Ruling 1151

Chapter 1151

She did not hold back with her words, as if conveying that Arianne had no merits apart from her beautiful looks. Arianne resented her mentally but still put a smile on her face as she said to her, “It’s up to us whether we find each other suitable or not. It isn’t as shallow as judging based on appearances, but rather, whether both parties like each other, isn’t that right? So Jessica, when will we talk about the dress?”

Jessica looked at her in silence before saying, “Mrs. Tremont, I will acknowledge that your designs have managed to be published in fashion magazines and you are quite experienced in the field. However, it isn’t up to my standards. Each and every one of my personal designers are even more renown than you are. We’ll put an end to this discussion here today. Until next time.”

Arianne had the urge to curse at the woman, but she held herself back as she thought of Mr. Yaleman’s incessant ranting. She was afraid that she would ruin Mark’s business since Jessica was one of Mark’s business partners. She had to endure as best as she could.

Mr. Yaleman was disappointed when he heard that the business proposal had been rejected, but he did not comment about it. He had already anticipated that it would be difficult to secure such a big business when he took into account the level of standard his company had.

On the other hand, Mark had received news about Jessica’s earlier than originally scheduled arrival at the capital and was a little frustrated. He had a feeling that something was amiss when she did not go to meet him the moment she arrived. It was possible that her objective was to discuss business matters with him. In any case, he had to fulfill the role of a host and organize her stay for her to the best of his abilities. However, it wasn’t all too bad for him. This way, he could resolve the misunderstanding about the present sooner.

Arianne was agitated at the amount of humiliation she had to endure. She thought of discussing it with Mark once they were back at home that night, but unfortunately, before she even got off work, Mark called her to say that he had a social event to attend to that night and she should head home herself. Arianne did not have to think too deeply to know that he was meeting Jessica that night. Her emotions began to rise as she immediately hung up the call.

That night at the White Water Bay cafe, Mark was seated directly opposite Jessica. He had brought Davy along to avoid having to meet with her alone, which would have been awkward for him. Since it was a formal business meeting, he had expected Jessica to bring her secretary along as well; however, she attended alone.

Jessica had a disgruntled look on her face when she saw that Mark had brought someone with him, but she said with a cajole tone, “I had thought this would be a date between just the two of us.”

Mark sat upright rigidly and replied, “There are surely a number of matters for us to discuss regarding our partnership. Hence, I have my secretary with me to listen in so that I don’t miss anything. I’m sure you wouldn’t mind.”

Jessica liked how Mark was always easy-going and confident. She held up both her hands and rested her chin on them as she stared right into his eyes. “If you think I won’t mind, so be it. The ambience here is really nice. I like the atmosphere as well. I’m sure the owner of this cafe is as much of a decent man as you are.”

Mark said tonelessly, “It’s my friend’s cafe. I’ll introduce him to you someday. Right, about the present I gave you previously…”

Jessica interrupted him before he could finish. “I like it very much. The design is very eye-catching. Its meaning is also… just perfect.”

Mark froze slightly. He was used to seeing Arianne, who was elegant and refined like a jasmine, so when he was faced with a flirtatious and domineering woman such as Jessica, he did not have the slightest interest in her. Heck, he was even irked by her. “I believe you have misunderstood. Those earrings were actually meant for my wife. I mistakenly took the wrong box with me when I was on my business trip. I’ve prepared another gift for you as a token of my apology since it’s my fault. I hope you’ll like it.”

Davy took his cue and brought out an expensive necklace that Mark had just bought. Jessica’s face stiffened. Without looking at the necklace, she said, “You’re saying that you… gave me the wrong gift? These earrings were meant for your wife?”

Chapter 1152

Mark answered honestly. “That’s right. It is precisely because of this that I asked to meet you tonight. I wanted to express my apology personally. I’m sorry for the misunderstanding.”

Jessica’s love life had always been filled with a bed of roses. Faced with such a humiliation all of a sudden, she could not hold in her anger and her face turned. “Is this something that can be resolved with just an apology? Instead of realizing your mistake from the beginning, you had to wait until so many days had passed to tell me that it’s all a misunderstanding. So, I’ve misunderstood your intentions all along? I deliberately pulled my schedule ahead to arrive at the capital half a month early because I couldn’t wait to meet you. But now, I feel like a complete idiot!”

