Ruling 1321

Chapter 1321

3AM in the capital. There was barely anyone on the streets, but it glittered with neon lights anyway. This wasn't his first time admiring the scenery in Ayashe, but it felt different for the first time tonight.

He returned to the Smith Estate and walked into Don Smith's room. That sly, strange-tempered old thing would never climb out of bed to torment him again. He laid there quietly, deathly still.

He stood in front of the bed in silence for more than half an hour. The pain in his legs graduated into numbness, yet he showed no reaction. Jett had driven him back from the hospital. He watched him as he stood there and knew that his legs wouldn't be able to take it. "Sir, don't stand too long," he reminded him, unable to help himself. "Your legs haven't fully healed. Be careful, it might get worse."

Alejandro took a deep breath. "Tell everyone. Start funeral proceedings, make it grand. The old man has had a lustrous life. We can't possibly give him a depressing ceremony."

Jett grunted a reply then turned around and left.

Alejandro brought a chair over and sat down. His eyes were fixed on the document by Don Smith's bed. He did not read it immediately. After a few puffs of cigarettes, he gathered his courage and opened the file.

He had considered it before. Perhaps the old man decided against leaving him the Smith fortune, as he knew that he wasn't the real Alejandro. However, after looking through the document, he realized that he was wrong. The old man had mentioned to him this afternoon that his only wish was that he would live happily ever after with Melanie, forget who he used to be, and remember who he was now. Don

Smith had considered him to be the real Alejandro, deep down. Regardless of whether he was forced into it or not…

He smirked when he read the last page of the document. As expected, the sly old fox had a trick up his sleeve.

Don Smith had left a large portion of his shares to Melanie and her newborn baby. That way, he wouldn't be able to divorce Melanie so easily.

…

Mark, Arianne, Jackson, and Tiffany were all well aware of the events in the Smith household that month.

Don Smith's death had arrived later than expected. They thought that Alejandro would speed up his death, instead of letting him live out his days to the very end.

On the second day of Alejandro's return to the capital, Tiffany took advantage of Jackson's absence from the company to discuss a partnership with a client, and contacted Alejandro on her own. She wanted to give the plant back to him. She would manage this on her own.

This matter was between her and Ethan anyway, so they should solve it themselves instead of dragging other people along.

She took the plant and drove to meet Alejandro at a café. She deliberately chose a crowded place. This was a dangerous man and she had to take precautions.

Chapter 1322

She sat down and waited for more than ten minutes before Alejandro finally arrived. “My apologies, there was traffic on the way here. I left early, but I ended up late anyway. Sorry for making you wait.”

Alejandro’s leg wasn’t well enough to allow him to drive, so Jett had to come along. Tiffany smiled at Jett in greeting and looked at Alejandro too. “Long time no see. I’ve heard that Melanie’s given birth. Is it a boy or a girl? I guess it was a premature birth?”

Alejandro was just about to reply when he suddenly noticed the potted plant on the side. His pupils shifted. “A girl. She’s very healthy. You wanted to talk to me?”

Tiffany took a deep breath. “You don’t mind having other people around, do you? If not, I’ll be frank.”

The “other people” that she was referring to was Jett. After all, this matter was considered a shady scandal for Alejandro.

The corners of Alejandro’s lips curled and he smiled calmly. “It’s fine.”

Tiffany paused and said, “Back when you gave me this flower, you mentioned that you’d tell me a secret when it bloomed. You haven’t told me that secret yet, but I know it. I’m here to give this plant back to you. I wonder… if I should call you Alejandro Smith, or Ethan Connor?”

Alejandro wasn't at all surprised. He knew that she had found out when he saw the plant. "It's your choice. Call me whatever you like."

Tiffany felt uneasy. She hadn't expected him to be so calm about it. "Why did you approach me with Alejandro's identity?" She knew but she wanted to hear it from him.

Alejandro's gaze toward her grew heated. "You know why. Would you have let me come near you if I told you who I was? I've done all of this to make up for my mistakes in my youth. If there's still a chance for me to make up for it all… But now, it looks like it's getting further and further from my reach… Just like those three years we once had together. I can't go back, I'll never have it again."

