Ruling 1681

Chapter 1681

“Well, she used to take care of me at work,” Robin explained. “So even though we’re technically not friends anymore, I think I should at least acknowledge her for old times’ sake. So, I invited her for my last dinner.”

Libby tucked her phone away and said nothing. All she knew was that her mood for selfies was dashed.

Arianne crossed the room and took her seat with phlegm, addressing no one in the room either through eye contact or verbal greetings. In her mind, Libby had rolled her eyes for almost a hundred times over the party-pooper’s attitude. All that was left was squeezing a scornful “Holy sh*t, still putting on those godforsaken airs because you were ‘Mrs. Tremont’ for a few days?!’ through her teeth.

The group dined in silence. Then, Arianne—seemingly casually—broke the spell, asking, “So, Libby Sheppard. I heard that you used to be quite chummy with Shelly-Ann Leigh, weren’t you? Still talking to her after she left?”

Libby stole a furtive glance at Arianne and decided against springing into an answer. Instead, she remained quiet as she tried to fathom Arianne’s loaded question.

It was only when Arianne’s biting eyes refused to leave Libby’s face that the latter finally had to answer, “Yes? But only in phone calls and whatnot. I mean, you know her leg condition, right? It’s not like we can hang out for lunch or whatever, if that’s what you’re thinking. Seriously, why are you even asking?”

Arianne's lips twisted into a slight smirk, placing her fork down. She wiped the corner of her mouth with a napkin slowly before cutting to the chase. "Who are you kidding, Libby? You hijacked Robin's work computer to send my design to McGinnis, didn't you?"

The accused's face paled. "Ex-cu-se me?! Investigation from the higher-ups had clearly pointed at Robin as the culprit, honey, get real! What's it gotta do with me? Or Mrs. Leigh? Resorting to slander already, you? Besides, it's not like I ever had the chance to look at your stupid design drafts. You're barking up the wrong tree, pal!"

Arianne snorted. "Please, if the 'culprit' were literally anyone else in the office, I would have believed the superficial. But Robin? 'Honey', she would rather die than harm me! I can't believe I had to slap her just to lure a scumbag like you out in the open. God, it still leaves a bad taste in my mouth," she rebutted. "Sure, you didn't have the chance to look at my draft, but Shelly did. Myself aside, there were only three people who had seen that particular design. Neither Sylvain nor Robin would do something like this—which leaves only Shelly."

She was getting on Libby's nerves. "Lord Almighty, I have no strength to waste on a nutjob like you! Where is the proof, huh? Or are you just gonna resort to barking at me with no proof? If you think I'm gonna hafta butter you up just because you and Mr. Tremont are still in some godawful complicated state after divorce, you can dream on, 'cause you don't deserve my respect. Hell, maybe you should take the chance to reflect on yourself—how many of us in this gigantic company actually like you? At some point, you gotta stop seeing yourself as a bigger deal than you really are," she snapped. "Lord, had I known you'd come, I would have said no to you, Robin. You birds go ahead; I am leaving!"

Robin beat Libby to the exit and blocked it with her frame, causing the latter's expression to darken even more. "And what the hell do you think you're doing?!" she lashed out. "Oh, is this whole thing just a joint setup from the two of you? My God, you always looked like a naïve, rosy-eyed schmuck, but who knew you've got such an acting talent, hon? Now be a sweetheart and step aside, or I'll scream for help!"

Robin doubled-down on blocking the door. “Oh yea? Scream then; I dare you! Or, maybe, you should look around and remember whose turf you’re in right now and realize that your scream isn’t gonna mean jack! Both times when I was tearing up in the office, you came with that whole ‘aww, you okay, sweetheart?’ act even though we were never pals in the first place. You didn’t actually think I’d forget how you treated me in the past, did you? Back when Shelly was still in the department, every single one of you had ostracized me just because I’m friends with Arianne! I don’t think anyone would care if I was crying—I could be literally dying on my desk and not one of you would care, either! So why would you suddenly go against your usual attitude when I started crying then, if not because you wanted to make sure that I was tearing up over a crime I became a scapegoat for? You were really relieved to know that I’d successfully turned into your fall guy, weren’t you? And you’re not the only one too, because I bet Shelly felt just as relieved—because she’s the puppet-master who commanded you to do this! You dirtbags just wanna kick Arianne out of Tremont Enterprise!”

Libby’s face had turned into a collage of red. She lurched at Robin and yanked a fistful of her shirt as she retorted hotly, “As if I’m gonna gain anything from ousting her! Stop smearing me, b*tch!”

Chapter 1682

Arianne lunged, grabbing Libby by her collar before pinning her against the wall.

“This restaurant belongs to Jackson West, whose wife, Tiffany, is my best friend. You really think you can skedaddle out of here before giving me answers?” she hissed. “Now that we’ve finally got you, you’re not leaving this premise until you tell me the truth. Just how many favors did that Shelly give you in exchange for you being her tail-wagging lackey, huh? Think. She’s exhausted every single one of her brain cells trying to kick me out of the company, yet the easiest way to do that has always been to just get Mark to fire me. Ever wonder why she would rather throw all of her effort into these useless roundabout ways than just doing that?