Mark’s patience gradually dwindled as the situation got out of hand. He had already apologized sincerely to her, yet her reaction to his apology was less than acceptable. At that moment, Mark had already decided that their partnership was no longer of importance. “It’s my fault for causing this misunderstanding. Therefore, I apologise for the inconvenience it caused you. I’ll leave it to you to consider the status of our partnership. If you feel that it’s impossible to go on, then we’ll leave it at that.”

Jessica was shocked to see Mark's resolve in his actions. She could tell that he was not the kind of man to be strung along by a woman. She suppressed her rage and said, "Forget it, let bygones be bygones since it's all a misunderstanding and all has been explained clearly. I won't let my emotions interfere with my work, so I do look forward to our partnership. I do admire you, whether this was all a misunderstanding or not. By the way, I had the honour of meeting your wife earlier today. My impression of her was that she is the daughter of a humble family. I had not expected you to be married to a woman such as her. It's unimaginable for the two of you to be suitable for each other."

Mark's eyes went cold. "I don't suppose it was a coincidence that you met each other?"

"I went to meet her on purpose. We also spoke for a while," Jessical admitted.

Mark's face grew cold as he got up from his chair. He looked at the earrings in Jessica's ears and said, "You can keep the earrings, if you like. My wife wouldn't want to wear something that has already been worn by someone else. I believe there is no reason for us to proceed with our partnership. I don't like to associate myself with a woman who thinks too highly of herself. I'll foot the bill on my way out. That'll be all."

As he finished, he walked off without looking back. Davy followed behind him hurriedly, leaving Jessica alone at the cafe, her face reflecting both anger and shock at the same time. She angrily removed the earrings from her ears and slammed them on the table. Her earlobes began to bleed from the roughness of her actions. Mark was still calm before, but she had not expected him to completely flip out at the mention of Arianne!

When he left the cafe, Mark immediately rushed back to the Tremont Estate. He assumed that Jessica had worn those earrings when she met Arianne and became irked.

When he entered the house, he found Arianne playing with Smore. Usually, she would greet him and then prompt Smore to call him daddy as well. However, she did not even bat an eyelid at him this time.

Of course, Mark knew the reason for her cold shoulder. She carried Smore with her and left just as he walked towards them to talk. He helplessly shut his eyes and rushed towards them. “I didn’t know that woman would look for you. I’ve already explained everything clearly to her. Our partnership has ended as well.”

Arianne muttered, “She came to my office today pretending to ask me to design a dress for her. Turns out, she had intended to belittle me from the get-go by saying that I don’t deserve you and that my skills couldn’t be compared to her personal renowned designers. Who does she think she is? She openly challenged my position, all the while knowing that you’re married and with a child. Are all of the women from her country so open minded? Now, I’ve seen everything. Does she think that she’s more suitable for you and wants us to get a divorce so that she can come into the picture? She would then get the best of both worlds in terms of her work and marriage. Is that her idea of perfection? I’m so angry, but I find all of this laughable at the same time as well!”

Chapter 1153

Mark found it funny, as he saw Arianne pouting angrily. “You look really cute when you’re angry.”

Arianne glared at him. “You think I’m cute when I’m angry? Very well, keep angering me as long as it pleases you! At the end of the day, it’s your fault for giving her the wrong gift and making her misunderstand your intentions! Of course, she would have the courage to challenge me when she thinks you prefer her over me!”

Mark surprisingly took her scolding in stride. “You’re right, it’s my fault and I’ve taken care of it already. I’ll compensate for the gift next time.”

Arianne snorted. “No! I don’t want your gift. I don’t wanna be scorned by those outsiders again. I can’t handle that kind of provocation! I suppose you’ve lost quite a bit, now that you’ve ended that partnership?”

Mark nodded his head. “You’re right, it’s quite a loss. However, it’s nothing compared to the humiliation you had to go through. Nothing else matters other than you.”

Although Arianne still had a cold expression on her face, her heart had already been melted by his words. She hadn't known that Mark could have such a way with his words…

She passed Smore into his arms. “Carry your son. I’m off to eat.”

