Ruling 1561

Chapter 1561

Shelly dropped her fork and knife to the table with a bang. “No member of the Tremont family shall ever deign themselves to someone this uncivilized,” she declared. “Whoever Smore’s bride may be, she will be nothing short of being prim, cultured, and of a standing befitting the Tremont prestige! She will not do anything close to what you’ve described!”

The undertone in her exclamation was that Arianne was the opposite of prim and cultured, and at all not a status-fitting wife to Mark. Naturally, Arianne pouted and offered a quick rejoinder. “Slow down. That depends, though. What happens if Smore loves someone who isn’t of ‘equal standing’ or whatever? Mark and I are definitely not gonna stop him from marrying whom he loves, that’s for sure. We’re democratic like that.”

Any retort from Arianne was automatically fuel to Shelly’s fire. “But you’re not the one in-charged now, are you? As long as I’m still alive, your personal opinion does not matter. Honestly, who gave you the right to decide for the Tremont family, huh? You think you can do whatever you desire just because Mark likes you? Ha! Hate to burst your bubble, but you’re not gonna be given free reign while I’m still here!”

“Enough!”

Mark growled and leaped to his feet. “What on Earth are you trying to do, Aunt Shelly? What did Arianne do that got under your skin? Why do you keep insisting on these… these nasty tirades against her? She was the one who took care of you while you were in the hospital; for Christ’s sake, she’s lost so much weight and energy from it! Even if you can’t be grateful for the things that she’s done, you should at least let go of whatever grudges you have, right? Jesus, making a scene out of an innocent dinner—seriously?” he ranted. “No one here disputes your seniority in the family, okay, but you really ought to start remembering that you’re no more than my aunt. The real man in-charge of this family is me! And by my decree, she can do whatever she likes, as long as she fancies it. So, stop kicking up a havoc from every trivial thing you happen to not agree with! She’s the real mistress of the Tremont family. This is

her home, and you're damn sure she's got every right to do whatever she desires in her own domain! I know you sacrificed your leg, but the debt is mine. It's got nothing to do with her!"

Mark might have heroically stood up for Arianne, but Arianne found no pleasure from it. Her husband's delivery had been too critical and acrid, which was a big deal because Shelly had only dared throwing these hissy fits by harping on Mark's respect for her. Now that Mark had made it unambiguously clear that he was on Arianne's side, he had made a mockery out of Shelly's pride. He gave his aunt no way out of this humiliation, and in other words—this could not possibly end well.

Just as expected, tears began to rapidly build up in Shelly's eyes—and then they broke out of her like a deluge. She cried so hard; it was like everyone was against her.

She glowered at Arianne with bitter fury and stomped upstairs with her cane, sulking. But not long after she started walking, she—be it by accident or by deliberation—tripped over herself.

Pity overwhelmed Mark. He hurried to her in an attempt to help her up.

Shelly slapped his hand away from her. "You broke my heart, Mark Tremont!" she snapped. "You've been bewitched by a woman, and it's making you say those… h-h-hurtful things to me. Are you so blind that you can't see who's the one sticking her neck out for you? Had Arianne been the one present during the runway accident, do you think she'll throw herself into saving you, huh? Sniff… Look at the state I'm in. I became this for you, Mark! But in the end, all these sacrifices are for naught. I'm worth less than an outsider. Right on her face, you extolled and lifted her up to no end while you trampled all over me—you humiliated me! Even though I've only said all those things out of my love for you!

"But it's okay. It cannot be any plainer now, can it? She's the mistress of the Tremont family; you said so loud and clear. She's the only family that matters to you! I should get out of your home, right?!" she shrieked.

Mark clenched his hands into fists before relaxing them again. When he spoke, his voice was markedly softer than his previous tone, obviously achieved only through sheer will against his rising spleen. “Please, Aunt Shelly, can we stop this? I know I’m the one who caused this to happen to you but… Sigh. God, what did Arianne do wrong? Also, I’m not letting you leave the house. How could I, considering your conditions? I just… I don’t understand what you’re trying to gain from being so antagonistic to Arianne. What, you want me to divorce her? I can’t, Aunt Shelly; that’s an impossibility. There’s no one else in this world whom I want more than Arianne.”

Helplessness pervaded Mark’s voice. On his left, his beloved, cherished wife; on his right, his blood-related aunt who sacrificed her leg for him. What the hell was he going to do to bridge these two into sincere reconciliation?

Shelly retorted nothing. Instead, she retired into endless weeping from her spot on one of the steps.

Chapter 1562

Mark was at the verge of a breakdown. “Please, Aunt Shelly, I’m sorry, okay? I’m sorry, please stop crying! I shouldn’t have worded it that way, alright? It’s my fault. Stress from work caught up to me, so I sounded harsher than I really meant. But really… I just want you to stop attacking Arianne for once, please?”