“It’s because Mark wants me to always remain in his life, divorce be damned. He won’t accept me leaving his sight. It doesn’t matter how many tricks Shelly plays, as long as he wills it, I’ll never go away,” she continued. “Say… We were never enemies before, were we, Libby? I guess we are now. Let me warn you, I’m not a forgiving woman by any stretch. I wouldn’t hesitate in going to the deep end… if it means I can get even with my enemies.”

Libby had not expected Arianne to be stronger than she looked, especially since the two of them were similar in stature. Despite her struggles, Libby saw no sign of herself wriggling free.

Her tight lips prompted Arianne to add a little more force to her push. Pain flared in Libby's arms, which were locked between her body and the wall, and her face paled.

"Let—me—go, b*tch! W-Who gives you the right to manhandle me like this, you f-f**king psycho?! You're not extorting a single word out of my mouth, so what'cha gonna do, huh? Christ, have you ever asked yourself this: if you're not the least bit problematic, then why the hell were you the one being expelled by the Tremonts, and not Mrs. Leigh?!"

"Gosh, you people really love meddling into other people's private business! You wanna play tough? Fine, be my guest. I wonder if you've already realized that I can get you fired with just a word. Or maybe you don't believe me, which in this case, how about a test? See if Shelly's got the power to protect you. If you got kicked out, I'll make sure your outgoing resume will prevent you from being hired by any company worth its salt. Then let us see if Shelly would be glad to pay you and your family for the rest of your life!" Arianne taunted. "You wouldn't be stupid enough to disbelieve me, right? You said so yourself—Mark and I are in a godawful complicated state. I even have his precious son with me, too. Why wouldn't he listen to what I say?"

Libby chewed her lips. Her silence bore an undercurrent of uncertainty evident in her eyes.

They had been many instances of Mark taking Arianne out for lunch despite the divorce. They were also always seen going home at the same time together. Everyone in the office was a witness to their public displays of relationship, which lent credence to Arianne's threat of kicking Libby out of the company with a word alone. On the flip side, Shelly was not working in the company at the moment, which gave Libby grounds to wonder if she could protect the latter's job.

Arianne seized the opening. “Worried, aren’t you? How about you call Shelly right now and see how she would help you? Tell her Mark thinks you aren’t doing well enough and is at the brink of firing you, then ask her to do something to keep you in the company. After that, well! Kick back and enjoy her weaving excuses right in front of your eyes. She’s gonna talk you into accepting your impending unemployment, she’s gonna bullsh*t you about her limited control over what’s happening in the company, yadda-yadda. Oh, she might even give you some sweet nothings too, like saying she’s gonna take care of you in some form. But mark my words—all of her promises will never land. Never.

“Don’t you see? You’re just a dummy she used as her pawn. Do you really think she sees you as anything but? I know her, Libby—way better than you do. She would love it if you could get fired from Tremont Enterprise, because you know all of the shady things she has done! The only reason why she thinks she can play this tug-o-war with me is because I’m too bored to fight her at all. Honestly, if I really want to, I can remarry Mark anytime, and he wouldn’t refuse!”

Libby’s faith was unraveling at the seams. Yet, at the same time, she was just as worried that Arianne was luring her into another trap. “Stop taking up the Devil’s work and driving a wedge between us! Mrs. Leigh isn’t like that!” she retorted.

Arianne laughed mockingly. “Oh, really? Put that to the test, why don’t you? Call her right now, and we shall have a look. Then you can see for yourself if I’m being the Devil here, or if she really is as sh*tty as I called her out to be.”

Robin snatched Libby’s handbag and took her phone out. “If you’re not gonna make that call, I will!”

Libby was in no position to stop her, so the call was made.

When the other side picked it up, she could only dissemble normalcy as quickly as she could before murmuring, “Hello? Um, hi, Mrs. Leigh. It’s me… Libby.”

Chapter 1683

Even so, Shelly was keenly aware of the minute but odd flex in Libby’s voice. “Libby… Sheppard? What are you doing? You sound off, dear.”

Libby shot a brisk glance at Arianne then took a deep breath and started, “Nothing. I just came home from work, that‘s all. Walked quite a distance, so I might sound a little, er, breathy. Um, anyway, the reason why I’m calling you right now is because I… need your help. Mr. Tremont thinks I’m not doing a peachy keen enough job for him, and I think he’s onto axing me. Mrs. Leigh, I was, uh, hoping you can help put in a good word for me, you know? I’ve been working hard in Tremont Enterprise for so long, and I didn’t get to be the supervisor just to be shown the door… You get what I’m saying?”

The other side of the phone was quiet for a tad too long. It took more than ten conspicuous seconds before Shelly finally said, “Hey, listen. I really, really want to help, but… I can’t do much about the affairs of the company. As you’re no doubt aware, I’m not working in the company anymore, so how do you expect me to talk to Mark about things like these? Oh, you know how he's like—very opinionated, that man. Don’t get me wrong, I really want to help you, but I can’t. My advice is that you leave the company when he tells you to, but don’t worry, because I’ll be wiring you a sum of compensation. How’s that? I’ll also help you scout for new jobs, too—and I’ll make sure you’ll earn as much as you do as in the Tremont’s.”