Mark was surprisingly clingy that day, similar to how Smore would be normally. Everywhere that Arianne went, Mark would follow right behind her with Smore in his arms. He even waited outside of the bathroom door with Smore when Arianne went to do her business. She was devastated. “Have you got nothing to do? Why are you following me?!”

Mark shamelessly said, “Smore said he wanted to see his mom, or he’d cry.”

Arianne laughed. Was such scenery common in normal families? Did all men think that their children couldn’t be away from their mothers for too long?

When Arianne was going through the ledgers that Naya had sent her, she deliberately warned Mark not to disturb her. Who knew that he would carry Smore and pass by her door every so often while saying, “Let’s see what mom’s doing. Why isn’t she carrying Smore? Why don’t you call mom.”

Arianne became so annoyed by him, her head was on the verge of exploding. “Are you that free? If you’ve got so much extra time on your hands, why don’t you put your child to sleep? I suppose you’re not tired at all. If you were, you wouldn’t even have the energy to carry him.”

Mark warmly smiled at her. “Relax, I’ll save some energy to carry you. But I’ll put Smore to sleep first. Hurry up and come over when you’re done.”

She knew that he had plans from his tone. Arianne had every mind to reject him that night due to exhaustion. The thought had not even crossed her mind, for she felt as though she could fall asleep as soon as she laid in bed. Her eyes were going blind from looking at her computer screen for too long.

By the time she was done going through the ledgers, it was already past eleven at night. She tiptoed back to her room and walked towards the baby tram without turning on the lights. She covered Smore with a blanket before laying in bed herself.

As expected, Mark had not slept yet. He went up and hugged her. It could be described as a bear hug, with Arianne’s petite figure being his bolster. Feeling his hands fondle her, she said with a tired voice, “I’m tired today, let’s go to sleep please.”

Mark mumbled beside her ear, “Call me honey and I’ll let you off the hook.”

It was pitch black in the room and neither of their faces could be seen clearly, so humility was thrown out the window. Arianne pinched her throat and called, “Honey…”

Mark was not satisfied. “I can’t hear you.”

She squirmed next to his ear. “Honey, is that alright? Or would you like it if I followed the latest trend and call you Oppa? Are you happy now? I really want to sleep. My eyelids are getting so heavy, I can’t keep them open…”

Mark thought for a moment and said, “Call me big bro…”

Chapter 1154

Arianne was startled for a while. He had forbidden her from calling him brother a long time ago. What kind of insanity was he playing at? She was too tired to think too much about the situation, so all she wanted was for him to not torture her anymore. “Bro.”

Mark suddenly hugged her even tighter, causing her to suffocate a little. “What’s wrong with you? Can you be a little more gentle? You’re hugging me too tightly.”

He did not reply to her, and she could not understand what was going on in his mind. However, she slept extra well that night. Perhaps her exhaustion caused her sleep condition to rise to maximum comfort levels.

The next morning, when Arianne was washing her face, Mark walked to her side and brushed his teeth. The prankster within her surfaced as she thought of how he had asked her to call him big brother last night. She splashed some water on his body and said, “Good morning, bro.”

Mark choked on some toothpaste and coughed for quite a while. His expression twisted. “Y-you…! Shut up!”

Arianne couldn’t stop laughing. “Do you not like it? You were the one who asked me to call you that last night, weren’t you? What’s wrong? It doesn’t feel like how it used to be when you were younger? A lot of women call their partners as brothers, just like how the Koreans refer to their mates as oppa. It’s just a nickname. Do you have to be so sensitive about it? You didn’t give that reaction when I called you that last night.”

Mark walked out of the bathroom after rinsing his mouth. Arianne was baffled but paid no attention to him.

Mark focused on his driving while heading to the office when Arianne suddenly asked out of curiosity, “Why did you suddenly ask me to call you bro?”

He turned his head to glance at her. “I wanted to see you cajole. Why don’t you do it for me now?”

Arianne’s lips twitched. “I don’t know how to do it. Why don’t you show me how?”

Mark grinned and said, “Men and women have different methods of cajoling. You wouldn’t be able to learn it even if I demonstrated it to you. Isn’t this something that women are born with? Stop pretending that you don’t know how to and just do it.”

Arianne was determined to have her way with him and said, “So, that means you do know how to cajole, am I right? Let me see how men and women’s cajoling differ. If you show me now, I’ll cajole you every single day. If you can’t, then let’s forget about it and move on.”