Everything he said had been for Arianne! The longer Shelly listened to him, the livider she became. She cast her voice as far into the direction of the dining hall as she could, shouting, “You heard that, Arianne Wynn?! You must feel soooo pleased with yourself, don’t you? No matter how much hell you put him through, no matter how much you plot against him, he’s completely head-over-heels for you! Everything he says to me has been nothing but a defense of you! Look at him, tell me you don’t feel a single stab in your conscience!”

Mark's hand shot straight to his forehead, rubbing his temples as the headache assaulted him. Christ, women were a different beast from even the worst challenge at work. At some point, Mark simply had to throw his hands up in defeat.

Arianne had to muster all of her will to stop herself from shouting back. Since when had she put Mark through hell? Plotting against him? And why would her conscience feel anything at all? If it were not for Shelly's loose grip with sanity, Arianne would have stopped holding back since a long time ago.

Unfortunately, Shelly's volume was so loud that the Tremont retinue, including Mary, heard her. As Arianne's maternal figure who watched her grow up, Mary could not stand seeing the woman suffer any more of Shelly's tongue-lashing. Emboldened by a rush of blood into her head, she barged into the scene, her finger trained on Shelly's face.

"Why, you… You good-for-nothin' skank! I had it! Devil may care if this gets me fired; so help me, someone gotta lay it on you!" she shouted. "What in tarnation have you ever done for Mr. Tremont all these years, huh? You never took care of him. You never even called him that much—scratch that, you never called him at all! And now you're back, you became lame because you were protecting Mr. Tremont from an accident, and suddenly, you act like you've earned jack to brag about that one time you were a hero!

"Do you even remember who the heck took care of you while you were lying in the hospital, exhausting all of her spirit over you? You wanna talk about conscience? Good, put your hand over your heart and tell us where Ari has ever done you dirty! You're Mr. Tremont's aunt, but you're not Arianne's relative! The fact that she withstood your constant abuse without lashing out is already an act of tremendous sacrifice and virtue!" she continued. "Everyone says you've lost some marbles, but you know what? You ain't pulling a fast one on me—I know you're as sane as the rest of us. You're just deliberately acting like a baboon on tantrums! Heck, if the late Mr. and Mrs. Tremont were still alive, I bet neither of them would act as much of a tyrant as you!

"You're a poor schmuck who had nowhere else to go after your husband bit the dust, so you came to us, ain't it? You'd be fine if you're just looking for a place to crash, but hoo boy, you're aiming to be the

mistress of the family, too! Well, tough luck! Ain't no one in this house wants someone like you to be the boss! Also, are you only happy whenever you're driving a wall between Mr. Tremont and poor little Ari? Well, what makes you think you've got any say in this, you pathetic no-goodnik?!"

Mary's sudden outburst was nothing short of a bewilderment to Arianne. She wanted to stop Mary, but Henry beat her to it by clutching on Mary's shoulders and dragging her away. On his way out, he found the window to apologize. "Mr. Tremont, please don't hold this against Mary. She's only lashing out of hurt from seeing Madam being maltreated like this."

Mark waved dismissively, gesturing Henry to bring the furious housekeeper out of the room. The world around him had become too chaotic to his liking, and all of the cacophony was stretching his patience thin.

Shelly was practically huffing and puffing in outrage over Mary's outburst. Red in abject fury, she snarled, "You skank! Since when has the Tremont family needed opinions from a baseborn servant like you? So now what, even some random maid has the right to spit on my face now, huh? Sh*t, this isn't the Tremont family. It abandoned that name long ago and became Wynn!"

When one's extremism outstayed its impact, people became desensitized. That was what happened to Arianne as Shelly's meltdown persisted. When she first saw Shelly-Ann Leigh, she was a regal, arresting, and impeccable beauty to behold. But now, all Arianne saw was a shrieking madwoman whose hold on her sanity was so unreliable that she was a ticking time bomb. Any time on any day could be that moment when she—suddenly, unprovokedly—blew up, eviscerating everyone else's peace along with her own.

Arianne stood at the periphery of the circus and gaped placidly, showing no signs of joining. She could not care less about what Shelly's opinion of her was.

All that mattered was that Mark remembered who Arianne Wynn really was.

Chapter 1563

“Maybe it’s time you get yourself admitted, Aunt Shelly. We’re all very worn out.”