Libby’s complexion turned ghastly. Shelly’s response so eerily mirrored Arianne’s prediction that it was as though the two had rehearsed her answer prior to this meeting.

The call ended soon enough—and so did Libby’s bravado, which was escaping her like air from a leaking balloon. For a long time, she wallowed in silence.

Knowing Libby was in no hurry to leave, Arianne let her go from her grip. “So, what do you think? I did tell you that I know her better than you do. Do you see the position you’re in right now?”

“What do you want from me?” Libby intoned mechanically. “You knocked me for a loop like a schmuck. I admit loss.”

Arianne sighed. “No, I don’t want anything. I just want you to tell me what Shelly made you do. No details held back, please.”

By now, Libby had lost every reason to cover for Shelly. “Well, one thing’s for sure—you ain’t wrong. I was the one who sent your design draft to James McGinnis through Robin’s computer. See, James and I met during university, but we haven’t talked since graduation. But hey, we at least know each other, and I do check on his social media posts and stuff from time to time... Anyway, Mrs. Leigh was the one who gave me the draft, just as she was the one who told me what to do with it. I asked her why, and she told me, well… You’re a wretch, she said. She wants you out of the Tremont family and Tremont Enterprise. And yes, she gave me some favors, but it’s not to the absurd amount y’all are imagining them to be. I only helped her because she was nice to me back when she was still working for Tremont Enterprise. …So, I guess that’s it—both for the answer you’re looking for, and for me. I know I can’t stay in the company no more, but whatever, you know? I’m done for.”

Arianne went quiet for a few seconds before stating, “I’m not gonna fink on you. I know it’s Shelly’s fault; she shouldn’t have conned you into this whole thing.”

Libby was flabbergasted. “W-Wait, are you serious? You’re not gonna… tell Mr. Tremont to ax me?”

Arianne pressed her lips before replying, “Yea. All I’m asking is that you focus on your work and stop minding these useless sideshows from now on. You know, a company is a place for work; it’s not some

backyard for stupid political games. You experienced it yourself—you earn nothing but troubles for dabbling in them. Anyway, it's alright now. You can go."

A change dawned on the way Libby looked at her. Gone were the scorn and repulsion, and for a few moments, it was almost as though there were words mounting at the tip of her tongue, close to coming out.

However, in the end, she chose to say nothing and left the restaurant.

With Libby now gone, Arianne returned to her seat. Instead of leaving the premise, she continued eating, and Robin was a little taken aback by it. "Er… Still have the mood for food, Arianne? I mean, you know for certain that it's Mr. Tremont's no-good aunt who's been plotting against you again. Aren't you gonna, well, tell Mr. Tremont about this?"

"Meh, the truth's out, Robin. Delaying the confrontation for a bit isn't gonna affect it that much. Besides, I gotta gain strength for the most apocalyptic fight yet," she replied between bites. "By the way, did it hurt a lot when I slapped you? If it did, go and feast a bit right now—maybe this food can heal? Either way, dinner's on me, so eat whatever you like, okay? No thanks to your idea about that slap! Gosh, I didn't wanna hit you at all…"

Chapter 1684

Robin stuck her tongue out playfully. "Teehee! Not at all, Arianne. A slap in exchange for you to unearth the truth? Now that's a fair bargain! I know you wouldn't hit me too hard, sis. You always know not to go overboard."

Arianne grabbed a spoonful of meatballs and placed them on Robin's plate. "C'mon, dig in already. To tell you the truth… I haven't made up my mind about telling Mark. Honestly? His method of dealing with anything Shelly-related has been very, very lacking. I've been patient for far too long, and this time, that

Shelly has really gone beyond the pale. I am not letting her off the hook; not anymore... But I also don't wanna trap Mark in a tough situation either, so I think this is something I must do on my own. Come on, let's enjoy our dinner to the fullest. After this, I'm going straight to Shelly-Ann Leigh."

"Yea, ditto," Robin murmured pensively. "She's Mr. Tremont's aunt, right? He can't go too far when he's handling any problem related to her, can he? Either way, I think you should solve this yourself, Arianne! And no matter what you decide to do, I'll always stand by you!"

Arianne chuckled. "You know, you got me thinking… Everyone around me trusts me so much. Everyone always voices unconditional support before I even know what to do. Tiffie's like that, and you're the same, and…"

'And Tanya used to be, too.'

……

After her dinner in White Water Bay Café, Arianne hailed an uber and went straight to the Tremont Estate. Soon after she got into the car, she called Mark, and after making sure he was not at home, she sighed with relief.

It was best for him to be absent. That way, she could confront Shelly and force a confession out of her.

From the courtyard all the way into the Tremont Estate, Arianne faced no problem nor obstacle at all. It turned out that despite her departure, the retinue in the estate still treated her as the de facto "Mrs. Tremont."