She was sure that he wouldn't cajole before her. She imagined what Mark would look like if he actually tried it with his cold face and masochistic character.

Who knew she would be proven wrong and miscalculate the situation.

When the car stopped by her office entrance, Mark suddenly turned towards her and held up her chin with his hand as he moved closer to her. He looked at her with an expression she had never seen before and said, "Be a good girl now. Don't go looking at other men, or I'll be very cross. I'll come pick you up when you're off work, so wait for me, mmkay?"

Arianne's eyes opened wide. Her heart raced to get out of her body—'rampage' would be a more appropriate description. She forgot how to breathe momentarily. Mark's full yet thin lips moved ever so slightly, his gentle words filling with a cajole that had a hint of dominance. Could this be the Tremont cajoling technique? She admitted her defeat…

She nodded her head in a daze before getting out of the car in the same state of mind…

Mark's car dashed off in the cold wind as his words continued to ring in her head. "Remember what you promised me. Don't forget to cajole me everyday."

When she came around, she raised her hands to cover her blushing face. She could not handle that kind of stimulation so early in the morning so she kept telling herself, "Calm down… calm yourself down…"

It was not until she entered her office that she completely returned to reality and calmed herself down. The weather that day was extraordinarily beautiful, and the sun was shining without any traces of snow.

Chapter 1155

Mark seemed to be in a good mood that day. Davy noticed it as well the moment Mark arrived at the office.

Naturally, Davy could not understand why Mark was in a pleasant mood instead of being upset at losing the partnership with Jessica, which would incur quite a sum of losses.

Davy did not dare to lower his guard, as things seemed too good to be true. He treaded even more carefully than usual and said, “Mr. Tremont, would you like some coffee or tea? Or would you like to have something else?”

Mark walked to his desk and sat down. He raised his eyes to look at Davy and smiled at him. “I’ll let you decide for me.”

Davy gulped, his face stiffening as he said, “Then… would tea be alright for you?” From what he knew, Mark preferred tea most of the time; he should be safe with this choice.

Mark only nodded in acknowledgement. His face didn’t look cold at all as he replied. In fact, he was very casual about it.

Mark turned on his computer. He saw that he had a new email and naturally opened it, only to find that it was from Jessica. His face instantly changed when he saw that name.

The contents of the email were mainly to express her intentions of continuing their partnership, ignoring all the misunderstandings that had happened and letting bygones be bygones.

Mark hesitated a little. Jessica's company had reliability as a partner, and the potential profit return was quite optimal as well. If the misunderstanding had not happened, they would have had a rather pleasant partnership. However, the idea of continuing the partnership disappeared every time he recalled the woman's criticism towards Arianne.

After some consideration, he decided to ignore the email. Non-reply would also be a good hint for her.

When Davy entered the office excitedly with a fresh brew of tea, Mark raised an eyebrow and said, "Get me coffee instead, no sugar."

Davy's hands trembled. "Y-yes sir…" He was right, Mark was capable of changing his decision on a simple whim. It was a good thing Davy had not lowered his guard, or otherwise, he would have been in for another round of scolding.

In the afternoon, Mark texted Arianne whilst walking out of his office. Although they were not eating together, he wanted to know what she was having for lunch.

When he arrived at his company's main entrance, he noticed Jessica's car from the corner of his eyes. The gentle look he had on his face disappeared instantly.

Jessica got out of her car and approached him. “You’re a really arrogant man, Mr. Tremont. I couldn’t even enter your office without a prior appointment. I believe you’ve read the email that I sent you, correct? Why didn’t you reply to me? I believe we should have a proper discussion.”

Mark said tonelessly, “I saw your email, but I did not reply because I didn’t see the point in doing so. As for our partnership, haven’t we already decided on it? Therefore, there’s nothing left to discuss. If you have any other queries, you may contact my secretary and he’ll pass on your message. I’ve got other matters to attend to now, so excuse me.”

Chapter 1156

Jessica went red from embarrassment. “Mark Tremont! You’re the first man to undermine me like this! I want to know why. Aren’t you the one in the wrong? I accept your apology. The partnership can still continue. Are you going to just throw it away, just because I’ve seen your wife?”

