Ruling 1371

Chapter 1371

Melanie was a little taken aback. “How could it be? He wouldn’t even let me go out without a fight. Even if I’m allowed out, Jett has to come along. Do you know why? Because he’s scared that I might bring Melissa back to Ayashe. I… I’ve been discussing the prospect of a divorce with him, but for some reason, he wouldn’t sign the paper.”

“It’s obvious he doesn’t want a divorce,” Arianne said, trying to analyze Melanie’s situation. “You two have been married for more than a year now. You even have a daughter together. And a divorce… isn’t something to be taken lightly. Why would you want that? You can share your reasons with me.”

Melanie watched the clouds drifting in the sky as she murmured, “Initially, I was truly happy about our marriage. I love him, sincerely and passionately. I wanted to spend the rest of my life with him as happily as we could be. But time and time again, he broke my heart. These sorrows and disappointment, they accumulate, you know? Then, one day, you wake up and realize there’s no point in continuing to suffer. I thought he would easily agree to the divorce when I brought it up. I… I didn’t think it would be so difficult.”

Arianne chuckled. “Well, that’s men for ya’. They are hard on the outside but soft on the inside. They may sound like a jerk, but they might not mean it in their hearts. You must think that he has been mistreating you all along. However, seeing how reluctant he is to divorce you, you should be able to guess that he has some feelings for you, right? Think about this. He’s not on particularly friendly terms with Mark, but he visited Mark just so that he could get Mark to speak to me and invite you out. It means he still cares about you. For someone like him, that’s an incredibly big thing. He had never cared about Tiffie in the past. The only thing he cared about was how to destroy Tiffie’s family, their company, and everything in-between! Compared to that, you’re getting treated way better than Tiffie was. So please, stop imagining things.”

Melanie was curious about Alejandro’s past so she seized the chance and asked, “What exactly did he do in the past? I don’t dare to ask him, but I can’t help but wonder.”

Arianne knew that if she told Melanie about Alejandro's past, it would only bolster Melanie's desire for a divorce. Alejandro, in the past, when he was Ethan Connor, had done many despicable and unspeakable things. Hence, she decided not to divulge his history, including how he had tried to hurt her, to Melanie.

"Don't wonder about the things in the past, Melanie. Look at the present. He's Alejandro Smith now. He's your husband. You shouldn't obsess over his history because your focus should be on the present and your future with him. I have a feeling he's turning over a new leaf. All those things he had done in the past were a result of an unhappy and broken childhood. It's not his fault."

More importantly, Ethan was Mark's half-brother. Arianne had never thought of forgiving Ethan for the things he did just as she would never forgive Aery Kinsey. The difference was that it was Arianne's right to decide whether she wanted to forgive Aery, and it was Mark's right to decide if he wanted to forgive or tolerate Ethan. Some people could be forgiven, but some people were beyond forgiveness.

Melanie sighed. "Fine, I guess ignorance is bliss. I worry that after knowing about his past, it would change my impression of him," she said, "Hey, will you get into trouble for hanging out with me during working hours? I heard that you work as a designer in a company around here. Honestly, you can just enjoy your life with what you have, and yet, you decide to be independent. That's very rare."

Arianne shook her head. "No, no trouble. I came out of the office precisely because I wanted to find a good place to sketch. But I'm not feeling inspired today, so whatever. It's good to chill and hang out with friends. Oh, and I'm used to not relying on Mark. I'm used to earning my keep. I don't like to live idly."

Melanie was green with envy. "You're so… good in every aspect. You're so intelligent. You know how to get the best out of relationships and life. I always thought I was pretty clever, but now I realized my life's a mess because I'm an idiot."

Arianne was not good at comforting people so she had to fall back on explaining her situation from an objective perspective. “Not quite, actually. You and Alejandro had no relationship before your marriage, right? The two of you had never lived together so there will, naturally, be phases you have to go through after marriage. A couple would need time to adjust and adapt to fit their significant other. Me and Mark are a good example; we went through a lot before we learned to accommodate each other. Even then, we get into really terrible fights as well.” She paused for a moment before she continued to say, “You should always leave some space for yourself, Melanie. You need to be calm and not recklessly rush into a situation that would make you end up in a corner. You shouldn’t easily suggest a divorce. If he’s reluctant, then, you’re still going to be stuck with him. If that’s the case, why don’t you give both of you a chance? It’s quite obvious that you like him a lot, to the extent that you tolerate him loving another woman. You even befriended said woman just to learn about Alejandro’s preferences and stuff. If I were you, I don’t think I would be able to do it! You should have more faith in yourself.”