Mark's sudden remark hushed Shelly into stunned silence. A few seconds later, she recovered with an indignant murmur. “Wha… What are you saying? You’re… You’re not seriously suggesting institutionalizing me, are you? Are you?! You think I’m mad... You think I’m insane? No, you don’t understand! You don’t know what Arianne’s doing behind your back, do you? What kinda juju did she put in you, my poor Mark. Why can’t you wake up and see the truth? I’ve done everything in my power devoting to the singular goal of coming back to your side—how could I let them harm you under my watch? No! Come hell or high water, I’ll eliminate all of them, all these pesky threats! They will never harm a single hair on your head, never again, never again, never…”

Something left Shelly’s eyes, leaving behind two hollow, unfocused pools as she mumbled to no one in particular.

Arianne caught the most unnerving part in her monologue and followed up. “Why is it so imperative for you to come back to Mark’s side? He’s just your nephew!”

The lights in Shelly’s eyes suddenly sharpened. They darted toward Arianne before nailing themselves onto her, unblinking.

It sent shivers up Arianne’s spines, and instinctively, she scooped Smore up in her arms and hid behind Mark.

Mark took a deep breath. Deadpanned, he carried Shelly in his arms and sent her back into her room. “Listen, Aunt Shelly, take a good rest and cease causing a scene right now, lest you inflict lasting fear in Smore. If the situation demands for it, or if your mental health continues to deteriorate, so help me, I’ll get you institutionalized,” he stated.

Finally, under the shadow of Mark’s near-threat, today’s dinner debacle came to an end. Shelly was averse to the suggestion of institutionalization. To her, places like mental asylums were no different from hell.

Arianne, with Smore in her arm, sat on the living room couch in silence and waited for Mark to come back down. When he did, she began solemnly, “I’m not going to work these next few days. I can’t—not when Smore’s left alone with your aunt at home. Seriously, her conditions are beyond worrying, and I can’t help but fear the day she suddenly snaps and harms Smore, especially since she hates me so damn much…. Jesus. I’m sick of this, Mark. If you’re not gonna handle this better, I’m gonna have to move out of the house. I just can’t stay here anymore.”

Mark approached her with guilt etched on his features. He caressed Smore’s supple cheeks in sympathy and replied, “I understand where you’re coming from; I get what you’re feeling. Truth be told, you’re not the only one who’s sick of this. I’m just as much at my wit’s end as you. She’s… so much more cordial when she’s not in her fits, but I don’t know how it came to this. She’s like a Russian Doll—no matter how hard we try to open her up, we never reach the bottom. Her deepest secrets are nestled far beyond our reach still.”

“Oh, sure, she’s cordial when she’s not in a fit—to you and Smore, you mean. To me and everyone else? Anything opposite of ‘cordial’ would be accurate… Bah. It’s your aunt we’re talking about; I don’t want to comment on her nature too much. I’m exhausted, so if you’ll excuse me, I’m bringing Smore to sleep.”

Mark resumed work the next day. Arianne stayed at home, idle and without things to do. Even with Smore as her shield, Arianne could not protect herself from Shelly’s unyielding, laser-focused, gelid gape that never left her.

She decided that the best way to not accidentally provoke Shelly was to hide from her sight altogether. Bringing Smore with her, she left the house and invited Tiffany and Melanie out. By this point, the only time she could catch a gulp was when she was with her friends.

She arrived at the café the trio had decided on earlier and found Tiffany already waiting. Melanie was not yet in sight.

Arianne held Smore in her arms, took a seat, and exhaled a drawn-out breath. “Oh my God. Even the air is sweeter when I’m outside that place… Anyway, go and order whatever. I’m footing the bill today.”

Chapter 1564

“No frickin’ way. Mark’s sweet little aunt again?” Tiffany teased. “Look at the tortured state she has put you under, gal! He’s gotta be blind to not see this!”

Arianne’s body sagged like a deflating balloon. “Oh, blind he is not. The problem is, he doesn’t know what to do with his aunt! No normal person would seriously consider reasoning with a psycho, right? — That’s right, I totally agree with you now. She’s a complete fruit loop and an utter nutcase. Doesn’t matter how terrible her transgression is, or how much venom’s in her words; you’re supposed to forgive the insane after she said she’s sorry! So what if I had enough of her? As long as Mark can’t say the word, I still have to put up with her all-day, every single day!

“Like what. The. Hell, Tiffie! You should have seen that never-before-seen puppyish docile look on Mark’s face when he’s with his aunt. It was that exact moment when I knew the only way forward for me is to endure her forever! I mean, for crying out loud, she’s his blood-related aunt who’s a carbon copy of his own mom! That’s like, the key feature that guarantees Mark’s affection. When his Aunt Shelly appeared in our life suddenly one day—my God, he was on cloud frickin’ nine. There had been no room for my opinions at all,” she finished.