Mark took a deep breath, paused, and said, “That’s right. My wife is the limit. No one is allowed to touch her. I’m in the wrong, and I’ve apologized. It ends now, okay? Although I’ve had a very good experience with our partnership, Tremont Enterprises can do without your partnership. There’s no use in it if you keep up this harassment.”

Jessica laughed in spite of her rage. “You’re the most difficult man I’ve ever met. I went to see your wife because I misunderstood and thought you had feelings for me. I wouldn’t have gone if I had known that this was a misunderstanding. Theoretically speaking, it’s still your fault, so there’s no need to put extra blame on me, is there? The loss of this partnership would bring too much loss for both of us. I just don’t see the need. Men should make big decisions. There’s no need to act on impulse. If needed, I will apologize to your wife. Will that do?”

Mark frowned. “You have a point, but my wife will feel uncomfortable. She might not prevent me from continuing our partnership, but I’m afraid that it might bug her anyway. There’s no need for an apology. Isn’t it all just a misunderstanding? We just need to solve the misunderstanding. We’ll terminate the partnership.”

Then, he immediately drove off.

Jessice bit her lips. Her eyes filled with dissatisfaction. She had taken such a long trip, only for it to end in such a sharp rebuff. Mark had caused the misunderstanding, and he had apologized. Yet, why did she feel so unfulfilled? She was clearly not in the wrong, but it felt like she was the only one at fault! She had thought it over for the entire night—this partnership could still continue, even if this man did not belong to her. She had already taken the initiative to send out that email, but he still reacted in this manner anyway.

The most perplexing of all was Mark's feelings for Arianne. In her opinion, feelings could be toyed with in one's control, and people would get tired of them. They weren't supposed to be permanent. Mark had successfully piqued her interest. She had never tasted defeat before. It was probably due to the feelings that Mark had given her. Now, she knew how much dissatisfaction and subjugation came with defeat. She would not give up so easily!

Upon returning to her car, she said to her chauffeur, "Go to that small office from last time." Yes, she wanted to see Arianne. Since Mark's wife was his taboo, turning the tides would be in Arianne's hands. If the woman relaxed, the partnership could still continue. As long as the partnership continued, she would have more chances of interacting with that haughty man!

When she arrived at the entrance to Arianne's office building, Jessica saw Arianne and Robin through her car window, chatting and laughing as they walked towards their office with a cup of milk tea in each hand. No matter how she looked at it, Arianne looked like a little girl who had just joined society not too long ago. She was simply nothing compared to herself. Aside from their age, Arianne didn't seem like she had the upper hand in any aspect. This was also another reason why she couldn't accept her defeat.

She gestured at the chauffeur to step forward. The chauffeur nodded, got down from the car, and ran towards them. "Mrs. Tremont, Jessica would like a word with you."

Arianne glanced outside. Hadn't this woman's partnership with Mark fizzled out? Why was she looking for her now?

Robin tugged her sleeves worriedly. "It's fine," she said soothingly. "I'll check it out. You can go back to the office first. I'll be back soon."

Once she got into the car, Jessica told the driver to head to the nearest café. The milk tea in Arianne's hands seemed cheap and a stark contrast to the atmosphere in the café. She glanced at Jessica's ears. This time, Jessica wasn't wearing the earrings.

After finding a seat, Jessica smiled calmly and said, "Mrs. Tremont, would you like something to drink? You can choose whatever you like."

Arianne waved the milk tea in her hand. "No need, I have a drink. Please get to the point. I have to go to work, and I don't have much time, sorry."

Chapter 1157

A hint of disdain flashed across Jessica's eyes. She would never drink milk tea from a roadside stall. "Mr. Tremont holds you in high regard. My previous visit to you was a misunderstanding. He was the one who had given me your earrings by mistake and caused me to misunderstand his feelings for me. I'm here to apologize. This was a misunderstanding, and although it has already been solved, he has terminated our partnership simply because I went to visit you before. You probably aren't aware of the great profits this partnership could bring us both, but it is important enough for me to make a personal trip. So, I'll get to the point. I hope that we can still continue this partnership, and you're the only one who can change his mind. I'm willing to give way. What do you think?"