Arianne’s words persuaded Melanie into thinking things over. Alejandro had told her to stop making decisions in the heat of the moment as well. Perhaps, she really needed to reflect on herself. In fact, once she had calmed down, she found her heart was heavy and she was unwilling to divorce him as well.

Chapter 1372

The two women only bade each other farewell and went their separate ways when it was almost dusk.

Melanie emerged from the conversation a visibly spirited woman. It seemed like this stemmed from having her worries soothed.

She returned to Smith Manor and resumed her old ways without mentioning getting a divorce. She told herself that she would give both Alejandro and herself one last chance.

Jett had furtively reported Melanie’s new emotional development to Alejandro.

Upon hearing that, Alejandro stopped hiding and went home earlier than usual to play with his daughter. He acted as though nothing had happened as well. He only stopped playing with Melissa when she began to bawl and nothing he did could soothe her.

No one mentioned the divorce. No one knew if Alejandro had quietly tossed the divorce agreement that Melanie had given him earlier away.

Tremont Estate.

As soon as Mark stepped through the door, he discovered Arianne was regarding him with a strange expression on her face. He was discomfited by this so he asked, “What are you looking at? Do I look different?”

Arianne covered her smile with her hand. “Oh, it’s nothing. It suddenly occurs to me that you’ve become much kinder compared to before.”

Mark understood the hidden meaning in her words immediately. His expression hardened. “No, you’re mistaken. I didn’t become ‘kinder’ like you said. Alejandro invited himself into my office. He was bothering me so I helped him to regain my peace. Honestly, I’ve never seen anyone so shameless before. Where’s his stupid, stubborn pride, huh? Why did he lose his pride after becoming Alejandro?”

Arianne could no longer stifle her laughter. “Aww, it’s definitely not because he’s shameless or anything. You helped him because he’s your brother! Now that’s more deserving of Melanie calling you ‘bro’ that one time!” she said teasingly, “Alright, go and shower. We can start dinner once you’re done.”

Mark felt slightly dismal, but he no longer explained himself. Frankly, even he did not know why he had helped Alejandro. He was sure most of it had to do with Alejandro being extremely skilled at bothering him.

During dinner, Mark suddenly recalled something. “Oh, right. I’ll be going on a trip in two days. I don’t know when I’ll be back. Remember that transportation agreement I signed with Alejandro? He said if I’m still worried, I can tag along and watch the entire process with him. We’re shipping our goods on sea this time so it might take a while,” he said, “Honestly, I didn’t want to go, but Seaton told me that I should tag along and use this as an opportunity to gather new information. I don’t quite trust Alejandro so this is a good opportunity and experience for me to set up a transportation company in the future. It would certainly be convenient if I have a transportation company as well. I think Seaton is right.”

Arianne remembered Seaton rather vividly. Based on her experience, Mark rarely praised anyone. This showed Seaton was important. It was obvious Mark thought Seaton was someone deserving of his trust.

Chapter 1373

Arianne nodded. “That’s a pretty good idea. But I thought Alejandro is looking to work with you in the long term? It’s a little bit dishonorable to use him as a learning opportunity and to dump him in the future, right? Suppose Alejandro knows that you’re tagging along only because you’re looking to accumulate experiences for your own transportation business in the future. Won’t this sow a seed of grudge in him?”

Mark had, naturally, considered this as well. “Oh, please. Any scenario you come up with, I’ve already thought about it, and so did Alejandro, I bet. He knows I’m reluctant to have a long term partnership or an exclusive contract. However, if he can’t stomach less savory prospects like these, then, he can pack it up and quit being a businessman.”

Mark continued to say, “Moreover, I was just casually talking about venturing into the transportation business. I didn’t put any real thought into it yet. After all, Tremont Enterprise has so many ventures that I don’t think I should start a new one. If I start a transportation company just to transport my own

goods, the startup cost would be way too much compared to the profits I might gain—" He paused for a moment before he said, "In any case, that's neither here nor there. We'll leave plans for the future to the future itself. All you need to know is that I'm going on this trip for no more reason other than to see how things go."