Tiffany held her chin with both hands, mulling over Arianne's words for a moment. "Hmm… He wasn't contacting his aunt before this, right? That means they should not be as close as they are now... My guess? He just enjoys the feeling of having his family around him. But alas, poor Mark, for his aunt turned out to be a bit messed up here—"

She finished her sentence by pointing at her temple.

As the two continued to chat, Melanie strode into the café. As soon as her eyes caught the women's spot, she hastened her pace toward them.

Instinctively, Tiffany looked out of the clear window and found her eyes on Alejandro's car driving away. Alejandro had been the one to bring Melanie here, it seemed, and Tiffany was glad that he did not come in with her.

As though she read her mind, Melanie sat and flashed her a smile. "Alex's got work to settle today, which is why he became my ride. I wanted to bring Millie with me, but she's a bit under the weather."

Tiffany was a little embarrassed. "I… I'm not afraid of Alejandro! If that's what you're thinking! I just find his presence, uh, awkward. God, you wouldn't know how that feels."

"Oh, how could I not know?" Melanie replied jovially. "You're his ex and yet here we are, the best of chums. It's bound to be awkward for the three of us—but it doesn't do jack to our friendship now, does it? Anyway! What were you girls talking about?"

Arianne sighed. “Oh, nothing much. Just ranting about some crappy family drama; what else? Hey, Melanie, that day when you called me… You think it wasn’t an accident, right? I asked Mark, and he told me he didn’t investigate it in the end—said he was too busy with work, and his aunt was in the hospital back then. He hadn’t gotten the chance to check. In the end, the incident was judged as an innocent freak accident. And since the venue is owned by Tremont Enterprise, the company itself is responsible for its own loss, so every procedure was streamlined. Still… The questions you raised that day—they have been eating at me since then. I keep getting this nagging feeling urging me to get to the bottom of it.”

Melanie ordered a cup of coffee from the waitress before answering, “Well, if you really want to know, maybe we can check the footage recorded that day right there where it happened. Normally, security footage doesn't get kept around for an awfully long time, though, so we’re only going to try our luck. Who knows? Maybe the footage still exists.”

The suggestion resonated with the group, and after having a brief meal in the café, the women —and Smore tagging along—departed to the show venue where Shelly’s accident occurred.

The venue had just hosted another fashion show recently, so the expansive hall was a little messy to the eyes. When free from events, it was usually closed to the public and guarded by security.

The spot where the light had fallen off had been replaced with a new bulb. Likely out of fear for the same accident repeating itself, every light on the ceiling had been changed to a smaller, studded type filling the entire upper dome of the show hall. When switched on, these lights dazzled similarly to a starry sky. In contrast, the previous light had been a mega-sized chandelier supposedly to create an ambience of royalty and pomp.

Chapter 1565

Looking up at the ceiling stretching way above her head, Arianne imagined the light plummeting from its spot and felt a surge of terror bubbling in her mind. Shelly was lucky that the light did not kill her right there and then.

The women took a complete round, strolling within the show hall before heading to the surveillance room.

The languid security present had been close to napping, but seeing Arianne shocked him awake. Arianne ignored the question on whether the security was doing his job and went straight to her motive. “The footage for the accident that happened here; do you still have it?”

“Y-Yes, you bet!” the security answered hurriedly. “Um, it was quite the accident, and we worried that Mr. Tremont’s gonna ask for it some day or whatever, so we didn’t dare delete footage of it, as well as a day before and after the accident happened. Would you like to take a look, Madam?”

Arianne nodded. The security guy began to hammer away on his computer and launched the surveillance playback application.

However, she shoved the security aside as soon as the program started and took control of the computer, playing the surveillance footage of the day the accident happened.

Mark had been standing underneath the hazard when it suddenly broke loose of its wire and plummeted. It was a gigantic chandelier, hanging in the center of the runway directly above Mark when it happened.

He had come to the site with the logistics and planning team, which Robin was also a member of, on that day. When the chandelier fell, Robin herself was standing outside and below the runaway while Shelly stood a few distances away from Mark.

Her reflexes had been abnormally fast, and she showed no hesitance nor confusion. When the chandelier began its course, Shelly had dashed forward and shoved Mark out of the way, taking the blow in his stead. Very fortunately, the chandelier was so large that most of its structure had crashed onto the floor, leaving only a narrow part of it to slam into the lower half of Shelly's body.

Shards from the doomed chandelier and crimson blood burst into showers. Mark had been the first to recover from his startlement, his mouth stretching into frantic screams that the surveillance camera, which only captured videos without audio, could not record. Still, one did not need to hear a note to know that Mark was nigh-hysterical.

The ambulance arrived shortly afterward. Robin waited until Shelly had been taken to the hospital before leaving, presumably returning to the company to inform Arianne about what happened.

