Ruling 1491

Chapter 1491

Smore stood at the base of the stairs, glum. He had wanted to present a picture he drew to Mark, only to have his father ignore him.

His distress made Ariane's heart ache. She hated it when unhappy feelings between parents were taken out on innocent bystanders, especially when Smore was one of them.

She approached the hurt child and held him in her arms. "Daddy's not in a good mood," she cooed. "He didn't mean to neglect you. I know, how about you show me what you made?"

A smile broke out of Smore, who solemnly—as though it was a treasure—presented his art to his mother. Arianne examined it closely before praising with a smile. "This is amazing, sweetie! You're really good at drawing! Alright, would you like to play with Granny for a bit? Mommy needs to coddle your Daddy now because he's in a bad mood. He needs someone to be nice to him, like what I do with you when you're upset, okay? It's very sad, too, if everyone ignores Daddy, right?"

Smore nodded in understanding and ran away to Mary.

Arianne heaved a sigh of relief. She began climbing the stairs.

Immediately after she pushed the door to his study open, Arianne heard a low, slightly impatient growl from Mark. "Leave me alone!"

Arianne halted her footsteps intuitively. “Hey, don’t tell me you fancy yourself at Smore’s age, being petulant and difficult whenever you feel like it, Mark. For one, I never imagined you would ever lose your cool like this!”

Mark deliberately ignored her, choosing to fidget with a beautifully-designed lighter instead.

Arianne marched forward and snatched the lighter away. “Sorry, but this is off-limits. I’m not letting you smoke behind my back, mister. Isn’t it a habit of yours to go straight to the showers after coming home from work? It’s almost time for dinner, so go and bathe already.”

Mark, still silent, fidgeted with a pen this time.

Arianne broke out into a helpless sigh. “Are you done, or is this gonna go on forever? It’s not… It’s not like I’ve judged you as anything specifically, have I? You’re the one who’s overreacting. Between you and Seaton, if someone had to die, then I’d definitely support your decision. We’d love to forgive others, yes, but the other side might not necessarily think that way of us. Back there, I was just… I was just acting out of intuition, okay? So stop throwing this weird, sulky tantrum already! To me, the most important thing is that you live, safe and sound.”

Arianne wanted to emphasize that her opinion was precisely that—just her opinion on the matter. It did not mean whether she supported Mark using the same kind of tactics all the time.

Mark shot her a sidelong glance. “Tell me then. What kind of person am I to you?”

Arianne knew just the right words to his heart. “An eccentric dude with a capricious nature who somehow treats me extremely well?”

The latter part of her answer palpably softened the edges on his face. “Good. That’s all I want you to know. So, understand that you shouldn’t ever pry anything I don’t want you to know about from me, not even at my last moments.”

Her lips thinned in silence. She supposed some things were best left in the dark, lest the knowledge sowed seeds of distrust. She had no right to ask him to do anything, not when she knew how much pain and burden he had shouldered alone since he was eighteen. Arianne had no idea how much he had been through, especially since he was a master at hiding all of it from her. Taking her ignorance into account, Arianne thought that maybe she had no right to demand him to be more merciful.

Suddenly, Mark pulled her close and rested his head on her chest like a child who just wanted comfort. “I’m so tired.”

Arianne sat on his lap and patted his back in pity. “I know, I know. I’m sorry that I can’t help you shoulder more of your pain.”

Mark drew a deep breath. “You being by my side is all I need from you. It doesn’t matter what I do; I’m always me. So please, don’t come up with bizarre, nightmarish ideas of who I am, okay? Every time I see you, I feel stressed, I feel pressure walling me. I worry that I’m not good enough for you or that you secretly think me terrifying. I just want you to know that no matter what happens, I’ll never treat you that way.”

Arianne finally understood Mark. No wonder every little thing she did, no matter how microscopic it was, could blow him up. His rage was not leveled at her but himself.

“I know, I’m not scared of you, nor do I think you are terrifying. Well, then, Sir Mark Tremont, methinks you have had enough time to blow off steam, haven’t you? Time to show some love to your son. You haven’t given him any attention since coming home; it stung him.”

Chapter 1492

Mark raised his head and gazed at her with faint but undeniable wildness in his eyes. “He can wait a little longer.”

Arianne’s eyes linked to his, and her heart fluttered. “C-Can we not? Dinner’s still waiting for us… Why is it that you always get the kick anytime, anywhere? God, can we please just talk about this later?”

He refused by catching the edge of Arianne’s sleeve with his teeth and yanking it away, exposing the latter’s chiseled collar bones. His lips swooped down on her neck.