Tiffany had thought of all sorts of ways to show her hostility before her arrival, but in the end, none of it came into play. "Let me go," she said, almost pleadingly. "Live out your life as Alejandro Smith. You have a wife and a daughter. You've let me down, but don't make the same mistake with Melanie. You know how bad your childhood was, so don't let your daughter be like you. Leave the past in the past. I can never forgive the man who brought my family into ruin, but I'm not thinking of vengeance. I just want it to end. I've still got a long way to go in life, and I'd like to go through it with the man I love. I don't want to be stuck in the past. You don't have to feel like you owe me a thing. I sought you out on my own. I… fell in love with you first. I know that it was my mistake. I shouldn't have provoked you. So, let's pretend it never happened. Okay?"

Jett had heard too much and knew that it wouldn't be a good thing. "Sir, I need to use the washroom." He quickly left before Alejandro could respond.

Alejandro had mixed feelings. "Are you… so unaffected by me that you won't even hate me? You don't even want revenge?"

Tiffany picked up her coffee cup and took a sip. “Revenge will only lead to more revenge. When will it end? We were once in love, after all. Consider it a form of leeway. Let me go so that you can let yourself go too.”

Alejandro gritted his teeth. “I can’t do it.”

Tiffany was growing frantic. “Why not? I don’t care about the things you’ve done anymore. Why are you still doing this? Why must you insist on driving us both to the brink of madness before feeling satisfied? I don’t want to waste the rest of my life fighting with you. I have a family, a man I love and a son. I just want to live my life in peace. The hurt you’ve given me can never be fixed! Your only choice is to be a good husband to Melanie and a good father to your daughter. Be a good man for the rest of your life. That’s how you make up for it! That’s how you make up for the mistakes you’ve made in your past!”

Chapter 1323

By the time Jett emerged from the washroom, Tiffany was already gone. All that was left was the potted plant and a downcast and silent Alejandro.

This side of Alejandro felt like a stranger to Jett. He was usually firm and cold-blooded in the Smith household, but he was reduced to a petty state when faced with Tiffany. It was true, everyone could be vanquished, one way or another. Even the most untameable man would be no different when met with the woman he loved.

Before his arrival, Alejandro was elated when he received Tiffany’s phone call. He would never act like this with anyone else. That’s why the outcome of this meeting caused him such disappointment.

A bolt of lightning flashed across the horizon, followed by the deafening sound of thunder. The people on the streets hurried to avoid the rain. This thunderstorm had arrived all of a sudden.

“Shall we go home, sir?” Jett asked.

Alejandro’s thoughts were pulled back to reality. He got up and said, “Let’s go. Take the plant along.”

When they arrived at Smith Manor, Jett put the plant in the study. Alejandro ignored Melanie, who was waiting for him in the living room, and went straight to the room to take a shower.

He found Melanie sitting on the side of the bed when he stepped out from the shower, holding his phone in her hand and trembling all over. The look on her face was either fury or something else. She looked very pale.

His eyes sunk. “If you’re going to check my phone, you should at least be mentally prepared, or don’t look at it at all.”

“You went to see Tiffany, didn’t you?” Melanie asked in a hoarse voice. “You just couldn’t wait, could you? Now that grandfather’s gone. Do I look like an idiot to you, Alejandro? I’m not a puppet. I have feelings. Can’t you show me a little respect? She’s a married woman. Please, wake up!”

‘Married woman.’ These words cut through Alejandro’s heart like a knife. He snatched the phone away from her and snapped, “I don’t need a reminder from you. Me not divorcing you is the greatest respect for you. Stop making baseless accusations if you want to live in peace. I hate that.”

Melanie forced herself to hold back the tears in her eyes. As expected, now that Don Smith was dead, he had nothing to worry about anymore. Should she feign ignorance and show zero concern, just like she used to in the past?

Melanie waited for Alejandro to go to the study before summoning Jett. “Alejandro went to see Tiffany, didn’t he? What did they do? Just tell me, I’ve made mental preparation.”