There was nothing nor anyone worth paying attention to in first viewing. So, starting from their first replay, Arianne slowed the video down and examined every single person present in the frame.

There had been no strangers among them; they were all workers and colleagues of Tremont Enterprise. She could tell that much based on their uniforms and the nametags hanging before their chests.

Suddenly, Melanie pointed at Shelly and requested, "Pause the video. Enlarge this part of the frame."

Arianne did as she was told, magnifying Shelly's face until her facial expression was clear to them. It was a boon to the women that the quality camera was top-notch enough that its video resolution remained relatively unhurt by the magnification. Perhaps the ample lighting in the show venue had helped illuminating the camera's capturing ability, too.

Melanie looked grim. "Um, Ari? Is it just me, or do you get the feeling that… uh, Mark's aunt seemed to be staring at the chandelier before it even happened? Did she... Did she know that it was going to fall?" she wondered aloud. "Hey, maybe you guys should take a look and see if my eyes are seeing things that aren't there. I just think the angle of her head is a mite too high for someone looking straight ahead, though she didn't really look like she was directly staring at the chandelier, per se…"

Tiffany closed in on the screen and examined it before voicing her support for Melanie's observation. "Yeap, I see what you saw. You better take a look at this, Ari."

Chapter 1566

Melanie's statement was verified. Shelly had indeed been staring at the chandelier for a long time before the incident happened. After realizing this, they rewatched the surveillance recordings and discovered that from the moment Shelly entered the ballroom, she kept on subconsciously glancing at the chandelier. Initially, Mark wasn't walking under that chandelier, but he only did so after Shelly said something to him, pointing towards the chandelier's direction while she was at it.

Arianne's entire body shivered down to her spine when she thought of something. However, she could not say too much since the security guard was standing next to her. Instead, she saved a copy of the surveillance recordings and left, but not before she made sure that the security guard had deleted all the surveillance recordings from their servers. The matter was serious; it would be better if less people were to learn about the fact.

After they left, Tiffany suggested, "Why don't we go to my house? There's no one at home right now, so it'd be more convenient for us to discuss while we study the recordings. Plus, it's less convenient for you to walk around outside since you brought Smore along with you."

The three of them agreed to it instantly. When they arrived at Tiffany's house, they used her laptop to open up the recording and studied it once again. Feeling that he was being left out, Smore threw a tantrum. "Mama, mama, play with me."

Arianne patted Smore on the head. "Mama's busy right now, so could you be a good boy and play over there for a while? I'll ask your aunt to bring you something to eat."

Tiffany had to bring out all the junk food she had in her house before they could make Smore calm down somewhat.

The trio then went through the video recording for the umpteenth time before they came to a unanimous decision—Shelly definitely knew that the chandelier was going to fall beforehand! However, other than the video recording, which could not be used as evidence, they did not have anything else that could be used.

Suddenly, Arianne's forehead broke out in beads of cold sweat. Tiffany was confused. "Why would his aunt do that? Why would she orchestrate the accident and make herself crippled in the process? Was she trying to gain Mark's favour? But, if she hadn't made it in time, wouldn't Mark have been the one who got injured instead? The risk factor was too great; plus, what could she possibly be planning? The fact that she's his aunt is set in stone, but did she still have to gain his favour? Is it possible that… we're overthinking this? Could she have looked at the chandelier because she thought it didn't look good or looked spectacular? That's probably why she was staring at the chandelier, isn't it?"

Arianne wavered after hearing what Tiffany said. "That is possible… What if we're going about this all wrong? There's nothing she could gain by doing that. We shouldn't jump to conclusions with just this. I hope it's just my imagination."

Melanie was the calmest person with the clearest mind. “Arianne, stop lying to yourself. Mark’s aunt didn’t so much as flinch the moment the chandelier fell, which alone is enough proof that she knew beforehand and was waiting for the moment the chandelier fell. Any normal person would be shocked, with their pupils dilating, if something like that were to happen. If you don’t believe me, you can have a look at the bystanders at the scene. Robin was so shocked that her mouth gaped open and she had no control of her facial expressions. Shelly already made it in time to push Mark away, so would she not have had time to put on a shocked expression?”

Tiffany immediately became speechless. She did not mean to defend Shelly; all she wanted to do was console Arianne when she noticed that the latter had broken into a cold sweat. Plus, she could not understand what Shelly’s motives were.

Arianne took a deep breath and forced herself to maintain calm. “If his aunt is involved in this, she most definitely could not have done it alone. There’s definitely an accomplice behind all this. I’ve saved a copy of the surveillance recordings from two days before the incident, which encompass the entire floor of the showroom. Let's do a thorough study and see if we can find anyone suspicious.”

