Ruling 1811

Chapter 1811

Arianne sampled every single dish on the table. “No, honestly, I think they are all very good! Really, I’m not the type to lie if I can help it,” she remarked. “Your restaurant’s business is just… booming, man. Which is kinda surprising, don’t you think? Considering your family’s main venture is something else, wouldn’t your family have a bit of an opinion about you directing your focus into your restaurant?”

Mateo's eyes cast down to the floor and shook his head. “They’ve always been respectful of my life choices. Anything I want to do doesn’t face opposition from my family—under most circumstances, anyway. Of course, I can’t abandon the family business, either, so I guess after a while I won’t be able to watch my restaurant as often as I’d like.”

Arianne nodded. “I agree. I wouldn’t want you to spend too much of your time and focus on a single eatery, too. Your family’s main business should be the right way forward—especially when this restaurant’s significance hardly matches the grandness of your family business. But hey, if you’re worried that you not being here is gonna stop me from coming, well, don’t. Because I’ve turned into one of your most loyal customers, Mateo; the food in this place is just… God, it’s right up my alley!”

Suddenly, Mateo leveled her enthusiasm with a long look etched with unheralded solemness topped by piercing eyes. “You really mean that? You’ll always come to my restaurant from here on out?”

Their eyes linked, and Arianne felt an abrupt flare of indescribable but tangent feeling deep in her gut, churning her stomach a little, making her weirdly uneased enough to consciously steer her eyes away. She furtively looked elsewhere to break the spell. “I, uh, guess? I mean, Tiffie and Melanie really love your food too, you know, so they will probably want to meet here often. By the way, Mateo, you mentioned your crush before and I wonder… Have you gotten your closure yet?”

A mirthless curl shadowed his lips. “Not yet, ruefully. Even though this restaurant was set up for her. I hope… that it will be a haven she frequents in the future.”

Arianne felt her heart pounding against her chest. The famed instincts of a woman was rocking in her mind, nagging that Mateo was saying these words for his crush. For her.

Cold beads of discountenance bubbled within her for the first time since she met Mateo.

When she was sure she had tasted every dish on the table, she rose to her feet and announced, “I should go home now. I’ll be paying at the counter!”

Mateo mimicked her. “No, that won’t be necessary—it’s on the house. I should thank you for being my tester today, even.”

Arianne, however, insisted on paying before she rushed out of the restaurant. The summer breeze billowed in her face, introducing elements of frustration into her. No matter how she analyzed it, Mateo’s crush was more likely to be Melanie, right? Before these few days, their acquaintance was purely one-sided; Arianne had not an inkling of who Mateo was. How did a stranger like herself end up immortalized in his heart after all these years?

That would be absurd. Her head was losing a bit of a grip back there, she reasoned. And in that confusion, she had leaped into conclusion. That must be it.

The first thing Arianne caught immediately after stepping through the door of the Tremont Estate was a change of atmosphere hanging over the living room. There, Mark was sitting on the couch, apparently reading a magazine, while Smore had one knee down on a stool right in front of him!

She froze for a millisecond before exclaiming, “Okay, what happened this time?”

Smore pursed his lips as hard as he could to keep his tears from flowing. He ignored his mother.

It was Mark who answered her without lifting his head from the magazine. “You told me to discipline him, didn’t you? Well, I’ve done it. If you found this sentence too light to your liking, you’re welcome to pile on,” he stated placidly.

She released the breath she was holding, relieved that Mark had listened to her. She approached him and dropped her handbag on the coffee table before taking a seat next to Mark. “My wish is simple, Mark. Be it in life or in the direction of us educating our child, I want our values to be the same. I don’t care how you were taught growing up, but my son will not be given an excuse to act like a little tyrant.”

Confirming that his parents now shared the same outlook on the issue, a very defeated Smore burst into tears. “You are all bullies! Mean bullies! I didn’t do anything wrong at all! Chubby Chuck bullied Lil’ P first! You told me to take care of Lil’ P, Mom, so I did! Chubby Chuck snatched his toy and then pushed him; was I not supposed to help? Chubby Chuck deserved it!”

Chapter 1812

Arianne was having a slight headache. “Stop crying for now and let me take a look at that! So, Chubby Chuck snatched Lil’ P’s toy and even pushed him, did he? You were right to protect your little brother, but you can’t just go up to him and swing a punch at him now, can you? What if you injured his eyes or somewhere important? We must be virtuous first; if we can’t get our logic across to them, then we tell the teachers. The teachers won’t be able to overlook the situation since it happened in school. Of course, I’m not asking you to keep it inside and not retaliate when you’re being bullied. You’re free to let it out if someone hits you first. You’ve got to be tough when you have to, but you have to weigh the severity of the situation first too.”

