Ruling 1211

Chapter 1211

Lilian shared the same view. “Tiffie, quit being so stubborn, would you? This is all for your own good. Staying at home during confinement is just a roundabout way to burden everyone around you, sweetie. That includes Jackson and his mom. Look, you’ll be in a weak state for about a month, just like your newborn baby, so it’d relieve all of us if we could let professionals in the post-partum center take care of you, right? Besides, we have the money for this now. Using it for an appropriate service isn’t a waste of anything. And stop saying how unsafe it’ll be! Jackson will always be by your side anyway!”

Tiffany furrowed her eyebrows, silently seething. It did not matter what they said. She did not want to stay in a foreign environment for a month, no matter how high-class that place was. It would never be as comfortable as her own home. Heck, all these days staying in the hospital were driving her nuts. Every day she wished she could just go home already.

Jackson read her expression and hurriedly supplied. “It’s alright, Moms. Let Tiffie decide this, alright? As long as she’s happy, it will never be a burden. Plus, I’m pretty good at taking care of a baby and making good food, and if I can’t handle it, I can always hire a nanny. It’s no trouble at all. Besides… I doubt the confinement meals I make can’t compare to the professional ones made in these postpartum centers.”

Lilian pursed her lips. “God, you’re babying her again.”

Jackson smiled instead of answering her. Of course, he would baby Tiffany—she was his babe.

There were a lot of people in Tiffany’s ward today, which deprived Arianne the chance to have a more personal, best-friend-only chat with Tiffany. After a while, Arianne left with Mark, fully aware that Tiffany was now a celebrity under the limelight, and no amount of friendship would award Arianne the time to chat with her. Not that it was a bad thing, as it was genuinely heartwarming that so many people cared about Tiffany.

They returned to the Tremont Estate, but no sooner after they went in, Mark suddenly halted in his steps. Arianne, who was changing into her indoor shoes, asked quizzically, “What are you doing? Why aren’t you going in?”

Mark signaled her to be quiet, and Arianne followed his line of sight.

Smore was standing on the living room couch, alone, playing with his toys. More amazingly, the toys were in both of his hands, which meant he was standing on his feet without scaffolding.

Had he learned how to walk already?

Pleasant surprise overtook Arianne, but she dared not make anything louder than a pip to avoid scaring the little boy. Quietly, she tiptoed forward until Smore noticed her and looked up to her calmly.

“Hey there, Smore,” Arianne said gently. “What are you playing?”

Smore waved the little car in his hand and mimicked the sounds of driving cars. It was so adorable that Arianne wanted to swoop the boy off the couch and give him a big, fat kiss!

Mary came out of the kitchen with a milk bottle in her hand and was stunned to a stop. “My goodness, my little lordling! I told you to stay in the cot for a bit, didn’t I? I was only in there for two minutes, and you already freed yourself? Can’t wait to be a little man, can you?”

“Since when has he learned to stand on his own?” Mark asked. “I remember him stumbling and falling over his steps just yesterday or two days ago. Back then, he could only walk by holding onto things.”

Mary stepped forward and ruffled Smore’s hair. “I don’t know either. All I know is that he somehow, suddenly, knew how to stand tall and steadily today, though he hasn’t gotten the hang of walking. He would fall after a few steps—so I guess, he isn’t very stable yet,” Mary answered. “Either way, he’s a really good boy, isn’t he? He’s handsome, he’s healthy, he’s developing exceptionally well, and he walks with a very fine gait.”

“Oh, he grew up so fast! And the older he gets, the more his looks take after his mom,” Mary continued. “But his nature—oh, it takes after the two of you! He’s not like any other kids his age, always screaming and shouting. This one is so quiet… He only shouts a bit when he’s upset. What an easy child to mind!”

Chapter 1212

Arianne instinctively shot Mark a glance. Honestly, Arianne was not quiet by nature—before eight years old, her childhood was one of joy and rambunctious guffaws, especially when she was playing with her friends. The only reason why she became so quiet was that Mark influenced her that way. In other words, Smore was quiet because he followed his father’s trait, and as the baby grew, the resemblance became unmistakable.

At night, as the two laid down side by side, Arianne asked, “Have you always been this icy and stoic since you were a kid, Mark Tremont? ‘Cause Smore’s acting quite like you when you were a kid, isn’t he?”

Mark pinched the bridge of her nose. “What did you just call me? For some reason, hearing it makes me miffed.”

She slapped his hand away. “I called you by your name, duh! Isn’t that a normal thing to do? You can’t possibly expect me to call you ‘honey’ at the drop of a hat, right? Come on, you’re not really gonna fixate on the terms I use to call you, right? What else is a person’s name for, if not to be used? Also, I’m asking you a question here! Have you always been like this since you were little?”

