**Ruling 1171**

Chapter 1171

Mark seemed to have assumed that Arianne was already asleep because he came through the door, still on the phone, instead of trying to hide the conversation. “I couldn't care less whatever it is that you plan to do,” he barked. “You go ahead and crap out as many troubles as you like until the world ends. I don’t care. Sorry to burst your bubble, but I’m not, by any means, an unprincipled man.”

Hearing the steely rage in his voice, Arianne put her pen down and looked up at him.

Their eyes met, and a slight change overcame Mark’s expression before he hung up immediately. “You’re still awake? What are you doing in the living room?”

Arianne tucked her unfinished draft toward herself. “Waiting for you, what else? Who were you talking to? You sounded pissed.”

Weariness rose in his eyes. “It’s nothing. I’m going for a bath. You should rest early.”

Arianne was quite upset with him waving the question aside. She had heard every single word he spoke while he was on the phone, and her instincts told her that whoever was on the other side of his phone was a woman. And yet, Mark had decided to keep his lips sealed.

Arianne just wanted to understand him, or at least, know what was currently going on with him. Was this not the sort of thing shared between a husband and a wife? She hated feeling like there was an invisible wall between them.

Mark went into the bathroom while Arianne stood guard outside the door. She was going to make him loosen his mouth. She did not have to try to recall his daily habits—live with a person long enough, and one automatically knows the other person's schedule.

Mark usually bathed for half an hour, but today, he took an extra ten minutes. It was this little detail that reinforced Arianne's conjecture that he must be in a knotty spot to have caused this "abnormality."

Arianne listened to the sound of the flowing shower come to a stop before the door opened. Immediately, she launched into her interrogation. "I want you to tell me who you were talking to."

Mark froze. "Uh, it's a little late, don't you think? I don't think it's a good time to talk about it. I still have an important matter to deal with tomorrow at work, so I ought to sleep."

A frown rose to Arianne's eyebrows, her temper starting to flare. Just this morning, he told her that he would talk about it tonight, and now, he was acting like a phone on low battery? Thanks to his overseas business trip, Arianne had not been able to spend time with him for almost half a month. And still, that was not as egregious as his habit of keeping everything a secret from her for no good reason!

Arianne marched to their bed and laid down with a scowl. This man could be so… infuriatingly chauvinistic sometimes, especially when he treated her as the same little girl he raised and hid things from. A correction on this stinking behavior of his was a long time coming.

Acutely sensing her displeasure, Mark tried to coax her out of it in a low voice. "C'mon now. I am genuinely tired. It's not a front to hide something from you."

She continued to silently seethe and inched a little bit farther from him, as though she was determined to carve out a line between the two of them.

Helpless, Mark focused on wiping his hair dry before laying down next to her. “Don’t go to bed sulking. Shh. Sleep.”

An extended period of silence followed his words. Arianne turned and found the man already sound asleep! She was so angry that she almost kicked him awake, only barely stopping herself. Arianne truly loathed Mark’s penchant to tease information, only to keep it away from her later. The least he could do was not to incite her curiosity through teasing!

The next morning, Arianne woke up to find Mark still asleep. Reluctant to rope Henry into the trouble of sending her to work, she decided to call a cab. A small part of her wondered how Brian’s blind-dates were going since he had not returned.

No sooner had she arrived at the mouth of the street than she suddenly spied Sylvain Trudeau’s car right across the street. The car was a very eye-catching model, so it did not take her long to spot it.

Chapter 1172

The first rationale that came into Arianne’s mind was that Sylvain lived in a nearby neighborhood, which would be a reasonable explanation that begged no further attention. Since Arianne found going forward and bidding him good morning a little too bothersome, she decided to turn around and leave the area via another route.

Sylvain suddenly rolled down his car window and waved at her. “Morning, Sunshine! We work at the same place, don’t we? I could give you a lift.”

Arianne could not catch his expression from her spot across the street, but he still managed to throw her off. Why did she feel as though this guy had been here doing groundworks out of an unfathomable intent?

Naturally, Sylvain's greeting made it impossible to feign not seeing him. Uneasily, she went into his car and asked, "Why are you here?"

Sylvain leveled her with an enigmatic, meaningful smile. "What will you do… if I tell you that I had been waiting for you at this spot, this whole time, with the explicit intention to get you into my car?"

Arianne placed her hand on the door.

He cocked his eyebrow, seemingly satisfied with her response. "Oh, I locked the door. You won't be leaving this car, so make yourself comfortable," he teased. "Besides, I was just pulling your leg. Who'd spend their time and energy to drive you down the route between work and home every single day? Relax, I just happen to live around this part. And since I know this is the time you usually go to work, I thought of giving you a lift on my way to the company."

