Ruling 1711

Chapter 1711

Arianne had not received a single call from Mark since then, even at the very next day. All she received at most was a midnight text telling her that he could not leave. She felt as though he stood her up.

She went to work, and immediately spotted Sylvain languidly sipping his morning tea in the office. Immediately, she asked, “When is the wedding between you and Robin?”

Hot tea choked Sylvain on cue, leaving him sputtering for a good while before finally regaining composure.

“Gah? Right, our wedding. We’re… still in the middle of planning it. Yeah, stuff like this is always best taken slow, right? So we’re getting ready for everything. Plus, I’ve only got the time to work on that bridal gown design after work,” he fibbed. “I’ve decided to take up your brilliant suggestion and design it myself. Whew, it’s quite exhausting to do things yourself, though!”

His reaction was a little off, but Arianne had no time to dwell on it. Instead, she took her seat and asked, “Have you seen Mark since this morning?”

Sylvain rubbed his nose. “You know, if you wanna know if he’s around or not, you could have just—I dunno—checked if he’s in his office? I don’t know why you’re asking me.”

Arianne turned around and glared at him.

“Uh, he usually arrives around the same time that I’m here, so we kinda meet often right in the parking lot,” he relented. “But I don’t think I’ve seen him yet today. Maybe he came earlier than I did. Or maybe he arrived after.”

He must not be in the office at all, then. Just what in the world was occupying his time?

The days that came after did not change much. Mark’s streak of mysterious disappearances continued, and Arianne never saw him within the office. He at least remembered to dispatch some of his people to send some delicacies and toys to Smore, though—apparently, his son was still on his mind.

On Friday night, Mark instructed Brian to gift Arianne with an evening gown set, along with complementary jewellery and shoes. The driver told her that she was to attend a ball of some kind on Saturday night, which was to be held in a cruise. Since the weather was still a little on the chilly side, and it was going to be held at sea, he reminded her to bring a tippet with her.

Arianne spread the gown out as soon as Brian left and found herself thoroughly amazed. Far from a sultry, sexy design, it was a pure white dress that emanated a fae, innocent air. Delicately embroidered flowers adorned the layer of muslin wrapped around the dress hems. It was not a gaudy, showy dress, yet it inspired any onlooker and admirer, nonetheless.

Another layer of muslin wrapped itself around her chest. Since it was commonly thought that two of a woman’s most alluring attributes when donning a dress was her collarbones and neck, the evening gown’s particular design accentuated them by teasing their existence with a veil of muslin rather than barring them outright, thus striking the balance between decorous modesty and intriguing charm.

Arianne could not help but put it on right there and then. It was a flawless fit—the length of the dress was perfectly complementary to the heels that came with the gift.

She had to acknowledge Mark's thoughtful, exacting nature once again. Besides, the fact that he chose to bring her to the ball rather than any other woman was not lost on her.

She took a photo of herself using the mirror and was about to send it to him when she changed her mind a millisecond before hitting "send". He must have already known how it might look on her since he had selected the gown in the first place—so if she showed him pictures of herself in this dress right now, would it seem as though she was trying to ingratiate herself?

The next afternoon, Brian started waiting for her downstairs, outside the condominium. Arianne haphazardly put on her gown and began the make-up process, but her panic seemed to have cost her usual dexterity. The fact that Brian the driver was the one who fetched her led Arianne to surmise that Mark himself must be very busy that he could not even drive her there personally.

Seeing how late the time was, she called Brian. "Um, I might need a bit more time. Is… Is the whole thing about to start? I'm a bit slow in my make-up today…"

"Take it easy, Madam. Just do it at your own pace. The ball isn't gonna start until it's night. As soon as we reached the venue before six, we're good. Mr. Tremont has emphasized that you should be given all the time in the world to get ready. Don't panic, Madam. I'll be waiting for you down here."

Hearing no urgency in his voice, Arianne was finally relieved before returning to meticulously dolling herself up. Once the make-up was completed, she then drew her long, disheveled hair into a simple evening hair bun that was just the perfect style for the dress.

Looking at herself in the mirror, Arianne sighed in satisfaction. It was then that she suddenly remembered that Mary had taken Smore out to play earlier and had not returned yet. She called the old housekeeper, and the moment the call connected, Arianne wasted no time instructing, "I don't know

when this ball is gonna end, Mary, so I might actually be home late tonight. I'll have to pass the responsibilities to you. Please, be careful while on your way back home."

Strangely, Mary's surrounding was unnaturally rambunctious and filled with revelry. The woman even had to raise her voice before replying, "Smore's already with his father, Ari. 'Cause we're both already aboard the cruise! So, come over here with Brian, Madam!"