Mark pulled Arianne’s slender fingers into his own before fidgeting with them. “Not really. Much of it is down to nurture,” he replied. “The old Tremont family was… very different from what it is today. Everything I did—from the way I used my eating utensils to how many times I should chew my food before swallowing it—had its own sets of rules. I was practically raised as the heir to the Tremont legacy from the moment I was born; every aspect of my life was suffocating. Not even my school breaks were free from their micro-managed schedules. The only reason why I never felt like playing with others of my age was that I never had the time to form that desire at all.”

Arianne listened to him in pity. He was eighteen when she first met him, which meant she had not been there to watch eighteen years of him growing up. She could not imagine just how heavy his burdens must have been. And yet, seeing how he managed to shoulder the entire Tremont legacy without fail at the tender age of eighteen, all alone, implied that the training his family fashioned for him, though stringent and cruel, was also very foolproof. Even after a calamity had befallen the family, the surviving heir was already long past the jejune state of mind many of his peers would still be in at this age, and was thus able to carry the torch.

Seeing that he had no interest in continuing the topic, Arianne cut into the silence with jocularity. “Hmm, it turns out that the rich aren’t as happy as people think they are, huh? At least, that’s what I think. Your life was a burden since you were a child! Others have been jealous of your life before, but you’re probably jealous of others as well. Were you… happy?”

Mark’s answer was immediate. “No, I didn’t know what happiness was before I met you. This is why Smore’s life should never be like how mine was, and I won’t parent him that way. Anything as long as he lives more carefreely than I ever could,” he said. “In fact, he could be a good-for-nothing and it’d still be fine! The wealth of the Tremont could last him for eternity.”

Arianne was half-amused and half-appalled. “Excuse me, but did you just admit that you hold very, very low expectations of our son? You sound as if he’s confirmed as a good-for-nothing for the rest of his life, and you’re glad that the money you accumulated won’t fail him?” she rebuked. “Spare the rod and spoil the child, remember? You should be a bit more demanding and strict with him instead of being so forgiving, I think. It’s alright to pamper him when he’s just a little toddler, but once he goes to school, he needs discipline.”

It was a little too early to talk about Smore’s future, so Mark placed his chin on her shoulder and nudged it a little. “I know, I know. I was just saying, I want his life to be much happier than mine, but I won’t really let him do whatever he wants just because. Either way, let’s go to sleep; I’m tired,” he replied, before adding, “Oh, and also. I might not have made it mandatory to address me as ‘honey’, but please stop calling me by my full name. Can’t you fashion an intimate nickname out of ‘Mark?’ At least call my name with the sort of camaraderie Jackson and the gang had with me.”

An intimate nickname? He was a man ten years her senior and someone who used to be her big brother figure! To suddenly call a figure like that with an intimate nickname made her skin crawl in embarrassment. Honestly, Arianne thought it was almost no different from calling him “honey.”

She could not help but shudder at the suggestion, which Mark acutely picked up but misconstrued. “Something tickling you?” he teased as he pinched her waist.

Arianne was ticklish, so his little poke immediately caused her to curl into him. “N-No! I just c-c-couldn’t say anything like t-that! S-S-Stop tickling me!!”

Chapter 1213

As Mark inhaled the scent of Arianne's hair, his breaths became a mite more elaborate while his sleepiness, which had been growing for the past few minutes, gradually receded.

He bit on her earlobe. "I want you. Now."

Arianne's breath stopped, her body shrinking from him slightly. "But aren't you sleepy?"

Hot breaths warmed through the woman's ear.

"Nope. Not anymore."

…

It was Saturday, yet Mark rose early in the morning despite not going to work. Instead, he spent his morning playing with Smore.

Arianne was bored and had nothing to occupy her mind. In the end, she thought of seeing Tiffany.

While in the hospital and waiting for the elevator, Arianne met Jett by coincidence. Contrary to the usual lunchbox, his arms were full of motherhood and baby products today. It became clear that his zero experience in fatherhood, as well as the general lack of motherhood knowledge in a typical man, had caused Jett to purchase a few unnecessary items, including a few redundant products and formulaic milk that were not meant for a newborn.

Arianne could not help but speak up. “Some of the stuff you bought is wrong. Not everything in that bag is necessary, and you missed out on some other necessary products, too. Has the baby been born?”

Jett glanced at the bags in his hand. “Contractions happened last night, so she was sent into the labor room today. It’s estimated that today should be the day she delivers…. Also, I don’t know anything about these things, so I wonder if you could help me out. Tell me, what do I need?”