Arianne moved her hand away from the car door. "Wow, how very nice of you. Anyway, let's get moving. I still have a lot of things waiting for me back at work. Unlike you, I presume, who could go on and off work however you please."

"Curious, curious. You're 'the' Mrs. Tremont, aren't you, who practically lives in excess? Theoretically, you could be partying all day and night, and you would still have enough moolah to last you for eternity. So why rub elbow grease for a palsy sum like this?" he asked. "Plus, you could have just worked in your family's big firm. Unless… Mr. Mark Tremont is a lot less generous to his wife than I imagined?"

Arianne was still miffed about Mark's attitude, but she was not going to badmouth him. "No, none of that. He never leaves me wanting," she replied. "It's me. I just don't wanna rely on him for everything. Plus, what's wrong with living on your own means? Life is so meaningless if you're just going to waste your time while leeching on someone else's hard work until life comes to an end, in my opinion."

Sylvain considered her with an expression of slight curiosity. "Well, well. Aren't you a different breed than most women? Everyone else would've prayed to wake up in your rich, privileged life, but here you are, talking as if all these riches are a burden to you. Ah, well. By the by, there's a company hangout tonight. You're gonna show up, I presume?"

A hangout? Arianne had not heard anything about this at all. "What hangout? This company never schedules anything like that. I mean, who would expect the ever-so-misery Mr. Yaleman to come up with any festivities? Heck, he didn't even let us throw a New Year's Eve party last year."

An enigmatic smile shadowed Sylvain's lips. "But that was last year. The present is always a different beast," he countered. "I'll be attending, by the way, and I hope I'll get to see you there too. After all, it's shaping up to be a great opportunity for me to know my colleagues here."

Arianne said nothing. If all of her coworkers were going to attend this hangout, then she would have no reason to excuse herself, too.

The first thing Arianne did after arriving at her office was to confirm with Robin that there was, indeed, a hangout later that night. Mr. Yaleman, in a display of utter out-of-character judgement, was suddenly throwing a lavish, expensive party.

The caveat, of course, was that not everyone was invited. As it turned out, only the bigshots and the elites could join in, which meant that it was a hangout that excluded the company's "normal" workers.

Worried that attending a party without a friendly companion would bore her, Arianne had requested Mr. Yaleman to extend an invitation to Robin, who was initially not one of the guests.

The day's work wound down to an end an hour earlier than usual, with none of the employees working overtime, to accommodate for the party. Arianne, too, quickly called Mary and informed her that she was going home much later that night.

Coincidentally, Mark had told Mary just the same a while ago. When Arianne heard of it, the image of Smore, wistfully waiting for his parents to come home, crept into her mind and incited a pang of pity. For his sake, Arianne decided to attend the hangout only for a bit before leaving. She was not going to stay for long.

The group subsequently went into a high-class entertainment establishment where Mr. Yaleman led them into a specially reserved room. There, to the participants' growing excitement, highly-refined liquors were already set up on the table.

Arianne never liked events like these, so she took to sitting at a quiet corner with Robin and engaging in their own small talk. It was then that Sylvain, who was previously the center of a circle of vying women, suddenly strode toward her with a filled glass in hand.

"Aren't you going to join in on the fun? I mean, your corner doesn't look very interesting," he said, before offering, "Have a drink."

Sylvain seemed to have expected Arianne to decline him because, in the next second, he seamlessly offered another cup to Robin. “I should have made it clear. Let’s all have a drink together,” he said smoothly. “I happen to believe that we should always relax a little at a time and place like this, especially when chances like these don’t come very often. Can’t be a sin to decompress a bit after a hard day of work, right?”

Chapter 1173

Robin was never good at saying no, so to save her from embarrassment, Arianne received her glass and said, “Cheers.”

That pleased Sylvain, who immediately sat between Robin and Arianne. “Now, that’s more like it.”

Robin had never interacted with men before, so the abrupt arrangement that came out of left field quickly stifled her, causing the poor girl to straighten her back before freezing in that stiff position. Unfortunately, Sylvain was so extroverted and carefree that he wrapped his arm around Robin’s shoulder in a swoop.

“Soooo! I heard you’re Arianne’s lil’ puppy. Methinks you shouldn't adopt too much of your master’s reticence. It doesn’t add to your charm if you keep things to yourself and don’t talk,” he pointed out.

Arianne quickly raised her voice and clarified, “Excuse me, but she isn’t my ‘puppy.’ The correct term you were looking for is ‘protégé,’ okay? ‘Puppy,’ seriously? It sounds unflattering. And also, she’s never had a boyfriend before, so please don’t act so casually like that. You’re scaring her.”

