Ruling 1401

Chapter 1401

Arianne asked nothing more. Some things were just meant to stay private.

…

Somewhere in a foreign country laid a hospital that housed a feeble man lying on his bed with his eyes trained on the little screen of his phone. There, shown in the tiny screen, was the dining hall within the Tremont Estate.

A slight smile hung on his lips as his eyes lingered on Arianne and Smore with rapt attention.

Henry, the butler, was massaging his legs. “Are you sure you want to keep your survival a secret from your wife, Mr. Tremont? We couldn’t tell her back then because you were in a coma and in a rather dire state. But now, you’ve passed the most critical phase. That’s a good cue to inform Madam, right?” he suggested. “She’s in a terrible mental shape, Mr. Tremont. She even contracted a serious case of migraine. It’s not at all surprising to find her sitting inside your study because she couldn’t sleep, and she’ll sit there and do nothing until the very next day. I’m just afraid that if this keeps up, she might fall ill in exhaustion. The weariness of the body can often be cured with a night’s rest, but the fatigue of the heart is tormenting and not easily relieved.”

Mark furrowed his eyebrows and replied noncommittally, “She’s not as feeble and fragile as you’re making her out to be. Remember, she has already gone through the worst of this entire ordeal. I’ll return to her when I’m fully recovered. If I see her before then, all I’d do is burden her. Just the affairs in my company are enough trouble—I’m not keen to add myself as another. Speaking of which, I need to repay the family that rescued me.”

“Understood,” Henry answered. “Poor fishermen and their families populate that entire area, so I reckon nothing will be more enriching to them than money itself. I’ll repay the family with a good sum.”

A few months ago, Mark Tremont boarded a freight ship with Alejandro Smith.

The beginning of their trip was as good as it could get. After a whole day, however, the ship encountered a restless sea spurred by non-compliant weather. It was still, by all means, part and parcel of freight ships; since it was not serious turbulence, no one onboard took mind.

Then, suddenly, someone among them cried out, “The ship’s sinking!”

In a flash, chaos erupted on the deck. People panicked. They knew that in a frigid climate, the terrors of a sinking ship could not be understated.

Alejandro had his men inspect the ship before departure. It was fine and in perfect condition to set sail, which could only mean that they had a saboteur on the loose.

Alejandro had forfeited the cargos and dragged Mark to the lifeboats to be rescued. Unfortunately, all of the boats were maliciously ruined while all life jackets were missing.

Mark realized that someone planned this watery death trap for him, a thought that chilled his core. However, he never once suspected Alejandro to be behind it simply because he had been by his side the entire trip. Besides, everyone on board was heading to a watery grave, including Alejandro himself. That

man could have never planned anything as unbeneficial to himself as mutual destruction. It would be far below his usual shrewdness.

The ship sank into the bottom of the waters, and the biting coldness in the water around Mark slowly pierced through his senses.

Just as everyone was floating, helpless and waiting to die, Mark saw the saboteur riding the only lifeboat, escaping the scene. The snake who had done something to an otherwise sturdy ship was alive and running away. No one else had seen the fleeing saboteur except Mark, which was why the popular narrative painted Alejandro as the only survivor.

Not many could withstand freezing seawater, and as time crawled by, more and more began to sink below. Alejandro used what little strength remained to stay next to Mark, remarking, “Who would have thought that we’d die together, huh? How ironic.”

Chapter 1402

Mark responded by regarding Alejandro silently, his mind whirling with thoughts foreign even to himself. For some reason, it suddenly occurred to him that Alejandro’s childhood was even worse than his own. He was a Tremont scion just as much as Mark was, yet they were not treated equally at all.

This was a Tremont’s reparation, one that was a long-time coming and should have been done by his father. Mark decided that he was going to wipe off a debt his father left so that he no longer owed his unscrupulous, stonehearted half-brother anything.

There was also another thought telling Mark that, supposedly, if his mother had not orchestrated that plane crash, Ethan might have been able to live more a bit better, too, even if he was still never going to be treated as a legitimate son of the Tremonts. In other words, Mark might not be so much as wiping his father’s debt clean, but atoning for his mother’s sin.