Hearing footsteps approaching the entrance, Shelly rushed out to greet whom she imagined was Mark. But when she saw that it was Arianne, her expression immediately darkened.

“What’s the meaning of this?” she snapped. “How did you get in here? Don’t tell me you still have the keys to the Tremont Estate—you and Mark are divorced! You should return the keys to their rightful owner!”

Arianne leered at her. “I don’t have any keys. In fact, it was the security themselves who let me in.”

Scowling, Shelly turned toward outside and yelled, “From now on, anyone of you who let an unauthorized stranger into the house will be fired on the spot! On. The. Spot!”

Arianne’s lips curled into a mocking smirk. “Oh, shut your trap. I’m here today for you and you alone. I promise I’ll be out of here when it’s over—though, of course, I wouldn’t want to stay a second longer even if you begged me, frankly.

“Hey, Shelly-Ann Leigh? How should I put this through your thick skull—it’s Mark who’s adamant that I stay in the company, okay? It isn’t me who’s shamelessly clinging to him,” she began. “You’re so obsessed with ousting me from his life that you do everything your wicked mind could come up with to kick me out of the company—and I do mean absolutely everything, because Jesus Christ, you even resorted to a depraved, unscrupulous scheme. I’m awed, ma’am; I’m frickin’ floored. Does Tremont Enterprise’s reputation seem so dispensable to you?”

Shelly halted slightly with her eyebrows slightly furrowed. “What are you yammering about? I don’t know what you’re trying to allude to.”

Arianne made herself comfortable on the couch before continuing placidly, “Oh, miss me with that bullsh*t act, would you? Mark isn’t here, so why bother? Also, don’t go about telling me that it wasn’t you who ordered Libby Sheppard to email my draft to James McGinnis. Don’t tell me it wasn’t you who thought of using Robin Cox as your scapegoat, either. Your calculative prowess is wonderful, Shelly! At first, I didn’t even think you'd ever deign to breaking standards, because I thought, at the very least, you seemed to care a lot about Mark. You must know how important Tremont Enterprise is to him, right? I thought no amount of your petty, catty hatred toward me would ever be enough reason for you to harm the company… But boy, I’ve thought so, soooo wrongly of you!”

Shelly snorted in contempt. “Please, I know it won’t make a splash against Tremont Enterprise, genius. All I want is to have you kicked out of the company like you so richly deserve, that’s all. Honestly, my goal has always been the same: I want an eyesore like you out. Anyway, now that you seem to know about everything, I don’t have to put up this charade anymore,” she rejoined. “None of the things you’ve said was from Mark’s investigation, correct? He would have come to me already, otherwise. So, I guess after living in Mark’s vicinity for so long, you’ve inevitably taken after his little schemes and resourcefulness, haven’t you? Though I’m leaning toward Libby being a bumbling idiot, anyway, since she must have done something to betray herself while you were watching. I bet you were standing just beside her when she gave me that suspicious call, weren’t you?”

Chapter 1685

Mentioning Libby somehow caused Shelly’s face to contort in derision and disgust.

Seeing the grimace take shape in front of Arianne’s very eyes somehow fanned the flames in her. Was this how Shelly saw and used the people around her? Treating other humans as monkeys and suckers as if that made her superior to them all?

“So, what’s the next dirty, sh*tty move you’re gonna pull out, huh? Or have you reached the bottom of the barrel and are now running out of tricks? Gonna threaten Mark to fire me by using your relation to him again?” Arianne bristled hotly. “I’m warning you, don’t get too cocky. Because one day, you will go so far that you'll hoist yourself on your own petard!”

Unthinkably, Arianne's words only made Shelly burst out laughing.

"Haha! Bless your heart, sweetie; that day won't ever come. In fact, I dare you to tell Mark about this whole thing right now and see if he believes you! Even if Libby told you everything, so what? I am Mark's one and only birth mother. Why would he believe the fanciful narratives two outsiders like you paint than his own family? Especially since I've been staying put at home like a good mother from the beginning to the end. Oh, I don't know jacksh*t about what happened in his company now, do I? Perhaps you've worked together with Libby in smearing me just so you can crawl back to the Tremont Estate, too. Of course, even if you fail at every single attempt of it, you shouldn't be ruining the relationship between me and Mark in your pettiness, should you?" she taunted, flexing the end of her sentence with faux admonishment.

It was at this moment that Arianne finally witnessed the true extent of absolute shamelessness in its full glory. "You… are the most deplorable and sorry thing I've ever met in my life! Not even a single trace of shame in your entire being when you bend the truth out of shape!" she fumed. "If my goal had always been to come back here, do you really think I'd need to waste my time on this?! For God's sake, I left here precisely because I want peace of mind for me and Smore. As long as you're here, even if you beg me on your knees, I will still never, ever, ever come back!"