Arianne had washed herself clean of this issue, as she believed in Mark's decisions and she did not like the smug connotations in Jessica's tone. "Am I not just a naive little girl to you? I have zero understanding of your business. He makes the decisions on what to do, and I have no say in that. If the partnership is unnecessary to him, it is unnecessary. There's no use in seeking me out for this. If there's nothing else, please excuse me. By the way, the coffee here is pretty good, and the weather is great today. Please, enjoy."

Then, she got up and left with a smile, refusing to give Jessica any further chance to speak.

Jessica had finally realized something—Mark and Arianne were the same when it came to heartlessness. They wouldn't give way for negotiation. Seeing Arianne was a mistake. She had only brought herself further humiliation!

Arianne did not tell Mark about Jessica's recent visit. There was no need. However, Mark's refusal to work with Jessica warmed her heart. This guy really was pretty good to her. He didn't say it often, but certain details definitely revealed it.

It was a Saturday, so it was considered overtime during a holiday. The entire company got off work early in the afternoon. Arianne didn't feel like going home to get snubbed by Aristotle so easily, so she dragged Robin along to go shopping with her. She hadn't had much to eat at noon, so she was feeling slightly hungry. It had been a while since she went on a food hunt. Previously, it was Tiffany who would walk around with her, as she always had a knack for finding good food along the streets.

Having spent some time with Robin, Arianne found her increasingly likeable and amiable. Robin was considered a gentle and refined young lady. She had a tender demeanor and was not good at rejecting others. She was good-natured and polite. The word that she used the most every day was "thank you". That showed that she was raised very well.

While the pair was having pretzels at the shopping mall, Arianne asked, “What does your family do? I’ve never heard you mention it before.”

Robin smiled shyly. “My parents are teachers. My mom teaches in high school and my dad is a college lecturer. I guess you could say that I was born into a family of scholars. My parents always valued my opinion, so they let me do whatever I wanted after graduation. I’m their only daughter, so they’ve never put a limit on material possessions for me. They were very strict with me. I’ll tell you a secret—I’ve never been in love. My parents’ greatest fear was that I would start dating early. Now that I’ve graduated, I’d like to focus on my career first. Romance is like a blank slate to me. But seeing your relationship with your husband makes me kind of want to be in love too.”

“Relationships can’t be judged on the surface,” Arianne, an experienced woman, explained pertinently. “It’s not as great as you think. There are ups and downs. You’ll feel like staying alone for the rest of your life when it’s on the rocks. However, when you’re really alone, you’ll start feeling lonely again. Humans are a contrary species. You’re still young, so listen to my advice—don’t start dating too early, then get married, and have kids. You’ll realize what a luxury freedom is when that happens. Now, I’m always longing for my baby at the end of work, but taking care of him is exhausting too. However, at the same time, I dearly cherish it too.”

Robin nodded, only half-understanding the situation. “That’s probably it. It’s quite conflicting. My parents fight too, and I do drive my mom crazy sometimes. But it’s usually warm and comforting. There’s always two sides to a coin.”

Chapter 1158

The pair made their way to the fruit section. Arianne thought of buying some fruits to bring home to Aristotle. She wondered which fruits to get, as Aristotle hadn’t tried many fruits before. He’d only ever had one type. She did not dare to try out fruits that could cause allergies.

Suddenly, she noticed a familiar figure in an obscure corner around the back door, moving boxes of fruits. The back door was usually the channel for new stock arrivals. Arianne stopped and observed very closely for a while before realizing that that familiar figure was Harvey Wynn. It was now the winter holidays and Harvey would be graduating soon. Was he taking on a part time job over the holidays?

She did not greet Harvey immediately but waited until he was nearly done with his job before approaching him. “Harvey, what are you doing here?”

Harvey was taken aback when he saw her. He tried to avoid her gaze. “Sis… I had nothing much to do during the winter break, so I decided to come here and get a part time job to earn some allowance and get an early experience with hard work.”

Arianne scanned Harvey from head to toe. This guy wasn’t afraid of dirt or exhaustion. His uniform was slightly dirty, and sweat was on the tip of his nose despite the cold, wintry weather. “Your parents can’t possibly have no money for your tuition and daily expenses, can they? How much could you earn from this entire winter break? And it’s hard work too to boot.”