Whatever the reasons were, they prompted Mark to grab hold of a piece of floating wooden plank and push Alejandro onto it. It was only strong enough to withstand a single adult's weight.

In other words, it was a day when one of them had to die.

Alejandro knew that pushing him up the floating plank had exhausted all of the strength Mark had left and was rapidly sinking into the water because of it. Panicked, Alejandro gripped Mark's hand, yelling, "No, get up here! I'm going down!"

Mark pushed the plank as far away from him as he could. "We both… have families… waiting for us to come home… Doesn't matter if I die or you die, this is… a tragedy through and through… We Tremonts no longer owe you anything, so do good with this life… that I sav—"

A cold wave swallowed his body along with the rest of his words.

Alejandro was saved.

Mark thought he was going to die, but he lived. In a hazy, semiconscious state, he could feel acute pain flaring in his lungs, but he was breathing air. Every breath brought in a sting to his chest, but he could feel lumpy, fine sand beneath his body. He could feel each grain grinding against his skin.

He conjectured that the waves must have washed him ashore somewhere close. Still, he had lost the ability to control his limbs—all those times trapped in icy-cold seawater had done a number to him.

The second stroke of fortune came in the form of local fishermen, who exploded into a commotion upon discovering his body. Mark listened and made out the men's spoken language to be English, though heavily regional and foreign.

For a very long time, Mark remained nigh unconscious as high fever ravaged him. The fishermen were too poor to send him to the hospital, so they exhausted all of the tricks and means they knew to prolong his life to another day. His condition ameliorated a little after a while, providing Mark a brief moment of lucidity that he then seized to make his identity known to his rescuers. He then left them Henry's contact number and told them to get him to the hospital, for if they let him be without professional help, Mark might end up having his bodily functions impaired, if not dead.

By the time he was finally truly recovering much of his senses, Henry was already in his ward. The fishermen had sent him to a very small and unsophisticated hospital, but Henry transferred him to the best one in a nearby city.

Mark's conditions had yet to pass the most critical period, and there were real possibilities that his organs may fail. Hence, he told Henry to keep his survival a secret—the last thing he wanted was to give Arianne hope and then dash it.

He battled the Reaper for days while the season of spring dawned on his home country. He had missed the festive celebrations and fireworks that he had become so accustomed to for years.

It was only recently that his conditions improved dramatically. He knew all about Arianne's happenings. And when he was finally, completely well, he would go back to the country straight away and never leave her side ever again.

Had it not been his brush with death, Mark would not have known this side of Seaton. The man might live abroad often, but Mark always saw him as his second-best friend after Jackson. This would be the first time Mark had ever been wrong in judging a character, but it was not a mistake that he would let slide. Payback was in order, and it would start the moment he returned home.

A month passed. One day, Mark “died in a shipwreck” Tremont reappeared in the public’s view.

One of the nation’s most renowned journalists showed an exclusive interview with the man who miraculously lived, where Mark spoke directly to the camera and addressed the libelous reporting. “Let it be known that it was an egregious case of false reporting. The tragic plane crash from a few years ago has got nothing to do with me, and my wife never expressed reason to avenge it on me. Besides that, Alejandro Smith isn’t a bastard child of the Tremont—imagine believing that the head of the Smith Enterprise is an illegitimate son of the Tremont family! How much more farcical can it get? There is, however, a real conspirator behind this, and I’ll sniff them out and make them pay.

“On a lighter note, I’m thankful to my most stalwart wife, who held the Tremont Enterprise in my absence. Your labor is over, for I have returned.”

Chapter 1403

Mark’s exclusive video interview became a viral internet sensation, yet Arianne knew nothing about it. Since morning, she had been so busy handling company affairs that she had no time to busy herself with such online clamors.

However, her cluelessness was challenged when Sylvain burst through her office door. “Arianne—Arianne!”

The woman in question looked up at him with a deadpanned expression, puzzled at the apparent jubilance he showed. “Why are you excited?”

Sylvain's hand, holding his phone, was slightly but visibly shaking. Suddenly, he realized he had no idea how to break one of the most astronomically-great news to the woman who needed it the most.