Jett was blunt. “Mrs. Smith, the relationship between Mr. Smith and Tiffany isn’t what you think. You can be jealous of anyone you like, but Tiffany Lane? Not necessary. Because she and Mr. Smith will never happen. Mr. Smith is the one who refuses to let go. Their meeting today was nothing shady. Tiffany contacted Mr. Smith on her own. I guess you call it a farewell. I didn’t have the guts to listen until the end, but based on the looks of it, Tiffany Lane will never see Mr. Smith again. He is in a very bad mood, so please don’t fight with him. He’ll get over it, in time.”

Melanie didn’t believe him. “You’re on Alejandro’s side. Of course, you’d stand up for him and lie to me for him. I shouldn’t have asked you. It’s a useless question anyway.”

Chapter 1324

Jett felt helpless. It was completely normal for Melanie to feel insecure, now that she no longer had Don Smith behind her. However, he was telling the truth. She just wouldn’t believe him. “Ma’am, please don’t think the worst of everyone. I may be working for Mr. Smith, but I know the difference between right and wrong. Men don’t like it when women refuse to let go. That will only annoy him. Perhaps you should focus your attention on something else.”

Melanie took a deep breath. “Something else? The baby? She’s the only thing I have left. But he hasn’t even touched her since her birth. Just how cold-blooded can he be? So, he’s distant to the baby too, just because he doesn’t love me? I’m not asking for him to fall in love with me one day, but I’d be content if he could be nicer to the baby… My greatest fear is that he’ll suddenly ask for a divorce. That would be my greatest humiliation!”

Jett checked his surroundings, ensured that there was no one else, then lowered his voice and said, “Madam, Mr. Smith would never do that because Don Smith segregated his shares before his death. Most of it is left to you and the baby. You’d just delivered the baby back then, which is why you’re not aware of this.”

Melanie was shocked. “Is this true? Grandfather… He left his shares to me and the baby? Why didn’t Alejandro tell me?”

Jett shook his head. “I don’t know either, but I guess he thought it unnecessary. This means that he has no intention of divorcing you. So, don’t worry. I’ve heard that women’s emotions are easily affected after childbirth, and you do seem a little… extreme lately. I’m telling you this to reassure you. Mr. Smith will not divorce you because breaking up the Smith fortune will not benefit him.”

Melanie felt much better after realizing this. “You should have told me sooner. As long as he doesn’t consider a divorce, everything else is fine. He just doesn’t like it when I pick a fight with him, right? I won’t do it then. Go back to work, Jett. I’m going to check on the baby.”

That night at White Water Bay Villa.

Jackson returned from a dinner party to find Tiffany sitting very still on the sofa. She didn’t even turn on the lights. “What are you doing?” he asked curiously. “You’re not upset with me just because I went to a dinner party, are you? Don’t worry, they were all men. There were no women.”

Tiffany lifted her gaze and looked at him. “Jack, come here. I need to talk to you.”

Jackson's heart thumped. She usually called him by his full name, yet she was using a nickname all of a sudden… Something must be wrong. He slowly made his way to the couch and sat down. "Talk to me. I'm ready."

She sighed. "I met Alejandro today."

His breath caught in his throat. "And?"

She giggled. "Don't look so serious. I was just returning the plant. I've told him to leave the past in the past. From now on, all I want is to live the rest of my life with my lover and my family. I've asked him to let me go. He didn't say much, but he didn't stop me when I left. I believe that my words were harsh enough, enough for him to back off. My sentiments were very clear. This was between me and him anyway, so I didn't tell you about my meeting. Please don't be angry."

Jackson returned to his senses. "Okay… I'm not angry. I was just worried that something might happen to you if you met with him alone. I know what he wants from you, how could I not? But you did it anyway. There's no use in getting angry now. Have you eaten? I've already had dinner. Didn't I tell you to cook your own dinner or order takeout? I sent you a message, but you didn't reply."