The more Arianne spoke, the more aggrieved Smore became. He cried so much, he had trouble kneeling down. Arianne, no longer able to bear seeing him in this state, hugged him. “All right, stop crying now. It’s shameful for a man to cry so much. Go get a shower and have an early rest, you still have to go to school tomorrow.”

Smore snivelled as he headed upstairs. It seemed that he was still extremely aggrieved. ‘I suppose a child isn’t able to differentiate between right and wrong in their minds. What a headache.’

Mark said in a muffled voice, “I don’t feel sorry for him, nor did I ask him to get up. You’re the one who gave in to him first.”

Arianne shot a glance at him. “Did you do it on purpose to show me? He’s so thinly dressed in the summer, yet you asked him to kneel down on such a hard stool. He's probably going to have a bruise on his knees when he wakes up tomorrow. I’ve never seen that small stool at home. Where did you get it?”

Mark faintly sneered beneath his lips. “I prepared it especially for him to teach him a lesson. I asked Jackson already—Chubby Chuck’s parents are the ones who’ve outrageously spoilt their child to be so disrespectful. In fact, I think Smore wasn’t wrong at all, but you’re the one who insisted on setting things straight. If it were in the past, I wouldn’t have left things just like that.”

‘Chubby Chuck’s parents aren’t pleasant people, I have to agree with that. They were initially behaving as though their child was a king, bending towards him wherever he went. However, now that the matter is resolved, there’s no need for me to dwell on it any longer. Otherwise, it would only seem like I’m trying to cause trouble.’

“All right, it wasn’t a serious matter, so let’s leave it at that. Plus, the child that ended up being beaten wasn’t yours, so what more do you want? I’m tired. I’m going to take a shower and sleep. You should get an early rest as well.”

Mark put down the magazine in his hands and headed upstairs with Arianne. “Am I such a cruel person in your eyes?”

Arianne momentarily stopped in her tracks. “What are you talking about? I… don’t think of you like that. Now that all is well, I feel like there’s no need for Smore to go through as much as you did in the past. Wouldn’t it be better to live a more relaxed life?”

Mark went up and grabbed ahold of Arianne’s slender hand. “Where did you have dinner tonight? You must’ve eaten outside to have arrived home at this hour.”

Arianne recalled the “strange feeling” that Mateo gave her before, so she lied as she said, “I had my dinner at a restaurant I happened upon. Are you worried about that? You wouldn’t be angry if you were just worried about this.”

“It was at Mateo’s Chinese cuisine restaurant, wasn’t it?”

Arianne froze on the spot as she reflexively asked, “Were you following me?!”

Mark let go of her hand and said expressionlessly, “No, you smell of Chinese cuisine. Go take your shower and get an early night in.”

After he said that, Mark turned and went towards his study.

Arianne's heart suddenly thumped faster and faster at her lie having been exposed. 'I'm surprised he has such a sharp nose. Now I'm regretting coming up with a lie so casually. It was definitely nothing, but will he overthink things based on how suspicious he is? The more poker-faced he is, the more terrifying.'

Chapter 1813

Over the weekend, Melanie and Tiffany invited Arianne to meet up at Mateo's restaurant, but she refused.

Regardless of whether it was the strange feeling Mateo gave her previously or her lie being exposed by Mark, she did not have a reason to go there again.

'The less trouble the better. I've never been able to beat Mark in mental games. I only feel like I've managed to tame him when he's being docile, but the moment he bares his fangs, I won't be able to control him anymore.'

When they arrived at the restaurant, as she was ordering her food, Tiffany complained, "D*mn it, it's such a rare opportunity for us to be able to come out and have fun over the weekend, yet Ari refuses to join in and leaves both of us to ourselves. Didn't she say she was in love with the food in Mateo's restaurant? Has she been secretly coming here behind our backs and is now tired of the food here?"

Melanie was a little more meticulous than Tiffany. She had already thought things to a deeper level, but she kept these thoughts to herself. "Maybe she's just gotta have a different taste for a change once in a while. Plus, I think it's nice that the both of us get to eat together. Am I not here to accompany you? By the way, I can't seem to find Teo here; let me give him a call and ask."

After that, Melanie got up and headed to the washroom. Once the phone got connected, she asked, “Teo, where are you?”