It was only then that Sylvain realized that Robin’s face had turned flaming scarlet. Swiftly, he removed his arm from her shoulder. “Oops, sorry. Force of habit; hope you don’t mind.”

“U-Uh, no, I d-don’t,” Robin offered hurriedly.

As the mood of the party grew, Robin gradually loosened up. At one point, she lugged Arianne to join others in their games. They drank even more but ate too little to offset the creeping influence of alcohol.

A while later, a waitress presented a bottle of champagne to the circle. Sylvain declared promptly, “This is for Ariannne Tremont! Consider this my gratitude for having you as my colleague.”

Arianne knew she was not good enough to finish it herself—and she was not keen on the idea of drinking it clean at the cost of being carried out of the establishment completely knocked out. Hence, she decided to share. “Let’s all drink this together.”

To her surprise, Sylvain objected to her attempt. His handsome face drew close enough for Arianne to take in every crease in his expression, yet she realized she could not read the flickering emotions behind his gaze. “I said it was for you, didn’t I?” he emphasized. “If anyone else wants it, they can order another one for themselves.”

The crowd quickly echoed Sylvain’s words. “Yeah, girl. We’ll order another one for ourselves, right guys? Wouldn’t wanna drink a special gift Mr. Trudeau had for you! Quit putting on that Mrs. Tremont act, for God’s sake!”

The seemingly jocular remark pitted Arianne in a corner. She did not know if she should continue with what she had previously wanted to do or keep the bottle to herself. Nonetheless, she smiled and said, “Alright, then. Thank you for this wonderful gift. I’m sure I’m not barred from sharing this with my protégé, right?”

She quickly poured a glass for Robin without waiting for his permission, although Sylvain ended up saying nothing at all, too. He just stretched his lips into a brief smile at Robin.

The two finished their liquor and ended up a little tipsy. Arianne and Robin went to the bathroom together, hoping to break the spell of drunkenness by dousing cold water on their faces before leaving the hangout altogether.

A shrill and unrestrained bout of laughter tore through the air from a closed cubicle in the bathroom. “Like, oh my God, right? The one who’s trying to talk to her is the Sylvain Trudeau, okay, who is like, way more skilled than she could ever be? All she has is that Mrs. Tremont title, right? Like, if we scrap that pomp off of her, she’s nothing! I've hated how she likes putting on airs back in the office, but holy sh*t, who would have thought that she would act like a high-status b*tch in front of Sylvain too? God, it’s like she really thinks she’s got actual substance—gimme a break! Seriously, if that Mark Tremont really treats her so frickin’ well, would she still need to become a lowly employee in some plebeian company? So what if someone’s always coming to send her to work and take her home? We don’t know if the driver is her husband! For all we know, it could be just their poor family driver being forced to do his job!”

Another person quickly chimed in, “Go off, sister! You’re onto something here, girl. For sure, someone like Mark couldn’t possibly have this laser-focus loyalty to a woman like her. I bet he’s got plenty of flowers to water out there—and definitely no time to play as her driver every day, ha! Besides, you remember that time when someone called her out as a homewrecker? Shameless of her to ruin someone’s family while continuing to act all holier-than-thou like she’s Saint Arianne. Hell, I wouldn’t be surprised if she pretends to shrug off Sylvain’s advances in front of us all monkishly only to have her legs spread wide for him behind us!”

Robin had enough. The alcohol had released her from her usual restraints, and she swung her leg into a mighty kick at one of the cubicles as though it was the prelude to an epic altercation. Fortunately, Arianne cupped her hand over Robin’s mouth and dragged her out of the bathroom before it happened.

The occupant, meanwhile, burst out of her cubicle a few beats too late, fuming. When she found no one outside, she could only shout at no one in particular to let off steam.

Arianne, with Robin in tow, left the establishment as quickly as they could. The nipping air outside slapped into them, causing her stomach to be sick despite Arianne not feeling any vomit rising.

Nonetheless, Arianne texted Mr. Yaleman about their departure. She was starting to get very sick and tired of how ingenuine everyone was back there.

Chapter 1174

Once outside, Robin ranted, “Did you have to stop me? They badmouthed you behind your back, missy! Aren’t you peeved? I’ve always thought that I’m a weak-willed doormat, but you’re cool, aren’t you? Or are you just as much of a scaredy-cat as I am? You afraid of getting into trouble?”

Arianne steadied herself with the help of a tree at the sidewalk. “No, it’s more like there’s no point. You heard them, right? They know me as Mrs. Tremont. If I quarrelled with them for this little thing or, I dunno, turned it physical, how badly would that reflect on me? I’d embarrass my man, too! Honestly, I’m just so-very-disinterested in talking to people like these, you know? As long as their stinkin’ blabbering mouths don’t take it too far, I don’t care. If they crossed my line, though, I’d hit back.”