A jolt of a soft but warm sensation rocked Arianne’s mind, and her arms automatically wrapped around his neck—

When the two exited Mark’s study, the scarlet flush on her face had yet to recede, though Mark looked as though he had not just answered his carnal calling. He quickly picked up Smore after descending the stairs and before taking their seats around the dining table.

Kids say the darndest things, and Smore, too young to know fear, called Mark out right to the man’s face. “Daddy wants coddling. Daddy’s a baby!”

Mark's lips twitched. "Who told you that? Of course, a brat like you who doesn't know jack about stress and distress doesn't need coddling. All you do every day is eat, sleep, and play till it's time to eat and sleep again! Your life's easy."

Smore stuck out his tongue. "Nope, Mommy says people only coddle babies!"

Mark leered at Arianne with a darkened expression. "I didn't need anyone to 'coddle!' That's not true at all—who told you that, hmmmmmm?"

Arianne conveniently ignored the topic and sent a spoonful of food into Smore's mouth. "Shh, chow time."

Mary, who was listening in from the side, was almost out of breath from laughter. "Oh Lord, Smore's Lil' Mr. Precocious, isn't he? He knows everything! We might be looking at a Lil' Einstein here!"

Just then, Mark's phone rang. He glanced at the screen for a second and excused himself from the table, walking to a far-end corner before accepting it. "Hello."

Alejandro sounded noticeably upset. "Turns out that Seaton's a lot slicker than we gave him credit for. He used the old 'bait-and-switch' and let everyone up there think he's already dead while the real him, annoyingly alive, escaped from prison."

Mark was not surprised by the news, mostly because he had seen the man in question. "A confirmation of him being alive is good enough. He didn't just escape—he's now active in the Capital. You better not think you're out of this, Alejandro. Hunt him down through any means necessary; the entire city could

be uprooted, for all I care, if it means he turns up at our feet. Right now, he's a ghost to the law. His death will be unknown to the public—just as he deserves."

Alejandro let out a soft scoff. "Oh dear, you're ordering me around now? I dunno, man; if I were Seaton, my first target would be you. You should watch your back more than I do."

Mark's voice turned steely. "I wasn't ordering you—I was warning you. You would do best to remember that his incarceration resulted from a joint effort between the two of us. He could start his vengeance through you first, too."

When Mark returned to the table after hanging up the call, Arianne asked immediately, "Who was that? You don't look, uh, so good."

"Alejandro called," Mark replied candidly, "He confirmed that Seaton is alive and has escaped from his prison cell. That means the person I saw was, without a doubt, that snake. He must have followed me to the wedding that day, though I hadn't given him the chance to silence me."

Cognizant that the situation had escalated, Arianne quickly turned to Mary. "Please do not take Smore out of the house for the next few days. Let him stay at home; he would be safe here. Curses, what does it take to maintain peace in life these days?"

Mary was glum. "Problem is, Smore's outgrown playing in his house. He always wants to go outside. Admittedly, I've never brought him anywhere crazy—just the nearby park, really. But anyway, when the time struck, his kick came, and he started yelling about wanting to play outside. But now, we can't even go to the park anymore?" she ranted. "That Seaton S. Bart! What's a powerful, rich guy doing, throwing his good life away by murdering so many people with this evil scheme that landed him in jail? And now he's gonna make sure we don't live in peace, too! The Lord knows how I wish I understood people like

him. He used to be this famous big cheese in business before he was in jail, right? So, what was he trying to do by trading everything he had for nothin', huh?"

Chapter 1493

Arianne pursed her lips. "Some people seek thrill in gambits like these, I suppose. They win everything when they succeed, and they lose everything if they don't, sometimes costing them their life. Either way, no matter how much Smore wants it, don't succumb to his demand and let him out of the house. Seaton must have come here illegally, and now that he's more or less without an identity, he leaves very little trails behind. That means tracking him is gonna be a challenge, so we ought to keep our eyes peeled."

No sooner than she finished did her phone ring. It was a call from Tiffany, and since Arianne was in the middle of dinner, she openly accepted the call and put the call on loud-speaker.

And that was how Tiffany's despairing, hoarse shriek reverberated within the dining room. "Aaaaariiiii! J-Jackson's been stabbed! We called 911, and we're in an ambulance now, heading t-t-to the hospital. I don't—can't—I'm scared to tell his parents. I… I just want you to be here with me, please! I'm so scared, Ari, I'm terrified!"

Arianne could hear white noises crashing into her head. "S-Stabbed? Where? He's not critically wounded, is he? Hang on, I'm coming to you right away. Calm down, okay? Remember the baby, Tiffie, remember the baby! Don't panic; get a leash on your emotions. I'm coming right away!"