Mateo seemed to sigh. “I’m at my office at the moment, not in my restaurant. However, I do know that you and Tiffany are there but Arianne isn’t… It seems that I might have misspoken last time and she may have felt something. I’m afraid she won’t be coming to my restaurant anymore…”

Melanie paused for a moment before saying, “If that’s the case, why don’t you come clean with her? It’s not like you’re expecting her to do anything for you. You merely want to seek closure. Wouldn’t you agree that everyone would feel bad in this situation? You’re my friend and I can help you, but you can’t let Mark find out about this matter. Whatever your intentions are, you’ve laid eyes on his woman. I’m afraid that you won’t be able to walk out of this alive in the end.”

On the other end of the line, Mateo remained silent for a long moment before he said, “Thank you, Melanie. However, I can’t ask you to get involved with this. I already feel bad enough about having Alejandro misunderstand things between us. I’ll think of something myself. Maybe I’ll come clean with Arianne very soon, but this isn’t something that should concern you. Regardless of what happens, it’s got nothing to do with you. I don’t wish to have anyone dragged into this.”

Melanie seemed to recall how the relationship between Mark and Alejandro had never been great. ‘If I step in now, I have no idea how things might end up.’ At this, she gave up the thought of helping Mateo. “All right then, best of luck.”

At midnight.

Arianne was at the patio watching Smore do his homework. Although he had just started to attend school, the little boy was able to complete his homework of his own accord. However, he began to slack off not long after, so the moment Arianne wasn't watching him, he would stop doing his homework.

Suddenly, Smore raised his head and said to her, "Mommy, Chubby Chuck has changed schools."

Arianne was startled for a moment. "Changed schools?"

'Could Mark have done something behind the scenes? That kindergarten has always been a place where wealthy families send their children by hook or by crook. Who could possibly be so out of their mind to leave of their own accord?'

Smore nodded his head with a serious expression on his face. "That's right, he changed schools all of a sudden. I don't even know why. But it's good that he left though. He bullied people in school."

Arianne pondered for a moment about the matter and decided not to ask Mark about it. 'He's just transferring schools. I'll be able to accept this since it isn't anything too cruel. This is probably the best case scenario.'

Suddenly, Arianne's phone began ringing at the worst possible moment. She glanced at the contents of the text message before picking up her phone and walking to a side. "Hurry up and do your homework, Smore. I'll come and check it later. No food for you if you don't get it done properly."

The text message was sent by Mateo, who wanted to ask her out to meet up that night.

Chapter 1814

Arianne did not know whether she should go since nothing else was stated in the text message.

'Mark is home during the weekends, so I can't come up with any reasonable excuse to go out tonight.' At that thought, Arianne considered rejecting Mateo. However, before she could even finish typing a sentence, Mateo sent her another text message. 'I know my request may be a little hard for you to accept, but this is a long time wish of mine and it took me a lot of courage to be able to ask you out privately. I've got so much to say to you; would you be able to complete my wish?'

At that moment, Arianne confirmed that Melanie wasn't the light of Mateo's life—it was none other than her.

'I can't for the life of me understand why someone would keep me in their heart for so many years. I've had an influence on Mateo for so long, yet I didn't even know of him before. This has all been unfair for him since the beginning.'

Ultimately, Arianne was still silently moved by his gesture and agreed to his request.

After she was done sending the text message, she deleted all traces from her phone before heading upstairs to look for Mark.

Arianne mustered up the courage to speak, and it took all she had to not look suspicious.

Mark was rather busy at that moment, so he did not look at her and said, "Fine, come home soon."

Arianne sighed with relief. She was about to turn around and walk away when Mark suddenly asked, “Who are you going out with?”

She instantly stopped in her tracks and said headstrong, “Melanie, she asked me out tonight. She might have argued with Alejandro again.”

Arianne did not use Tiffany as an excuse because she was afraid that Mark would ask Jackson to verify. On the other hand, Mark would most likely not ask Alejandro whether Melanie was at home or if she’d asked Arianne out that night, making her a safer choice.

Mark did not ask any further and merely stared at his computer screen where he was chatting with Alejandro online. Just two minutes ago, Alejandro had sent Mark a message. ‘Melanie is rushing me to go and have dinner, so I’ll leave the rest to you to have a look. We’ll continue verifying it after I’m done with dinner.”

‘She’s bluffing. She’s lying to me!’

After Arianne had left Tremont Estate, Mark casually picked up his car keys and followed her. Before he left, he specifically instructed Henry and Mary not to tell Arianne that he was not at home. ‘I’m curious to see what she’s up to.’