Shelly strode to the coffee table and poured herself a cup of black tea, savoring its taste on her tongue. "Mark really has good taste, doesn't he? The taste of this black tea is exquisite… Too bad his refined taste doesn't extend to women, tee hee. Arianne, darling, if there's nothing else for you to do here, you should leave. I don't want to see you disturbing my life with your reeking presence, you know. Every time I see you, my body automatically retches in disgust," she said. "So, what's gonna come from your knowledge that I've been plotting against you? What can you do in retaliation, exactly? Nothing. You can do nothing but live all alone, outside, with your child like an unwanted cur, isn't it? Mark can't even see you unless I'm feeling particularly merciful. Without my express consent, he can't even step out of the door! Oh, you should give up on playing this game with me, sweetie. You can't win. Of course… if you could leave the kid to us, I guess I can stand to be just a bit nicer to you. Otherwise, well! Let's see how long you can hold up, shall we?"

With that, she turned on her heels and headed up the stairs.

Arianne's rage was blazing, cackling like a mad inferno. She dashed forward and snatched Shelly's wrist, growling, "You deplorable, bastardly b*tch!"

Shelly met her gaze with contempt. "What's this? You're gonna get physical with me? Sure, hit me all you like. I won't even fight you."

Arianne knew better than to give in and punch her in the nose. If she did, it would not matter what led to this point—she would be indefensible.

It was then that Henry's voice suddenly rang outside the door, "Mr. Tremont, welcome home."

Mark—he had returned!

Before Arianne could react, Shelly suddenly shrieked at the top of her lungs before throwing herself down the steps.

Arianne's grip on the tumbling woman's wrist yanked her along with the force, causing the startled woman to stumble almost at the verge of falling. Luckily, she managed to stop her motion with her free hand pressing on the handrail.

As the women were rather close to the ground, a fall from this height should not have hurt much. But Shelly seemed to have knocked her head on the step, and fresh blood immediately burst out of her.

It splattered on the grey-white floor, vermillion and blooming and oh-so-eye-catching, like flowers in spring.

Clambering footsteps filled the space from the door as they reverberated closer and closer to Arianne. Mark and Henry burst into the house, and upon seeing what happened, an unreadable expression befell Mark's face.

He looked at Arianne for two seconds before turning to Shelly. "Aunt Shelly?! Aunt Shelly, are you alright? What happened?!"

Arianne was still in a daze. She played back how it happened frame-by-frame in her mind, seizing on every detail she could salvage, and knew from the bottom of her heart that she did not do it. She did not push Shelly! And neither did she tug her in any way—Shelly threw herself down of her own accord!

But her fall was a little too extreme. Blood was spilling everywhere. And Shelly, frighteningly, looked like she was about to pass out any second from now.

The woman could not even answer her son intelligibly. She managed to open her mouth for a bit before appearing motionless.

Mark ordered Henry to immediately drive Shelly to the hospital.

The Tremont Estate had erupted into chaos, and yet, Arianne remained nailed to her spot with the same pose, unmoving and excluded from the snafu around her as though she was just a spectator watching from outside. Her heart was wringing in agony.

She was too acutely cognizant that even from the moment he busted through the door, Mark had not once asked of her.

Chapter 1686

It was only when Henry's car was about to hit the road that Arianne finally reeled back from her daze. "I'll tag along!"

Mark leered at her, saying nothing.

She took a seat and went to the hospital with them. There, Shelly was pushed into the emergency room, and a few moments later, the operating doctor came out reporting that although the bleeding appeared copious, it would still take a few X-ray imaging to confirm any significant internal damage.

With the bill in hand, Henry dutifully sauntered away to pay it by the counter, leaving only Arianne and Mark waiting outside the emergency studio.

Their gazes linked; they were a few steps away from one another, yet it felt as though they were several lightyears apart. He was so distant that Arianne could not fathom a lick of what could be brewing in his mind.

Abruptly, Mark broke the spell. “Why were you there … in the Tremont Estate?”

There were no external emotional cues on his face. Nothing to pick up on; nothing to work up a guess.

Arianne was startled. “Are you… Are you suggesting I shouldn’t be there? Did it occur to you before you asked, that the Tremont Estate used to be my home for more than a decade? I only left the place a few months ago, Mark. Just a while ago—”

“That’s not what I meant,” Mark cut her off, his eyebrows a little furrowed. “All I want to know is why were you there suddenly by yourself? What happened before I was home? You called me a while ago… Was it to ensure my absence?”

Arianne inhaled deeply. “So, what do you imagine had happened? You think I pushed her down the stairs, don’t you?”

Mark’s frown deepened. His eyes were trained on her. “I did not in any capacity mean that. Again, all I want to know is what precisely happened. Just answer me properly—and without unwarranted emotional flares. Please.”

Arianne cast her eyes down. When she spoke, her tone was even-keeled. “I was asking her to see if she had any dirtier tricks against me; I wanted justice for myself and Robin. Since the beginning, she was my prime suspect behind that plagiarism debacle, and it turned out that she did, in fact, use an external agent to email my design to McGinnis through Robin’s computer. This whole time, she had only one singular purpose—to drive me away from Tremont Enterprise, with Robin acting as an unwitting fall guy. That’s right, Mark; Robin was just her escape plan. She assumed I would automatically stop the trail-chasing once Robin’s ‘role’ was uncovered out of protection for my friend. But I believed in Robin’s character, and I know she would never do such a thing. That was why I continued the investigation on my own.”