Arianne discovered that when men talked business, they seemed to exude a strangely alluring aura. The way Mark had spoken had a magnetic effect that drew out Ariann's admiration from the depth of her heart.

Mark laughed when he saw the adoring look in her eyes. "What is with those eyes? It's not easy to make you act like a fangirl."

Arianne was not stingy with her praises. "Indeed, my husband is a genius! He's a force to be reckoned in the world of business. In fact, if you don't mind, dear sir, Smore and I will drink to living a good life under your brilliant mind!"

As though he understood his parents' conversation, Smore lifted his little bowl and gulped down its content loudly while blowing bubbles in the process.

Arianne and Mark burst into laughter. Life was good, indeed.

On the morning of Mark's departure, Arianne helped him pack, stuffing a scarf she had personally picked for him during one of her shopping trips into his luggage. It was getting colder and colder as they passed. She knew it would be even colder out at sea. The Mark she knew all her life had always lived a comfortable and privileged urban life. She was not sure if he could endure the new harsh environment for long.

She stood by the door with Smore in her arms and watched Mark's car leave, her eyes glued to the distance even after the car vanished. It was only after Smore pinched her nose impatiently that she was forced to return to the house.

This was not the first time Arianne was separated from Mark. However, this was the first time she acutely felt the longing for him. She wondered if it was because she was getting more and more used to having him by her side?

Some people said cohabitating with someone for a long time would take the magic away, but Arianne disagreed. The longer she stayed with Mark, the more she loved him.

The third night after Mark left was incredibly dark and stormy. It was quite terrifying.

Arianne was sleeping when she was woken up by the sounds of clambering footsteps and a series of rappings on her bedroom door.

A sense of unease welled up in her heart. Henry had never woken her up in the middle of the night before. Moreover, something about the storm scared her.

She forsook her cardigan and stood by the front door, her arms wrapped around her body to keep warm. She asked blearily, "What's the matter, Henry?"

The butler moved aside with a severe expression on his face, revealing a drenched Alejandro Smith.

His deathly ashen face made Arianne's heart skip a beat. Was he not at sea with Mark? Why did he suddenly show up here? Where was Mark?

Many questions flitted through her mind, and yet, she found that she was unable to speak. It was as though something was lodged in her throat.

The commotion had woken Smore up as well, causing him to descend into a crying fit.

Arianne called out to Mary loudly, ordering her to take care of Smore for her. Then, she walked down and said, "Alejandro, would you like a hot shower and a set of clean clothes? You might catch a cold like this."

Chapter 1374

Alejandro's voice echoed behind her. "Something terrible has happened to my brother."

Arianne's legs wobbled. She almost fell walking down the steps. Fortunately, Alejandro caught her hand in the nick of time. However, his grip was a little too tight.

She righted herself and willed herself to calm down. "W-w-we should talk in the living room, okay? T-t-tell me what happened?"

Alejandro waited until she took a seat on the couch before he recounted what happened. "The freight ship we boarded is wrecked. I don't understand. I've ordered countless inspections and made sure that it had no faults and is in top condition. We encountered mild turbulence at sea, but it shouldn't pose a

problem to a ship like that. It… it doesn't make sense why it's so weak. Someone must have sabotaged the ship, someone wants to kill me! Or maybe… maybe the target is Mark. I don't know. I really don't know. When we were trying to save ourselves, we discovered the lifeboats have been sabotaged as well. Not even one could be used. Everyone onboard… they're gone, all gone! Except for me! The cargo, the people, all gone!"

Henry's eyes were wet.

Arianne fought back the bitter tears that were threatening to spill and focused her attention on Alejandro. "How did you get back?"

His body was trembling. He was not sure if it was due to cold or his close brush with death. "B-before the ship went down, Mark… he pushed me to the only piece of floating plank. It was only good enough to hold one man's weight. I don't know why he did it. I don't know why he didn't let me die! I was in too much shock to react. The water was so cold… He couldn't withstand it and so he went down under… I've already ordered my men to begin search and rescue and to salvage the shipwreck. B-but the sea is rocky and troubled tonight. That part of the sea is known to be treacherous. I… I don't dare to have any hope. I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have invited him on the trip. If I didn't, he would be fine..."