Robin broke out a dumb, drunken smile. “Oh ho ho, touche! We’re not as low as they are. Fighting a bunch of losers like that will be soooo undignifying! Whelp, this is it. See you later, Arianne! I’m gonna hail a cab. You? Someone coming to pick you up?”

Arianne fished out her phone and looked at the time. It was 9 o’clock—Mark was most likely still knee-deep in his work. After a quick thought, she answered, “I’m hailing a cab too. Head’s a little dizzy, but I’m still conscious, so I don’t think I need anyone to drive me home.”

Robin let Arianne take the first cab they managed to hail, citing the latter's address as being relatively farther away from their current location than the former's as the rationale. Arianne, who worried for Smore's welfare at home, accepted Robin's offer and took the ride.

Narrowly after Arianne left, Sylvain appeared and hurried toward them in small jogs. When he noticed Robin standing alone, a grave expression shadowed his face. "Where's Arianne?"

Robin was losing some of her balance as intoxication kicked in, so she grabbed Sylvain by his arm to steady herself. "Ohhh, she just… uh, what? Oh, she left. Just now, yeap. You got something for her? Thought we texted Mr. Yaleman about us leaving. Or did we?"

Sylvain stared at the back of the cab vanishing into the horizon silently, his lips thinning.

Robin smacked either side of her cheeks hard, trying to cling to whatever remnants of sobriety she had left. When she saw an empty cab coming her way, she extended her arm to stop it while continuing, "You go back and party the way you do best. I'm gonna, uh, go home now. See ya tomorrow—"

Sylvain caught her by the wrist and tugged. "I'll drive."

While the girl insisted that it was unnecessary, Sylvain told the cab to move on.

Meanwhile, on her way home, Arianne felt as though her body was on fire while a peculiar sensation flared amid that heat. Hurriedly, she rolled down the car window and let the nipping air from outside blast in, hoping that the wintry cold could relieve a bit of her strange state.

The driver noticed her antsy movements and asked, “Are you alright, Ma’am?”

She answered him with a hum as her eyes noticed that they were fast-approaching the area where the Tremont Tower was. A thought sprung into her mind, and she declared, “I change my mind. There, just stop by the entrance of this building.”

Once out of the car, Arianne clambered and stumbled into the tower as that erratic sensation ballooned. This was not a typical effect of intoxication at all, Arianne was sure. Could it be that someone spiked her drink with a kind of drug?

Not that she possessed the clarity to work out who the culprit could be. There were too many attendees just now, and too many had an ax to grind with her. In other words, there were too many suspects.

She rode the elevator up to Mark’s executive floor and found consolation in the fact that he was still in his office. Davy, who also had yet to leave, watched Arianne’s fitful gait and exclaimed in mild shock, “Oh my goodness! Are you okay, Madam? Might you have had a little too much drink?”

Arianne let out a long exhale. “M-Maybe. Is… Is Mark inside?”

Davy nodded and pushed open the office door for her. “Watch your steps now. I’m just about to leave, although Mr. Tremont himself will in a minute too. You two could leave together; I’ll excuse myself in the meantime. Good night.”

Chapter 1175

Arianne could not answer Davy. Instead, she haphazardly waved her hands in dismissal.

When Mark noticed how unsteady her steps were and how she held onto the door frame, he dropped the papers in his hand and rushed forward, catching her.

“Who made you drink, Ari? Don’t you know your limits?” he reproved.

Arianne threw herself onto his chest and writhed against it. “T-There was a company hangout, and um, I couldn’t be absent, and I drank a bit, b-b-but I’m feeling really, really off right now. It’s not the usual, wasted sort of off. It’s just… uh, weird…”

Mark frowned and felt her slightly feverish forehead. A pang came to him, and he asked, “Did you come here alone?”

“I h-h-hailed a cab, but I can’t endure this until I reach home, I just can’t,” she slurred under her breath. “So I came to your office, and God, why is it so hot in here? Your AC is too high…”

She swung her bag across the floor and began to pull her blouse apart, baring a pair of delicate cheekbones and her snowy-fair skin.

It was all Mark needed to see to gain a good grasp of what was happening. He could even guess how it happened—someone had undoubtedly laced Arianne's drink with a drug!

It was a terrifying thought, one that made him feel guilty. He should not have skipped out on driving her home personally just because he was busy. Were anything to have happened to her—Mark could not finish the thought

"Uh-hem," Mark said hesitantly. "Are you, uh, in the mood…?"