"H-He has fainted, he's down," Tiffany described between tears. "He's got so much blood… Help me, Ari, I'm scared! Please be quick…"

By the time the call ended, Mark had already snatched his keys to the car, and the two drove to the hospital.

They arrived when Jackson was still in the operation studio. There, Arianne found Tiffany in the corridor, her eyes red and puffy from sobbing nonstop. She clasped her hands around her poor friend and kept comforting her. “He’s gonna be alright, Tiffie, he will be fine. Look at your poor eyes, they’re so sore! Please don’t cry; it’s alright. We’re here with you.”

Mark’s eyebrows were locked together in the middle. “What happened? Why was he suddenly stabbed?”

“W-We were in the parking basement of the mall, and I wasn’t feeling very good because of the baby, so I told him we should go home earlier than planned. T-Then, I got into the car first while h-h-he p-packed our stuff into the trunk, and then out of n-n-nowhere, there was this guy running toward him, and he just s-s-s-stabbed him in the back! He looked like he was hugging him from where I was looking! I couldn’t—I didn’t even know what was happening until J-J-Jackson j-just plopped down on the floor, a-and only then I understood what happened!” Tiffany sobbed. “I wanted to get out of the car—t-to see him, to help him—but that guy locked me inside, and then, he s-s-stared at me for a very long time before running away… When I finally got out of the car, J-J-Jackson… He’d already lost consciousness—he was bleeding everywhere… B-Blood, just e-e-everywhere… Jesus Christ, what if he dies? What am I gonna do? What about our baby?”

Mark’s voice quaked. “Describe how the assailant looked. Did you see him clearly enough?”

Tiffany shook her head helplessly. “He was wearing a black cap and had this mask on; everything about his face was shielded from me. His pants and shirt also seemed black—I can’t tell for real in the parking basement when it’s pretty dark there. All I saw was this man in black dashing behind Jackson—b-but his sleeves were short, and his skin was a bit fair, and I think there was some tattoo on his arm. I can’t tell it exactly but I think the tattoo was quite large? Look, I was panicking and my head went blank. How the hell could I notice all the details?”

“It was Seaton S. Bart,” Mark concluded. “He’s got a large tattoo etched on his arm. I can’t believe that scumbag would take it out on Jackson first! That piece of sh*t!”

Arianne was a little skeptical. “Are you sure? After coming here, his goal must be to eliminate you and Alejandro immediately before the two of you can take him out. Why would he waste what precious time he has on Jackson? That debacle had very little to do with Jackson on a whole. You and Alejandro were the ones who kicked him into jail.”

“Remember what Seaton was trying to do before I returned? He wanted to annex Tremont Enterprise as his own, but Jackson lent you quite a loan and saved you from that,” Mark explained, a little wearily. “He used to be buddies with Jackson too in the past, so maybe this is why Jackson’s help embittered him. Had he not lent you that sum, Tremont Enterprise might already have fallen. Besides, Jackson was the least wary among the three of us, since Alejandro and I had known of Seaton’s return only a while ago. I didn’t even have the time to warn Jackson about this—I honestly hadn’t expected that bastard to harm him first.”

Tiffany had cried so much that she was running out of tears. Now, her eyes were beginning to look a little glassy and unfocused. “Seaton S. Bart—? He… He did this just because Jackson helped you guys protect a company? That’s all it took for him to want Jackson dead? W-W-Why can’t he be the one who dies instead, huh? That... That son of a b*tch!”

Mark thinned his lips in silence. What’s done is done. Now, the only thing they could do was to pray that Jackson made it out alive.

Chapter 1494

A long time passed until the doors to the operation studio were pushed open, revealing a surgeon in a large white coat. “Any of his family here?”

Tiffany wiped her tears away before approaching him, exclaiming, “Me! How is he?”

The surgeon took off his mask and breathed a sigh of relief. “No harm was made to his vital organs, though his right kidney sustained slight, non-critical damage. He lost quite a lot of blood from the assault, but he should be fine with a timely blood transfusion. Doesn’t this count as a case of crime already? Perhaps you should take this to the cops.”

Tiffany looked at Mark with a plea for help in her eyes. He shook his head and replied, “We’ll handle this, Doctor. Thank you.”

Filing a report to the police was unthinkable. Seaton’s own country recognized him as a dead man, so if they reported this attack to the authorities and exposed Seaton as alive, it would turn into an investigation involving two or more sovereign nations, which was a typically unbearably sisyphean. Even if the law apprehended Seaton, the worst he could get would be extradition to his original country before resuming his time in jail.