Chapter 1712

The phone call got disconnected before Arianne could even say anything. 'What the h*ll, Mark! Couldn't you have informed me earlier that you were taking Smore along? You ended up just taking him away with you directly. However, that's fine. If Smore's under Mark's watchful eyes, he'll be back home earlier since Mark has never been the type of person to stay in a public area and be courteous to others with a smile. It's too stressful for him.'

When she arrived downstairs, Brian got out of the car to help her open the car door for her. He even lifted the hem of Arianne's skirt.

After she was properly seated in the car, she lifted her eyes and smiled at Brian. "Thank you."

Brian was startled for a moment before he quickly averted his gaze from Arianne's face. "It's part of my duty."

Arianne thought that Brian's reaction was a little strange. "What's the matter? Is my makeup not done properly?"

Brian had a serious expression on his face as he said, “No, you look good. We’re going to depart now. It’s going to be more than an hour’s ride, so please get some rest.”

Arianne always felt refreshed whenever she got out of her house, so there was no way she would rest. Instead, she casually struck up a conversation with Brain. “Who’s organizing this event? Is it a normal event, or is it someone’s birthday?”

Brian paused for a moment before he answered, “It’s a wedding.”

Arianne was slightly surprised. “A wedding?!”

‘I thought it was just a normal event. If it’s a wedding, my dress is way too attractive. I might just snatch the attention away from the bride.’

Brian nodded his head. “Yes, it’s a wedding.”

Arianne was slightly frustrated. “In that case, I shouldn’t have dressed like this; my dress looks too much like a wedding dress… I’m just missing a veil and the exaggerated bustle… What the h*ll was Mark thinking? Wouldn’t I be attracting all the attention away from the bride? When I get there later, I’ll have to see if I can mend the outer layer of my dress…”

Brian hurriedly said, “You don’t have to! Since it’s Mr. Tremont’s decision, I’m sure he has his own ideas. You won’t be attracting too much attention.”

‘Brian seems to be making some sense. Mark wouldn’t be so outrageous.’

When they arrived there, Arianne was shocked when she saw a cruise ship parked by the coast. ‘Which prestigious family’s wedding is it? It’s such a huge cruise, just the decorations for the place would cost a lot. Has the media reported whose daughter is going to be married off today?’

While Arianne was startled, Brian parked the car and approached her, lifting his hand. “Madam, watch your step. Let me help you there.”

Arianne laughed at Brian’s gesture. “What are you doing? Mark and I are divorced, so why are you still calling me Madam? I was planning on correcting you previously. This dress may be a little long, but I don’t think I need to put on such a huge show and ask for your help, do I?”

Brian remained silent, but his arm was still raised.

Arianne helplessly placed her hand on his arm. “Fine, fine. Let’s go. This cruise seems to be very well-decorated; you can tell that it’s a wedding with just one look. Which prestigious family’s daughter is getting married today? And to whom?”

Before Brian could answer, Tiffany’s voice could be heard from the long stairwell. “Ari! I’m here! Hurry up and get up here!”

Chapter 1713

Although Tiffany’s belly was extremely big, it did not stop her from wearing a dress. In fact, it gave her a certain charm.

‘Jackson’s here as well. It seems like the owner of this wedding banquet is quite something.’

It was not until Arianne got onto the cruise that she realized that there were many renowned people onboard. Even Alejandro and Melane were there, along with other business tycoons within the industry.

As she arrived at the lounge, Arianne spied Smore wolfing down food through the corner of her eyes. He was eating so much cake that his mouth was filled with cream. Before he left his house, he had even gotten changed into a suit with a black tie. Truthfully, he seemed to look a lot more like Mark at that moment.

“Aristotle Tremont, why are you wolfing down your food without showing any courtesy?” Arianne walked up towards him and took out a piece of tissue to wipe Smore’s mouth.

When she heard Arianne calling Smore’s full name, Mary, who was standing to the side, hurriedly explained, “He’s probably hungry from playing the entire afternoon. It’s fine, don’t worry. He has only had a little bit; let me clean it up for him.”

Smore was slightly aggrieved. “Mommy doesn’t let me eat anything sweet if we’re at home. I’m not afraid of rotten teeth, Mommy is!”

Arianne’s lips twitched. “Stop trying to make me look like some torturous stepmother. Your teeth are probably only going to start changing when you’re seven or eight years old. After that, you’re going to have to use them for a few years. If they all go rotten, you’re only going to be able to eat porridge everyday, do you believe that? When that happens, don’t come crying and calling Mommy when it hurts.”