Sympathy overcame Arianne. Regardless of their history, Tanya was going to be a mother soon, yet the only other person she had was Jett, who was just a man. Neither did she have a knowledgeable and experienced parental figure to point her in the right way. It was a sympathetic case through and through.

Hence, she nodded and replied, “Follow me. I’ll take you to the closest maternity shop, but I must warn you. It’s inconvenient and challenging for a man to take care of a woman who just delivered a baby. Her body will be frail, so you can’t be too careless in your care. My suggestion? Hire a doula.”

Jett nodded in agreement. “I was thinking the same. I know nothing about this, so it’s only logical. Thanks for offering to help.”

Arianne accompanied Jett in buying all of the apt products before the two returned to the hospital. Instead of going straight to Tiffany’s ward, Arianne followed Jett into Tanya’s.

Every woman in their postpartum lying-in resided on the same floor, which was where Tanya’s single-person unit was, as well. The fact that she was staying in a private—rather than a shared—ward also

made it clear that Jett was a good husband. At the very least, he did not mind spending more out of his pocket for Tanya's comfort; even his wrongly-purchased baby products were those of premium quality.

Tanya was ready in the labor room. In her absence, Arianne taught Jett how to use the products he bought, with the man recording her instructions on those that required more complicated procedures with his phone to help him remember.

He was so solemn throughout that Arianne doubted it was fake. Curious, she asked, "So, are the two of you still staying in that apartment?"

Jett shook his head. "No, I bought a house for us, and we've moved in already. I have a kid now; I can't still live like a lone, free spirit with no attachments. Besides, the hired doula would need a place to stay, too," he said. "I'll make a few calls on that right now so that she'll have a professional taking care of her immediately after delivery. Thank you for your help."

Arianne returned him a smile. "No, no. It's what I should do. After all, Tanya and I know each other, at least. And if I may be frank, I think she's lucky to have met you."

Jett paused for a few seconds as though he had something to say to her, but the words would not leave his mouth.

"Hey, if there's something you'd like to ask, go on," Arianne encouraged. "We're not friends per se, but we're not strangers either."

Regardless, Jett chose against voicing out what he wanted to say. "It's nothing."

Chapter 1214

Arianne chose to let that slide and pivoted to a new subject instead. “Say, it’s been a few months since Melanie Lark’s pregnancy, right? Surely, she’s going to deliver the child very soon.”

Jett leveled a silent, steady gaze into hers for a while before replying, “Yes, Melanie’s pregnant. But I took a break to care for Tanya for months. I haven’t been working under the Smiths for a while. If there’s any information about them that interests you, the odds of gleaning them from me won’t be satisfactory.”

Arianne had to admit that Jett was no ordinary person—he was perceptive and very alert.

Her lips thinned. “Hey, I didn’t help you today to squeeze intel out of you; don’t misunderstand me. Besides, if I really wanted to know something, I have my ways of getting it that don’t involve prying it from you,” she said. “Anyway, I should be going. You take good care of Tanya after childbirth, please.”

She went to Tiffany’s ward right after, and while chatting, told the other woman about Tanya’s delivery. Tiffany was breastfeeding her son at the moment, but upon hearing the news, she pouted. “Hmph! So it was only a few days after mine! Urgh, I can’t believe she gave birth around the time I gave birth and then chose the same damn hospital, too! Urgh! Just thinking about how close her child was to being considered as Jackson’s just… pisses me off!”

Jackson, sitting nearby, immediately frowned. “Hey, can we stop connecting every single thing to me now? And what ‘a few days’? It’s a lot of days’ gap right there, man!”

Arianne chuckled. “Ha, Tiffie! You still talk before your brain works, do you? Say, are your moms not coming to see you today?”

“Nope, ‘cause I sent them away with an excuse!” Tiffany replied as pride rose into her mien. “Seriously, do you know how creepy it is to have moms breathing down your neck all the damn time? Everyone is surrounding me every time and showering me with this attention, and God, if you think I’m enjoying the extra love, you’re dead wrong! ‘Cause this whole thing is terrifying as eff! I feel like a frickin’ panda in a zoo, while everyone else has suddenly got nothing to do but come and gawk at me. It doesn’t help even if they change up when they visit me; it’s still freaky! Look, I know they’re doing this because they care, but man, can they not be so overt about it? Especially when I’m breastfeeding—all eyes are on me, like, unblinking! And my genius mom even talked about how ‘adorable’ my son looks while suckling in everyone’s face! Do you know how embarrassing that was? I wished I could just dive into a crack in the ocean floor and hide!”