Harvey hung his head. “It’s fine, I can do it. I’m going to graduate soon. I’ll be fine when my internship starts.”

Arianne felt a tinge of rage when she saw how sensible Harvey was. If his father hadn’t squandered all of the money that Mark had given him behind her back, their entire family would be living an easy life. It must be harder on Harvey to have a father like that.

Knowing that Harvey wasn’t the kind of person who would get lazy so easily, after some consideration, Arianne said, “I’ll pay for your daily expenses and tuition fees, until you graduate. Do your best in your internship. Life can be above average as long as you work at it. Christmas is coming soon. You shouldn’t be hanging around for nothing like that. Go home.”

Harvey's first reaction was to refuse the offer. "No no no, I don't need that much money. I can work and study at the same time. I'll earn just enough for my tuition fees during winter break. I can cover my daily expenses doing regular part-time jobs. You really don't have to worry, sis. I do appreciate the sentiment though."

Arianne shook her head. "It's not as easy as you think. How can you expect to study if you spend all of your time on your job? You won't have much time to do anything else when you start your internship. You don't have to put on a brave face. It's decided. Don't tell your parents about this. I'm not helping you because of them."

Harvey stayed silent and didn't answer. He knew that if his parents found out about this, they would start thinking that they could rely on Arianne again. They would certainly become shameless again. It'd been such a long time, yet his father still refused to get a real job and chose to drink and gamble instead. His mother, Zoey, did odd jobs, but it wasn't enough for the family expenses. That was why he was doing part-time jobs. He initially had no plans of going home for Christmas. That way, he could earn more money. He did not expect to bump into Arianne.

Chapter 1159

Arianne gave Harvey an estimate of the money Harvey would need to last until his graduation and internship. She did not give him anything extra, as she worried that it would cause further issues. Harvey accepted it, but he still felt apologetic. "I'll pay you back when I start working, sis. I promise I'll do it."

Arianne did not decline his offer. "Sure. I'll wait for you to start earning your salary to pay me back. The money for you to get home is included too. Try to go home sooner and have a Merry Christmas."

Robin waited for Harvey to leave, then asked, "Was that your brother?"

Arianne nodded. “My aunt’s son. My grandmother adopted her, so we’re not related by blood. However, my cousin isn’t all that bad. He’s not like his parents.”

Arianne walked around a little more after buying fruits, then headed home. Aristotle had just finished his milk and was feeling particularly energized. He was crawling around on the ground and refused to stop.

Poor Mary was already old enough, yet she still had to follow him around, worried that he would knock into something. After a few rounds, she felt as if her back was close to breaking.

Seeing this, Arianne strode forward and said, “Mary, you should get some rest. I’ll take care of him. Don’t worry, let him crawl around. It’s fine if he knocks into something. He’ll learn to be more careful from then on. He has to experience some form of hardship as he grows, or otherwise, how would he learn? It’s not good to be overprotective. As long as it’s not too dangerous, there’s nothing to worry about.”

Despite her words, she couldn’t bring herself to actually do it. She was more cautious than Mary. Aristotle crawled at an exceptional speed, as if he had an endless supply of energy. After a few tedious rounds, she felt as if she had gotten old. Her entire body was sore…

Aristotle actually decided to crawl upstairs while Arianne was sitting down to have a break. Left with no choice, she ran after him. Aristotle took twenty minus to slowly crawl upstairs. He huffed and puffed as he used both arms and legs. When he reached the top, he sat on the ground to rest for a while then continued crawling.

Aristotle was different from when he was much smaller. He was very mischievous now. He crawled into the room and began wreaking havoc. He grabbed anything that he could touch. He even pulled on the carpet to play with it.

Once he was done with that, he babbled and cried, asking to play on the bed instead. Arianne wondered if he would end up tiring himself out if he continued playing, so she carried him onto the bed, hers and Mark's bed.

She soon realized that this was a bad idea. Aristotle ended up pooping on the bed. Arianne noticed his reddened, scrunched up little face and decided to take him away. Unfortunately, it was too late.

Just as she took Aristotle downstairs with one hand, Mark happened to walk in. "Why are you holding him like that? Can't you carry him properly?"

Arianne was exhausted at this point. "You do it then," she replied sulkily.