Chapter 1325

She shook her head. "I haven't eaten. I was too lazy. It was raining so heavily, the delivery man would have had a hard time if I ordered takeout. Don't worry about me. I've had a lot of snacks, so I'm not hungry. Go and get showered. After that, sleep early tonight."

The negative vibes all over her body made him very worried. She had a lively personality, yet she had suddenly become so quiet. That was enough to show how much courage it took for her to see Alejandro. He didn't point it out. "Okay, I'll get showered. Wait for me in the room."

She nodded silently, albeit absent-mindedly. Of course, she didn't notice the implication behind his words. Usually, she would include her own two cents.

Jackson found Tiffany already lying on the bed when he stepped out of the shower. She was all curled up under the covers, like a ball. It was a pitiful sight.

He stepped forward and pulled her into his arms. "So, what's the 'agenda' tonight, baby?"

"Eek… I'm having goosebumps," Tiffany whined. "Who're you calling 'baby'? Have you used that word on a lot of women? It rolls right off your tongue!"

He smirked wickedly as he worked his hands enthusiastically all over her body. "That was then, this is now. You're my only 'baby' now."

His passion had successfully pulled her back from her depression. "You haven't initiated in a long time," she teased while responding to his movements. "Have you forgotten your medication today? You've been avoiding me at night ever since we got married. It seems abnormal for you to take the lead tonight. Is there something fishy going on?"

He lowered his head and pecked her on the lips. "What do you mean? Sometimes, I'm too exhausted to do it, but I'm not tired at all today. So naturally, I want to do it."

Their faint giggles were gradually replaced by heartracing, blush-inducing sounds…

Meanwhile, at Tremont Tower.

Mark was finally able to step out of the office at 10PM after working overtime. The heavy rain still continued outside. It was as if the skies held a stockpile of grievances and were now letting it all go.

He had asked Brian to leave early today, as he had to work overtime. Now, he had to drive himself home.

He ran into Sylvain at the parking lot as he happened to be leaving too. “Seriously, rainy days are the worst. Everything’s all wet. It’s a huge downer.”

Mark was the complete opposite. He liked the rain. He liked it when the sound of rain masked the noise of the world. “Go home early.”

Sylvain leaned against his car and handed him a cigarette. “You have someone waiting for you at home, someone to warm your bed. Why should a lone wolf like me go home early? I might as well stay in the office and do overtime.”

Mark accepted the cigarette and lit it. “Continue working overtime, then.”

Sylvain’s lips twitched. “I was just saying things. Look at the time. That’s how long I’ve been working overtime. You’re not serious, are you?”

Mark curved his lips into a small smile. “Do I look like I’m joking? Alright, I’m leaving.”

Sylvain watched as Mark drove away. He remained in his spot and finished his cigarette before getting into the car. He suddenly felt lost. Should he go home? However, the image of Robin’s busy figure in the restaurant suddenly appeared in his mind’s eye. She couldn’t possibly still be at the restaurant at this time, could she? It was raining… Did she bring an umbrella?

For some strange and inexplicable reason, he drove his car outside the restaurant where Robin worked. The restaurant was still open, but it was near closing time. There weren’t any customers now. They probably had less customers today due to the weather.

Robin was hard at work, cleaning up like a busy little bee. More than half an hour later, the lights in the restaurant finally went out. The small amount of waiters and waitresses from the night shift filed out in succession. Robin was the last one out.

Chapter 1326

After locking the door, Robin stood under her roof and reached out her hand to see how heavy the rain was before swiftly retracting her hand again. She had forgotten to bring an umbrella with her; she had to grab a taxi by the parking lot in front of the cafe, which meant that she had to stand under the rain. There wouldn’t be that many taxis on a rainy night like this, so she was hesitating on whether to rush home under the rain. Robin wanted to go home earlier so that she could spend more time studying since her exams were approaching soon. She was worried that her family would cause a scene again if she did not manage to get certified as an accountant.