After the surgery, Jackson was placed in a normal ward. He had yet to regain his senses, while his face was so devoid of color that he appeared as white as paper. Tiffany watched over him tearfully as she controlled herself from sobbing too loudly.

Mark had been pacing up and down the corridor outside the ward, making calls. One could only suspect that he was coordinating an urgent hunt for Seaton.

Arianne, on the other hand, had been sitting next to Tiffany the whole time. It had been a mortifying incident, made even more nerve-wracking by the fact that no one knew who could be Seaton’s next target.

A while later, Alejandro and Melanie appeared too. Alejandro had stopped by the corridor to discuss something with Mark instead of entering the ward with Melanie, who brought Tiffany dinner.

“You haven’t had anything, have you, Tiffany? That’s not good for an expecting mother. You can’t starve,” she said, before adding, “Oh, hello Arianne. What about you? Sorry, I forgot about yours while I came here. I brought only enough for one.”

Arianne stretched her lips but gave up before she could form a smile. Her mood was just that bad. “No, it’s fine. I had mine. That’s so sweet of you, Melanie—to be honest, I myself forgot to ask Tiffie if she had her dinner. The first thing I did was to rush to the hospital… God, my mind was a mess.”

Melanie sighed. “I can’t imagine otherwise. No one would possibly feel okay after knowing this happened. I’m just glad everyone’s alright.”

Tiffany grimaced. “I don’t have an appetite right now, to be honest. But thanks anyway, Melanie.”

Melanie patted Tiffany’s shoulder good-naturedly. “I’m your friend; there’s no need to thank me. If you don’t feel like eating anything solid, I did bring a bowl of warm soup. It's better than nothing and most certainly good enough for the baby. Um, Tiffany, you were there with Jackson when it happened, right? I’m so relieved that he didn’t take you on, too. Lord, when I overheard Alejandro’s phone conversation, I was scared half to death. I was so terrified that you might have gotten hurt, too!”

With a pout, Tiffany burst into tears again. “J-J-Jackson couldn’t even stand on his feet after Seaton stabbed him! And still, he wanted me to lock the car doors! I wanted to lock the door shut, too, but I also couldn’t bear leaving him alone out there, completely defenseless and vulnerable for more attacks! Jesus Christ, it was just so frightening that I can’t even—oh God. Praise the Lord, Seaton was probably worried that someone might see him or something, which is why he must have run away only after one

attempt. B-but before he went, do you know what he did? He looked at me—in the eyes—through the window. He. Looked. At. Me. It was at least half a minute! I swear to God, it was the longest f**king thirty seconds in my life. Even thinking about it now scares the sh*t out of me!”

Chapter 1495

Melanie presented a small bowl of soup to Tiffany, cooing, “Hey, hey! It’s okay, we know what happened. You must be scared out of your wits, aren’t you? Here, let the warmth sooth you.”

A little while later, Jackson’s senses gradually returned. Seeing him opening his eyes, Tiffany loomed and threw herself onto him with a gleeful hug. “I-I can’t believe it—I thought you were gonna die! You frickin’ scared me!”

Jackson’s eyes popped wide open as traces of bloodshot redness surfaced to his cheeks. Arianne, noticing his uncanny look, quickly pulled Tiffany away from him. “Let him go, girl! He’s still weak from his surgery and everything—what you’re doing can really hurt!”

Jackson exhaled a long breath after he was freed from Tiffany’s clutches. “I… I swear to God, you’re gonna kill me by accident one day, bae… Go and see if my wound’s torn open!”

Melanie swiftly pulled his sheet away and examined him. “You’re fine, Jackson. All’s good, no worries. It probably only hurts a bit more now because the anesthetics are wearing off,” she answered. “Tiffany didn’t mean to crush you; she was just too happy to see you awake. But um, aren’t you very handy with martial arts? That’s what I heard, anyway. Couldn’t you have beaten Seaton one-on-one? You kinda went down a little too easily for a guy who knows how to fight.”

Her remark made a little too much sense that all three women stared at Jackson in unison, waiting.

Jackson shot a slight look at Tiffany before realization hit him. “Seaton—as in, Seaton S. Bart?” he echoed in shock. “The mofo who stabbed me in the back was Seaton? I thought he was in jail—isn’t he?… Is Mark here? Get him in here. I need to talk to him.”

Arianne went outside and told Mark to come in. Alejandro, too, followed inside.

Seeing Alejandro put Tiffany slightly on edge, so she made up an excuse and dragged Arianne and Melanie with her to the bathroom. When the room was left with just the men, Alejandro asked the same question his wife did. “How the hell did you end up at Seaton’s mercy, huh? What, because he’s got a knife?”