It took the trio the entire afternoon before they could lock onto one suspect amongst the countless frames—a man in a technician’s outfit with a yellow safety hat on and a tool box in his hands. The suspect met up with Shelly in a corner near the elevator. Although the two of them only interacted for less than a minute, it was very obvious that Shelly had handed him something. After zooming in, it seemed to look like an envelope, though it was not possible for it to be a letter, since it was rather thick. The trio suspected that the contents of the envelope was money.

Chapter 1567

After that, they focused the recording on the man and found that he had entered the showroom the day before the incident happened. There was no one in the showroom except for the man, so no one knew what he did while he was in there. It’s possible that the man had taken the opportunity while the facility was being renovated and entered the showroom. While he was in there, the power within the showroom was out and even the surveillance cameras were off.

Due to the limitations of the surveillance cameras, the trio could not make out the man's face, so that was as much as they could investigate for the time being. Shelly had most likely orchestrated the entire incident herself, and only she herself knew the motive behind her actions.

In order for the trio to investigate further, Arianne decided to locate the man first. She needed to ensure that she had enough evidence before she could confront Shelly. Arianne did not want to hurt Mark by wrongly accusing Shelly if there was even a slither of chance that she was mistaken about Shelly.

Arianne did not know how she should begin her investigation, so she could only ask for Alejandro's help in the end.

It was already dark by the time Arianne returned to Tremont Estate; the sky got dark earlier since it was cold that night. Mark had returned home earlier than usual that night, and when he saw Arianne returning home with Smore in her arms, he asked, "Where have you been? Were you out the entire day?"

Lost in thought, Arianne answered half-heartedly, "Yes."

Mark frowned. His tone suddenly changed and became cold. "Leave Smore with Mary and come with me."

Arianne did not notice his expression. She followed him upstairs after putting Smore down.

Mark closed the door after both of them had entered the bedroom. His face was slightly confused and his voice deepened when he said, “I know you’ve got some opinions against Aunt Shelly and you’ve gone through some troubles, but you can’t do this…”

Arianne raised her eyes and looked at him with a surprised expression. “What? What have I done?”

Mark reached out a finger and poked at Arianne’s forehead. “Do you still have to ask? Everyone at home refused to attend to Aunt Shelly, you brought Smore out for the entire day, and she’s on bad terms with Mary. Moreover, no one bothered to help when Aunt Shelly fell down and couldn’t get up. She was still sitting on the floor when I came home. She’s lost one of her legs because of me. I feel very bad that she’s been treated like this in my own house.”

Only then did Arianne realize that something was amiss. No wonder she had not seen Shelly in the living room when she arrived home. It’s likely that she was lying in bed after her fall.

However, she felt that there was something wrong with Mark’s words. She casually punched Mark’s chest. “What are you trying to say? Are you saying that I ordered our maid to ignore her? Do I seem like such a horrible person? I was out with Tiffany and Melanie today, and I made all the arrangements before I left. What am I supposed to do if Aunt Shelly makes a big fuss and causes a lot of trouble for others? I can’t speak for the others, but Aunt Shelly has greatly offended Mary. Additionally, Mary’s job scope doesn’t include taking care of her… Forget it. Is she alright now?”

Mark did not mean to blame Arianne. “She’s fine. She did say that her leg felt slightly painful, so I brought her to get it checked, but it’s fine. I didn't mean to say that you had deliberately asked everyone to ignore her, but you should know that they’re purposely ignoring Aunt Shelly because they dislike how she has treated you. Why don’t you have a chat with Mary, since everyone at home listens to her and Henry? I’m not very good at handling these kinds of situations myself. If I have to, things won’t be as simple as they could be.”

Arianne glared at him. “Why did you just poke me? Were you domestically abusing me? Are you going to lay a hand on me?”

Mark raised an eyebrow. “How’s that domestic abuse? What could you possibly be thinking? I think your punch was a lot heavier than mine, wasn’t it? Alright, I’ll go check on Aunt Shelly while you talk to Mary.”

Arianne gently scoffed before she turned and went downstairs. She called Mary to the living room. “Did Aunt Shelly fall down in the morning? Mark told me that no one attended to her.”

Chapter 1568

Mary had a surprised look on her face. “Did she? I have no idea. All I know is that sir suddenly returned home in the afternoon and then brought her out. I didn’t hear anything about her falling down. Doesn’t she know how to call out for help when she falls? There’s so many people at home, and none of them are deaf. Despite my age, I’ve still got perfect hearing, and I’m very sure that she did not call out for help. I would not have known if you hadn’t told me about it.”