“Oh, but aren’t I basically gawking at you while you’re breastfeeding right now, Tiffie?” Arianne said, snickering. “Where’s this epic feeling of embarrassment now?”

It was Tiffany’s turn to snicker. “Ours is a different case! We are so close to one another that we even change in front of each other. That’s some next-level stuff that simply cannot be compared to my relationship with everyone else!”

Watching her joking and laughing while feeding her son clued Arianne in that perhaps the worst for Tiffany had passed. She even looked to be recovering very nicely, too, so Arianne could finally put her anxieties to rest. “Glad to see you as spirited as before, Tiffie. Your wounds don’t hurt so much now, huh?”

Tiffany sighed. “No, no. It still hurts… Just not like hell, which was, I dunno, before? Two more days, and I’ll finally be released back into the wild, and then I’ll finally be able to run around and dance and jump and create mayhem the way I do best! Like, do you know how tasteless these hospital foods are? Half the time, I can’t even swallow them! But once I’m out, oh ho ho, I’m gonna go to a Mexican place and pick the hottest, spiciest food they got!”

Arianne and Jackson exchanged glances—that was Tiffany Lane, alright. She was the only one who would fantasize about eating hot Mexican food even before she was discharged. One could only imagine how she would react if someone told her that she could not have anything like that for a month after childbirth. She was probably going to bawl and throw a tantrum right there and then!

Neither Arianne nor Jackson dared break the news to her because to do that was akin to suicide.

The newborn's name had been decided with a suggestion from Atticus West: "Plato West." No one had any objection to it and had thought it was a splendid name, especially since it echoed the philosopher-themed naming that Aristotle possessed. In fact, that was Tiffany's biggest personal reason for why she loved it; although she could not betroth her child to Arianne's, the two could at least become brothers.

On the day of Tiffany's discharge, an anonymous sender sent her a bouquet of fresh red carnations forming a ring around a few stalks of crimson roses. It was a very bizarre arrangement. Owing to everyone's presence, Tiffany and Jackson both avoided talking about the flowers even though they both knew just who the mysterious sender was.

The pair subsequently returned to White Water Bay Villa. After Lilian and Atticus left while Summer went into the kitchen to whip up some food, Tiffany brought up the flower's existence herself. "I know who gave me those flowers, and I've told my mom to bring them home. If you're miffed about it, be frank."

Jackson's head was slightly lowered while he gently massaged her thighs with an unreadable expression. "Nah, it's just some flowers. There's no way I'll be mad about something trivial like that; don't overthink this. Your priority, from now on, is to take care of your health."

Chapter 1215

There was an undercurrent of wary gingerness in Tiffany's voice when she continued, "You're only not picking a fight with me because I've just given birth to your son, right? If this were the past, storm clouds would have been all over your face already! But you gotta remember, I haven't been talking to Alejandro, and I don't know how he knew about whatever I'm going through. Hell, he even managed to send me flowers on the exact day I leave the hospital, too! But he's only doing this out of genuine goodwill as a friend. I myself have always seen him as nothing more than a friend! You're the one who insists on being jealous."

Jackson looked up and met her eyes. "You might treat him as nothing more than a friend, but he doesn't. Either way, I don't want you to hang out with him or contact him at all—you know what, I'll expand the scope. I don't want you hanging out with any other guy in the world! That's right; I'm that possessive. Deal with it, sistah."

Tiffany giggled giddily. "Aha! Finally, you've confessed and shown your dark side to the world! You should have admitted that you're possessive earlier, though—would have saved us a lot of work. Also, who says he doesn't see me as just a friend? He's married, Sweetie. You're overthinking again… Oh, well. Let's not talk about this anymore. It's not like it's important or anything!"

Jackson bit on his lips, silent. If Tiffany would still joke and laugh like that even after knowing that Alejandro was actually Ethan, everything would have been a bit easier.

Night fell, its dark colors shrouding the sky above Tremont Estate. Arianne received a text from Harvey informing her that he was aiming to get an internship at Mark's company.

Harvey studied architecture. If Arianne was not mistaken, she remembered that the Tremont Enterprise did venture into that, hence providing the chance Harvey needed. Arianne's only caveat was to have news of Harvey's internship at Tremont's to be kept a secret from Zoey and her spouse. She was not

keen to incite that couple's penchant to leech off their wealthier relatives and invite yet another round of family trouble.

Fortunately, Harvey was a very perceptive kid. He had never planned to tell his parents about his work at the Tremont's at all, preferring to tell them that he just wanted to intern in the Capital.