Arianne still had one last shred of sobriety left in her to understand him, which caused her already feverish-pink cheeks to deepen into crimson. "Y-Yes. Uh, this is so embarrassing…"

Her answer was the last proof Mark needed to conclude that someone had spiked her drink. Nevertheless, neither the details nor the implications were important right now.

Instead, Mark held her into his arms and pushed her onto the couch.

Arianne licked her drying lips gingerly, and the sparks in Mark's eyes burst into flames. The man lurched forward and pushed his lips into her ripe, rouge ones. She was exceptionally proactive tonight, wrapping her slender arms around his neck, offering her writhing tongue into Mark's mouth, while her legs hooked and bucked against his muscular abdomen.

He had never seen this side of her before. His breathing stopped for a moment—and then, like a man possessed, he cast aside all of the clothing getting in their way and went straight to the main course.

The next morning, Arianne sat up from her bed in their bedroom back in Tremont Estate, groggy and confused.

She could not remember how she managed to get home last night. All she had were disjointed bits of memories, but piecing them together teased out a dreadful picture. She had done something incredibly wild last night, had she not? First, she went straight to Mark's company, then despite his busy schedule, threw herself onto him, and then—

Arianne stopped herself from filling up the blank for what came after.

She heard sounds escaping from the bathroom and knew that Mark had already risen. Then, almost instantly, she realized she was donning her pajamas and was reminded that Mark had helped her bathe after they came home last night.

Smore, already wide awake, was lying on his cot and staring into space. It incited guilt in her. She should not have drunk so much and strayed too close to a dangerous trap. And now, thanks to what she did last night, she was not fit to breastfeed him for a while.

Still, Arianne could not have possibly rejected Sylvain's offer, especially since it would also indirectly embarrass Mr. Yaleman. She drank because she was forced to, as social gatherings in business settings were wont to do. Few people in business were ever considerate of a woman's off-work duty as a breastfeeding mother.

While she was playing with Smore, Mark appeared from the bathroom and scanned her, his eyes laced with a kind of ardor not usually found in him. "Awake already? To be frank, I thought you were going to sleep till noon time. But it looks like your biological clock is quite on time."

Chapter 1176

Arianne smiled awkwardly. “Sorry… I might have had a little too much to drink last night.”

A thought hit Mark and his expression turned grim. “You didn’t drink too much, but someone put something in your drink. Now that you’re sober, think carefully. Who did it? I certainly can’t let you go to the office worry-free if you have someone two-faced by your side.”

Arianne was reminded of more details from last night, thanks to his reminder. That’s right, she wouldn’t have felt so hot just from alcohol, and she was overcome by such a strange feeling too. That feeling pushed her to go to Mark’s office to see him then demand sex from him, over and over again…

She thought of the champagne from Sylvain last night. He had deliberately emphasized that that champagne was for her and had stopped her from sharing it with anyone else. Everyone else had drunk other liquor, so it was impossible for this to have happened to everyone else. If it was the champagne, was Sylvain behind all of this?

She didn’t dare make an immediate assumption. What if it was a misunderstanding? There was no grudge between her and Sylvain, and they had just gotten to know one another. Even if he had his sights on her, he wouldn’t act so quickly and resort to such despicable measures too. After all, he was a renowned fashion designer. Reputation would be considered important to someone like Sylvain.

After some thought, she said, “I still have to go to the office. I’ll find out who’s behind this once I do. Let me get ready. You take Aristotle to Mary for his milk. I won’t be breastfeeding him for a few days. I’ve had alcohol, and that would be bad for him.” She had to go. Robin had that champagne too. What if it really was the champagne? Robin would have been tricked, just like her.

Mark surveyed her for a while. “I’ll take you to the office. From now on, I will have someone pick you up, no matter how busy I am. Actually… I think it’s time to wean Smore. Give him milk powder from now on. He’s old enough. There’s no need for breastmilk anymore.”

Arianne couldn’t understand why Mark suddenly wanted to wean Aristotle. “Why? I’ve still got breast milk. I can still feed him. There’s no need to switch to milk powder, is there?”

He raised his handsome brow. “Don’t you wish to have some form of freedom from time to time? Think about how long you’ve been on a diet. You haven’t been able to touch a lot of foods since your pregnancy. Aren’t you tired? You’ve done your due diligence as a mother. It’s about time.”

There was a slight stir in Arianne’s heart. She thought that Mark never noticed her sacrifices for Aristotle, from her pregnancy to Aristotle’s birth. She would always get up drowsily in the middle of the night, just to breastfeed him. She thought he had no idea of how difficult it had been for her. Men were usually more insensitive.

She smiled. “I’ll think it over. I feel kind of empty every time I think about Smore not needing my breast milk anymore.”