Realizing that Mary was telling the truth, Arianne became speechless. What kind of scheme was Shelly up to this time? It was obvious that she had not called for help, but in front of Mark, she pretended as though everyone had ignored her. Based on Arianne’s understanding of Mary’s character, there was no way she would ignore Shelly if she fell unless she was truly unaware of the incident.

Arianne did not make a fuss about the matter with Mark. If Shelly truly had something to do with the incident at the showroom, Arianne would bring it up again once she managed to gather more evidence.

That night before they slept, Arianne laid in bed, her thoughts filled with the showroom incident. While she was deep in thought, she also waited for her phone to ring. If Alejandro put in the effort to investigate such a small matter, he should be able to complete it within a short time.

Arianne checked her phone every now and then. Her actions finally caught Mark's attention. He disdainfully grabbed her phone to check through its contents. "Are you expecting a call from someone?"

Arianne, afraid that he would find out something that he shouldn't, hurriedly snatched her phone back from his grasp. "What are you doing? I'm not expecting a call from anyone. Don't you have to go to the office tomorrow? Hurry up and go to sleep. Stop messing around."

He did not have the habit of "checking" her phone, as the couple had an unspoken rule where they both agreed to never "check" each other's phones, since neither of them had anything to hide. However, Arianne was acting very strangely that night, and Mark thought that something was amiss. "What's gotten into you? Will isn't back in the country yet, so whose call are you waiting for?"

Arianne rolled her eyes and turned her back against him in contempt. "You're crazy. I told you that I'm not waiting for anyone's phone call, yet you've somehow managed to bring up Will into the argument. Have you been monitoring his movements all along or what?"

Hoping to find out what she was thinking through her eyes, Mark forcefully pulled her body to face his.

Arianne reached out and pushed him away. "What're you doing? Are you stopping me from going to sleep just because you don't want to?"

Mark disliked facing such insecurities. His face darkened as he stared at her for two seconds before pressing his body against hers.

Arianne was in no mood to do it that night. “I’ve been out the whole day and I’m tired… Stop it…”

The more she rejected him, the angrier he became. He lowered his head and bit her on the lip.

Arianne felt a sharp sting and frowned, using even more force to push him away this time. “What are you doing? That hurts!”

He grabbed both her hands and pinned them to her sides while staring straight into her eyes. “Tell me, whose call are you expecting? You’ve been looking at your phone more than you’ve been looking at me. Why don’t you dare to let me have a look at your phone? Well?”

Obviously, Arianne could not tell him the reason. She turned to look away to avoid locking eyes with him, as she worried that he would realize what she was thinking. She could not say anything before she could arrive at a conclusion. “It’s nothing. Can you stop suspecting so much? What could I possibly do when I’m under your watchful eyes everyday? You’re hurting my wrist. Let go of me.”

Chapter 1569

Mark did not say anything, his expression unreadable due to the darkness. There was no moon that night, so the atmosphere was enshrouded with darkness and nothing could be seen.

After two seconds, Mark released Arianne’s wrist. However, he immediately picked up Arianne’s slender body and got down to business, with her all the while shrieking.

Thunder began to strike all of a sudden, but it was not enough to cover up the sounds inside their room. The thunder strikes were soon replaced by rain and the commotion in the house died out as well. All that was left were the sounds of two slightly breathless people and the rain.

Arianne waited for Mark to fall asleep before going to the bathroom. She looked at the mirror, and seeing her slightly tired face, she helplessly sighed.

Suddenly, she could hear her phone softly ringing and reflexively darted out of the bathroom. Sure enough, her phone was ringing, and she immediately turned it to silent. She looked at Mark, but he only turned around and was not distrubed by the noise. Arianne sighed with relief and went back to the bathroom with her phone in her hands. She answered her phone and said, “Hello?”

Alejandro was on the other end of the phone call. “I’ve sent the thing to your email address. I wasn’t planning on calling you so late, but I thought it would be safer if I told you first before someone else saw the contents of the email. It’s rather serious.”

Arianne softly said, “Thank you. Sorry to trouble you by calling me so late at night. I’ll buy you a meal next time.”

Alejandro seemed to be smiling. “Are you being a stranger with me? It’s fine, I’ll hang up now. I’m back at home already, and Millie’s asleep. I don’t want to disturb her.”

When the phone call was disconnected, Arianne checked her email and found a video inside. It entailed a man who was curled up in the corner of a wall with a frightened expression and was constantly begging for mercy. He seemed to be in a very messy area, possibly at a cheap rental house of sorts. Someone was saying to the frightened man, “Talk. Who asked you to do it? What have you done?”

