortable one here. The woman you love is right in front of you, but she doesn’t belong to you. You can only be friends with her or schoolmates and exchange conventional greetings. It must have felt terrible.”

Will didn’t answer. He simply walked away. This marriage wasn’t done out of love anyway. He had simply submitted to his family’s arrangements, utterly dissipated. He had gotten married and had a baby. He couldn’t even be bothered to deal with the trivial matters during his wedding ceremony.

Chapter 1128

The woman stayed in her spot, holding the baby. She was feeling slightly humiliated but mostly helpless. She knew that she could never replace Arianne in Will’s heart in this lifetime, not even when she and Will had already had a baby. This was a tragic fact.

Arianne let out a long sigh of relief after leaving the shopping mall. The cold winds refreshed her emotions. It was almost time, and Mark would be reaching soon.

She sent him a message to tell him that she was at the shopping mall entrance. His car soon arrived on the street across the road from her. She opened the car door and got into the car. The warm air in the

car cut off the chill from outside. She smoothed her hair, which had been messed up because of the wind. “Where are we going for dinner?”

Mark didn’t reply, so she turned around and looked at him. “What’s wrong?”

He stared at the rearview mirror with an expressionless face. “When did Will Sivan come back?”

She was taken aback, then realized that Will was at a distance from them, leading his wife and child, getting ready to leave. Mark saw all of this.

“He says that he’s here to visit relatives,” she confessed in honesty. “He’s only been back for a few days and will be leaving soon. We bumped into each other when I was walking around. He was with his wife and daughter. His daughter is adorable, she can walk now.”

Mark didn’t answer and drove his car ahead. She couldn’t make out the emotions on his face.

Arianne was worried. She had been excited about tonight’s date, but she never expected this to happen. Was he angry? She wanted to explain but wasn’t sure how. It was as if there was nothing to explain.

They arrived at a high-class chinese restaurant. Mark got out of the car and handed his keys to the valet. “Let’s go.”

Arianne tagged along, hanging her head. Something felt amiss.

They walked toward a table inside the restaurant. He handed the menu over to her. “You can order.”

She ordered a few random dishes. She wasn’t in the mood to examine the menu. The air had grown still. She was about to speak when Mark spoke up first. “There’s no need to feel pressured. It was a coincidental run-in. It’s not like you purposely set up a meeting. I’m not mad.”

Arianne looked at him, bit her lip, and stayed silent. Was he subtly warning her against meeting Will Sivan? He claimed that he wasn’t mad, but that did not reflect the expression on his face…

The strange air continued all the way to the hotel. Once they entered the room, he pushed Arianne up against the wall before she could turn on the lights. His hands deftly unbuttoned her shirt in the dark. His hot kisses were impassioned.

She panicked. “Don’t do this. Will and I really did run into each other, purely by coincidence,” she said, in between intervals of pushing him away. “Otherwise, I wouldn’t have known when he was back in the country or when he would be leaving. I don’t plan on contacting him either…”

He put his forehead against hers, their breaths inches away from one another. “Really? Not bad. I don’t have to remind you this time.” Then, he scooped her into his arms and carried her toward the large bed in the room.

Arianne’s mind was a mess when he threw her onto the bed. This wasn’t the date that she had been looking forward to. Her joy had completely disappeared.

Chapter 1129

Arianne felt a kind of emptiness deep down. Their relationship may look like it's going strong on the surface, but in reality, it was still fragile. Based on everything that had happened today, it was clear.

She fell fast asleep before Mark emerged from the bathroom, probably because it was easier to fall asleep in the dark.

After an unknown amount of time, she felt something move next to her. She opened her eyes, just a little bit, and found Mark looking through her phone. She pretended not to know, hoping that this would bring him some form of assurance. He was probably trying to confirm if she had saved Will's contact details. Luckily, she hadn't…

Arianne woke up before sunrise the next day because she had gone to bed early. Mark was still fast asleep. She silently got up and took a shower. She longed for Aristotle. This was her first time spending the night away from home since Aristotle's birth.

She stepped out of the bathroom, absent-mindedly after her shower. She jumped with fright. Mark had woken up at some point and was leaning against the wall of the bathroom door!

She regained her senses. "You're awake? It's still early. Why don't… we go home for a while? We can change our clothes and see Smore too. I'm a little antsy, we haven't been home for an entire night."

Mark nodded, walked back to bed, took off his bathrobe, and changed. She lifted her hand to tuck her hair behind her ear. She took her clothes and changed in the bathroom. She really had a fright.

Mark did not check out of the room when they left. That meant that this hotel belonged to the Tremonts too.