Jackson scowled at him. “Why don’t you try kicking a** with your hands full of groceries, tough guy? Natch, I was aware of the hasty footsteps closing in from behind me. Even when he had his hand on my neck, my reflexes were still functional. The problem was my hands; they were full of whatchamacallits that weighed a ton! I even had a few bags hanging on my wrists and arms. Goddamned it, I was basically chained by plastic bags! And then I felt pain flaring from my waist, and the next thing I know, my strength was sapped out of me. I seriously wonder why women gotta buy a f**k ton of things whenever they go shopping and have the audacity to forbid me from squeezing out even a single, well-deserved complaint!

“But more importantly, the girls said my attacker was Seaton. I couldn’t get a good look at him, so I don’t know if that’s true. Is it? How the hell did he get out of prison?” he asked.

Alejandro pursed his lips. “Who the f**k knows? My plan was to kill him while he was inside, and still, he managed to flee. According to prison records, he’s listed as deceased, so he might have spent a bit of money to hire someone else to die for him, though I don’t have concrete details about this. Snakes like him must have enough artistry that even if his company’s down, he has other assets to liquidize, too. Certainly enough money left in him to stage a proxy death.”

Jackson suddenly felt ill. “The hell did I do, man? Why is he targeting me? All I did when Tremont Enterprise was in danger was lend some money. That’s literally all I did that could be considered as ‘crossing’ him or whatever, right? F**k, this guy’s gonna drive me nuts. Well! Since he’s reared his ugly face, and there are plenty of cameras around the parking basement, you could start by watching the footage. As for me, welp. Looks like I’m stuck in the hospital.”

“Wow, super helpful there, Captain Obvious. But we’re way ahead of you. Our people were already on it way before you came up with this genius idea,” Alejandro sneered mockingly. It was as though he was itching for a fight. “Seriously, did Seaton stab you in your waist or your brain, hmm? Or are you telling me you’ve always been this slow?”

Jackson was so infuriated that he almost leaped out of his bed to rearrange Alejandro’s face. Before he could, however, Mark stepped in and stopped them.

“Enough with this, you two. If the two of you are really so gung-ho about proving your superiority, then wait till this is settled before getting into a boxing ring. I won’t even have a problem with whoever wins. But back to the point. Jackson, I’ll have some of my people watch over you in the hospital to prevent Seaton from sneaking in to finish what he started. In the meantime, the two of us will be heading home first. Now, Tiffany, being pregnant, wouldn’t be in the best position to take care of you, so you may need a caretaker. Or shall we contact your family about this?”

Chapter 1496

“Don’t tell my mom about this,” Jackson quickly said. “Tell Tiffany to keep her trap shut. I’m not badly hurt. I’ll be discharged in a few days. Go home, all of you. It’s getting late.”

After leaving the hospital, Alejandro lit a cigarette. “I don’t think Seaton wanted Jackson dead. You were closer to Seaton, so you should know that Seaton was a medical student years ago. He should know precisely where to stab a man in order to take his life. Even if he’s forgotten his medical knowledge, he wouldn’t have just stopped at one stab if he really wanted to kill a man. It wouldn’t have been difficult

for him to kill Tiffany too. It's obvious that it wasn't his intention. It's probably just a warning to us, and a means to let off some steam."

"Since that's the case, we have to station some bodyguards at the hospital, just in case," Mark calmly said. "We all have to be careful from now on and avoid falling into Seaton's grasp again."

Alejandro narrowed his eyes. "Are you worried about me?"

Mark cast him a sidelong glance. "In your dreams. I'm hoping for your death. If Seaton slices you up, I'd wake up smiling from my dreams."

Arianne felt drowsy along the way home. This trip had certainly tired her out into the late night. Usually, she would be in bed by now. They couldn't bring themselves to leave Tiffany all alone at home, so they decided to take her home with them. Tiffany had been sleeping to her heart's content in the back seat since long ago. She was pregnant, after all, and had sobbed herself into exhaustion.

As they approached a traffic light, the light turned red just when Mark wasn't paying attention. He immediately hit the brakes, causing Tiffany to nearly roll off the car seat. "Mark Tremont, drive a little slower…"

Arianne's heart nearly leapt out of her chest too. "Drive slowly. What's going on in your head? You should pay attention to the road…"

"Got it," Mark groaned. "I had stuff on my mind and wasn't paying attention…"

Tiffany was now wide awake, so she decided to just sit up instead of continuing to sleep. “Do you think that crazy Seaton will suddenly drive his car into us? He managed to catch me and Jackson in the underground carpark, so who’s to say it won’t happen?”