'I don't dare to have any hope' was as good as saying there was no hope. After hearing these words, the rest of Alejandro's words were like white noise to Arianne. All she heard was a loud voice in her voice saying over and over again, 'Mark is dead. He's never coming back.'

The voice echoed over and over again. How many times? She had lost count. She broke down, howling and sobbing.

Alejandro trembled even more violently. The sound of Smore's cries from upstairs and Arianne's anguished cries were like a testament of his sin. Mark was dead. His surviving wife and son had no one to look after them.

Even now, he could not understand his brother's last moment. Why did he choose to save him at that moment? A man who had once hired hitmen to kill him sacrificed himself to save the one he had tried so hard to silence. Why?

What felt like an eternity passed before Henry muttered under his breath, "Master Martin, you should return home for now. You need a good rest… and someone needs to take up the role of cleaning up this mess."

Alejandro nodded solemnly and started toward the door.

The way Henry addressed him had changed. The meaning was glaringly obvious; with Mark dead, the heir to the Tremont legacy would now fall to him. However, he wanted none of it. He did not want people to think that he was behind Mark's death just so he could inherit the Tremont's wealth and power.

Out of the blue, he heard Arianne cry out, "Alejandro, keep the search and rescue and the salvaging of the shipwreck a secret from the public!"

Alejandro was shocked. How could she remain so clear-headed even at a time like this? She was right. That news should be kept a secret, of course. If the death of Tremont Enterprise's head and heart was made known to the public, it would mark the beginning of the Tremont Empire's calamity. When he finally composed himself, he grunted in assent before his figure disappeared into the tenebrous night.

Arianne sat in the living room until morning broke with only the unending rain keeping her company. She had never hated the rain so much. If the sky were blue when Mark was out at sea, would he have been safe and alive?

Chapter 1375

Arianne only moved when Henry looked for her. Staying stationary in the same position brought a wave of nausea when she finally moved. However, compared to the agony roiling in her heart and body, it was nothing. She took a few deep breaths and mustered up her courage before she said, “Henry, please bring some people with you and assist them in the search and rescue. As for the company, I’ll handle it. Remember, this piece of news cannot be leaked. No matter what the rumors might be, not a word about Mark’s death is allowed to get out.”

Henry nodded. “Understood. I’m on it.”

Arianne’s face was as white as a sheet of paper. She was like a husk, as though her spirit had left her body. She went to her dressing table and plastered her ashen face with makeup to look somewhat more presentable before she changed and left the house.

Her first destination, she told Brian, was her company. There, she informed Mr. Yaleman that she wanted to quit without giving him any reason. Her poor ex-boss tried very hard to pry a reason out of her to no avail. In the end, he could only let her go.

Her next stop was not Tremont Tower but Alejandro’s private manor. Last night’s news came like a bolt of lightning on a sunny day. Due to the onslaught of shock and grief, she had forgotten to observe Alejandro’s reactions and expressions.

According to the man, he was the only survivor of the shipwreck. That meant whatever the truth of the tragedy was, his narrative was the only narrative left. Regardless, she wanted to discern if he was the puppetmaster or, like he said, someone else.

When the car arrived at the front gates of Smith Manor, Brain asked tentatively, “Are you sure about this, madam? If Alejandro is the one behind this, don’t you think meeting him right now is akin to suicide?”

Arianne’s colorless lips curled into a smile. “Mark might never come back, Brian. He might be dead. With the worst already happening, what else is there in this world that do I have to fear? The only thing I want now is to know who’s the culprit. I can’t let him die without a reason or an explanation. Don’t you worry about me. Wait in the car.”

She strode into the manor and was promptly greeted by Melanie. “Arianne! This is quite a surprise. Ale had a high fever since he came home last night. Even now, he hasn’t recovered. He’s sleeping at the moment, and… uh, he refuses to go to a hospital or see a doctor,” she explained, “Didn’t he, well, went out to sea with Mark a few days ago? Did something happen between them?”

“I have something I’d like to speak to him about. It doesn’t matter if he has a fever as long as he’s conscious enough to answer me,” Arianne replied, “Please bring me to him. Thank you.”