Mark was completely unaware that Aristotle had just taken a dump. He only realized when he held him in his arms and smelled the stench. "Why does it smell as if… he has just defecated?"

A wicked smile hung on the corners of Arianne's lips. "That's right. Didn't you tell me not to carry him like that? The baby's in your hands now. You deal with it yourself. It should be pretty easy to wash his buttocks, right? I'm going to rest. I'm exhausted."

Mark's face changed from green to white. "Mary! Mary! Smore has defecated in his pants. Wash him!"

As he spoke, he placed Aristotle onto the ground in disgust. Aristotle immediately began to crawl from the moment his legs touched the ground. He crawled very quickly, just like a rodent.

By the time Mary washed Aristotle clean, Mark had already finished his shower. His germaphobic tendencies were acting up, so he kept smelling his hands, which previously held Aristotle. There were clearly layers of clothes and a diaper in between them, yet he felt as if he had touched his excrement.

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Arianne couldn't bear to watch any longer. "Must you? What if I told you that he pooped on your bed? Are you going to change the entire bed?"

Mark was taken aback. "Mary, change the sheets."

Arianne was speechless.

That proved that one should never challenge the limits of a germaphobe. Mark barely ate during dinner, probably because he kept thinking about his frustrations. He wasn't even in the mood to hold Aristotle during bedtime. He even sniffed the newly changed sheets and duvet to confirm that there were no strange smells before he could lie down in peace.

Arianne couldn't help rolling her eyes. "You should just amputate yourself if Smore poops on you. That would be much cleaner. How could you be disgusted by your own baby?"

Mark raised his brow. “I won’t give him the chance to ever poop on me. What kind of mother are you? How could you let the baby poop in his pants?”

Arianne pulled out a diaper and replied to him while changing Aristotle. “What’s the use in having diapers if I can catch him all the time? The more logical explanation would be that the kid is too young to be potty trained. Understand? It’s like you can’t even understand. You might be disgusted, but I’m not. If you’re not going to help, quit flipping out.”

Mark stared at her calmly. “Sometimes, you do act like a good and loving mother. When does Christmas break start for your company? Would you like to go on a holiday?”

“With Smore?” Arianne asked.

Mark shook his head. “It’ll be too much trouble to bring him along. He’s young, so long distance travel wouldn’t be suitable for him. It’ll just be the two of us.”

Arianne rejected the idea immediately after hearing that she would have to leave Aristotle. “Forget it then. It's not every day I get a break, and I have to abandon Smore and have fun on my own? Not a good idea. You can go alone if you want. I'll stay home and take care of the baby.”

The holiday fizzled out just like that. Taking a long trip seemed prohibited ever since they had a baby.

Most companies soon began their Christmas break. Christmas was approaching, and one could see all sorts of decorations and lights along the streets. It was very festive.

Tiffany held on in the company to the very last. After the holidays, she would have to continue working after the baby was born. Everyone unanimously agreed to this, as they didn't want her to continue tiring herself out.

Arianne dressed Smore up in red Christmassy clothes on Christmas Eve. This contrasted well against the little boy's complexion, making it seem even fairer than usual. He looked round and chubby, very cute. Arianne had sent Helen a message beforehand, inviting her to spend Christmas at her home. Helen still hadn't dropped by for a visit, and she was feeling slightly disappointed. She thought that it would be a good idea to have Helen join in their merriment, as she was all alone anyway…

Henry and Mary joined the dinner table for the Christmas Eve dinner. Mark had given them a small envelope of Christmas bonus, as usual. This year, Aristotle had received one too, along with Arianne. Suddenly, Arianne felt that having a baby was a good call. At least, she could receive two Christmas bonuses, before Aristotle started understanding the concept of money.

Helen finally arrived before they started the meal. "I'm sorry for being late. I was delayed."

Arianne did not display her joy on the surface but got up to pull up a chair for Helen. "You're not late. Come, sit. Let's have dinner."

Helen smiled. She stepped forward and sat down then stuffed a small gift envelope into Aristotle's pocket. The pocket was too small, so the gift peeked out. The half-exposed gift slowly came into view as Aristotle wiggled around. The envelope seemed empty. Arianne guessed that there was probably an ATM card inside. Helen was very generous, so if it was an ATM card, it probably contained a lot of money…