The corners of Mark’s lips twitched. “Will you shut up? Can’t you watch your mouth? You’d better not tell Jackson’s parents about what happened when we get back. Jackson doesn’t want them to find out, so you’d better act like nothing’s happened and not make them worried too.”

Tiffany pouted. “I know. You don’t have to remind me. Jackson’s mom is exhausted enough from taking care of my baby for me. I don’t want to worry her even more. I was just making conversation. Do ya have to be so serious? I can’t seem to shake this feeling that an accident might happen at any time since that happened. I’m close to having delusions. By the way, I forgot to ask the doctor about the side effects from Jackson’s wound in the kidney. He’ll be fine, right?”

“He’d be impotent at most, what else?” Mark irritably snapped.

“You have a horrid mouth!” Tiffany replied through gritted teeth. “You’re the impotent one here!”

Chapter 1497

Arianne wasn’t sure if she should laugh or cry. “Stop bickering. It’s the middle of the night, and everyone’s exhausted. Let him focus on driving. There are four lives in this vehicle.”

Tiffany stroked her belly. “That’s right, four lives. You’d better focus on the road; who knows if my shock from today affected the baby? I’ll get a check up tomorrow when I visit Jackson at the hospital.”

“We’ve sent people over to the hospital to take care of him,” Arianne said with a frown. “You shouldn’t leave the house alone. What if you run into trouble, and no one’s around with you? No matter how worried you are about Jackson, you’d better stay at home for the next few days. If you really need a check-up, I’ll go with you and have Brian drive us there. It’ll be safer with a man with us.”

When they arrived home, Arianne immediately fell asleep when her head hit the pillow. She truly couldn’t move any more.

The next morning.

She got up as usual and went to the office with Mark. Then, she realized that Sylvain had arrived earlier than her. She thought that he would have needed more time to settle his personal matters.

Sylvain was in a much better mood than before. It was clear that he hadn’t received a bad scolding from his meeting with his mother-in-law yesterday.

“So, what happened yesterday?” Arianne asked. “Any developments?”

Sylvain arranged the documents in his hands and replied with his head down, “Nothing much. She hasn’t given me an exact reaction, but she didn’t chase me out the door either. I treated her mother to a meal at a restaurant at noon, and I ate in her house during dinner. Regardless, I felt very uneasy the entire time. Her mom did not smile at all. She stared at me as if I’ve defiled her pure, virgin daughter.”

That situation turned out much better than Arianne had imagined. “Not bad. It’s improving. Take your time. It’s too late anyway; her mom is probably just feeling uncomfortable for the time being. She’ll feel much better after a while. I have a lot to do today, so would you like to help me out?”

“I’ve got a lot to do too!” Sylvain replied, looking alarmed. “You’re the boss’ wife. It doesn’t matter how much you do; no one would call you out on it anyway. Stop exploiting me, I have to leave early to do grocery shopping this afternoon too. I’m going to Robin’s house for dinner. We agreed about that last night—her mom asked me to do grocery shopping after work today. It’s my first time doing stuff like that…”

Arianne had initially thought that he was just making casual conversation, but then she saw the tensed look on his face, a result of his torment. She giggled. “Haha, I was just teasing you. Do you have to look like that? It’s just that something’s happened to my friend, and I’ll probably have to leave early too. So, I’m going to wish you good luck in advance.”

At close to 4PM, Mark left work early after his meeting and went to the hospital with Arianne.

Alejandro was at the hospital too, probably because he had been invited as well. He arrived before they did and stayed in the car. He only got down when he saw their car in front of him then walked in with them.

Alejandro had come alone today. Coincidentally, Tiffany didn’t tag along this time, so there was nothing to worry about.

They walked into the ward to find a nurse wiping Jackson down. This nurse had been transferred from Tremont Estate’s readily-available staff members; she was initially a nursemaid at Tremont Estate. The two bodyguards at the doorway never left, and even the doctors and nurses had to take off their masks

and show their identification before being allowed inside. With such high security measures, Seaton would never be able to infiltrate this place, even if he sprouted wings.

Alejandro casually dragged a chair over and sat down. “Seaton is a sly one. He managed to avoid the surveillance cameras very quickly after leaving the underground parking lot. We couldn’t find anything useful from the surveillance footage. I’m having a huge headache over this mess. Any updates on your end, Mark?”

Chapter 1498

“Same thing,” Mark calmly replied. “He has zero identity. It’s not easy to find him if he wants to hide himself away. I’m afraid we’ll just have to wait until he shows his face again.”

“Even Jackson, who’s great at self-defense, has been cut down. If you or I run into Seaton, we might actually lose our lives…” Alejandro latched onto Jackson for some mystifying reason.