Arianne gawked at him as her confusion intensified. "What… What's going on?"

Sylvain recomposed himself with incredible difficulty. He took a deep breath before starting, "I think you should steel yourself before I announce this bombshell."

His boast amused Arianne a little, but she obliged, putting her papers down and intently staring at him. "That's enough teasing. Tell me what's happening right away. I want to see how shocked I might be."

Sylvain approached her and played the interview video.

As Arianne took in the images of the familiar man—his face, his voice—the easygoing expression on her face gradually froze before a deluge of pain, ecstasy, and disbelief washed over her.

She snatched Sylvain's phone and examined the short clip over and over again. After multiple replays, she finally broke out into a trembling, uncertain voice, "T-This is doctored, right?"

Arianne could not believe anything else. This man must have been someone who happened to look like Mark. And yet, the interviewed man talked like Mark, smiled like Mark, blinked like Mark, and used his hand gestures just like Mark. This man even exhibited behavioral ticks that resembled Mark all too

closely. But dared she believe that he was coming back to them, alive? She did not want to get her hopes up just to see herself plunge back into despair.

“It’s the real deal, Arianne!” Sylvain cried, confidence brimming. “What the hell are you skeptical about? This is Mark Tremont, in the flesh! Mr. Tremont isn’t dead—he’s alive, he’s back! And the first thing he did was to clear both your and Alejandro’s names. God, he’s coming home, Arianne! Are you gonna meet him back home or what?”

Arianne did not know if she should laugh or cry. As she laughed, tears broke out of her eyes like the deluge of joy now scouring clumps of anguish built up in her chest over the past few months. The clash between her emotion and the impact they caused quickly shot right beyond her capacity to control. She became madly gladdened, crying and laughing at the same time.

When she finally recovered her composure, she had only one goal: she must see Mark with her own eyes. She must verify that he had returned. She wanted to make sure that this was not a dream!

How many days and nights passed where she spent dreaming about him coming home! She had long given up on what had seemed so unattainable…

Arianne spurred Brian to drive as quickly as the car would allow them as they hurled back to the Tremont Estate. The poor driver, with his hands practically clutching on the wheel in panic, cried, “We can’t go any faster, Madam, we’re approaching legal limits! What could this emergency be? Lord, I just flouted two red stoplights…”

Arianne remained silent while watching the scenery flitting past her window, her excitement and trepidation simmering. The car finally stopped at the Tremont Estate entrance, and she leaped out of the door in a burst of impatience and dashed inside.

Disappointment dawned. Mark was not here. The Tremont Estate was still devoid of his presence. Tiffany was playing with the kids in the yard. Everything was as she left them.

Tiffany noticed her sudden—and appallingly uncalm—appearance and asked quizzically, “Whoa, hey, Ari. Why, uh, are you here? Did you forget something?”

Arianne scooped Smore up into her arms and pecked his cheek. “Take out your phone and see what’s trending.”

Tiffany did as told, suspicious. But when she browsed through the news and saw Mark’s story among them, her eyes widened.

She exclaimed, “He’s. Not. Dead?! He’s coming back? Holy Mother Mary—I… I don’t even know what to say! I don’t even know how to describe what I feel? Other than—well, I told ya so, Ari! Mark’s a tough, unkillable mofo; that’s what he is! There’s no way he would leave you behind—no f**king way! Oh, oh! Maybe he’s on his way home right now as we speak!”

Arianne believed her, so she stayed at home and waited.

However, unbeknownst to her, Mark had thought differently—he thought she was busy in the office, so he set his return stop as the Tremont Tower instead!

Chapter 1404

Mark appeared within the Tremont Tower a few moments later. From the entrance to the forty-sixth floor, his presence was marked by widened eyes upon widened eyes, as rapt attention was nailed to him while he sauntered through his office. Had it not been for Henry, his stalwart butler, following Mark's movement, no one would have believed him to be the genuine article.

Mark was surprised upon not finding Arianne, so he asked a dumbfounded Davy, "Where is she?"