After leaving Tremont Estate, Arianne intended to hail a taxi when she arrived at the intersection; however, she did not expect for Mateo to be waiting for her there. She had no idea how long he had been waiting there.

Arianne was afraid that someone nearby might recognize her, so she hurriedly got into his car. “What are you doing here? Shouldn’t you be waiting for me to arrive at our agreed upon location? We have no idea what people might say if they see us. I don’t want Mark to have any misunderstandings.”

Mateo lowered his eyes to hide his emotions. “I’m sorry, I didn’t think of this clearly. But it’s all right. If all goes well, this will be the last time we meet.”

Arianne did not say anything further, probably her form of silent acknowledgement. ‘After today, I won’t go to his restaurant ever again and will do everything to avoid him. So, it’s most likely that this will be our last meeting.’ It seemed as thought both of them had the same understanding.

Then, the car slowly drove off from the city before finally arriving at a garden at the foot of a mountain.

Neither of them said anything. Coupled with the quiet atmosphere and the dark sky, they felt uneasy. Finally, Arianne was the one who first broke the silence. “Go ahead and say whatever you want to. I’ve got to go back home after a while. I… never thought that the woman in your heart would be me. To be honest, I’m a little shocked. I never thought that you would be so adamant for all these years. In fact, I find it a little… silly.”

Chapter 1815

Mateo laughed at himself. “You’re right, this might seem silly to you, but I’ve been holding onto this for all these years. Sometimes, I hate myself for my character, how I keep holding onto a person without being able to forget them. I remember the first time I met you; we were at the art studio in school. At the time, everyone was resting while you were the only one sitting there, drawing with a serious expression on your face as you sat in the sun… I tried to get close to you, but you would always reject anyone from approaching you. Apart from Tiffany and Will, you weren’t able to accept anyone else in your circle. Plus, I was going to leave for overseas anyway, so I didn’t intentionally try to get close to you. After that, I kept on thinking, if I had put in a little more effort, would I have been able to be like Tiffany and Will… One of your friends? At least, I wouldn’t feel so regretful.”

Being liked by someone wouldn't make them hateful or antipathic. The same went for Arianne, who merely thought that it was all a little exaggerated and far-fetched. Then, when Arianne thought of the details of how Mateo treated her, she could not help but believe him.

After a moment, Arianne took a deep breath and said, "I understand. Thank you for once fancying me. But from the beginning, the two of us have never been part of the same world, even now. I hope that you'll be able to find someone who will truly be able to accompany you for the rest of your life, as you wished."

Mateo smiled in relief. "Yeap, you must live a great life as well. I've decided to return overseas. I thought of taking things slowly when I first returned to this country, but I never thought that I would be so useless and let you find out so early. I never intended to cause you any trouble though. That restaurant… was initially opened up for you. I do hope that you'll be able to continue to patronize that place. I suppose you wouldn't mind if I'm not in the country."

At that very moment, Arianne could not refuse him. Mateo had always been able to influence others into being unable to reject him, so she nodded her head. "All right."

Whatever had to be said had been said, so all that was left was the final step, which was the hug that Mateo had always wanted.

It was likely that Mateo did not know how to initiate it, so Arianne instinctively hugged him. "I'm going to go now. Let this be a gesture for us to walk our own ways. You too; you should treat this as a farewell to your past."

Mateo froze for a moment before he reached out to hug her back. That very moment had played out countless times in his brain, coupled with a silhouette that gradually seemed to fade away. However, that very moment was now playing out right in his arms. Mateo felt a sort of satisfaction that he could not even describe. What he had been wishing for all these years had finally been fulfilled.

At that moment, Mark slowly approached Mateo's car.

Mark had followed Mateo's car all the way there, unable to maintain his cool. When he saw that Mateo's car had been parked there for quite some time, he could no longer hold in his emotions. They were in such a remote area where a man and woman were hiding together in a car, causing Mark to let his imagination run wild and want to get to the bottom of it.

When he saw the silhouettes of the two of them hugging each other, Mark instantly froze on the spot, and the scene before him burned into his brain. 'My woman has secretly come to such a remote area to have an affair?! If I don't stop them now, just how far would they go?!'

Mark did not dare to think any further. His anger was so strong that a punch from him instantly smashed the car window. "Arianne! Get out right this instant!"

The sudden movement from the car and the roar from outside the car window shocked both Arianne and Mateo. She reflexively pushed Mateo away and hurriedly opened the car door.

When she saw the broken car window and Mark's hand, which was bleeding, she went into shock. She began to panic and did not know what to do. "I… It's not what you think… How did you get here?!"