Smore hid himself within Mary's embraces angrily, refusing to bother with Arianne.

Arianne sighed. "Fine, I shouldn't have come to find you, and let you eat more. When your teeth hurt like Mommy and you can't sleep because it's so painful, then you'll feel better. Now go on and continue playing. Mary, watch him while I go and look for Mark, please. My God, I haven't seen him anywhere yet."

Just as Arianne walked outside, the cruise slowly drove out of the coast. The sky gradually turned dark and the endless sea seemed to have a hidden depth in it. Arianne admired the scenery for a moment before she walked into the crowd. Some graceful music began to play in the cruise to sound the commencement of the event.

Suddenly, someone grabbed onto Arianne's wrist.

Arianne reflexively struggled to break free, but when she turned her head to look, she saw Mark. "You scared me, what are you doing? Where did you jump out from?"

Mark was donned in black, which made him match the night sky and gave him a mysterious look. He noticed the shock beneath Arianne's gaze. "I was behind you the entire time. Where were you looking? Could it be that I'm not attractive enough to get your attention? Your dress suits you quite well though…"

All it took was one glance and Arianne's face began to blush. She reached out her hand to grab Mark's elbow. "Why didn't you tell me beforehand that this is someone's wedding? You even made me wear

this dress; wouldn't I be stealing the spotlight? Also, where have you been this entire week? And yet, you asked me to accompany you to this event the moment you show up."

Mark brought her along as they walked on the gangway, the gentle sea breeze feeling slightly cold. "I'll explain things to you about what I'm busy with later. But look, do you think this scenery is beautiful? It took me a long time to pick this place."

Arianne raised her eyes to look at the scenery. 'This sea view does look quite good. Having a wedding on a cruise like this is really lovely, completely fascinating.' Arianne held both of her arms in the air and took a deep breath before she asked, "Whose wedding is this? That girl will definitely be very happy. This entire setup is truly outstanding."

Mark deliberately refused to answer her question. "You'll know who when you meet her later; you know who she is."

"I know her?" The first person that Arianne thought of was Robin. "Is it for Sylvain and Robin? It seems that Sylvain does have quite some money, as this wedding must have definitely cost a fortune. He was still under the company's employment a while ago, so I can't believe all of this is happening."

Mark neither denied nor admitted to it. "Do you want to eat something first? Are you hungry?"

Arianne pouted her lips. "This dress is a tight fit, so eating anything is probably going to make it tighter, isn't it? I'd be better off not eating and waiting till the event is over 'cause it saves me the trouble of panicking. Why did you bring Smore out as well, though? There are so many people here. I'm worried that he'll go off running on his own."

Chapter 1714

Mark, on the other hand, was not worried at all. “He’s still going to be on the cruise no matter where he runs off to, so where could he possibly go? Plus, Mary’s looking after him, so don’t worry. Since he’s my son, he’s going to have to get used to this from a young age. He’ll have to walk around with me in the company when he’s 10 years old. Otherwise, how’s he going to take over my place? I don’t care how you raise him before he hits 10 years old—let him play around freely or whatever. But I’m in charge once he hits 10 years old. Thinking about it, he’s my only son, so how can I not raise him up right? However, I won’t exhaust him either.”

Arianne shot him a glance. “If you think one son is too little, you could always have a few more with someone else. I won’t be able to bear you more children anyway.”

Mark suddenly reached out his hand and pulled Arianne towards him. “Who said I was complaining? One is enough.”

Arianne hurriedly struggled to wring free. “Stop messing around! There’s so many people around here.”

Not only did Mark not release her, but he even hugged her waist even tighter. “Who doesn’t know that you’re my woman? If they want to see, let them.”

“Oh my God, you two look so lovely. Hug her tighter!”

Suddenly, Tiffany and Jackson walked towards them.

Arianne's face flushed red from embarrassment. She slammed her fist on Mark's chest before she was able to wring free. "Stop laughing at me, Tiffany. You're going to be in a lot of pain when your baby comes out."

Tiffany did not seem to be bothered at all. "It's not like it has never happened before. I'm not afraid of it. The event's going to start, so shall we go dancing? We haven't danced in such a long time, actually."

Jackson looked at Tiffany's bulging belly and asked with some uncertainty in his tone, "Do you think you're able to dance now? I'll be really worried if you actually do go dancing."

Tiffany chuckled. "Aren't you here? What do I have to be afraid of if I'm dancing with you? Or do you think I'm not good enough to be your dancing partner with my big belly?"