The frightened man seemed to be afraid of being beaten up, as he reached out his arms to protect his head and muttered, “It was a rather pretty woman who asked me to do it. She asked me to tamper with the chandelier in a large showroom so that it was just on the verge of falling. It was quite the task to get it done correctly. I refused to do it at first because I was worried that something would happen. I would be in a lot of trouble if someone were to lose their life. However, I needed the money for my daughter, who has leukemia, and further, she offered a whole lot of cash—tens of thousands of dollars. If it wasn’t for that amount of money, I would never have done such a terrible thing. I was not told that someone was going to be harmed by the chandelier… Who are you people? I’ve told you everything I know, so please don’t hit me…”

Someone took out his phone and placed it in front of the frightened man with Shelly’s photo on the screen. “Was it this woman?”

The frightened man glanced at it and frantically nodded his head. “That’s her! I swear it on my daughter’s life! I remember her face very clearly because she was really beautiful, so I’m sure of it!”

The video ended at that point. Arianne replayed the video a few times, her grasp on her phone slightly shivering as she rewatched the video. It was terrifying… So, Shelly had orchestrated the entire incident just to risk her life in order to save Mark? Why would she do that? Was she actually trying to kill Mark, but regretted her decision at the last minute? Or was it always her plan to pretend to save Mark?

When she recalled the things that Shelly had said in her dreams, Arianne shivered. Shelly seemed to have a very deep grudge towards Mark’s mom.

What kind of secrets was that beautiful woman trying to hide?

Arianne gathered her evidence the entire night, hesitating on whether she should show Mark everything in the morning. What kind of reaction would he give when he found out about it? Shelly was Mark's only relative left and also his own aunt…

When daylight approached, the rain began to die out as well and a layer of mist enshrouded the windows. Arianne walked towards the window in her bedroom and opened it up to welcome a fresh breeze that was mixed with the humid air, which travelled into her brain. The breeze was so cold that she shivered but did not shy away from it. The chilly breeze made her clear up her mind, and she decided that she needed to tell Mark everything that she had found out. Smore's life and her own had been deeply affected because of her. If Arianne did not resolve Shelly's mystery, when else should she get into it?

Chapter 1570

Arianne curled under her blanket when she could no longer resist the cold. The blanket was very warm thanks to Mark's high body temperature. She immediately felt bliss when she tucked herself in.

Arianne's movements awoke Mark from his sleep. He half-opened his eyes and looked at her before easily pulling himself into her arms. "Why're you up so early?"

Arianne did not even manage to get some sleep. How could she fall asleep?

She quietly tucked herself in his arms, not knowing what to say.

He suddenly kissed her cheek. "I don't think I was that rough last night, was I? Are you angry about that? So angry that you couldn't even sleep last night? I wasn't really suspecting you of anything last night; I was just in a bad mood. It's my fault, so please don't be angry, alright?"

Arianne quietly looked at him. “It’s not because of that… Are you awake? I’ve got something to tell you, but you need to be mentally prepared for it.”

Mark slowly sat upright to show that he was thoroughly awake. “Alright, go on.”

Arianne took out her phone and showed him the evidence. “Have a look yourself. I was waiting for Alejandro’s call last night because I asked him to help me investigate this.”

Mark’s drowsy expression gradually disappeared as he looked at the phone’s contents. By the time he was done, his face became dark, which was quite terrifying. It was more like he did not want to believe it but had no choice. His disappointment and confusion with Shelly was mixed in his expression as well.

Arianne, having already predicted that he would react this way, hugged him and consoled him. “You should ask Aunt Shelly and find out why she did it. I’m sure there’s a reason for everything. I was pondering the entire night on whether I should tell you about this. I was afraid that you would be sad when you realized the truth. However, if this were still kept from you, how much longer would we have to live like this? I’m truly tired from being tormented by her.”

Mark remained silent for a while. The atmosphere became heavy all of a sudden.

When it was about 8 AM, Shelly’s voice could be heard from outside. She had a habit of waking up early, and when she saw that Mark’s bedroom door was still closed, she knocked on it and said, “Mark, why aren’t you up yet?”

Mark got out of bed and opened the door. His face was filled with mixed emotions as he looked at Shelly. “Aunt Shelly, could you wait for me in your room? I’ll be right there. There’s something I need to talk to you about.”

Shelly caught a glimpse of Arianne, who was in bed. She did not know what he was thinking about. “I see… Alright.”

When Shelly left, Mark closed the door and walked into the bathroom. After washing up and changing into a fresh set of clothes, he headed off to find Shelly.

Arianne was curious to know what was going to happen, but stopped herself from following Mark to save herself from any unnecessary scolding from Shelly, who disliked her from the beginning.

After a while, a lot of commotion could be heard from Shelly’s room. She was shouting at the top of her lungs, and Mark’s loud voice could be heard as well. No one dared to go near her room. At least the contents of their discussion could not be heard thanks to the decent acoustics in the room.