Davy was so overwhelmed that his answer came out as a stammer. "M-M-Madam, uh, she r-returned home, I think? Sylvain came to her excitedly, so she probably heard of your return from him… Um, Mr. Tremont, are you alright?"

"Do I look otherwise?" Mark replied flatly.

As he talked, he crossed the room and sat behind the desk. He could smell a whiff of fragrance, no doubt left by Arianne. He marveled at the fact that she had begun to use a perfume; it smelled soft and sweet, just like the woman herself.

Mark looked at the pile of undone documents on the desk and began to pick them up. She must be exhausted all this time, he thought.

Seeing him casually starting to work, Davy asked tentatively, "Uh-hem, Mr. Tremont? Are you not gonna contact Mrs. Tremont?"

"Let me finish all of the work she needs to do today so she doesn't have to return later, okay?" Mark intoned without lifting his head from his work. "I'll go home as soon as I finish. It'll be nice to gift her a well-deserved long break for all that she has done."

Davy was speechless. How could his boss remain so unperturbed even after all that had happened? Did he not want to drive straight home and cuddle with his wife and son? How could any normal person act this calmly under the circumstances he had gone through? It was as though he did not just cheat death but had just gone on a very, very lengthy overseas trip!

Of course, Davy was only brave enough to snark within the confines of his head. He had no guts to say those things aloud.

Finishing all of the paperwork had taken two hours out of Mark's time. Pleased, Mark finally rose to his feet and declared to Henry, "Let's go home."

The butler affirmed him, and the two left the office.

He watched the familiar cityscape and breathed the city's familiar air. He had never felt so fortunate. Over the past few months, the only air he breathed reeked of fish and other kinds of disgusting, foul smells. All he heard was that same heavily-accented English.

It felt good to be home.

Mark abruptly fell into steps before the front door. He had been gone for so long. What kind of face would Arianne look when she saw him?

He heard Smore's playful laughter ringing in his ears and found the strength to advance. And then, suddenly, Smore burst out from within the house and cried, "Daddy's home!"

Smore would always rush to the door whenever he heard the sound of car engines. But this was the only time when his expectation was met—Mark had come home.

Behind Smore, Tiffany—with her son in arms—and Arianne emerged.

Arianne and Mark linked eyes. It was only for a few brief seconds, but the moments lasted as long as centuries.

Neither of them said anything, for all of the litanies that needed to be said were told through the eyes alone.

Chapter 1405

Mary was the one who broke the silence. "Mr. Tremont, you really have come back!"

It was the last confirmation Arianne needed to know that the man standing in front of her was real.

It's been a long, long time.

She rushed forward and dove into the chest of the man she thought about in the day and dreamed about at night. She was acutely aware of how feeble and emaciated his body had become compared to the sturdy frame she remembered. He had stumbled a bit from the impact, but at the last step, he stood steady and locked his arms around her into a tight, unyielding embrace.

Unfortunately, Arianne's force was a little too much for his chest, and soon, his yet-fully-recovered lungs began to protest with a fit of coughs.

Arianne refused to let go. "Where have you been? Why have you only come back now? I thought… I thought you were dead! I thought you were never coming back. Do you have any idea how hard it was for me to… to go through the motion over these few cursed months?"

Mark ruffled her hair gently and increased the force of his hug. "It's alright. It's over. I'm home. I'm never going away again."

Smore was whining for his father to hug him too, so Ariane released herself from the embrace with tears in her eyes and shoved the toddler to him. "Smore… Smore has been crying for his Daddy… for so long. Finally, t-today's the day… when his wish c-came true…"

Mark gazed at Smore with a soft glow in his eyes. "Daddy's home, sweetie. He's never gonna leave you again."

Smore understood him. He threw his arms around his father's neck and refused to let go.

It was up to Henry to remind him. "Mr. Tremont, we should get inside. There is quite the strong gale today; it might be a bit baleful to your current condition."

Mark nodded in agreement. He held Smore up in his arm and held Ariane's hand with the other before the trio entered the house.

Tiffany watched the family's long-awaited reunion and finally felt earnest relief for the first time over so many months. "Mark Tremont, I'll have you know that I've been living in the Tremont Estate for so many months to help take care of your little darling. I'm practically their second mother now! You owe me, big time!"