Mark neither looked at Arianne, nor intended to listen to her explanation. Instead, he grabbed onto Mateo's collar and threw him onto the ground before swinging consecutive punches at him.

Chapter 1816

Arianne regained her senses and hurriedly went forward to pull them apart. "Mark! It's not what you think! Please let me explain!"

Mark instantly pushed her away. "Fuck off!"

Arianne wore high heels, so the grassland already made her footing unstable. But after being pushed by Mark, she instantly fell onto the ground and her palm struck a rock, drawing out a heartfelt cry of pain from her.

Both Mateo's nose and mouth were bleeding. He raised his hands to protect his face as he tried to explain. "Mr. Tremont, it's not what you think. It's fine if you misunderstand me; I don't care how you deal with me. But you mustn't misunderstand Arianne!"

When such protective words went into Mark's ears, he only felt that it was more evident that there was definitely something going on between Mateo and Arianne. Any explanation at that point would only make things look even more grim.

Arianne did not know what to do since there wasn't anyone around. 'If this keeps up, Mark will beat Mateo to death! And Mateo isn't even fighting back. He's only protecting his head. I wish that he would fight back—at least he could defend himself on grounds of self-defence. But if he keeps getting beaten by Mark like this, things are going to get out of hand!'

At that thought, Arianne endured the pain in her feet and palm as she shakily got back on her feet and rushed forward. She hugged onto Mark's waist. "Stop hitting him! Let's go back and talk about this properly, ok? It's nothing like what you're thinking. I can explain!"

This time, Mark did not push Arianne away and stopped beating Mateo up before gently heaving a sigh. His expression was unclear since it was dark out, but his voice was so cold, colder than she had ever heard it as he said, "Arianne, is this your way of having your revenge against me? I hate betrayal the most…"

Mateo got up from the ground and was just about to say something, but Arianne growled and said, "Leave now, Mateo!"

Mateo was slightly hesitant, afraid that Arianne would become Mark's next target to vent his anger on once he left. "I…"

Before he could even finish speaking, Arianne growled again. "Hurry up and leave! Now!"

At that moment, Mateo chose not to continue persisting. 'At least Mark has never laid a finger on Arianne. I, on the other hand—if I don't leave now, I'll definitely be beaten to death.'

Arianne finally sighed with relief when Mateo and his car were no longer in sight.

At the same time, Mark pushed Arianne away once again. "He's gone, so you don't have to stop me anymore. Arianne, I just want to know, how is Mateo any better than I am? Huh?!"

Arianne opened up her mouth, but before she could even say a word, Mark turned away and got into his car. He had no intention of listening to what she had to say, not a single word.

Arianne stood on the spot and did not follow behind him immediately. In her mind, she expected him to drive away instantly and leave her alone there. However, he did not do as she expected. In fact, to rush her into his car, he even blared his horn, which was like a loud reminder in the silent night.

During the journey home, Arianne saw that Mark's hand was still bleeding and wanted to help wrap it up, but she did not have the guts to even touch him. Mark was so furious at the moment, he even drove his car at high speed. She could only carefully grab onto the armrest, since she did not feel safe even with her seatbelt on.

When they arrived at Tremont Estate, Mark got out of the car first and went to the shotgun seat to pull Arianne out of the car.

Just like that, under the gazes of everyone in the house, Mark gripped Arianne's arm as he dragged her back to their bedroom and fiercely threw her onto the ground.

Arianne, startled from being thrown, raised her eyes to look at him. "What? Do you want to hit me too? Did you see what happened between me and him? Mark, are you even able to listen to any explanation at the moment? If you can't, I won't say a thing. Do as you please! You've already beaten him, and you've also vented your anger. If that wasn't enough, carry on!"

Chapter 1817

Arianne never thought that she would behave so upright because of this matter. She had thought of explaining things to him properly and hoped that Mark would be able to understand her. However, not

only did he refuse to listen to any explanation, he even hit Mateo and threw her onto the ground twice. Most importantly, she hated being watched by others and also being followed; she had hated that since the very beginning!

'He says he hates betrayal the most, but I've never even thought of betraying him. I shouldn't be stingy about giving a hug to someone who has been remembering me for so many years, that's all.

'I also said that I hated being watched and followed, but he keeps doing so…'

When Arianne thought of how calm Mark was before she left, she found it to be such a joke. 'He clearly knew that I was lying, yet he was still able to calmly pretend as if nothing was going on. Was he waiting for the moment to "catch me in the act"? In his eyes, am I that kind of woman?