Jackson's loving eyes seemed to glisten like stars. "Sure, sure, whatever you want, as long as you're happy."

Mark held up Arianne's hand as well. "Come on, let's go as well."

Arianne did not reject his offer. Although dancing wasn't her strong suit, she could still manage.

As they walked onto the dance floor where the crowd swayed towards the gentle music, Arianne only had Mark in her eyes as they looked at each other. Their feelings for each other bloomed like flowers in their hearts.

Suddenly, Mark softly whispered in Arianne's ear, "You look… very beautiful today…"

Arianne was slightly embarrassed as she replied, "You don't look so bad either…"

The music suddenly changed into a very formal tune. Arianne stopped to look at her surroundings, only to realize that everyone had dispersed, leaving only her and Mark standing in the middle of the empty dance floor. Not only that, she even saw Sylvain and Robin standing amongst the crowd. Robin was wearing a dress instead of a wedding gown, which would mean that the main character for the night was not Robin and Sylvain.

Just as Arianne became filled with curiosity, Mark suddenly knelt on one knee and looked at her with passionate eyes. "Ari, will you marry me?"

Out of nowhere, Smore suddenly appeared right in the nick of time, presenting a ring. "Daddy, here you go!"

Arianne was shocked, and did not know how to react to the situation. 'So… am I the main character today? The dress I'm wearing was originally meant to be a wedding gown? That little schemer…'

Chapter 1715

"Why are you spacing out there?! Hurry up and say yes, Ari!"

Tiffany was shouting by the side, obviously excited.

Arianne regained her senses when she heard Tiffany screaming. She thought that it was all unbelievable. She wanted to ask what was going on, but it did not seem like the right time to talk about anything else given the circumstances. Hence, she slowly raised her hand under everyone's watchful eyes. "Y-yes…"

Arianne still thought that she was dreaming, right up till the point where the ring was placed around her ring finger. 'Is this the "big thing" that Mark has been busy with?' Arianne was so agitated that her hands were slightly trembling…

Arianne's eyes suddenly began to tear up and swell. 'He really did keep his promise and give me the best. He's announced to everyone that I'm his woman.'

As fireworks began to be released above the cruise, the music became merrier. Mark got up and kissed Arianne on the lips. "From now on, you're mine. No, you've always been mine. This is only what I owe you. Now, everything has been paid in full."

Arianne lowered her eyes and forced herself to calm down because her makeup was definitely going to be ruined if she cried. "How could you do this to me? Why didn't you tell me beforehand…? You…"

Mark gently curled his lips into a smile. "It wouldn't be called a surprise if I told you. What you're wearing now was personally designed by me night after night. This is what you wanted, you said so yourself."

Arianne still failed to hold her tears. 'I should've known that Sylvain was trying to get me to talk. I only told him that a wedding gown that has been especially designed for the lady would show more sincerity, but I never thought that Mark would actually do it for me. Mark's been sleeping in the morning because he was rushing the design for this dress through the nights, yet I was still angry at him. Why didn't this big idiot explain himself?! He still refused to tell the truth in that situation!'

Arianne stood on her toes and hugged Mark. “All I want is you…”

The fireworks above the cruise kept going, and Arianne had no idea how long had passed. She could still feel her body trembling even after she returned to the lounge. ‘Is it because it’s cold, or I’m too excited? I just can’t seem to calm myself.’

Melanie and Tiffany both accompanied her. When they saw how excited Arianne was, they felt shocked. Melanie laughed and said, “Arianne, I thought you wouldn’t give any kind of reaction even if the sky fell, but who knew you would be so excited. I suppose you’re mostly touched, aren’t you? Mark has really put in all this time.”

Tiffany patted Arianne’s shoulder. “I think she and Mark are the same: cold on the outside, warm on the inside. She only looks as cold as ice on the outside. Ari, are you touched? I just found out about it yesterday as well. That asshole Jackson hid it from even me. However, I really did find it hard to keep it a secret. Luckily, I managed to keep my mouth shut before you. Was it exciting?”

Arianne felt very embarrassed after hearing their comments. “Stop teasing me, I was just… caught off guard. I suppose anyone would react the same way as me, wouldn’t they? For a moment there I thought that it was Robin and Sylvain’s wedding, but I never thought that you guys were actually hiding the truth from me. Moreover, I’ve got to hand it to you for being able to hide it so well.”