They returned to the Tremont Estate and ran into Mary, who had woken up and was feeding Aristotle. Arianne's spirits lifted when she saw Aristotle. She took her baby from Mary's arms. "Let me."

Mark went into the cloakroom without another word. "What's going on?" Mary asked in a soft voice. "Mr. Tremont doesn't look too happy. I thought you two went out to spend some time alone?"

Arianne felt slightly depressed. "Yes, there was a small bump along the way, and this happened… I don't know what to say. It's fine. Thank you for taking care of Smore for the night. It's still early, get some rest."

Mary didn't ask too many questions. She got up and went back to her room.

Mark emerged from the cloakroom and teased Aristotle while putting on his tie. "You're up early, aren't you going back to sleep?"

Aristotle stared at him as he suckled on his milk. He even reached out his tiny little arm. He strode forward. Aristotle grabbed his tie and pulled on it. His nearly tied tie was undone again. He didn't get angry and pinched Aristotle's chubby little cheek instead. Then, he stepped aside.

Arianne couldn't take it anymore. "Must you? It's not even my fault. Why the heck are you so mad? You say it's fine, but you're actually disgusted, deep down. Hypocrite…"

"Am I?" Mark glanced at her.

"Can't you tell if you are?" she mumbled. "I thought that going out with you on a date was going to be so perfect and romantic. You've spoiled my fantasy."

Chapter 1130

Mark walked closer toward her again, reached out, and pinched Aristotle's ear. "I wanted to create a perfect and romantic atmosphere too, but your body was very honest. You refused to show any reaction at all, no matter how much I tried to entice you. What does that mean? It means that you weren't in the mood for our date at all."

Arianne was indignant from his false accusation. "It's because you had such a sullen face for the entire night. I panicked. How could I possibly have the mood for anything else? You made it look like I was actually in the wrong. You're unreasonable and petty! I wasn't sickened with you when I came back from seeing Aery, was I? So you're upset, just because I accidentally ran into Will?"

Aristotle pulled Mark's hand away in protest, and Mark did not continue their conversation. "Come downstairs for breakfast when you're done with feeding him. I'll take you to the office later."

On the way to the office, Tiffany sent Arianne an ill-timed message: 'How was last night? Did your romantic fantasy come to life?'

Arianne saw how Mark was completely focused on driving and wasn't paying her any attention. She quickly sent her reply: 'What fantasy? I ran into Will last night, and he saw it. So he sulked at me for the entire night.'

Tiffany's focus was immediately drawn away by the subject of Will: 'Will's back? Damn, he didn't tell me. What a waste of our good relationship during our college years. I'm going to make him pay. You should stuff a pacifier into that crybaby's mouth. So petty.'

Arianne looked at Mark and silently agreed with Tiffany. He was a crybaby—the kind that would explode into a fit of rage without warning!

"Bye," she said when they arrived at the office building.

Mark tossed a royal blue jewelry box at her. "For you. I was supposed to give this to you last night. I didn't get to."

She pouted, took the box, and left the car. She waited for Mark to drive into the distance before opening it to have a look—it was a necklace. This guy was such a "carrot after stick" man. He'd interchange between a nice guy and bad guy. He played the part of a man with a split personality disorder with vivid detail.

Meanwhile, Tiffany was itching for a reunion, now that Will had returned. In addition, the weather was cold, and her large belly made her feel extra sluggish. Thus, she decided to slack off and take a day off. She stepped into Jackson's office and spoke in a theatrical manner. "Mr. West, I have an emergency today. I need to take the day off."

Jackson smelled something fishy about her. “What kind of emergency could you possibly have? What emergency would you have that I don’t know about? Why are you taking the day off? Tell me the truth, or you’re not leaving.”

She stepped forward and sat on his lap. “Will is back. I haven’t seen him in a while, so I want to have a meal with him. He, Arianne, and I were the best of friends back in college. We were a solid trio. He’s finally back. What’s wrong with meeting him? Give me the day off, okay?”

Jackson raised his brow. “You’d better see Will on your own. You’d better not drag Arianne into this. There’s going to be trouble if Mark finds out. Furthermore… Your belly has grown so big, I’m worried. So if you’re going, I’m coming with you.”

“How is my belly an inconvenience?” Tiffany whined. “I’m only a few months pregnant. What’s with the trouble? If that’s the case, what about those women who are close to giving birth? How do you think they’re going to live? Their bellies are bigger than mine. Besides, you and Will aren’t close. Won’t it be awkward for you to come along? Stay out of it. I can go on my own.”