Sylvain began to waver as he saw Robin struggling. He wanted to send her home but did not have the courage to face her at that moment. They had not met for so long that he wondered how she would react upon seeing him… He had already decided not to interfere in her life long ago…

After a moment, Robin actually fished out a book from her bag and began squatting down and reading. The light under the roof was not bright enough, yet she was actually able to read under those circumstances. Was she thinking of waiting for the rain to stop before leaving?

Sylvain felt bad for Robin. He wanted to protect the girl who was in front of him, yet he had so many doubts within himself…

After struggling for a long time, he finally took out an umbrella and got out of his car. He walked towards her and stood right in front of her. “I’ll send you home.”

Robin’s body froze, and she slowly raised her eyes to look at him. Their eyes seemed to meet for a few seconds, but to them, it felt like an eternity.

“N-no… no need… I can catch my own taxi!” Robin came around and hurriedly shoved her book back in her bag carelessly.

“If you were able to catch your own taxi, you wouldn’t have squatted here for so long.” Sylvain directly exposed her lie.

Robin was slightly surprised. “How long have you been here?”

Sylvain paused for a moment before saying, “I’ve been here before your cafe closed. That’s right, your suspicions are correct—this isn’t my first time being here… It’s fine if you think of me as a stalker or a pervert.”

Robin lowered her head, her face growing hot. “I don’t think of you like that… but… why are you doing this?”

Sylvain did not answer, as he did not have the answer to her question himself.

When Robin did not hear his reply, she swiftly looked at him right in the eye. “Why aren’t you saying anything? It’s… quite uncomfortable if you’re being like this…”

Sylvain shoved the umbrella into her palm and said, “I’ll wait for you in the car.” After he said that, Sylvain turned around and ran into the rain.

Robin hurriedly ran towards him whilst covering herself from the rain with the umbrella. “Don’t run off so fast, you’ll get wet all over! It’s very easy to catch a cold in this weather!”

Sylvain grinned. He had expected for her to follow behind him.

Back in the car, Robin took out a bag of tissues from her bag and handed it to him. “Wipe yourself, your hair’s all wet. Remember to blow yourself dry. It wouldn’t be good for you if you caught a cold.”

Sylvain stared at her and was curious as to what else was in her bag, apart from her book and the bag of tissues. Didn't all women only keep their makeup in their bags? To Sylvain, Robin stood out much more than other girls because she was so different.

Robin grew uncomfortable with Sylvain staring at her. "Why are you staring at me…? Weren't you going to send me home? I-I… should probably thank you first."

Sylvain retracted his gaze. "Why is it that you always stutter whenever you're talking to me?"

Chapter 1327

Robin wanted to slap herself hard. She has never been one to stutter and could speak very clearly to anyone else, yet she could not help it whenever Sylvain was around.

They passed by scenery after scenery very quickly, and the distance to Robin's home became shorter and shorter. The couple kept quiet for a very long time. As they were approaching Robin's neighbourhood, she quietly glanced at Sylvain a few times. He was still radiating the same brilliance he had the first time she met him.

They had been very intimate with each other in the past, but now that she saw him again, she felt as though he was so close, yet so far away, and it felt weird to her.

When the car stopped, Robin had a slightly disappointed look on her face as she opened the car door. "Thank you, Sylvain."

Sylvain suddenly shouted, "Wait!"

Robin jumped; she looked at him with some slight anticipation.

However, Sylvain only handed her an umbrella and said, “Bring this with you, as there’s still some distance before you arrive home. Don’t get yourself wet under the rain.”

When she got out of his car, she did not look back. She had never liked the feeling of being separated from another person, so she did not wish to see him driving off into the distance.

She had already gotten used to being alone a long time ago, but when Sylvain reappeared again, she could not stop her emotions from flowing out again. Why did he have to reappear again all of a sudden when he had broken things off between them so thoroughly in the past?

…

Arianne had not fallen asleep because she was waiting for Mark to return home. When she received Robin’s text message, she felt very relieved that Sylvain could not resist himself and went to see Robin. Although everything was happening as she had expected, things were still developing very slowly.

Robin asked Arianne why Sylvain had consistently stalked her previously, only revealing himself to her today.