Melanie no longer said anything. She led Arianne to Alejandro’s room. When they were at the door, she said, “I won’t be able to join your conversation. I need to feed my daughter. Good luck.”

Arianne nodded and pushed through the door. Alejandro was sleeping on his bed. She stepped forward and nudged him awake. “Wake up.”

He roused from his sleep and opened his eyes blearily. When he saw Arianne, he pushed himself up to sit. “Ari…”

Arianne did not mind how he called her. This was the first time he had ever called her Ari with palpable and undeniable sincerity. She remembered him referring to Mark as ‘my brother’ last night, as well. Perhaps, it was small details like these that made him less suspicious than she would have been otherwise.

She stood in front of his bed and stared into his eyes. “Melanie said you refuse to go to the hospital despite your fever. Why is that? You should strive to recover soon so that you can take over the reins of Tremont Enterprise.”

Alejandro frowned. “What are you saying?”

Chapter 1376

“Mark isn’t coming back anymore, is he? You’re the only one with the right to manage Tremont Enterprises. Smore is too young. How can a woman like me possibly accomplish that?” she said with a serious look on her face.

Alejandro was reminded of the nightmare. The usual frostiness in his eyes died away. “You can do it. You’ve been with him for so long, you’re capable enough and you have more right than anyone else until Smore is old enough. I won’t touch Tremont Enterprises. I’m not Ethan Connor anymore, and I’m certainly not Martin Tremont. I’m Alejandro Smith. If you’re here to ask me this, there’s nothing more to say. I won’t agree to it. It may seem difficult for you at first, but I will help you. Just say the word when you need more. I owe Mark that much. I owe him a life…”

“Didn’t you want to supplant him?” Arianne asked. “The opportunity is right in front of you now, so why aren’t you taking it? It’s completely legal. No one is objecting to it. You’re overestimating me. I don’t know if I can take care of Tremont Enterprises.”

Alejandro still refused. “I won’t agree to it. I will never agree to it.”

Arianne was convinced. She was only feeling him out. If Alejandro agreed to managing Tremont Enterprises, that meant that he was involved in Mark’s death. Vice versa, if he refused, then everything he’d said last night was true. Mark’s death was caused by someone else.

She let out a sigh of relief. “Get some rest. I’ll try to take care of Tremont Enterprises. I’ll definitely be needing your help later. You’d better get well soon. You’re the only Tremont I can trust now.”

Alejandro nodded. “Okay… You don’t blame me? Although I wasn’t involved in this, I’ve done a lot of hurtful things to you… Shouldn’t you hate me?”

“I might have become even more extreme if I were you,” Arianne replied bitterly. “Humans have many personalities, after all. There’s good and bad. You used to be a bad person, but that doesn’t mean that you’re still the same now. People can grow all of a sudden and become more capable of differentiating between right and wrong. You’re not that stubborn little boy anymore.”

Arianne tried to cheer up when she left Smith Manor and told Brian to take her to the office.

She had zero experience in managing a company, so of course, the earlier she started, the better. Tremont Enterprises was a huge business and she needed time and a lot of energy to adapt. This meant

that she had no time to even mourn. Mark had left Tremont Enterprises behind. She couldn't let it collapse just because he was gone; she had to grit her teeth and hold the fort.

Traces of Mark's scent still seemed to linger as she walked into his office. She sat in his usual office chair and tried to imitate him by flipping through a document next to her. Suddenly, it felt as if he was right next to her, but when she lifted her head, she couldn't see him at all. A heart-wrenching pain tore into her heart.

She wanted to let go and burst into tears, but she couldn't. She pretended as if nothing had happened. Mark's death could only be announced to the public once she had complete control over Tremont Enterprises. She couldn't keep it a secret forever, but she had to do it, no matter what.

Davy walked in to ask if she wanted a drink and questioned, "Madam, when is Mr. Tremont coming back? What are you doing at the office alone?"

Arianne hung her head and tried her best to answer as emotionlessly as possible. "He's caught up with some business and won't be able to come back just yet. I'll manage company matters in his place for now. I'm not too familiar and you're more experienced than me. Please assist me. Thank you."

Davy didn't think too much of it. He made a cup of black tea for her. "Here, drink this. Mr. Tremont likes this. Don't worry, just let me know if you need anything. I'll be right outside. I won't disturb you for now."