'I didn't want to tell him about the matter to avoid any misunderstandings, but I never thought that he would end up lying to me on purpose.'

Mark bent down and reached out his hand to pinch Arianne's chin as he looked at her with his cold eyes. "How are you still able to act so upright? At that kind of place, in such an enclosed environment in the car, both of you were hugging each other. I saw it with my own eyes. What else would you expect me to think?"

Mark's gaze sent chills down Arianne's heart. She suddenly felt that telling him the truth at that moment would only seem so useless. In fact, Mark might even think of it as a joke when he listened, wouldn't he?

Suddenly, Smore and Mary's voice approached from outside as they continuously slammed on the door. Mark ignored them and his grip on her chin tightened, causing Arianne to be in so much pain that she frowned and tried to break free but failed no matter how hard she tried.

She had no doubt that Mark might kill her due to the amount of anger he was feeling. She felt sad that their years of relationship would be beaten down by suspicions, but not a single tear fell from her eyes. That was because she did not want to seem like a pitiful woman begging for forgiveness after committing a sin, which would only cause Mark to irk her even more.

Moreover, she did not want Smore and Mary to worry for her. "I'm all right. Why don't you take Smore out to play, Mary…"

When Mary heard Arianne's voice, she heaved a sigh of relief, but she still felt concerned for her, so she whispered to Smore, "Hurry up and ask Daddy to take you out to play. Otherwise, your Mommy is going to get beaten up. My goodness, whatever happened this time…"

Hearing this, Smore immediately slammed the door and said, "What's a man who lays a hand on women?! Come out this instant, Mark! Don't you hit my mommy!"

Mary was rather shocked and instantly covered up Smore's mouth before carrying him away. 'Mark is already over the top at the moment. Is Smore really so fearless? Things are definitely going to get very noisy in the house afterwards.'

When Mark heard Smore's "provocations", he was just about to get up and open the door when Arianne grabbed onto his hand. "What are you trying to do?! Come to me if you want to vent your anger, not your son! He's only three years old, what could he possibly understand?! I'm telling you now, there's a reason why I went to meet Mateo today. He's always liked me ever since we were in university. The reason why he came back today is merely to seek closure. All he wanted was a hug, that's all, so there

was no reason for me to not give that to him. We are both well aware that we aren't from the same world, so he merely intended to bid farewell to his past. That's all. It's up to you whether you believe me or not.

"Before all this happened, I didn't even know who he was. Even till now, we've only met each other privately a few times, two or three encounters, and this is the only time we've met each other without a crowd around us, our last time. He's going to go back overseas soon—be it the past or the present, we will never have any contact with each other ever again! Just believe me this once… All right…?"

When Arianne spoke the last sentence, her tone was close to begging. She had not expected for things to end up being so messy. It was merely a misunderstanding, so there was no need for them to make a huge deal out of it.

Chapter 1818

"Anyone at all?"

Mark coldly flung Arianne's hand away as he said those words.

Arianne stood her ground. "It was just a hug, that's a very normal thing to do. Why are you saying 'anyone at all'?"

Mark walked towards the roof-to-floor window before sitting down and lighting a cigarette. "There are tons of women who fancy me. Should I hug them all as well? If that were the case, I wouldn't be doing anything else anymore. Why couldn't you not give it to him? You're already married, and you didn't even ask me first. Do I not have the right to be angry at all? Is it that hard for you to even admit to your mistakes?"

Arianne finally fell silent. ‘He’s right. He does have a reason and right to be angry at me.

‘Why I agreed to Mateo’s request in the first place was because he has done so much for me and has been thinking of me all these years that I couldn’t help but feel a little ashamed and think of it as a burden that needed to be resolved as soon as possible.

‘Further, he is Melanie’s childhood friend. If it were anyone else, I definitely wouldn’t bother with them.

‘I’m angry at Mark because of how controlling he is and for hitting Mateo. Apologizing actually isn’t that hard.’

At that thought, Arianne got up and took a deep breath. “I’m sorry, I acted too rashly in this matter and did not think too much about how you might feel. I never intended for things to turn out like this.”

Mark slowly puffed out a mouthful of smoke. “He opened up a Cantonese cuisine restaurant for you, kept you in his heart for so many years, and returned to the country solely for you. Does it move you?”

‘Does it?’ If it did, she would probably be panicking more, wouldn’t she? She lowered her head. “No, I never would’ve thought that he would do all that for me. Besides, I just found out about it myself. I was very shocked and panicked, that’s all. I’ve already admitted to my mistake; you don’t have to hold onto it any longer. There won’t be a next time.”