Naturally, a man like Mark would not understand this. In fact, he was baffled. “What’s there to feel empty about? Isn’t it troublesome to have a kid hanging off you? Fine, I’ll take him for his feed, you get ready.”

Mark yawned from time to time along the way to work. Arianne felt guilty. “Are you tired from last night? Did you not manage to sleep well?”

He turned to the side and gave her a profound look. “Yes it was ‘quite’ tiring. Looks like I can’t indulge too much in the future. I’ve been busy lately, so it’s a little hard to digest.”

Arianne’s face heated up. “Honestly… Please behave.”

When they arrived at her office building, she seemed to remember something. She paused in her footsteps and said, “Get out of the car.”

“Why on earth?” Mark asked, confused.

She remembered last night’s slander behind her back and instinctively wanted everyone to know that Mark had sent her to work personally, not the family chauffeur. “Don’t care. Just get out of the car.”

Mark unbuckled his seatbelt and left the car, then walked towards her. His tone was snobbish, but his eyes were full of indulgence. “Why? Do you want me to send you upstairs? Just how old are you? You’re acting like a kid…”

Chapter 1177

She went on her tiptoes then boldly reached out and wrapped her arms around his neck. Then, she planted a kiss on his cheek and hurried away. “Don’t forget to pick me up after work! I’ll stay with you if you have to do overtime!”

Mark lifted his hand and touched his cheek longingly as he watched her leave. The corners of his lips slowly curved upwards. The sun was certainly rising from the west today…

He went back into the car and remembered how she had been spiked last night. He couldn't stop worrying, so he sent her a message: 'Be careful, call me if you need anything. Don't show off and try to solve everything on your own. I'd have to clean up after you if you mess it up. That would be even more troublesome for me.'

Arianne replied to his message with a smiley face. She knew what to do.

Robin usually arrived earlier than she did. Today, for the first time ever, Robin still hadn't arrived even though it was almost time for work. Sylvain obviously wasn't going to arrive that early. Her heart was plagued with concern. As a result, she couldn't pay attention to work and stayed at her desk, staring into space.

Sylvain and Robin finally arrived at the office around noon, one after the other. Arianne pulled Robin aside. "Did anything happen to you last night?"

"Uh… What do you mean?" Robin asked distractedly. "I don't know… I drank quite a lot last night so I don't remember."

Arianne's keen eyes noticed the hickey on her neck. Her heart immediately sank. "Don't lie to me. Be honest. Someone drugged me. I suspect it was that champagne. You and I were the only ones who drank it."

At first, Robin was slightly astonished. Then, she hung her head in silence. "Arianne… I didn't go home last night. I'm still too scared to answer my parents' calls. I've never stayed out all night before. I was going to call a cab and go home after you left last night, but Sylvain ran after me and insisted on taking

me home. I don't know what happened along the way… Then he and I… And… It just happened naturally. I woke up at his place… We've done it all. I don't know what to do now. Please don't tell anyone… Did you say that the champagne was spiked? Who could have done such a thing? I was wondering why I felt so strange… I couldn't resist when Sylvain kissed me…"

Arianne's mind buzzed. "Are you saying… that you and Sylvain? You were with him last night?"

Robin nodded heavily. "That's right. I woke up really late last night. He asked Mr. Yaleman for the morning off for me, but he acted as if nothing else happened. I don't know what we are anymore. Perhaps a one night stand is completely normal to him, but it's different for me. I've never had a boyfriend before. My parents will kill me if they find out!"

Arianne took a deep breath and forced herself to stay calm. "It's alright. I'll talk to Sylvain. I need to confirm if he had anything to do with drugging us. I'll make him pay if he was behind it. I'll make him give you an explanation. I know that you're different from other girls, so I won't let him treat you like one of his toys."

Robin was worried. "Is that a good idea? What if he thinks that it was nothing more than a drunken night… Wouldn't that mean that I'm just pestering him into taking responsibility? I'm fine. I can pretend like nothing happened, but you have to get that drugging incident straightened out. This isn't a small matter. I'm not the only one involved, as you were involved too… Nothing happened to you when you got home, right? Weren't you drugged too?"

Arianne shook her head. "I'm fine. I went straight to Mark's office. He was doing overtime so he hadn't left yet. I went home with him. Now, get to work. I'm going to talk to Sylvain."

Chapter 1178

It was almost lunch break. The office was still crowded. Arianne did not speak to Sylvain in the office but invited him for lunch instead. Sylvain agreed straightaway and suggested a nice French restaurant.

When they found a seat and sat down, Arianne went straight to the point. “Someone drugged me and Robin last night. I suspect that there was something in the champagne. What do you think?”