Arianne did not know how to explain it to Robin. Sylvain may be a genius designer, but thanks to Jessica, he was most definitely a hopeless case in terms of love. After considering for a moment, Arianne replied,

‘Think of it from his angle. Why would you constantly pay attention and observe a person from the shadows?’

Just as she sent the text message, someone pushed open the bedroom door. Mark entered the room, completely drenched in the rain and carrying a musty smell. With a dark face, he asked, “You’re still awake?”

Arianne sat up and asked curiously, “Why are you back so late? Your clothes are all wet.”

Mark helplessly gave a long sigh. “There’s something wrong with the car, which has never happened before. Now that Brian is busy with his relationship, he’s unable to handle such trivial tasks. It’s a good thing that I wasn’t far away from home; that’s why I walked home myself. The car’s still by the roadside. I’ll have someone get it fixed tomorrow.”

Arianne watched as Mark went into the bathroom. She grabbed his pajamas and handed it to him. “Didn’t you have an umbrella in your car? Where did it go?”

Chapter 1328

Mark’s face turned even darker. “That’s what I want to know as well. Do you think I should cut Brian’s salary in half?”

Arianne stifled a laugh. “Just ask him what’s going on tomorrow. You’re a man as well, so you should know that men would normally spend most of their time on their relationship at the beginning, so it’s normal for them to neglect their work. It’s not as though Brian has committed the same mistake several times. It isn’t a good idea for you to cut his salary right when he needs it the most. Relax, hurry up and get a nice, hot bath. I’m heading to bed first.”

Mark quietly accepted her suggestion. He was not actually going to cut Brian's salary, but the fact remained that Brian was neglecting his duties recently and Mark needed to sort it out with him.

By the time Mark was done bathing, Arianne had already fallen asleep, Smore was on the bed as well in his mother's embraces, completely cutting him off. Although there was a really big area all for himself, he was still unsatisfied. He pondered on how he could remove Smore from his mother and place him in his baby cot.

After observing for a while, Mark realized that it was an impossible mission so he helplessly dropped the idea.

The next morning, Mark had been kicked awake by Smore. Smore's chubby feet were directly on top of his father's face and he did not hold back his strength.

Smore was not aware that Mark had awakened. He was gleefully sipping on his milk bottle in his hands and stomping his feet while he was at it. Mark wasn't angered by this. He looked at the time—it was almost 8AM. Arianne had already woken up and was in the bathroom. Mark felt weak this morning. It was likely that he had caught a cold from last night; no wonder he had woken up late.

Mark took the opportunity when Arianne was not around to tickle Smore's feet. Smore giggled and retracted his feet. With the milk bottle in his hands, he climbed onto Mark and called out to him, "Horsie!"

Arianne immediately ran out after hearing the commotion. "Smore! Didn't I tell you not to disturb your daddy?"

Smore ignored her and continued having fun riding on top of Mark, who had a dying look on his face. “Ari, should we let him sleep in his own room? I feel like I’ll end up tortured to death by him someday.”

Arianne looked at Mark and realized he was not feeling well. She walked up and placed her hand on his forehead. “You’re burning up; your forehead’s really hot. Did you not blow your hair dry after showering? You were even wet from the rain. You’re not a child now, yet you’re still so careless of your own health.”

Mark shot a glance at her. “Why do you sound so strange? It’s as though you’re lecturing a child. Remember that I’m ten years older than you are.”

Arianne carried Smore off Mark and said, “I stand corrected. You’re not uncaring of your own health like a child—you’re as careless as an old man now. Get up and eat, I’ll give you some medicine for your fever after you’re done. If you haven’t got anything important at work to do today, you should just rest at home. You’ve been so busy at work recently that you haven’t even been able to rest much over the weekends as well.” When Arianne finished speaking, she carried Smore downstairs with her.

Mark helplessly turned his head to look out the window and saw that it was still raining, albeit not as heavy as last night. The dark sky made his mood even gloomier. Mark suddenly hated rainy days a little…

Brian had arrived early in the morning. He even commented that he saw the same car as Mark’s parked by the roadside nearby, the color also being the same.