Mark did not say anything. After a moment of silence, both of them simultaneously asked, “Does your hand hurt?”

When they both heard the other's voice, they were stunned for a second.

Arianne brought over a first-aid kit and knelt before him. The moment she touched his bruise, Mark squinted in pain and subconsciously moved his hand away. "I'm fine, don't bother about me and take care of your own hand."

Arianne adamantly held onto his hand. "Don't move, let me see whether you've injured any bones or not. Just endure the pain for a while. Also… put out that cigarette. It's suffocating."

Mark obediently followed Arianne's orders and casually threw his cigarette into the ashtray. He felt a little regretful when he saw how carefully she tended to his wounds while her own hand was still bleeding. 'I shouldn't have rashly pushed her just now. God knows how I felt when I saw her hugging another man in her arms earlier.'

After she was done tending to his wounds, she helped wrap up his hand. "There's no injury to your bones, but you're definitely going to be in pain for a few days. You were actually able to break such thick window glass. If I were standing in front of you at the time, I suppose that punch would've landed on me, wouldn't it?"

The moment Mark recalled how Arianne and Mateo were hugging each other, he unhappily retracted his hand. "Can you not mention that matter already? You just had to say it to traumatize me again. If there's a next time, it won't end as simply as this!"

Arianne glared at him. 'What else does he know how to do other than spitting threats?'

Just as Arianne was about to leave, she was suddenly pulled into his arms. While she was startled, Mark grabbed onto her injured hand and carefully looked at it. “Don’t move, let me wrap it up for you. You’ve got some lacerations; be careful not to get it infected.”

‘Compared to the injury on Mark’s hand, mine really isn’t that serious at all. There’s no need to wrap it up.’ At that thought, she struggled to try and get up. “No need for that, it’s just a minor flesh wound. I’ll go take a shower now. I’ll be fine after putting a plaster over it later…”

Before she could even finish her sentence, Mark suddenly took a breath. “Don’t move!”

Chapter 1819

Arianne instantly froze and did not dare to move again. ‘We’ve only just had a big fight, yet he’s able to act all leisurely now. People have said that as long as men still breath, their brains are definitely filled with all kinds of inappropriate stuff. It seems like they aren’t wrong.’

Suddenly, Arianne’s phone rang.

Mark’s expression turned serious as he raised his eyes to stare at her. Obviously, he wanted to watch her answer the phone call himself. ‘I suppose Mateo’s the only person who would call at this hour, wouldn’t he?’

Arianne felt a little frustrated. ‘What if Mateo’s really calling me out of concern? I’ve had to go through so much before finally being able to calm him down. I can’t stop him if he goes on another rampage.’

After pondering for a moment, Arianne reluctantly picked up her phone. When she saw that it was Melanie who was calling her, she gently heaved a sigh of relief. “Melanie? What’s the matter?”

On the other end, Melanie’s voice was very soft as she tentatively asked, “Are you all right…?”

‘I suppose Mateo’s told her everything based on how worried she sounds.’ Arianne glanced at Mark before she calmly answered, “I’m all right, quite well actually. Um… About Mateo, could you apologize to him on my behalf please? My husband has misunderstood him. I hope he’s alright.”

Melanie remained silent for a moment before she said, “Arianne, I’m sorry… I know there are some things that I shouldn’t say, but… Teo’s my childhood friend after all. His perseverance for you is in the past already, so a hug really isn’t asking for too much. Plus, he didn’t harbour any sort of inappropriate thoughts. He just wanted to say goodbye to his past. I don’t expect Mark to be able to understand that since it’s only normal for men to be suspicious of everything. I hope this matter can be put behind all of us. Also, could you prevent Mark from going against Teo and the Rodriguezes, please? If he’s clouded by anger and doesn’t listen to you, I could go over and find him.”

Arianne hesitated for two seconds before placing her phone by Mark’s ear. “Melanie has called. She’s asking you not to go against Mateo and the Rodriguezes.”

Mark slightly turned his head away. “Since it’s a misunderstanding, I don’t intend to pursue this, nor do I have the time to do so. However, if he does have even the tiniest bit of inappropriate intentions toward you, it wouldn’t be enough even if he dies a million times. I’m off to shower now, so you girls go ahead and chat.”

Melanie had heard everything that Mark said. After thanking them, she finally hung up the call.

When Arianne recalled the incident from earlier, she was rather horrified. ‘If I hadn’t asked Mateo to run away, I’m afraid someone might have actually lost their life tonight.’