A hint of loneliness flashed through Melanie’s eyes; her marriage with Alejandro was done up about the same scale as it was that night. However, the only difference was that her marriage with Alejandro was not founded on their feelings for each other, but due to business reasons. The entire marriage was done as a show for others. Hence, every time Melanie looked at Jackson and Tiffany or Arianne and Mark, she would think that she had it the worst among them. To this day, Alejandro had not even shown any signs of loving her. She surmised that their relationship would probably have been long but broken if not for their daughter.

“Melanie, is Millie here?”

Arianne’s voice brought Melanie back to her senses. She hurriedly smiled and replied, “I didn’t bring her today. She’s too naughty and likes to run around too much. I had to leave her alone at home, since I wouldn’t be able to take care of her with this crowd. By the way, Smore is such a good boy; he was even able to present the ring.”

Chapter 1716

Arianne could not help but be proud whenever she thought of Smore. ‘I never expected Smore to be the one to present the ring. The little boy was even angry at me a while ago.’

Tiffany did not slack off, despite being pregnant. She moved around sloppily when she heard the fireworks still being set off. “I want to have a look at the fireworks. Would you all like to join me? I heard from Jackson that the final moments before the fireworks end are the best, and it’s going to be coming soon.”

Arianne shook her head. “My legs are a little sore from standing too long, so I’m going to rest for a while. Cut me some slack please. I’ve still got to go out and entertain the crowd later on. If I knew I was the main character earlier, I would’ve been more prepared mentally… You go ahead with Melanie.”

Tiffany grabbed Melanie’s hand as she eagerly rushed out. When Arianne saw that there was no one around her, she took off her high heels. Her toes had begun to turn red from standing up for too long. ‘These shoes are much higher than the ones I normally wear. I suppose there’s a price for beauty.’

Suddenly, someone pushed the door and entered. Arianne panicked and wanted to put her shoes back on, but when she saw that it was Mark, she sighed in relief. “Shouldn’t you be outside, attending to your guests? Why are you in here? I’ll be out after a short break.”

Mark stood directly in front of her before kneeling down. Then, he held up her feet and gently massaged them. “Are the shoes too small? I remember you wore this size…”

Arianne could smell the alcohol on Mark. ‘He has probably had a lot to drink. Otherwise, he definitely wouldn’t do such a considerate act.’ Arianne felt slightly uncomfortable and wanted to retract her feet, but Mark suddenly held onto them tightly, which was unexpected. “Don’t move, I’ll help you massage them.”

Frankly, Arianne felt very uneasy. She would never have even dreamt of Mark helping her massage her feet, not when he was such a clean freak. ‘I wonder if he will have trauma from this when he wakes up tomorrow morning and the alcohol has left his system?’

“Have you had a lot to drink?” asked Arianne tentatively.

Mark raised his eyes to look at her. “I didn’t drink for too long, so I’m still sober. What's wrong with touching my own woman’s leg? If you really do feel very uncomfortable in those shoes, just stay here and rest. You don’t have to go out later. We’ll go home when this is over. Also, I’ve asked Henry to arrange for some men to move the stuff from that condo to Tremont Estate. So, it’s all settled; you don’t have to go back to the condo anymore.”

‘I’m moving back, just like that? I had no intention of going back to Tremont Estate directly when I left earlier. Mark has really planned out everything and made all the necessary arrangements.’

On the other hand, after Tiffany and Melanie were done watching the fireworks, Melanie suddenly remembered that she wanted to look for her brother. 'No matter what, now that the Larks are attending tonight, we're considered one of the shareholders in Tremont Enterprise, so we should be here. The Larks reside in Ayashe, while I'm in the Capital, so it's a rare thing to be able to meet.'

Tiffany thought that it was boring for her to be alone, so she suggested, "I'll go with you. We'll see how it goes after we change our locations. There are too many people here. It's really noisy with all the chatter going on."

Melanie did not refuse Tiffany's suggestion; hence, she brought Tiffany along with her to the living area on the second floor of the cruise. After asking a few people, Melanie was finally able to find out where her brother was.

Melanie ran into her brother just as she walked to an empty staircase. When she saw Nikolai, she rushed up towards him and hugged him passionately. "Bro!"

Nikolai was a handsome man and appeared to be very mature, looking seven to eight years older than Melanie. He hugged her back with a faint smile. "Melanie, why are you still the same as you were when you were little? You're already married and have a child. You shouldn't be so intimate with your brother now."

Chapter 1717

It took Melanie a moment before she remembered that Tiffany was with her. She hurriedly introduced them. "Bro, this is Tiffany. You should probably know her, since she's a good friend of mine."

Nikolai squinted his eyes slightly as he sized up Tiffany for a moment. Then, he said with a casual expression, “Hello, my name is Nikolai.”