"What would you like as a show of my gratitude?" he replied. "I'm all ears."

Frankly, Tiffany intended it as a jest—so when she saw how serious Mark was, she quickly felt embarrassed. "Uh, h-hey! I mean, I don't have anything in particular in mind other than, well, could you please never pull off something this legitly terrifying again? Please don't ever crush Ari's heart ever again, y-you hear me? Be by her side forever and ever and… be kind to her."

Mark's reply was solemn and resolute. "I promise."

Now that Mark had returned, Tiffany lost the only reason to continue her stay in the Tremont Estate. Immediately, she requested Mary to help her pack up for her own return trip. It had been months since she had gone back to White Water Bay Villa, or went to see her mother, or even have her absolute-number-one-favorite-food, hotpots. She was beyond eager to tick off all of the boxes in her desire list.

Mark ordered Brian to send Tiffany home after her frenzied activity of packing up her belongings. Once they left, there were only Arianne and Mark in the room, staring at each other blankly.

Apparently, once the initial emotional roller-coaster was over, the two of them quickly returned to the way they were before—still as taciturn with one another as ever. The fact that the two of them had separated for over a few months also made the matter worse because suddenly, the Tremonts found their other half a little… estranged.

Chapter 1406

Arianne shyly stared into his eyes. “You’ve… lost weight. What have you been up to over the past few months?”

Mark was different from her. He wasn’t shy, so he boldly stared at her, surveying her from head to toe. One look alone was not enough. “I was washed onto a nearby shore after the shipwreck. I drank too much seawater and it was too cold. I was dying, but a fisherman saved me. It was a small, poor little place. The family that took me in used primitive medication to save my life. Now that I’m mentioning it, it’s kind of funny. The people there had some strange beliefs. They even asked someone to perform a ritual. I guess it’s kind of like… witchcraft? This dragged out for a few months. I thought I was going to die from the delay. Thank goodness I managed to contact Henry. He took me to the hospital then. I was in bad shape. I don’t know if I would survive, so I didn’t dare tell you until I was sure that I could come back to you alive, then go straight to you. I was afraid that you’d abandon everything to look for me if you found out that I was alive. It would have been a long journey, and I didn’t want to tire you out. So, I thought I should just come home. You’ve been through a lot. You’ve handled the company beautifully too.”

Only now did Arianne understand why Henry kept coming up with excuses to go out around Christmas time. She didn’t have time to ask, but now she knew that he had gone to look for Mark.

She felt resentful towards Mark’s methods. “What do you mean ‘didn’t want to tire me out’? Your survival would have saved me. You have no idea… how much pain I’ve been through…”

The look in Mark’s eyes slowly burned with heat. “I know… I know it all…”

Arianne felt embarrassed as he stared at her. She hung her head. “Henry must have updated you on everything that’s happened at home. I don’t have to tell you then. By the way… Jackson, the Smiths, and the Larks all gave me a loan when the company was in trouble. I’ve turned their loans into shares in Tremont Enterprise. I don’t think you know that. Henry wasn’t at home when I did that.”

Mark didn’t seem to react much. “I’m confident in your decisions. You don’t have to tell me.”

Arianne remembered another thing. “By the way… everyone thinks you’re dead. Due to the circumstances, I’ve transferred Tremont Enterprise into my name. Now that you’re back, we can change it again. Let’s start the process.”

Mark suddenly chuckled. “Aren’t we married? Do you have to divide it all so clearly? It doesn’t matter whose name the company’s under. I’m willing to give you anything I have, even everything. I’m exhausted. I need some rest.”

Only then did Arianne realize that he had traveled a long distance and hadn’t stopped yet. She quickly got up and helped him upstairs. She swiftly changed the covers on the bed. He probably still had germaphobia. He’s had such a long journey and should be given a calm environment for sleep.

Mark quietly stood at the doorway, watching her work. Aristotle stood next to him, hugging his leg. He wasn’t in the mood to entertain this lump of extra weight on his leg. He only wanted to scoop Arianne into his arms…

“Mary, take Smore to the courtyard to play.”