Arianne brought it up to Mark with the clear implication that she let him decide and arrange the details. Honestly, this was the first time she had ever done anything for her relatives, but every interaction Arianne had with Harvey thus far had been a pleasant one; otherwise, she would not have bothered.

Still, Arianne tried to make it a point that whether Harvey stayed or left was up to the latter's judgment. Mark needed not constraint his decisions for his wife.

"Sure," Mark answered. "I mean, he doesn't seem like a good-for-nothing, so I think an arrangement can be made. Tell him to come over."

When the couple finished arranging Harvey's thing, Mark suddenly asked, "Can you request for a few days' leave? The weather's looking fine lately, and the temperature is great. I want to take you out on a short vacation."

Arianne made a show of counting her fingers to estimate her workload. "I don't think so. Where do you want to go? Aren't my weekends enough?"

Mark was not surprised at the answer, but he was still rather bitter about it. "I was thinking of an overseas trip, okay? Just your weekends aren't going to cut it. If you can't squeeze the time, then fine. Pretend that I never asked."

Arianne knew that Mark would, on occasions, still complain about her insistence on going to work, even if he did not say it out loud. His implication could not be any more apparent.

She snaked her arm from behind and hooked onto his neck before leaning onto his back. “There will be time for that, I promise. Don’t get mad now.”

Perhaps he caught the coquettish element in Arianne’s voice, causing him to smile. “Excuse me; I’m not mad at all. Oh, I’ve prepared a little something for you. Take a look. It’s there on our bed.”

A gift? Arianne’s heart fluttered a little. Could it be that this gigantic iceberg was starting to melt? He had been gifting her things for more than the occasional once or twice now. Surely, this meant he had learned something about romance!

She walked to the bed and spotted a gilded, intricately-designed little box. It was larger than a typical jewelry box, which sparked her curiosity.

She opened it and found about ten high-end branded lipsticks lined up in a neat row. Despite the diversity in colors, all of them were matte and rather dull, which could only mean that he had a hand in the selection.

Arianne could not help herself from chuckling. “Wait, is this your roundabout way of telling me to throw out all of my old lipsticks?”

Chapter 1216

“That’s right,” he replied, not bothering to hide his opinion. “The old ones are too thick and gaudy. These are great. Don’t you like them?”

She didn’t dare express her dislike. “No, no, they’re pretty good. I quite like them. I’ll use the ones you’ve bought from now on. I’ll go downstairs to check on Smore. You should get some rest if you’re tired.”

Mark’s phone rang just as Arianne had left. His limited time of peace and quiet was disturbed, which made him frown. He picked up the call without checking the screen. “Hello?”

Janice’s voice answered him from the other end. “Mr. Tremont, there’s an urgent document you need to see. Davy had an emergency and left the office, but not before asking me to send it over to you. Is this a convenient time?”

“This is a part of his job,” Mark replied impatiently. “Have I given him permission to leave the office early? Tell him to bring it over himself!” He ended the call immediately after that.

How could he not be aware of Davy’s emergency? Davy didn’t mention anything when he left the office today. Even if he had a sudden emergency and was unable to work overtime, he would have informed him beforehand. Why would he ask Janice to send the document over? Even if he did ask someone else to do it, it wouldn’t have been Janice, a normal employee.

Unexpectedly, Janice came anyway and gave the document to Arianne straightaway too.

He broke into cold sweat as Arianne calmly gave him the document. “This document…” Arianne cut him off before he could finish speaking. “I know, it’s urgent. Janice mentioned it when she brought it over. You should deal with it as soon as possible, since it’s urgent. She’s waiting downstairs.”

He quickly skimmed through the document and signed it. “I… I didn’t ask her to come here. Maybe you should go downstairs and give this to her for me?”

Arianne shot him a look. “Do it yourself. Do I look like a runner to you? I haven’t said anything. Why are you trembling with fear? I’d overanalyze even more if you keep doing that…”

He immediately reverted to his stern exterior. “I’m heading downstairs then. I’m going to give Davy a piece of my mind tomorrow. He left all of a sudden. That’s why Janice came.”

Arianne didn’t answer and followed him downstairs. They found Janice playing with Aristotle when they arrived at the stairs. There was no doubt that Janice was good with kids. She had even managed to make Aristotle, a non-disruptive child, laugh. He seemed full of energy and was waving his arms around enthusiastically.

At this moment, it was undeniable that she felt very uncomfortable. That was her baby. This was a stark contrast from her usual playtime with Aristotle. Her son was rarely ever this energetic, yet he seemed so gleeful with this woman, who could be considered a “stranger.”