Strangely, Mark's frown was even further creased. "Who was it?"

Arianne knew exactly what he was alluding to, but she had promised Libby to protect her. Finking on the woman right now would, more or less, be a nasty thing to do.

She sidestepped the question. "No, that's not the question you should be asking. It was an innocent person who was unwittingly conned into being Shelly's pawn, and I don't intend to go after them. My eyes are on the real mastermind—and that's none other than your aunt."

Henry finally returned. Mark took it as a cue to bring Shelly for the X-ray imaging test, and soon enough, her result was out. Her cut was shallow and non-damaging.

Shortly after that, Shelly woke up from the hospital bed. Mark was standing before her when he asked, "Did you use someone as a pawn in a plot against Arianne?"

The woman in question stood by the door, with her eyes nailed on Shelly. She was not going to admit to it, Arianne knew, yet deep down inside, she hoped against hope that Shelly would choose to let the cat out of the bag…

Chapter 1687

Shelly's face seemed so weak she might have passed out anytime. "What are you talking about? I don't know what Arianne told you, but I didn't do it. No means no! I've been staying at home all this time, so there's no way for me to come into contact with matters at the company. I'd only been to the office that one time and then something happened; could there be such a coincidence? You suspect that I'm plotting against Arianne, but why don't you think that there's a chance that someone's taking advantage

of the situation and plotting against me instead? I'm not the only person who hates Arianne. Doesn't she hate me as well? Do you have it in you to say that she doesn't? The moment she stepped through that door, she questioned me as to why I framed her. Then, just because I didn't do it and I refused to admit to it, she pushed me down the stairs. How could you still want to be with that venomous woman when she clearly knew I had a bad leg and definitely couldn't react to that? Can't you see her clearly for what she truly is?!"

Arianne was so angry that she began to tremble, but she still remained silent. 'If Mark truly believes her words, then there's no point in me explaining myself anymore, since this man isn't worth my time or patience.'

Mark remained silent, as he seemed to be thinking about something. After a moment, he merely said, "Get some rest. Henry will come over to drive you home later."

After that, he turned around and headed to the door where Arianne stood, grabbing her wrist as he passed her.

Shelly immediately stood upright and shouted, "Mark!"

Mark did not stop and left the hospital with Arianne instead.

Arianne was quiet throughout the journey as she moved forward as Mark wanted. 'Is he going to question me next? He seemed so calm towards Shelly when he walked out of the ward. He believes her, doesn't he?'

"Why didn't you tell me?" asked Mark all of a sudden.

Arianne raised her eyes to look at him. “Tell you what?”

He released his grip on her wrist and grabbed her shoulders instead. “You’ve clearly investigated and found out what’s happening, but why didn’t you tell me the moment you knew? Was there any reason for you to confront her alone? Unless, you thought that I would still believe her and doubt you instead?”

Arianne was slightly startled as she subconsciously stopped in her tracks. “You… don’t think that it was I who pushed her down the stairs?”

Mark turned his head over to look at her as his lips curled up into a smile. “What are you thinking? You’d have done it long ago if you wanted to do that. Plus, you wouldn’t have taken care of her at the hospital for more than a month or endured the tough decision of having a divorce with me. In fact, you shouldn’t be persuading me anymore. If this keeps up, will we ever even see the end of it? I’ve already decided how I want to do this, so I’ll definitely make it up to you so that you don’t have to endure it any longer.”

Arianne’s eyes turned red. “Mark…”

Mark raised his hand to caress her cheek. “Alright, don’t cry. Let’s get you home first. Leave the rest to me now.”

Arianne nodded her head, as she could not control her tears. She was not an emotional person, but she was still moved when Mark said such gentle words to her just now, as she knew what he meant by making it up to her…

Mark left after sending Arianne home and did not arrive at Tremont Estate until late at night.

In the past, he would have a sudden sense of anticipation whenever he arrived home because there were people that he missed waiting for him there. But now, whenever he arrived home, he almost could not bring himself to enter because the person that he dearly missed was not there.

Chapter 1688

As he set foot into his house, the pitch black living room suddenly lit up. Mark squinted his eyes due to the sudden overwhelming brightness and scanned his surroundings before laying his gaze on Shelly, who was standing by the staircase.

Shelly was wearing a thin piece of nightgown, making her look so thin that she could probably fly away with the wind. The bandage on her head seemed to be a little bloodied as she squinted her eyes. “Why have you arrived home only now? Have you been to Arianne’s place again? She’s already done this to me, yet you still want to be with her? Do you really want to drive me up a corner? Will you be happy if I’m dead?! Why can’t you ever understand the hardships I’m enduring?!”

Shelly’s words were as sharp as a knife as she talked; it was so irritating that it made others feel like shutting her up.