Sylvain stared at her with a half-smile. “And you think I did it? What would be my motive? It’s true that I gave you the champagne, and you and Robin were the only ones to drink it and got caught up in deep shit. All of that is true, but I never touched the champagne. I may look suspicious, but you don’t have any evidence to prove that I did it. Do you?”

Arianne was speechless. She couldn’t seem to read Sylvain. He didn’t seem surprised or nervous.

After some thought, she asked, “What’s your plan for Robin? She’s from a family of scholars, so she’s more modest. She’s never had a boyfriend, and this is her first night away from home. You have to take some responsibility.”

Sylvain seemed amused. “What kind of responsibility am I supposed to take? We’re all adults. Are we incapable of being responsible for our own actions? It’s not like I forced her. I’ve had many women. If I had to be responsible for all of them, I wouldn’t have a place to live. Even if I do it for your sake, I could date her. However, it would be limited to just dating. I have no intentions of getting married.”

Arianne was frustrated. “You know darn well that her situation is completely different, and you still did that to her. Did you expect her to take full responsibility? Don’t you think that you’re crossing a line?”

Sylvain shrugged nonchalantly. “Let me make this very clear. Everyone drank last night. I am a man. My self-control has its limits. It was mutually consensual. I did not force her into it. You should get things straight before making accusations. I don’t want anyone to pin anything on me. I had no idea that she was drugged at the time. Now that you’ve explained things to me, what do you think would have happened if I hadn’t sent her home but let her take a cab instead? Can you be certain that nothing would have happened to her?”

Arianne was at a momentary loss for words. It was true; Robin was a woman, all alone. She was hailing a cab in the middle of the night under those circumstances. What if she ran into an unscrupulous cabbie or someone shady? The consequences would be unimaginable. Even though the conclusion from having Sylvain take her home wasn’t ideal, it was better than any of those other scenarios. She might have even lost her lift.

Sylvain smiled at her speechlessness. “Don’t be so pissed. Calm down. I haven’t committed an unforgivable crime. Robin isn’t a child. We’ll deal with whatever happened between us ourselves. If you want something to worry about, try finding out who spiked the champagne in the first place.”

Arianne took a deep breath. “I know. You don’t need to remind me.”

After returning to the office from lunch, Robin secretly sent Arianne a text: ‘Arianne, what were you and Sylvain talking about when you went out? What did he say? Who drugged us?’

Arianne knew that her real question wasn’t about who drugged them, but Sylvain’s stand on last night. “Don’t know. I didn’t manage to get any information out of him. I can’t be sure if he was behind it, and I can’t find any reason or motive for him to do it. As for whatever happened between you, he said that you’d take care of it yourselves. I can’t meddle. You’re both adults, so think about it yourself. Let me know if you need my help. Just a reminder, a man like Sylvain is from a completely different world than yours. You won’t be able to tame him.”

Chapter 1179

Robin agreed with her. “I know. I don’t deserve him. He is always surrounded by women, and I’m not that attractive. I’m not hoping for anything.”

Arianne was speechless. “That’s not what I meant. Regardless of how attractive you are, there’s only one of you in this world and there will never be another. Everyone is special in their own way. We exist for a reason. Why would you think that you don’t deserve him? To put it harshly, you have a pristine family background, and you’re such a pure-hearted girl. You have much better choices. Sylvain may be great in every aspect, but his personal life is nothing to boast about. He’s too promiscuous. If anyone is undeserving, it’s him. He doesn’t deserve you. I’m going back to work. He’ll probably talk to you soon.”

Robin’s eyes glistened even more when she looked at Arianne now. Receiving acknowledgement was a great feeling. She had been raised under her parents’ halo from a young age. She had followed her parents’ wishes, from her basic needs during her childhood to her college application when she grew older. No one cared about her opinions. She later graduated. Although her parents stopped being so strict on her and allowed her to do whatever she wanted, she still felt contained in a glass box. She even believed that she didn’t have any opinions and didn’t know how to say “no”. She lacked confidence.

It was Arianne who made her feel like she was special and unique. She gave her enough confidence.

Robin wasn’t sure of how to face Sylvain due to last night’s affair. She avoided him unwittingly. She and Sylvain were definitely from different worlds. Regardless of how awkward or uncomfortable she was, Sylvain seemed completely unperturbed, as if last night never happened at all. He acted normally in the office and did not object to the female colleagues who were hitting on him. He would even flirt with them from time to time.

It was only when she decided to make tea for Arianne out of convenience and walked to Arianne’s desk that Sylvain took the initiative to speak to her. “If you don’t mind, could you make some tea for me as well?”

Robin was too afraid to look Sylvain in the eye. She clumsily replied and walked away.