Jackson gritted his teeth angrily. “What are you implying? Some things can’t be overcome, okay? He f*cking snuck an attack on me. Stop looking so mystified. Just wait until I’m out of this hospital. I’ll knock you down first. You’ve certainly got a big mouth, you villainous pest.”

Alejandro laughed instead of getting enraged. “You may be pissed, but you can’t do anything about it, can you? If you want to beat me up, I’ll stand right here, perfectly still. I swear that I won’t fight back, as long as you can get out of bed and raise your fists.”

“Enough,” Arianne said helplessly. “Why are you two acting like kids at a time like this? As long as Seaton is still in the Capital, it won’t be impossible to find him. It may be difficult, but doable. Let’s just try harder. He’ll lose control and reveal himself again, for sure. Regardless, we all have to be more careful.”

Mark was just about to speak when his phone suddenly rang at an inopportune moment. He walked to the window and picked up the call when he saw the screen. “Hello? What is it?”

The person on the other end said a few words. His expression changed, then he turned around and headed back to the ward. “I’m coming home right now!”

Arianne ran towards him, confused. “Who called? What happened?”

The look on Mark’s face seemed complex and difficult to read. A close observation would indicate that the hand around his phone was slightly trembling. He couldn’t bring himself to answer Arianne’s question and simply said that they had to go home. He moved so quickly that Arianne couldn’t keep up with him at all.

Realizing that something wasn’t right, Alejandro ran after them, leaving Jackson all alone in shock.

When they arrived back at the Tremont Estate, Arianne caught a sharp scent in the air from the moment she got down from the car. It smelled a lot like gunpowder. The smell grew even stronger as she entered the courtyard. Tremont Estate servants were all gathered near the entrance in a heated discussion. No one dared to enter the house.

Her legs felt like cotton. Mark walked very quickly and didn’t notice her state at all. Just as she was about to stumble, Alejandro, who was behind her, helped her to her feet. “Watch it, don’t fall down now. Let’s find out what’s going on first. Based on this situation, I believe that someone’s caused an explosion in Tremont Estate.”

Arianne rushed into the house tremblingly. “Smore! Mary! Where are you?”

One housemaid stepped forward and softly said, “Madam, Master Aristotle and Mary aren’t home. They should be alright. I think they’ll be home very soon.”

Arianne grabbed onto the staircase and weakly asked, “What happened? Where are they?”

The housemaid looked traumatized. “We don’t know either. There was a sudden blast from Master Aristotle’s room, and the winders and glass in that room all shattered. We’re too scared to check on the room. Henry was helping Mary clean up Master Aristotle’s room at the time and was just leaving when the explosion happened. He is injured. He’s been taken away by an ambulance. Someone’s gone to take care of him. Thank goodness Master Aristotle asked to go out and play this afternoon, and Mary took him out. Otherwise, if Mary were the one cleaning up in the room, Master Aristotle would have tagged along too. I can’t imagine the consequences.”

Chapter 1499

Mark stepped out of the wrecked bedroom. His expensive leather shoes were now stained with residue from the explosion. He was no calmer than Arianne. He walked towards the staircase and sat on the balcony. “Do you have a cigarette?”

Alejandro pulled out a cigarette and handed it to him. “This is the first time I’ve ever seen you like this. The kid is fine. He’s not at home. I’ll go look for him right now.”

Mark took a few puffs of his cigarette before he could gradually calm down. He called the housemaid over to ask her about the situation. Based on the housemaid’s reply, a man dressed in a utility uniform arrived at the house around 1PM, claiming to check on the air-conditioning. He was wearing a face mask

and baseball cap. She couldn't see his face too clearly. Henry was not around at the time, so only one housemaid followed the repair man upstairs. Everyone thought that Henry had called the repair man over, so no one questioned it.

The housemaid stood by and watched the man at the door as he began fixing things in Mark's room. She did not follow him inside because no one except Henry and Mary were allowed in his room.

Nevertheless, the housemaid had been called away from the door at least twice during the course of the repair.

The signs were clear—Seaton had dressed as a repairman while Henry was away from home, infiltrated Mark's room, and tampered with it. Luckily, no one lost their lives; only Henry ended up with mild injuries.

Noticing that Mark had nearly finished his cigarette, the housemaid quickly brought him an ashtray. He put out his cigarette and let out a long sigh. "No one is allowed into the estate for the time being!"

He had just finished speaking when he was overcome by a series of coughs. Arianne didn't scold him for smoking and simply patted him on the back soothingly. Anyone would be scared out of their wits at a time like this.

Aristotle and Mary were soon brought back by Alejandro. They were already on the way home and Alejandro had happened to bump into them along the way.