Tiffany waved her hand. “Hey Nikolai, we’re all friends here, so there’s no need to be so formal.”

The stairs were definitely not a good place to have a chat, so Melanie said, “Bro, why don’t we find somewhere to sit and chat? I haven’t been home for a very long time now, so I neither know how things are back at home, nor have I been in contact with Mom and Dad.”

Nikolai nodded his head, but his gaze was still fixated on Tiffany.

Tiffany was already standing below the pair and it was narrow on the stairs, so she definitely needed to turn around and walk down first. Suddenly, Nikolai pushed her from behind. Since she was heavier due to her pregnancy, this caused her to roll down the stairs!

Tiffany’s screams had been covered up by the fireworks, so no one could hear her. Bright red blood began to flow out from beneath Tiffany’s body as it spread all over the floor. It was a terrifying sight to behold!

Melanie was completely dumbfounded and shocked. It took her a few seconds before she was able to regain her senses. “What in God’s name have you done, brother?! Are you mad!” As she softly growled, she hurriedly walked towards Tiffany to check on her situation. However, Tiffany had all but completely lost consciousness at that moment.

Melanie rummaged through her purse in hopes of making a phone call, but Nikolai snatched it away from her. “I’m not crazy, you are. Don’t think that I don’t know that Alejandro loves her. You’ve never

had a good day ever since you were married into the Smiths. The Larks do not have such a cowardly person like you! I'll do what you refuse to do, and I'll bear the consequences myself! Have a good, long thought about it. If this goes on, Alejandro is going to divorce you for sure. When that happens, the Larks would be at a complete loss. I'll call for someone to help her, but not now. The best thing to do is to make sure that she's on the verge of death before we call for help. When that happens, no one would know what we've done here."

A hint of hesitation flashed through Melanie's eyes, but she soon steeled herself again. "No… It's not her fault. Alejandro and I were only ever married for business reasons, and I've known since long ago that he will never fall in love with me. Now that we have a daughter together, he won't divorce me, so please don't involve an innocent person in this, all right? I promise, I won't allow Alejandro to divorce me. Please bro, save Tiffany. She's pregnant! I know you're only worried that I won't be able to win over the Smiths, but I will try my best. Bro…"

Nikolai was slightly impatient as he reached out into the pocket on his suit to light up a cigarette. "What the hell are you thinking? Don't you know that it's absolutely foolish to show kindness to your enemies? Has Alejandro ever taken the initiative to accompany you back to visit your family since you've been married? Millie has already grown up so much, but why hasn't he made you give birth to a son yet? Think about it yourself: if you end up getting kicked out in the end, the Larks won't stand for it. You even think of Tiffany as your friend, you must be completely crazy! It's even possible that she's making a joke out of you behind your back!"

Melanie's eyes were flooded with tears. She could not believe that the brother, who had always loved her, had actually done such a cold-blooded and cruel act. Although he said that it was for her on the surface, he had actually done it for the Larks. 'I'm just a pawn to him… Is that what it is?'

As she looked at Tiffany's breathing gradually becoming weaker as she laid on the ground. Melanie gritted her teeth. Suddenly, she rushed towards the door near her. "Somebody, help! Is there a doctor in this shop?"

Behind the door was the living area on the second floor of the cruise. When they heard the screams, people began to rush over towards the direction where they came from.

Nikolai was so angry that he threw his cigarette on the floor and stomped on it to extinguish it. “You… idiot!” After spitting out those words, Nikolai hurriedly disappeared into the staircase in the corner. If someone were to see him on the scene, he would most likely be involved in the mess.

When the bystanders appeared, Melanie could no longer be bothered with Nikolai. She helped the others bring Tiffany to the lounge.

Chapter 1718

‘The people who have attended tonight’s event are all businessmen, so how could there be a doctor present?’ When Melanie realized this, she borrowed a phone from one of the bystanders to call Arianne. ‘We need to get the cruise back to the coast now and send Tiffany to the hospital. Otherwise, her life is definitely going to be in danger!’

When they received the news, Arianne and Mark swiftly rushed to the scene. When they saw how bad of a condition Tiffany was in, Arianne’s face instantly turned pale. “Tiffany!”

Mark was still calm at that moment. “Turn the ship back now!”

Soon, Jackson and Alejandro arrived on the scene as well. Jackson almost lost his footing the moment he saw Tiffany. “W… What happened? How did this happen?! What’s going on here?!”

Alejandro's first reaction was to rush towards Tiffany's side. He gently slapped Tiffany's cheeks as he growled with an urgent tone, "Can you hear me?! You have to stay awake, or the baby in your womb won't make it!"