Chapter 1377

She waited for Davy to leave, then stared at the black tea on the coffee table. Her strong facade finally cracked and crumbled. She couldn't bring herself to taste the tea. Both the temperature and taste were Mark's favorites. He drank this all the time. She lay on the office desk and wept, keeping her voice as soft as possible by biting her lip until blood poured out from her lips.

Mark, please come back? I won't fight with you anymore, and I won't make you angry anymore…

Mark, I can't do this without you. I don't know what to do.

Mark, you're playing a joke on me, aren't you?

When she got ready to go home that night, Davy noticed that her eyes were slightly red and felt suspicious. However, he didn't dare ask.

Brian drove her back to Tremont Estate. She looked out the window on the way home and asked, "Do you think he'll come back? Perhaps a miracle might happen? I can't shake this feeling that he's still alive. I could never get rid of him, so how could he possibly surrender and let himself disappear… just like that?"

Brian's heart ached when he saw her. "Don't be too sad, madam. Tremont Enterprises needs you, Aristotle needs you too. Henry is following up with the rescue team. Perhaps we'll have news soon. By the way, should we tell Mr. West too? Perhaps he could help."

Arianne closed her eyes, afraid that the tears might come again. "I'll speak to him."

She had just taken over the company and there was a lot to hand over. No one could lead her. She had to fumble through it on her own and bring the documents back home. When Aristotle circled around her at night, she exploded into a tantrum, unlike her usual self. She told Mary to take him away. She

couldn’t take care of him. Her priority was to protect Tremont Enterprises; it was all on her now. The pressure on her was too great.

She finally went back to the room when she couldn’t hold on anymore in the study, late at night.

She was plagued by nightmare after nightmare in her sleep. She dreamt that someone had been knocking on her door, just like how Henry had knocked on the door that fateful night. In her dreams, she got down from bed and opened the door and found Alejandro outside the door, soaking wet. Just as she was about to speak, Alejandro’s face turned into Mark’s. He pulled her into his arms. “I’m back.”

His body felt ice-cold in her dreams, it pierced through her bones. However, she couldn’t bear to let go and sobbed profusely in his arms.

Then, she woke up, crying. There was no trace of Mark. Her sorrow was all-consuming.

She didn’t want to wake up from her dream. She wouldn’t see him if she did…

She waited for her emotions to calm down, then looked at the time—it was only 3AM. She couldn’t go back to sleep, so she got up and looked through documents again, all the way until morning. Mary called her downstairs for breakfast, with a cautious-looking Aristotle behind her. The little one probably wasn’t used to her sudden cold distance.

She held back her tears and strode forward, then scooped Aristotle into her arms. “Good boy, mommy’s just busy right now so I might not be able to sleep with you for a while. You have to listen to Mary, eat your food, and sleep early, like a good boy. Mommy has other important things to do. Okay?”

Aristotle couldn't understand much. He pitifully nuzzled against her cheek, pursing his little lips, as if he was close to bursting into tears.

Chapter 1378

Mary burst into tears when she saw the current state of both mother and son. "Don't worry, Mrs. Tremont. You work in peace; leave Aristotle with me. He's still young, so he won't understand. But he will when he's older."

Arianne nodded. She had breakfast then went to the office. She was in a much better state today. At least, she managed to hold it in in Mark's office, instead of bursting into tears. She had no time to cry. She had a lot to learn and very little time to do it. She wished that she could separate one minute into two.

"Would you like something to eat, Mrs. Tremont?" Davy asked during lunch time when he noticed that she seemed to have no plans to go out for lunch. "Shall I order a delivery?"

"No thanks, I'm not hungry," she replied, waving her hand. "I'm going to nap for a while, as I'm a bit tired." She had only slept for a short while last night and she couldn't stand any longer.

Davy grunted in reply and went out.

She was tired, yet she could not sleep. After some thought, she pulled out her phone and called Jackson. "Jacskon, I have something to discuss with you. Please come over and speak to me when you have the time."

This was Jackson's first time seeing her so stern. The tone in her voice alone was enough to tell him that something had happened. "Sure, I'll come over at once. I happen to be free now. Are you at Tremont Estate?"