Hearing this, Mary quickly dragged Smore away and softly chastised him too. “Your dad’s had a long journey home. You should let them have some space. Why are you being such a busybody? Come, I’ll play with you.”

After straightening out the bed, Mark wrapped his arms around Arianne from behind before she could straighten up. His embrace still felt the same as ever, warm yet slightly overpowering. The smell of his scent drove her wild.

She was slightly flustered.

Chapter 1407

It was proven that he was wilder than her imaginations. Unfortunately, someone forgot to close the window, causing Aristotle, who was playing in the courtyard, to question Mary inquisitively.

Mary blushed, unsure of how to explain it to him. “We-well… It’s not that… How could your daddy possibly be hitting your mommy? They’re probably just biting each other’s ears.”

Aristotle’s little face filled with fear. “Can pewple… eat ears?”

Mary was at her wits’ end. She could only cover Aristotle’s ears. “Let’s go to the kitchen. I’ll make something for you to eat.”

Mark finally fell asleep when the sky grew dark. He had lost a lot of weight and the outline of his face seemed sharper and more prominent. His already long and slender fingers were now boney. Arianne's heart ached as she stared at him. Both of them had suffered greatly during this period of time.

By the time she put on her clothes and arrived downstairs, Mary had already prepared dinner. "Madam, would you like to eat?" she asked in a soft voice. "Isn't Mr. Tremont still asleep?"

Arianne nodded. "Mm, he's still asleep. Just fallen asleep, in fact. No need to call him for dinner. Just whip something up when he's awake. By the way, I've heard that he's developed a cough. Is there any kind of nutritional food to help him with that?"

"Yes," Mary replied. "I'll make it for him when he wakes up. Henry says that his lungs developed this cough after being waterlogged. It won't heal completely, but it'll probably get better if we give him the right nutrition."

Arianne felt bad, but as long as he was alive, it was good enough for her.

As she carried Aristotle to the dinner table for dinner, Aristotle suddenly bit her ear, gently, and it tingled slightly. She felt goosebumps all over. "What are you doing?"

"Da-die bit ma-mie's ear. Ma-mie was cwying," Aristotle explained with a serious look on his face.

The corners of Arianne's lips twitched. This… was a sin… She wasn't crying!

That night, Arianne finally had a good night's sleep. It was her first restful night in months. She clung onto Mark the entire night, refusing to let go, even in her dreams.

The next morning, when she woke up, Mark stared at her in amusement and teased her. "I wouldn't have realized how much you loved me if I hadn't almost died. You were even calling out my name in your sleep and held onto me for the entire night."

Arianne was stubborn and refused to admit it. "I was not… It's getting late. Get up. Are you going to the office today? You can rest for a while if you're still tired. I can take care of things for a while."

Mark's expression turned serious. "No need. You have a good rest at home. Leave the company to me. There are many things beyond your skills, for example… Seaton S. Bart."

Chapter 1408

Arianne gnashed her teeth hatefully. "That hypocrite. I wish he was dead! Thank goodness Sonya didn't go along with him. She handed her shares over to me."

"Mm," Mark replied, then got down from bed and went to the bathroom. She awkwardly averted her gaze but couldn't help stealing a few more glances.

After breakfast, Mark went to the office straightaway. Arianne stood at the doorway with Aristotle, watching his car leave. It was as if they were transported back to the past, another typical morning.

Of course, Seaton had heard of Mark's return. He never expected this, not in a thousand years. His plan was completely foiled and his confidence disappeared into a puff of smoke. Mark's return signaled the

return of Tremont Enterprises at its peak. He was no match for that. He quickly sold his mansion and fled from the country, hiding himself away as far as possible. Having known Mark for so many years, they knew each other well enough.

Even so, he still feared retribution from Mark. Hence, it was now his turn to be plagued with nightmares.

Aerse had been thoroughly used by Seaton. Now that Mark was back, in a bid to be reinstated as a shareholder of Tremont Enterprises, he approached him to betray Seaton.

Of course, Mark allowed him to see him.