Mary had no idea what happened, and Alejandro didn't say a word along the way. She caught the distinct smell in the air and frowned. "What's that smell? It was fine when I left. What is with this thick smell?"

Arianne dashed forward and held Aristotle in her arms. Her eyes brimmed with tears, tears of relief and joy. Thank goodness Aristotle was alright. "Oh my baby, it's all my fault… I've had such a fright…"

Aristotle stroked Arianne's cheek and innocently soothed her. "Don't cwy mommie."

Mary's face was ashen when she discovered what had happened. "Oh thank god, thank god. Mrs. Tremont was just telling me not to take Smore out at all, but thank goodness I gave in to his wheedling. The situation would have been a lot worse if we hadn't gone out!"

Mark cut her off. "My room seems to be the only one destroyed at the moment, but we're not sure if there's only one bomb. Based on the explosion, it looks like a mini bomb. The surface area of the explosion doesn't seem to be too big, but in a space like the bedroom, it's enough to take someone's life. Get some people over here to search every corner of Tremont Estate. We won't be staying here until the house is completely renovated. We'll move to the nearest villa for the time being."

Arianne nodded. "Right. We can't stay here. Mary, pack up some simple necessities. We're leaving right now!"

Alejandro, who was next to them, suddenly spoke up to volunteer. "No need for the trouble, just come to my place. It's a little out of the way, but it's safe enough. You're so careless, Mark. Nothing like this would ever happen at my place."

“It’s because you’ve committed too many sins and are scared of death. You probably sleep with a gun under your pillow, don’t you?” Mark dissed him freely.

Alejandro shrugged. “It’s not that bad. The old Alejandro may have lived like that, but our lives have been a lot more peaceful ever since I became Alejandro. I don’t have to suffer through sleepless nights. This is the best solution now—the choice is up to you. Who knows if Seaton would have guessed that you’d move to another house and had tampered with the other properties too?”

Chapter 1500

Hearing this, Arianne immediately answered in Mark’s place. “Yes! We’re going, right now!”

Mark didn’t object. The corners of Alejandro’s lips curved into a smile. “That’s the right choice! I have to rush home for dinner. Stop dallying. Give the Tremont Estate staff a long holiday. I can’t sustain that many mouths, nor do I lack any staff.”

Finally, only Arianne, Mark, Aristotle, and Mary went to the Smith Manor together. Aristotle couldn’t be separated from Mary, so she had to come along.

Melanie personally prepared a large meal when she found out that Mark and Arianne were coming over. She used to be waited on, hand and foot, when she lived with the Larks. Now that she was married, she didn’t have any other interests aside from taking care of her baby, so she managed to hone her cooking skills.

Melanie’s welcoming attitude made Alejandro very uncomfortable. “They’re not guests, no need for such a ceremony. Can’t you tell the staff to cook instead?”

Melanie shot him a look. “Yes, they’re not guests, but they’re family. Your brother, sister-in-law, and nephew. I only cooked because I wasn’t sure if they’d be used to our chef’s cooking.”

Instantly, everyone else aside from Arianne and Aristotle had a weird look on their faces. Even Mary narrowed her eyes. Her heart clenched. Only Melanie would be bold enough to announce that kind of information in public.

Aristotle kept staring at Alejandro's daughter at the dinner table. Melissa seemed to be curious about Aristotle too.

Arianne stroked Aristotle’s round little cheeks. “That’s your cousin-sister, your uncle and aunt’s daughter.”

Mark let out two coughs, probably because of what Arianne had said.

Alejandro’s interest was piqued. He put two chicken nuggets into Aristotle’s plate. “Say ‘uncle’.”

Aristotle was just about to speak up when Mark immediately stuffed some food into his mouth. “No! No saying ‘uncle’! Eat your food!”

Aristotle looked perplexed. He looked at Alejandro, then at Mark. No one could tell what was going on in his little head.

After dinner, Arianne told Mary to take Aristotle to bed early. She had to visit Henry with Mark. Henry was getting old, so an injury was no small matter. Even though they were minor injuries, they could prove to be fatal to an elderly man.

Humans are generally weaker at an old age. For the most part, that's how life works.

On the way to the hospital, Arianne suddenly asked, "Deep down, you've already accepted the fact that you have a little brother, haven't you?"

The light in the car was dim. The expression on Mark's face was difficult to read. "What are you talking about? I'll never forgive him for the things he's done."

Arianne pursed her lips and didn't say anything more. It was strange. Alejandro had committed many crimes, but she did not feel any enmity towards him now. Well, not entirely, but it was very, very mild. Aery was an entirely different case. She hated that woman to her very bones.