"I'm in Mark's office," she replied.

Jackson soon arrived with Tiffany, who was very excited and poked around blindly in Mark's office. "What's so important that we had to come over? What are you doing in Mark's office? Isn't he back yet?"

"He's not coming back," Arianne replied. "The yacht sank. Only Alejandro managed to survive. I've been dealing with handovers over the past two days, trying to take care of the company."

Jackson and Tiffany were in shock. Their faces filled with disbelief. Aside from this grievous news, Arianne's calm exterior felt unbelievable to them too.

Arianne knew that they would react this way. "It's the truth. Out of everyone in the yacht, Alejandro survived. Mark gave up his hope for survival to him."

Jackson frowned. His voice trembled as he said, "Alejandro said all of that? And you believe him? What if he's behind Mark's death? I don't trust him. He has a motive to kill Mark!"

Tiffany agreed with Jackson. “I feel the same! This happened to Mark when he followed him to the yacht. He could have been absolved if he died with him, but he was the only one that returned. I don’t believe that this has nothing to do with him! I thought he had become a better man. I didn’t think that it would turn out this way! How could he do this? Mark is dead. What’s gonna happen to you and Smore?”

Arianne reached up and tucked her hair behind her ear, feeling helpless. “I’ve tested him. It’s not him. I can feel it. I offered to hand Tremont Enterprises over to him, but he refused to take it. If he killed Mark, wouldn’t Tremont Enterprises have been his motive? He said that he checked the yacht before they left, but there was nothing wrong with it. But there was a setback, and the weather happened to be bad at the time. However, the waves in the sea were not enough to sink the yacht. The lifeboats were all destroyed when they tried to escape. Someone else is behind this. I don’t have time to investigate now. I… I don’t even have time to hold Smore.”

Jackson grew suspicious when he heard this. Was it really not Alejandro? He trusted Arianne’s judgement but was worried that her grief had clouded her judgement. “You should have told me sooner. How could you possibly manage to hold it all in? My mom is taking care of Plato at the moment, maybe she can help you. You’ve never had experience in running a company, so it’ll be difficult for you to do it all of a sudden. How about we let Tiffie take care of Plato for a while, so that my mom can help you out?”

Chapter 1379

Arianne nodded. “Okay, thank you. I’m sorry to trouble Mrs. West.”

Tiffany hugged Arianne, feeling very sorry for her. “Ari, you have to hold on. What if Mark is still alive? He’s a survivor. He’ll be fine.”

Arianne leaned into Tiffany’s embrace and closed her eyes as she relaxed. “I hope so…”

Tiffany wept profusely when they left Tremont Enterprises. “I’m pretty sure that Alejandro had something to do with it. Didn’t Mark tell you that it was Alejandro who invited him on the yacht? It’s a conspiracy! We should have sent him to jail long ago! The reason he refused to take Tremont Enterprises is because he’s guilty! He couldn’t bring himself to do it! No, I have to interrogate him! That’s his brother. What’ll happen to Ari if Mark’s dead?”

Jackson wiped her tears away with tissue paper. “Calm down. Even though Arianne insists that Alejandro has nothing to do with it, I’m afraid that Arianne’s judgement may be impaired under these circumstances. You don’t have to go back to the office today. Go to my mom’s and explain everything to her. Tell her to go to Tremont Tower tomorrow to help Arianne manage the company. This isn’t a time to grieve or fly into a fit of rage. If word gets out about Mark’s demise, there will be serious consequences. Let’s try to stabilize Tremont Enterprises for now. You’re used to taking care of the baby, so two won’t make a difference. Try to have Smore come over to play more often. Arianne doesn’t have the time to take care of her kid at the moment. Poor thing.”

Tiffany grew fiercer and fiercer as she wept. “Did you even have to mention it? Of course I know that. I’ll treat Smore as if he’s my own son. I admire Ari for not bursting into a sobbing mess. She’s actually managed to keep a clear and calm head in all of this. I would’ve gone mad if I were her.”

Jackson felt grieved. Eric was gone and now something’s happened to Mark. “Maybe she’s already cried, and we just haven’t seen it. I thought you knew her best? That’s enough, I’ll take you home.”