Mark expressionlessly said, “I’ll repay you whatever the mother who raised me owes, but I won’t allow you to torture Arianne any longer, since she doesn’t owe you anything. I’ll slowly repay you everything that my foster mother owed you… From now on, you’re forbidden from leaving Tremont Estate and will be receiving treatment when you’re recovered. This time, I’ll make sure you don’t run away, but I’ll personally pick you up when you’ve recovered and take care of you for the rest of your life.”

Shelly swayed and almost lost her footing. “What… What did you say?! In the end, you still choose to believe that wench?! You’d rather believe an outsider than me?!”

Mark closed his eyes and took a deep breath. “How am I supposed to believe you when not a single word that’s come out of your mouth is the truth?! Arianne would never do such a thing. We’ve been living together for over 10 years, and I’m the one who watched her grow up. We only had each other’s backs back then, so she’s the most important person to me. Who gives you the right to lay a finger on her?! I hope that you won’t ever spit out another criticism against her ever again! Everyone else is willing to live together peacefully, yet you refuse to go along with it, so I can only remove you from my life and make everything return to how it used to be before you showed up!”

Shelly was stunned as she sat on a step on the stairs. Her eyes were wide open, seeming to tear up. “Aren’t… Aren’t you afraid…”

Before she could finish, Mark interrupted her and said, “What would I be afraid of? Afraid that you’ll tell the public everything? I was afraid in the past because I didn’t want my foster mother to be criticized even after death. Also, I didn’t want to be too harsh on you because you kept pretending to be pitiful in front of everyone! But in the end, my silent patience has been met with your ruthlessness. This is where it ends; I’ve treated you with enough kindness. If you want to publicize the matter, you’re gonna have to see if you’re capable enough!”

After saying that, Mark asked for Henry. “Get someone to watch over her so that she doesn’t do anything stupid. She’s also forbidden from leaving her room. When she has recovered, send her to the mental institute for treatment and arrange for someone to take special care of her. She’ll leave whenever she has recovered. I’m tired; I’ll be returning to my room now.”

Henry acknowledged his instructions and called for two nannies to drag Shelly back to her room, her continuous yells falling on deaf ears.

‘In the end, it still came to this. I so wish that Shelly wasn’t the one who planned the entire plagiarism incident. That way, I could let her stay and take care of her and remember her merits so that maybe… I might still be able to call her mom after some time…’

The next day, the first thing Mark did when he arrived at the office was to call Libby over to his office. “You’re fired. As for why, I’m sure you know well enough.”

Libby did not argue. “I’m sorry… Mr. Tremont.”

Mark’s face was calm. “Arianne wasn’t the one who ratted you out. It was my aunt. Go retrieve your salary from accounts.”

Libby was slightly startled. She had thought that Mark would surely go mental on her and scold her. However, she did not expect for him to have spoken to her so calmly.

When he saw that Libby was startled, Mark asked her, “What? Don’t believe me? You don’t think that my aunt would rat you out?”

Libby immediately regained her senses and hurriedly said, “No… I’ll be leaving now, Mr. Tremont. Thank you for taking care of me all these years. Tremont Enterprise is a nice company, but unfortunately, a person like me doesn’t have the luck to stay here.”

Chapter 1689

When Libby returned to her desk to pack up her personal belongings, Robin approached her and asked, “What’s the matter? Are you leaving?”

Libby nodded her head. “In the end, Mr. Tremont still found out about it, so I definitely can’t stay. It’s alright though, I’ve been preparing myself for this. Robin, I’m so sorry… Please help send my apologies to Arianne as well, since I don’t have the courage to see her myself. Good luck with your work here. Arianne was right; we’re supposed to be working in our office, not cause strifes internally and do anything that would bring harm to others.”

Robin sighed. “Let me send you off. You’ve got quite a lot of stuff.”

Libby did not reject, but she had mixed feelings at that moment. ‘After how badly I’ve treated her, I never expected for her to be the one to send me off in the end.’

After sending Libby away, Robin returned to the designs department. When she found Arianne, she told her about how Libby had been fired.

Arianne was slightly distracted at that moment. “It’s likely that Shelly ratted her out. Regardless, there’s nothing I can do to make her stay here. There’s no way I can talk to Mark as well; he’s probably in a very foul mood at the moment.”

Robin meekly asked, “Arianne, what happened? How did Mr. Tremont manage to find out about it? What’s he going to do now? She’s still his aunt after all…”

Arianne raised her hands and rested on it as she looked forwards whilst still deep in thought. “I don’t know. Whatever it is… we should have peace within the company from now on. Everyone has their own limits, and Shelly’s been testing Mark’s patience continuously. He should’ve reached his limit a long time ago. I’ve already reached the end of my patience.”

Sylvain interrupted them and said, “Robin, why are you here listening to gossip? Hurry up and get back to work. You’re actually running away from your duty.”

Robin pouted her lips. “Arianne hasn’t even said anything, yet you’re already beginning to lecture me. Just how long was I actually here? Fine, I’m leaving. Remember to get the groceries after work tonight, ‘cause I’ll be working overtime.”