Arianne grinned at him and said, “Didn’t you notice the number plate on the car? It was, in fact, Mark’s car. Something’s gone wrong with it. Mark had to walk back home from his car under the rain and became completely soaked. He’s even got a fever today. Were you too busy being in a relationship yesterday, Brian?”

Brian's face immediately fell. "Oh no… I was just about to bring the car to the service centre, but I've been too caught up in other matters. I didn't get around to it yet. I even took out the umbrella when it was raining the other day and forgot to put it back. Is Mr. Tremont very angry at me?"

Arianne pursed her lips. "He's still alright. He was quite mad when he came back last night, but I suppose he wouldn't have the energy to be mad at you because of his fever. You should hurry up and get the car fixed and see what's gone wrong with it. Also, you need to put a spare umbrella in the car in case something like this happens again. You should carry on with your work. Mark won't be going to the office today, so you can go home and rest after you've gotten the car repaired. Take the day off."

Chapter 1329

Brian immediately headed for the door. He was not so silly as to wait until Mark had gone downstairs and given him an earful. Arianne was literally his saviour that day.

Mark noticed Brian's absence when he went downstairs for breakfast and asked, "Where is he? He's usually early, yet he's still nowhere to be seen at this hour. Does he not want his job anymore?"

Arianne handed Mark a bowl and said, "He was here earlier. I've asked him to get the car repaired. He won't be back today, so you should just stay home and rest. I've lectured him for you earlier, so there's no need for you to trouble yourself and lecture him again. Now, hurry up and eat. Take this medicine after you're done. I've got some matters to take care of at the office today, so I'll have to go out now. I should be able to come home earlier today. In the meantime, stay here and accompany Smore."

Mark looked at her with a faint smile and said, "Have you actually arranged my entire day's schedule for me? This is a first…"

Arianne provocatively stared at him. “I’m your wife. Is there something wrong with me making arrangements for you? Don’t you dare try to use your usual tone with me; it won’t work.”

Mark’s mood had improved quite a lot. “Fine, you should finish off your work as soon as possible and hurry home, or otherwise, I’d be bored stiff at home with Smore. Also, who taught him how to play horsy? My back almost broke this morning thanks to him.”

Arianne smiled and kept quiet. Mary was the one who had taught him that. It’s something every child should learn as they grow up.

Arianne suddenly turned serious as though she had thought of something. “Oh, I may need to take a trip down to the dessert shop in the next two days. I heard from Naya that the landlord is going to sell off his shop lot, so I’ll need to head over there and settle some stuff. Either the dessert shop has to be relocated, or closed. I really don’t want to see it closed. I would rather relocate the shop and start from scratch again.”

Mark immediately became unhappy when he heard that Arianne was going away and he did not know how many days she would be away for. “What’s the worst that could happen if the shop closed? You’re not relying on that shop for a living, so just shut it down and ask Naya to handle the procedures. There’s no need for you to go over.”

Arianne had expected for him to say that. She did not want to have an argument with him, but she also did not want to close the shop either. “Mark, can you… think of my feelings please? That shop belongs to me. Naya has been the one who took care of it for me after I left, and she normally has to stay there until midnight before returning home. If the shop closes, where would she find another job with flexible hours to take care of her child in the meantime? I’ve promised her and the other employees there that I would never close the shop on short notice.”

Mark gently tapped on the table with his finger. He decided to change his approach and take a step back. “Fine, how long would you have to be away for? I can’t do without you at home. How is Smore going to go to sleep at night? I’m usually busy at the office and can’t attend to him at night. Also, he’s used to being coaxed by you; not even Mary can handle him anymore.”

When Arianne thought of Smore, she began to hesitate. She had to choose a new location, register it, renovate it, etc. It would be a very lengthy process before the shop could be reopened, but she definitely couldn’t stay away from home for too long. When she first decided to open up the dessert shop with Tiffany, they did not have any experience and were like headless chickens running around everywhere, so they did not need to spend too much time. Now that she had the necessary experience, she would most definitely need to spend a lot more time to be better prepared. So much more time that it was not realistic for her unless someone could take over and make the decisions in her place.