Melanie, who was standing to the side, staggered as she retreated behind the crowd. Her entire body was shivering. 'How did this happen? What should I do now?'

Arianne noticed Melanie's reaction and frowned. She walked past the crowd and grabbed Melanie to one side. "Tiffany was with you just now, wasn't she? What went wrong? What actually happened here?"

Melanie sluggishly shook her head. She could never tell that it was Nikolai who had done it. 'Judging by how anxious Alejandro looked just now, he will never forgive me if he learns that it was my brother who did it... Maybe Nikolai was right; Alejandro may have said that he has let Tiffany go on the surface, but he actually still has her in his heart.' At that thought, Melanie did not dare to take the risk.

Arianne was extremely anxious at that moment. "Melanie, say something! What happened?!"

Melanie bit her lip and did not have the courage to look Arianne in the eye. "I… I was with Tiffany when she slipped as we passed by this staircase… It's all my fault. I didn't take care of her properly. I should've held her hand… I'm so sorry…"

Such a lie was only good for lasting for a moment. The moment Tiffany woke up, she would most definitely say that someone had pushed her. Moreover, there was only Melanie and Nikolai on the scene during that time, so one of them would definitely have to bear the consequences.

Arianne decided not to dwell any further when she saw how shocked Melanie was. Although she had some suspicions, she still thought that something like that would not happen all of a sudden, not when Melanie and Tiffany had been in such a good relationship together for so long…

When the cruise had returned to the coast, there was an ambulance waiting for them. Jackson and Arianne accompanied Tiffany into the ambulance, but Mark was not able to follow due to the limited capacity of the vehicle. Plus, he needed to clean up the mess left behind.

No one was feeling good after such a thing had happened. There was no choice but to put an end early to the event that Mark had put in so much effort to plan.

After calming all his guests, Mark immediately rushed to the hospital. Alejandro and Melanie were waiting outside of the operating theatre. Each and every one of them had a very anxious expression on their face. Furthermore, no one was talking, and under such a quiet environment, everyone was in an even more anxious mood.

Chapter 1719

Mark broke the silence first and said, “What’s the situation?”

Jackson helplessly shook his head and remained quiet.

Melanie’s guilty conscience kicked in, and she went to the washroom to escape. She was finding it hard to even breath when she was in the crowd.

As she stood in front of the basin, hatred began to well up inside of her when she looked at herself in the mirror. She had always been very upfront with her actions, but the incident had left a very sharp nail in her heart, relentlessly piercing her. ‘None of this would have happened if I had not gone and met my brother with Tiffany. I can’t say that it was Nikolai who did this. I’ll bear all the responsibilities for this incident.’

When Melanie left the washroom, she could see that Alejandro was waiting for her through the corner of her eyes.

She subconsciously averted her gaze and retreated.

When Alejandro saw her reaction, a hint of disappointment flashed through his eyes. “Tell me the truth. Did you do this?”

Melanie bit her lip, her heart riddled with thousands of painful attacks. ‘Why am I his prime suspect? Am I such a person in his eyes?’

Before she could answer, Alejandro said again, this time with a lot more anxiousness and impatience, “I’m asking you! Did you or did you not do it?! Tiffany was with you at the time!”

Melanie took a deep breath. “Won’t you be able to find what happened once Tiffany wakes up? You don’t have to be in such a hurry to question me.”

Alejandro stared at her for a few seconds before turning away and leaving.

The energy seemed to have left Melanie's body as she rested against the wall, tears beginning to fall silently. The thought of her young daughter made her feel even worse. 'When this is all over, I'm afraid that Alejandro and I won't even be able to treat each other with respect like we used to anymore.'

As time continued to pass, the doors of the operating theatre finally opened up. The main surgeon still had sweat on his forehead when he walked out. "The mother is safe, but the baby… Because it isn't time for an early labour and the baby had a lack of oxygen due to such an unforeseen circumstance, we can't tell for sure. We'll play by ear, but her family needs to be prepared for the worst. And, oh right—it's a girl."

Jackson let out a long sigh in relief. 'Thank goodness Tiffany's alright.' Jackson's mind was filled with all sorts of possible outcomes till he almost suffocated himself.

Everyone else was able to sigh in relief as well, especially Arianne. She instantly felt dizzy since she was only able to relax now, after being extremely anxious up until a moment ago. Mark, who was to the side, quickly helped her on her feet. "It's all right, both Tiffany and her baby will be fine. You must already be tired, so why don't you go home for now and come back tomorrow?"

Jackson was finding it hard to control his emotions. He was in no mood to show them any courtesy. "All of you head back. I'll stay here."