Janice immediately got up when she saw them coming downstairs. She lifted her head and tucked a lock of her hair behind her ear. “Mr. Tremont, Mrs. Tremont. Smore is so cute, he’s already walking! It’s so fast.”

Mark didn't answer. He handed the document over to her. "I've signed the document. Take it back to the office. From now on, leave these matters to Davy. Even if he's busy, he should be sending it over to me first."

Janice's expression stiffened. "Okay… I understand. Please excuse me."

After she left, Mary jokingly remarked, "That girl is really good with kids. I've never seen Aristotle so giddy before."

Mary caught herself just in time when she noticed the peculiar atmosphere. "I'm going back to work. You should take Aristotle for an early night's rest, Madam."

Chapter 1217

Arianne grunted in reply and carried Aristotle upstairs.

Mark took a deep, impatient breath, forcing himself to contain his rage. Then, he quickly strode upstairs. "Are you… angry?"

"Children don't have great memories. He would never have displayed such familiarity if he hadn't seen her so often. How many times have you left Smore with Janice? Look at her, she's so good with kids. Even I, his mother, am put to shame. I'm starting to question my own child-rearing methods."

Mark was having a headache. “No, it really was just once or twice. Smore hasn’t been to my office in a long time, and it’s not like you’re not aware. Maybe he doesn’t actually remember Janice, but he was just having fun. It doesn’t mean anything if the baby is having fun playing with her, does it? I suggested firing her, but you told me not to. What the hell am I supposed to do?”

Arianne paused in her footsteps, turned around, and looked at him. “‘What the hell am I supposed to do’? I’ve never asked you to do anything. Why do you make it sound like I’m testing your patience? Am I that intolerable to you? Do I look like I’m throwing a fit for no good reason? Yes, I’m uncomfortable. I don’t want strange women near my baby!” Especially when she attained access through him.

Mark’s expression sank. “You are throwing a fit for no reason. You’re feeling inferior as a mother compared to a strange woman because you haven’t been doing your job well. You wanted the kid, yet you’ve insisted on going back to work after having him. You spend so little time with the baby that it’s pathetic. The Tremont household has everything you could possibly want, except human emotions and comfort. I’ve never wanted my child to grow up in a loveless environment. If you’re not comfortable, then quit your damned job, come home, and take care of the baby! Yes, you have the right to talk about your dreams. I won’t stand in the way of your pursuit for your dreams. But don’t you start an argument with me or throw a fit at me over these issues! Isn’t this the life you wanted? You have total freedom to do whatever you want in the daytime, then come home and use whatever meager time you have left before bed to spend time with the baby. Even if you have to put me and this house on the back burner, and I can’t complain about that. But don’t you dare pick a fight with me over these unnecessary issues.”

His extensive tirade stunned Arianne. Every word he said denounced her for her stubbornness in going back to the workforce, and for neglecting her home, him, and Aristotle because of this. As if she’d never played her part as a good wife or a good mother.

She recalled her memories, starting from her pregnancy. She had suffered a lot of hardship. She had done everything for Aristotle on her own until he was seven months old before weaning him. How was that irresponsible in any way? How could she possibly pale in comparison to Janice, who’d only seen Aristotle a few times?

She never thought that he'd still have a problem with her job, despite reaching a compromise. He was still brooding over it too. So much so that he brought it up during an argument and exploded with such intensity.

It's true, the Tremont household had everything one could possibly want. Maybe everyone else felt the same way as he did and believed that she shouldn't have gone out to earn such an insignificant amount of money, squandering time that should have been spent on her son.

However, she just didn't want to degenerate into one of those messy, sloppy women with milk stains all over and did not have the time to take care of herself. She didn't want her entire world to revolve around her husband and her baby. That wasn't the life she wanted. She confessed that she had done her best. Unfortunately, to him, she hadn't done anything right.

He stood at the very peak of the world, holding lofty radiance in the palm of his hand, yet he expected her to fade into the shadows behind him. Her desire for self-reliance wasn't considered willful. She was willing to sacrifice everything for this family, except this. She couldn't do it. It wasn't just because of her reluctance to rely on people or her dreams. She didn't want to gamble with her future. What if she lost, and he ended up being disgusted by the mere sight of her? She didn't want that.

Chapter 1218

He loved her, probably because she was simply Arianne Wynn. However, men were visually-stimulated beings. This was in their nature. Anyone would grow weary of a gradually old and faded woman.

Why did she give birth to Aristotle? She was beginning to seriously ponder this question. Was it because it was her last chance to become a mother? Or… was it because she loved Mark?