After pondering for a moment, she said, “I’ll head over to assess the situation first. Then I’ll make the necessary arrangements and come back as soon as possible.”

Seeing how determined she was, Mark did not insist any further. “Alright then, you should do what you have to do. I don’t wish to have an argument with you over this. I believe you wouldn’t bear to leave Smore alone for too long, so do as you wish, but come home as soon as you can.”

Arianne’s heart was at ease when she managed to get Mark’s understanding.

Chapter 1330

Arianne contacted Naya straight away after finishing her errands in the afternoon. Unfortunately, she was told that the landlord had become rather desperate, so she had no choice but to bring her trip a day forward and fly tomorrow.

She then filed for a week-long leave—one week being Mark’s upper limit on tolerating her absence. Since her flight was tomorrow before noon, she began preparing her suitcases right after managing to coax Smore into sleep.

Arianne knew that this trip would be a costly one, so she took Mark's bankcard. The money Will returned to her was in it, along with the allowance Helen had given her. It was situations like these that made her private fund so useful.

From his spot on their bed, Mark watched her with a scowl as she busied herself with preparations. “Aren’t you quite eager to leave,” he muttered.

She kept her head low and continued packing. “Yeah. Schedule’s a bit tight. I’ve requested a one-week-leave, by the way, so expect me to come home within a week. Until then, I’m gonna have to delegate the duty of caring for Smore to you, Mark. He only wants his Mommy and Daddy at night, so Mary wouldn’t be able to help. Speaking of which… How’s your fever recovering?”

“Gee, I shouldn’t be this grateful that you remember my sickness still,” he murmured. “It’s getting better, nevertheless. I’m not that frail.”

She grinned. “Oh, I was only worried that you might pass your cold to poor little Smore.”

“Why, excuse me, princess! How about you stay here and care for him yourself, then?” he retorted.

Arianne was not going to make a fuss out of their seeming disagreement. When she was done, she let her readied suitcase lean against the wall and declared, “Welp, that’s the last of that. Now, I gotta rest early for an early rise tomorrow… Aww, c’mon, don’t give me the long face. I’m not running away from

home, you know. The café's still one of my personal ventures too. The income I get from it plus my job as a designer here makes me quite well-off, doesn't it? I love the feeling of earning my own keep. Sure, it's not as much as how much you earn by a long stretch, but I feel good."

Mark pulled the sheet over his head sourly. "Pfft. As if the money I make isn't for you to peruse as you wish. I don't get why you're so obsessed with rubbing your elbow grease for no actual reason. You're making me look as though I'm too miserly to feed my own wife," he mumbled. "Everyone else's wives are content with being taken care of by their husbands. They practically enjoy the best life has to offer every day. You, on the other hand, love creating all this unnecessary work for yourself. It's as if enjoying yourself is a sin to you."

Arianne climbed into their bed and laid next to him. "Well, I learned this from the best—you know, the genius entrepreneur extraordinaire who's also so, so busy with his work?" she replied, buttering him up. "People learn from those around them, don't they? And you've always been around me. Now, I can't even fathom the idea of being a rich housewife at all."

Mark was still miffed. With a pull, he drew Arianne into the sheet with him. "You'll be gone for a week, though. Can't you at least compensate for that? Let's put it this way: how many nights you deprived me of you is how many times I'll mess you up. Hmm… Looks like your plan to have a long sleep tonight is an impossibility now."

Arianne shuddered. "H-Hey, do you know how frequent our sex life is? Do you really have no clue? Even if I'm up for it, I don't think your current physical state allows—"

Mark suddenly rose in excitement. "You don't think? You don't think I can?"

The night passed into morning. Mark woke up to find Arianne already gone from his side, her suitcase disappearing with her.

He felt hollow. Frankly, he had a very dear reason as to why he was against Arianne continuing that café—it was the relic from a time when she abandoned everything without reservation in a bid to run away from him.