Naturally, the incident quickly travelled to Tiffany’s ears. Since she never cared about how severe the matter was, she rushed over to Tremont Estate the next day to look for Arianne. “I never expected that the person Mateo liked would be you! You haven’t had that many run-ins with men all your life, but they all end up being plucked out by Mark. I think you’re destined to be suppressed by him; the moment you joined the Tremont family, you were meant to be held within his grasp!”

Arianne munched on some melon seeds as she said, “Mark is still home. Aren’t you afraid that he’ll slap you if he hears you?”

Tiffany suddenly sat up straight. “Others may be afraid of him, but not me. He can’t beat my Jackson. Besides, I was only telling the truth. Or, is it that am I wrong about it?”

Arianne laughed and grabbed a handful of melon seeds before handing them to Tiffany. “You’re right, everything you said was correct. So long as you have that person behind your back, who could possibly dare to shut your mouth?”

Tiffany slyly scooted closer to Arianne, who asked with a frown, “What are you doing?”

Tiffany smirked. “You were caught red-handed meeting Mateo alone at night, but Mark was able to hold it in? With his temper? Did he not hit you?”

Chapter 1820

Arianne glared at her. “What nonsense are you spewing? What do you mean that I went out to meet Mateo alone late at night? You sound as though there really was something between me and him! Do you think Mark would hit me? How? Based on my understanding of him, he would rather die from anger than hit me. Pushing me twice was considered his limit already. What kind of best friend are you? Do you wish for me to get beaten? If he really did beat me, that would be the end of us already.”

Tiffany pouted her lips. “I suppose you’re right, but I do think that Mark has a reason to be angry about this matter. If there were a change of characters and it was he who had gone out with another woman, would you be able to accept him so much as hugging her? Mateo is pretty tragic; to be able to be so persistent and let his feelings control him for all these years ain’t easy. However, you didn’t handle this matter particularly well either. Now you’ve offended Mark. If you were to reject Mateo, you’d be too cruel, but if you didn’t, you’d be cruel to Mark instead. Hence, you wouldn’t be a good person no matter what choice you make.”

After listening to what Tiffany had said, Arianne imagined a scenario where Mark went out with another woman late at night. ‘She’s right; even if it’s a hug that didn’t mean anything, I’d still be jealous. I suppose I can’t hate him for being so angry at the time. I’m definitely wrong in this case.

Besides, my righteousness last night wasn’t because I didn’t feel guilty, but that I didn’t like him spying on me and following me. In fact, I already felt guilty the moment I went out last night.’

“Tiffany, you’ve finally sobered up and said something clever for a change. I’ll admit that I couldn’t be a good person in this situation, and it’s my fault. Mateo was beaten up quite badly and I’ve already explained the situation to Mark, so this matter has been put behind us.”

Tiffany jokingly said, “Mateo’s original intention was to say goodbye to his past, but the situation has now developed to such an extent that it’s deeply engraved in him already. I suppose after being beaten up so badly, he’s going to remember it forever. Although, he’s lucky that it wasn’t Jackson who hit him. Otherwise, he’d probably be confined to a wheelchair forever. Honestly, if he weren’t so adamant about

you, he'd really deserve a good woman. He's such a nice person, be it his family background, his looks, or even his character. No matter how badly he was beaten up, I suppose he won't regret meeting you anyhow, would he?"

Just as Tiffany had said that, Mark suddenly appeared from the stairs. "Is that not enough to make him regret? He should try asking my woman out again if he has the guts."

Tiffany instantly fell silent and stuck her tongue out, pretending that nothing had happened as she munched on her melon seeds.

Arianne purposely smiled as she said, "Tiffany, didn't you say you weren't afraid of Mark? Why have you gone quiet the moment he came down?"

Tiffany meekly glared at Arianne. "Isn't it because… Jackson isn't around? A wise woman would submit to the circumstances. I won't argue with a man. I'm just sitting here munching on some melon seeds; is he going to hold that against me? You guys should just ignore my presence here. It's so hot outside today, I'll stay here until Jackson comes for me tonight."

Mark's lips turned into a snicker. "What could Jackson do even if he were here? Relax, I would never lay a hand on a woman."

After that, he retracted his smile and looked at Arianne. "I have something to say to you, Ari."

Arianne was slightly surprised. "There aren't any outsiders here, so you could just tell me whatever you want. What's the matter?"

Mark paused for two seconds before he said, “Your mom has sent me an email.”

Arianne’s body suddenly froze, and she pretended not to be bothered as she asked, “And? Why did she look for you?”