Alejandro did not say anything, nor did he pay Melanie any attention as he walked away. When Arianne saw that, she said, "Melanie, why don't we go together? Tiffany will be fine, so you don't have to beat yourself up over it. I'm sure the baby's going to be fine too. Smore was also born prematurely, but isn't he just fine now?"

Melanie kept her head low as she muttered, “It’s my fault. I’ll stay here and wait for Tiffany to wake up. I won’t be able to feel easy if I don’t see her awake. I’ll be fine, you should leave first.”

Arianne could more or less understand what Melanie was going through at that moment, so she did not persuade her any longer and left the hospital with Mark.

Chapter 1720

Jackson waited until everyone had left before he turned to look at Melanie. “Did she fall down on her own?”

Melanie locked eyes with Jackson but remained silent.

Jackson’s eyes turned dark and he spoke no further. When Tiffany was pushed out by the nurses from the operating theatre, Jackson followed them to her ward.

Tiffany gradually woke up when it was past 1 AM, and the first thing she did was to touch her belly. “Baby… Where’s the baby?!”

Jackson gently held her hand. “It’s fine, the baby’s fine. She had to be placed in an incubator for a few days since she was born prematurely. You must have been shocked, haven’t you? It’s all fine now… Don’t be afraid…”

Tiffany sighed in relief. Suddenly, she saw Melanie standing not too far away through the corner of her eyes and had an expression with mixed emotions on her face. “Jackson, could you leave us first? I would like to speak with Melanie for a moment.”

Jackson turned his head to look at Melanie and said, “I’ll be outside. Call me if you need me.” He did that to both assure Tiffany and warn Melanie.

Tiffany nodded her head. When Jackson left the ward, she called Melanie towards her. “Why?”

‘Why…’

Melanie’s lips curled into a wry smile. “Did you think it was me as well? Tiffany, why would I harm you? If I wanted to, I had tons of opportunities to do so. There was no need for me to wait until Mark and Arianne’s wedding where there is a lot of commotion going on to do so… It’s my brother’s fault. I have no idea how he found out that Alejandro had feelings for you. He did it for me in order to ensure that the relationship between the Smiths and the Larks continue. That's why he did that to you. He did not tell me about his plans beforehand, which is why I was unable to react. I owe it to you to tell you the truth, but please, I beg you, please don’t tell anyone else. Let’s just say that I pushed you, all right? My marriage with Alejandro has always been a business deal from the beginning, so it wouldn’t matter if he divorces me. However, if he finds out about the truth, he’s definitely going to destroy the Larks. Let me bear the responsibility for all of this, please…”

Tiffany shut her eyes. “I heard a bit of… your conversation with your brother. Although I wasn’t able to move when I fell from the stairs, I was still slightly conscious. Although I didn’t hear it properly, I know that you insisted on saving me; you’re different from your brother. Melanie, to tell you the truth, I will help cover up this incident if my child is fine, but if anything happens to her, I’m truly sorry. However, I refuse to allow you to become a scapegoat for this incident. Whoever did this must bear the responsibility.”

Melanie gritted her teeth and knelt on the floor. “Tiffany, please, I beg you, no matter what, could you please not tell them that it was my brother? I beg you…”

Tiffany wanted to help get Melanie back on her feet, but she could not move. “Are you crazy?! Why would you bring yourself down to your knees for that kind of family?! They’re treating you like a pawn. Do you really think they treat you as family? Once the matter was brought to light, your brother immediately ran off and left you alone to be his scapegoat. Is he still a human being?! Despite all that, you still intend to beg for mercy on his behalf. Girl, are you mad?!”

Melanie was quietly sobbing. “I can’t help it… I can’t neglect the Larks. Please, Tiffany, I’ll accept anything you do to do me, but just help me this once…”

Tiffany was helpless when she saw Melanie in her current state. “Fine, I’ll forget about the whole incident. I’ll be able to leave everything in the past, as long as my child is safe. I’m doing this as a favour for you, as I don’t want to see you and Alejandro get a divorce!”

Melanie had broken down into tears and was not able to speak. Moments later, after she was able to calm herself, she said, “You get some rest… I’ll be leaving now. I’ll come back tomorrow to visit you and your baby. Thank you…”

Tiffany remained silent, but she was still suppressing the anger inside her heart. She was angry that her child had almost lost her life, she was angry that Melanie had to live in such a cowardly manner, she was angry at the inhumanity of the Larks.

After Melanie had left, Jackson returned to the ward. “What actually happened? Was it Melanie who did it?”