“Seaton Bart has crossed the line,” Aerse snapped indignantly. “He started plotting against Tremont Enterprises right after your shipwreck and forced Mrs. Tremont into taking multiple loads in order to overcome that hurdle. He even threatened me, forcing me to help collect shares from the other shareholders. I had no choice but to agree. You’re probably not familiar with his methods. I have a family, I was scared… Mr. Tremont, I’m so glad that you’re back. I never wanted a divestment. Could you please reinstate my shares?”

Mark calmly listened to him, then promptly replied, “Nope. You don’t deserve it.”

Aerse gasped. “Mr. Tremont, you have to believe me. I didn’t want to do it!”

Mark remained as calm as ever. “I believe you, okay? But you still don’t deserve it. I’ve been planning to recollect the fragments of Tremont Enterprises’ shares for a while. Thank you for your help. I’m very satisfied with the distribution of shares in Tremont Enterprises. Hence, I will overlook everything you’ve done. That’s all. Based on my knowledge, Seaton never forced you, but enticed you with a 10% share of

Tremont Enterprises. Some things will cause animosity once revealed. Aerse, I'm leaving you with some dignity. Be grateful. The door is right over there. Leave."

Aerse was under the impression that Mark was completely in the dark. He only knew the truth when Mark suddenly exposed him. He was no match for Mark or Seaton. He ran out of Tremont Tower with an ashen look on his face and only heaved a sigh of relief when he saw sunlight outside the building. He was just glad to be alive!

Not long after Aerse had left, Alejandro arrived.

Mark would rather see Aerse than Alejandro. He wasn't sure why.

However, he let Alejandro in anyway. He did not plan on chatting with Alejandro. "What is it?" he asked as he buried his head in work.

Seeing his reaction, Alejandro knew that their relationship would not improve just because they both had a near-death experience. Hence, Alejandro did not try to curry favor. "Nothing, I've only heard about your miraculous survival, so I came here to see if it's true. I'd have to live in guilt for a while if you were really dead."

Chapter 1409

"Guilty?" Mark laughed incredulously. "Only normal people would react this way. Are you normal?"

Alejandro was enraged. "You… Forget it. I won't argue with you. But… still, thank you."

Mark tensed a little, then soon went back to normal. “I’m hosting dinner at White Water Bay Café tonight. Having you around wouldn’t be too much. Come if you want, you may bring your family. Let me be blunt, if you dare stare at Tiffany, I will gouge your eyes out.”

Alejandro’s gaze darkened momentarily. “Is Melanie not prettier than Tiffany? I don’t remember having a fondness for other people’s wives…” Who knew if he was lying to other people, or to himself. He had probably given up completely after his last meeting with Tiffany.

That evening, after work, Mark went back to Tremont Estate to pick Arianne up for dinner at White Water Bay Café. They didn’t plan on bringing Aristotle at first, as having a kid along would be tiresome. However, Aristotle insisted on coming along and he couldn’t bring himself to refuse the poor little thing, so he tagged along in the end.

This time, he wasn’t only treating Jackson and Alejandro to dinner, but he had specifically asked Jackson to bring Summer along too. Summer had helped Arianne manage Tremont Enterprises; her contributions were not unnoticed.

By the time they had arrived at the reserved private room, everyone else was already there. Alejandro had brought Melanie along. By sheer coincidence, Melanie and Tiffany had brought their children along respectively. All three families were in attendance.

Tiffany’s son, Plato, had just begun learning to walk, and would share whispers with Aristotle incessantly. No one knew what they were talking about. However, this was much better than their first meeting, when they fought. Melanie’s daughter was still small, too young to play with the two boys

Summer was surprised at Alejandro's attendance but didn't say anything about it. She felt sick after discovering that Alejandro was really Ethan. However, when she saw that Jackson and Tiffany seemed fine with it, she saw no need to feel overly uneasy.

At the dinner table, the most popular question was how Mark managed to survive. Mark patiently reiterated the events. His occasional cough unnerved Arianne, but a cough was a small price to pay for his survival.

During dinner, Aristotle asked to pee, so Arianne took him to the washroom, and Tiffany tagged along with her son. "How was it? Mark has been away for so long. What's the battle status from last night?"