She stared at Aristotle in her arms and felt a slight ache in her heart. He was going to be one-year-old soon, yet Mark still had the nerve to accuse her of insisting on having Aristotle, right in front of the baby. This gave the impression that he never wanted Aristotle to be born in the first place. It was disappointing.

Arianne's heart filled with grief at that very moment. She wanted to protest, but she had become pale and weary after a bout of rage. She thought that he had given her enough love and that he would allow her to do whatever she wanted to do and live life on her own terms. Unfortunately, it was all for show. Deep down, that wasn't what he really felt at all. Since that was his opinion, then it didn't matter what she said. She couldn't change his opinion. It's not like she'd never tried talking about it. Talking about certain things was of no use sometimes. They were just adding topics to a script during an argument.

Finally, she chose silence. She went back to the room as if nothing was wrong and put her baby to sleep, as she usually would, as if the fight never happened at all.

Mark felt upset at the sight of her in this manner. He strode towards her, softened his tone, and said, "I'm sorry. I was caught up in the moment."

"No, you weren't caught up in the moment," Arianne calmly replied. "You've finally released your frustrations. You must have been keeping them inside for a very long time, haven't you? I can't change your opinions, and you can't change mine either. We've never been in agreement. Let's just agree that I insisted on giving birth to Smore then and that it had nothing to do with you. Please don't ever say such hurtful things in front of him ever again. I can take care of him on my own. You don't have to trouble yourself. From now on, you will not pay for any of his expenses. If there's nothing else, please do not disturb me, I'm trying to get him to sleep. Get out!"

Mark took a deep breath, stayed in his spot for a while, then finally turned and left.

Arianne heard the sounds of a car leaving the Tremont Estate. She didn't know where he went and didn't want to ask either. Tonight, both parties needed to calm down.

She was once naive enough to think that as long as two people were in love, they could get married and have children. She had even overcome the huge obstacle in the form of Mark being her father's murderer. Now, she knew that life was littered with trifles. No matter how prepared you are, it is all the same when one truly experiences it. There were frustrations and breakdowns; no matter if you're rich or poor, everyone would have reason to quarrel. Nothing was smooth-sailing.

The next morning, Arianne woke up with swollen eyes, as she hadn't had a good night's rest. She looked listless and exhausted.

Based on every detail observed, Mark did not come home last night.

When she arrived downstairs, Mary rushed forward and said, "Ari, breakfast is ready. Have something to eat before you leave. Mr. Tremont… didn't come home last night. Have you been fighting again? Was it because of what I said?"

Chapter 1219

Arianne shook her head. "It has got nothing to do with you. We were going to fight over certain things sooner or later; it was only just a matter of time. I'm not hungry. Not eating. Smore is still asleep. Thank you for taking care of him during the day. I'll try to come home as soon as I can when I'm done at the office. From now on, send the bill for all of Smore's expenses to me. Do not ask Mark. I don't want to spend a single cent of his money. The same goes for Smore."

Mary gaped, unable to speak. This was the first time they had ever had a fight like this. She wasn't sure of how to advise her.

Arianne's mind was still in a mess when she arrived at the office. Every time she closed her eyes, she was reminded of everything Mark had said last night. She wanted to console herself. It was completely normal for people to say hurtful things in the heat of the moment, but hadn't she stayed silent last night? She was capable of controlling herself from spewing hateful words, but he was not. Who was the unreasonable one in his argument?

She opened her eyes when she heard footsteps approaching her. She saw Robin's cheerful, smiling face before her. "Arianne, you look really tired today. I've bought you some coffee."

Arianne smiled. "Thank you. I'll transfer the money for this coffee to you later."

Robin curled her lips and replied, "Why so modest? It's us. Can't I buy you a cup of coffee?"

Arianne took a sip of coffee. "It's not that. It's not easy for you to earn money. Your wallet won't be able to hold out if you keep buying coffee for me so often. Good relationships should be cultivated, not spent. Otherwise, you'll end up overspending one day."

Robin noticed the subtle meaning behind her words and carefully asked, "Have you… been fighting with your husband?"

Arianne took a deep breath. "No. There's nothing to fight about. That sharp, unkind, haughty, bad tempered old man? I have nothing to fight about with him!"

Robin was stunned as she listened to her complaints. Mark was a sharp, unkind, haughty, bad tempered and… old man? Why did her description make him sound more like a woman? It would seem that Arianne was truly enraged. Otherwise, she wouldn't have said such things. "Uh… Okay… I'll… get back to work then."