Arianne was able to relax now that she had Summer’s support. Summer was once a powerful woman who had shouldered everything on her own. She had managed West Industries all on her own. Even though she handed the reins to Jackson long ago, she remained adept. Summer was saddened. She never thought that Arianne would end up the same way as she once was. Except, Summer was more fortunate—Atticus returned in the end. Who knows if Mark would return this time?

The search and rescue operation went on for more than half a month, but there was still no news of Mark. Some of the victims’ bodies were uncovered while some could not be found. Due to the environment, they had no choice but to give up.

Arianne found the news difficult to accept. She had to see him, dead or alive. If Mark was dead, she didn't want his remains to lay at the bottom of the cold sea.

She mobilized every Tremont resource into continuing the search around that particular area of sea, and they would not give up until they had found something.

During this time, someone had sent out a report online. This news immediately caused a huge splash and dragged Arianne and Alejandro into a dangerous whirlpool.

The report clearly stated that Alejandro was a Tremont ba*tard and had motives for killing Mark. Of course, the shipwreck was brought into the picture too. However, there wasn't much information on Alejandro, probably because the person who leaked the news didn't know much. However, the information on Arianne was complete in every aspect, from how she entered the Tremont family, to the truth behind the plane crash and how her marriage to Mark had been turned into a form of torturous revenge plot. It accused her and Alejandro of orchestrating the shipwreck together, for the sake of revenge.

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Tiffany released a lifetime's worth of swear words when she saw that report. How could so many people believe in such baseless accusations?

Everyone was speculating over why Arianne wanted to be with the man who had killed her father. There was no other reason, except for revenge. They even said that she must have used unique methods in order to make Mark marry her.

Soon, Tremont Estate was surrounded by reporters, 24/7, all vying to find out the truth from Arianne.

Arianne couldn't leave the house. She had no choice but to ask Summer to take care of the company for now. She had read through the report countless times and realized that something was amiss—the report accused Mark of being the murderer behind the plane crash, but she knew that it was Mark's mother, not Mark himself. That meant that the person behind the report knew about the crash but didn't know the internal specifics. Furthermore, there was nothing else on Alejandro, aside from the fact that he was a b*stard. It didn't even state how Alejando had become a b*stard. That person was most probably the culprit behind the shipwreck. Their motives were too obvious—they were going against her and Alejandro.

Not many knew the details of this matter, so she could count them all with one hand. However, the culprit didn't have a lot of details. That meant that they were not too close to them. At least, it couldn't possibly be Jackson and Tiffany, so she had to consider their closer friends aside from Jackson and Tiffany.

Finally, she was certain of one thing—that person was trying to topple Tremont Enterprises. With Mark's death, only she and Alejandro could continue influencing Tremont Enterprises. If both she and Alejandro were dragged down, Tremont Enterprises would be in danger.

Arianne chose not to comment on the report. If needed, she would only deny it. This report may have caused great effect, but it would only be considered rumors as long as there was no concrete proof. The plane crash had happened so long ago and there was no way to investigate it. As long as she refused to verify the report, it would be considered made-up slander.

As long as Alejandro wasn't forced to do a DNA test, no one would know for sure if he really was Alejandro Smith. However, Mark's shipwreck had drawn the attention of authorities. She wasn't in a position to decide. The police had to investigate the shipwreck. At this rate, Alejandro, who was on the same yacht, would receive a summons. There was a chance that he would be made to do a DNA test, due to the influence from the report. If it was proven that he wasn't the real Alejandro, but a b*stard of the Tremont family, he would be in big trouble.

Soon, the police were sent to the Tremont Estate, saying that they wanted Arianne to come with them to help them in their investigation of the shipwreck. At that moment, Arianne knew that there was no escape for Alejandro.

The public watched as she was brought into a police car. Who knew what the reporters would preach to the public, probably defamation. This was undoubtedly the strongest suit of unscrupulous journalists. How many reports would keep their conscience in a hot scoop like this? Most of them would probably exaggerate in order to gain more eyeballs and wantonly start rumors.

Arianne met Alejandro, who had been summoned as well at the police station. The pair shared a look for a few seconds, then were separated into two different interrogation rooms.

Arianne's interrogator was a righteous-looking policewoman. "Mark Tremont, the CEO of Tremont Enterprises was involved in a shipwreck. Is this true?"