Arianne glanced guiltily at Aristotle, and when she saw that he wasn't paying attention to Tiffany's question, she replied in a lowered voice, "Could you not ask these questions in front of the kids? They can understand us, you know."

"Bullsh*t," Tiffany laughed, like a complete bimbo. "My son's an idiot. He can't understand a thing. He can't even string an entire sentence. How could he possibly understand our conversation? Tell me. It must have been wild. Mark's suffered a lot. He's lost a lot of weight."

Arianne didn't answer immediately. Instead, she asked, "You and Jackson haven't been together for a while too. Your battle status must have been wild."

Tiffany wasn't as hesitant as her. She giggled while blushing. "Of course. I still can't close my legs…"

Arianne was exasperated. "Shut up. I'm going to have to wash my ears if you keep this up!"

Chapter 1410

“We’re all adults here,” Tiffany laughed. “Why are you acting so shy? We talk about everything.”

They went back to the private room after dealing with the little ones. Melanie’s daughter was bawling, and Melanie was holding the baby, trying to coax her with an apologetic look on her face.

After a long, drawn-out attempt, Melanie was at her wits’ end. “Maybe I should take her home? She’s probably not used to the environment. That’s why she’s crying.”

Alejandro reached out and took the baby into his arms. “It’s fine. You eat. I’ll deal with her. We rarely go out for dinner; why should you go home halfway through it?”

Melanie’s heart thumped. This was Alejandro’s first time showing her consideration in front of outsiders. The first time he’s ever cared about her feelings.

Thanks to Alejandro’s careful, patient coaxing, baby Melissa slowly stopped crying. It was clear that he was used to pacifying babies.

Summer felt more relaxed when she saw this. Alejandro seemed like a good husband and father now. He certainly wasn’t going to try anything with Tiffany anymore.

After dinner, the women took their babies and went home. Mark, Jackson, and Alejandro went to a bar. Their objective wasn't to have fun, but to discuss business. The bar was noisy, so they needn't worry about being overheard. The lively atmosphere was just nice.

Once they were seated, Jackson asked, "What's the plan, Mark? Seaton's hiding somewhere out of the country. He probably won't show his face again, afraid that you'd get rid of him."

Mark sipped on his whiskey, enjoying its smooth taste, then replied, "It doesn't matter where he is. Alejandro and I are not the only survivors from that shipwreck. Seaton's accomplice did too. The yacht and lifeboats were destroyed after we set sail. Seaton's man took the only lifeboat left and escaped while everyone else was drowning. I saw it with my own eyes. There wasn't a lot of light on the surface of the sea, and the weather was bad. All I know is that he was a slightly overweight man. I'm sure we'll find something if we look through the information of everyone on that boat. It may not be easy to fish out the dead, but the same can't be said for the living."

The yacht belonged to Alejandro, so naturally, he received the lovely task of sifting through the yacht passengers' details. Upon learning that someone else had gotten away, he slammed his hand on the table and exclaimed, "How did I not notice that? Things will be much easier now that there's another survivor. I'll have this investigated ASAP. As long as we can find a witness, Seaton will not escape. That is, unless he's willing to give up everything for the sake of his own life!"

Jackson rubbed the space between his brows. "We've been friends for so many years. This is disgusting."

Mark had grown indifferent to Seaton's betrayal. "People like him don't deserve our friendship. I will make him pay for what he's done to me."

Once they all went home, Alejandro immediately told Jett to pull out the list of passengers on the yacht. After checking off the bodies they'd found, more than half of the list remained. There was only one

witness among them. The rest were resting in peace at the bottom of the sea. They couldn't make an accurate guess, so they had to go door to door and interrogate the passengers' families. If that person was alive, he would have contacted his family members. This was their only way of finding a lead.

That man must have received a huge sum of cash from Seaton after completing his mission. Naturally, he wouldn't stay in the country like a sitting duck. However, they had to confirm his identity first.

After sending out men to investigate, Alejandro sat quietly in his study, waiting for news. His mind was plagued with thoughts, so he couldn't sleep.