Mr. Yaleman noticed how downcast Arianne was all morning and that she hadn't finished a single sketch. "Arianne, don't you fashion designers like going to different places for inspiration? Don't stay in the office all the time, as you must be fed up with the environment by now," he suggested. "It's such a small place that it limits your imagination. Maybe you should walk around? We should be constantly improving."

Arianne yawned. "You're right. I'll head out then. Call me if you need anything."

Meanwhile, Davy arrived at the office and went to clean up Mark's office as usual. To his surprise, he found Mark sleeping on the couch when he walked in. After that small surprise, he decided to leave discreetly. He wasn't sure if Mark was a morning person or not, and he didn't dare tempt fate.

However, before he could close the door, Mark suddenly sat up. "Come here."

Davy shivered and carefully advanced. Finally, he felt Mark land a punch on his chest. Although Mark didn't actually punch him and he didn't use much force, it was enough to frighten him. "What's wrong? Why did you sleep in the office last night? Has Mrs. Tremont thrown you out?"

Mark shot him a glare. “Is it that hard for you to send over a document? Who told you to ask Janice? Do you resent the lack of drama? If you’re really that busy, finish your job first before solving your personal matters!”

Chapter 1220

Davy displayed a smile that looked worse than a weeping face. “I received a family call when I was working overtime yesterday. I had a last-minute emergency. I was going to ask the director to send that urgent document over to you, but the director didn’t have your address. I was about to give it to him when Janice walked over and said she knew your address, so she volunteered to take care of it. The director saw that it was close to the end of the work day and wanted to save the extra trouble, so he gave the job to her. I thought that since we were all colleagues and that document needed to be expedited, it didn’t matter who sent it… So…”

Mark’s expression sank even more. “So? My as*! Would I have asked you to do it if I needed someone else to do it? Use your brain next time. Get out!”

This wasn’t Davy’s first time hearing Mark curse. He ran off, escaping his clutches. He was afraid that Mark might tear him into pieces if he stayed any longer. The thought of it still made him uneasy, so he went downstairs to talk to Janice and ask her what happened last night. “You sent the document over, didn’t you? What else did you do? Why do I feel as if something’s not right with Mr. Tremont today? He’s thrown a tantrum at me, first thing this morning!”

Janice was surprised. “He’s pissed? I didn’t do anything. What’s happened?”

Davy’s shoulders slumped. “How should I know? Why would I ask you if I did? I think Mr. Tremont slept in the office last night. He was still asleep when I arrived today. I’m sure he had a fight with his wife and got chased out of the house. I’m surprised, he’s actually a henpecked husband.”

Janice's eyes gleamed. "Oh… Mrs. Tremont is quite unreasonable. Mr. Tremont has been tired from working so hard every day, yet she chased him out. That's too much. I guess Mr. Tremont has been overindulging her. That's just how women are like; they get a big head when they're overindulged. But this is really crossing a line."

Davy was never interested in gossip and knew that discussing a superior's personal issues was prohibited. "Enough. Get back to work."

After some thought, Janice decided to make a cup of black tea and bring it up to Mark's office. Davy was hiding from Mark's wrath and hadn't come back yet. When she knocked on the door, Mark thought that she was Davy, so he let her in easily.

Mark frowned at the sight of her. "What are you doing here?"

Janice placed the black tea in front of him. "I heard from Davy that you slept in the office last night. I'm sure it wasn't a good night's rest. I made this tea for you. I've picked up some tips from Davy, so it should suit your tastes."

Mark glanced at the steaming cup of tea and replied indifferently, "If there's nothing else, please leave."

Janice saw the gloomy haze on his face and felt a fearful urge to shrink away. However, her legs stubbornly refused to move. "Mr. Tremont, may I ask, why have you quarreled with your wife? You ended up sleeping in the office too…"

Mark lifted his gaze and stared at her for two seconds. “Was there some sort of miscommunication? What makes you think that you’re allowed to probe into my personal affairs?”

Janice lowered her head nervously. “I’m sorry! I shouldn’t have said that. I was just showing concern. I’ll get back to work!” She hurriedly turned around and left after that. The look in Mark’s eyes frightened her. She even had a feeling that she might end up getting dragged out if she said anything more.

She had clearly seen how gentle Mark was to Arianne; why was he so cold towards her? This man held her heart, she deeply admired him, yet Arianne had chased him out of the house and forced him to sleep in the office. The man she cherished was being trampled on.

She had given her all yet failed to attain her objectives. Arianne, on the other hand, achieved hers easily but did not appreciate it. This was unfair! She had never hated someone so much before. The very thought of Arianne’s face, which had the word “apathy” written all over it at any given time, filled her with disgust!