Sylvain had an unhappy look on his face. “Can’t we eat out? I don’t want to buy groceries. You know I’m bad at that!”

Robin rolled her eyes at him. “You gotta! Practice makes perfect. Do you know how much money we’ll be wasting by eating out? I’ll cook you something nice when I get back from work, so would it be too much to ask you to just get some groceries?”

Although Sylvain was still refusing, there seemed to be a smile beneath his eyes. “You might be slowly killing me with your food…”

Robin angrily waved her fist before turning away and leaving.

Arianne was slightly envious of them. “Seeing the two of you like this… It’s nice.”

Sylvain raised an eyebrow and said, “You don’t need too many riches in life. All you need is to accompany each other everyday and have meals together. Most importantly, leave no regrets behind.”

Arianne imagined the scenario that Sylvain just told her. ‘If Mark and I hadn’t met like we did and the two of us dated like normal people, would there be fewer challenges? I do think of living a normal and peaceful life, staying together and having meals together everyday, watching the flowers blossom and wilt, and our technology advance. At the end of all of it, I don’t want to leave any regrets behind.’

When it was after office hours, Arianne continued to stay at work on overtime, since she still had some unfinished tasks.

By the time she left, most of the people on the same floor as her had also already left. As she left the building, the sky gradually got dark and the city was magnificently illuminated by colorful neon lights. Also, there were a few stars in the sky, hanging up high as though they were watching everything that was happening beneath them.

Chapter 1690

There was a slightly bleak wind blowing that night, making the surrounding temperature just right during that season.

As Arianne leisurely strolled through the busy streets, she looked at the shops within her vicinity. The street she was walking on was very prosperous and bustling; every item they were selling was luxurious. ‘I used to pass by here everyday previously, but I never stopped or had the chance to shop around here. I’ve told Mary that I’ll be back a bit later and won’t be eating at home, so I could take this chance to shop around leisurely, since there’s no hurry for me to go home.

‘Smore is getting older and naughtier now, making a mess of the house, with his toys lying around everywhere everyday. Although Mary cleans up after him countless times, I still have to clean up when I get home after work as well. However, things should get better soon after Smore starts to attend

kindergarten during the summer. Wow, so many years have passed in the blink of an eye. Now that I think of it, I still can't believe that Mark and I have a son together who's almost three years old.'

Suddenly, Arianne stole a glance at a young couple who were passing by her with their hands held together. The girl was resting her head on the guy's shoulder with a very happy smile on her face. 'So it's true, a person's eyes glisten when they're together with the person they love...'

"Who are you waiting for?"

Arianne instantly turned her head towards the direction of the voice, which sounded very familiar, only to meet with Mark's deep gaze.

She looked behind him to find his car parked by the roadside. 'I totally didn't notice him when he approached me. However, I suppose that it makes sense. The company is very near from here, so he probably noticed me as he passed by.' Then, Arianne pulled back her hair that had been blown into a mess by the wind and asked, "Did you pass by here? I'm not waiting for anyone, just casually shopping around since I don't feel like going home too early tonight. Are you… going home now?"

Mark reached out his hand to grab her shoulder. "I'm here to drive you back home together. I even got off work early to buy some groceries with Mary and Smore. Although I'm not cooking tonight, I did pick out the groceries myself. Yet, you're out here, refusing to go home or answer your calls."

Arianne was slightly curious and took out her phone from her handbag. It was only then that she realised her phone had run out of battery. She became slightly troubled. "I'm sorry, I was too busy at work this afternoon, so I didn't take note of my phone's battery. Has the sun risen from the west today? I thought that you… you'd be busy these few days and have no time to see Smore."

Mark guided her into his car. “That’s just your assumption. Why would I be busy? There’s nothing more important that’s worth my time than spending time with my wife and son. Let’s go home now. Smore and Mary are still waiting for us to have dinner.”

Arianne suddenly smiled. “Sometimes I feel that God has treated me rather well.”

Mark did not quite understand what she meant. “What do you mean? Why is there a hint of “self-exclamation”? What are you exclaiming about?”

Arianne shook her head. “Nothing, let’s go home.”

When they arrived at Arianne’s neighbourhood, she got out of the car first while Mark looked for a parking spot. She did not wait for him since it was only a short distance and she wanted to go home to see if there was a mess in the house. If there was, she wanted to tidy it up first before Mark’s obsessive cleanliness disorder kicked in and grew uncomfortable.

However, the moment she entered her house, she was shocked to find that the house was extremely tidy. Smore’s toys had all been put in his toy box and there was not even a speck of dust on the floor. There was even piping hot food on the dining table, which smelled nice, and Mary was still working away busily in the kitchen. ‘It seems like everyone has their own bane. Smore is on his best behaviour whenever Mark comes around.’

Smore presented a box of chocolate to her. “Mommy, daddy bought this. He said that you would definitely love this. I helped try a piece for you. It’s really sweet!”

Arianne put down her handbag and hugged Smore. “Why has daddy bought this all of a sudden? You’re still young, so your teeth will go bad if you eat this. Could he really have bought it for me?”