Arianne shot Sylvain a look. “How do you plan on dealing with this? I’m warning you, don’t take advantage of her.”

Sylvain turned towards her in amusement. “Tsk tsk, you’re quite protective. Since Mrs. Tremont has spoken, I can’t leave you hanging, can I? What do you think I should do to lessen her pain? You know that men like me will never settle down so easily. Who knows what will happen if I start dating her.”

“Then stay away from her,” Arianne snapped icily.

Sylvain nodded, seemingly in agreement. “That’s doable. I could always treat her to a meal, apologize, and ask for her forgiveness. Even though I haven’t done anything wrong. At least, we can live in harmony as colleagues.”

“Don’t you dare treat this matter with such frivolity,” Arianne scowled. “I really think that you have a big problem. You’re quite hateful.”

Sylvain shrugged nonchalantly. “That’s just the way I am.”

After work, Sylvain took the initiative and asked Robin to leave with him. Arianne hoped that the matter would reach an ideal conclusion. However, she was still a bit worried, knowing Robin. She was too naive. She couldn’t deal with a man like Sylvain.

Mark picked Arianne up on time. Unsurprisingly, he still had to work overtime. He did not want Arianne to stay with him at the office, so he decided to send her back home and have dinner before leaving.

Chapter 1180

Arianne played with Aristotle for a while but she couldn't stop worrying about Robin. Hence, she sent her a message to check on her. Robin quickly replied: 'He's made things very clear with me. It was a mishap, and he has asked me not to dwell on it and pretend nothing happened. We'll talk to each other as usual from now on. He has apologized to me and treated me to a meal. He said that he would mentor me from now on with you. I think this is a good idea so that we won't feel too pressured. We've only just met, so getting together feels unsuitable. I just had a fight with my parents at home because I didn't come home last night. I got scolded really badly. I know I said that it was a fight, but I was the only one getting yelled at. Don't worry, Arianne. I'm fine.'

Arianne sighed. This outcome wasn't ideal, but it was the best possible outcome.

By the time Mark arrived home, it was already 11PM. Arianne was drowsy from sleep, as the sounds of him in the shower had woken her up. She waited for him to finish with his shower then the pair snuggled up against each other and chatted on the bed. They had very little time to spend with each other during the day, so this was the only way they could spend time together.

Mark was surprised when she mentioned Sylvain. "Sylvain Trudeau? He has joined your company? How is that possible?"

Arianne felt that he was making too big of a deal. "The company can afford him. What's so impossible about that?"

“How much money could a small company like that have for him? It’s still strange, even with all sorts of conditions,” Mark replied confidently.

Sylvain’s matters seemed unimportant to Arianne. She was only mentioning him in passing. “Who knows what’s up with him? I don’t care. He can do whatever he wants. I’m going back to bed. I’m sleepy.”

Mindless words can be taken seriously. Mark couldn’t help finding the situation a little odd. The timing was suspicious based on Sylvain’s entry into Arianne’s company. He was forced to go on a business trip during Christmas because Jessica had orchestrated it as part of her revenge. She had caused some problems for his overseas branches. Knowing Jessica, this wasn’t over yet.

Then, of all times, Sylvain suddenly arrived. An ingenious fashion designer joining a small, sub-par company. Wasn’t that a joke? There was also Arianne’s drugging incident to consider. He couldn’t shake the feeling that Sylvain was connected to Jessica in some way. The drugging incident felt fishy too, but he had to do a thorough investigation before reaching confirmation.

Mark didn’t have time to rest on Saturday either. Seeing as they had pleasant weather today, Arianne decided to take a walk outside with Aristotle. She invited Robin while she was at it. To her surprise, Tiffany called her up as well. Of course, Tiffany wasn’t going to go out of the house alone, for Summer came along. Hence, it culminated into a large group outing.

During their shopping trip, Arianne discovered from their casual conversation that Mark wasn’t the only one who was busy, as Jackson was equally swamped too. He had made early preparations to ease his transition into paternal leave after Tiffany delivered the baby so that he could take care of them. He was so busy that he had little time for anything else.

During their shopping trip, Robin suddenly received a call from Mr. Yaleman, asking her to go back to the office to collect a document and send it to Sylvain. Robin was still too used to being a “yes-man” so she agreed, regardless of how reluctant she was.

Tiffany, straightforward as ever, exclaimed, “It’s Saturday and he’s still ordering you around? Is something wrong with your manager’s brain? If it were me, he’d be lucky enough to get off without a good scolding. Why should you listen to him and do whatever he wants?”

Robin smiled. “It’s fine. It’s just sending a document over. It’s no trouble. You guys enjoy yourselves. I’ll meet up with you again when I’m done. I’ll give you a call.”