Ruling 1881

Chapter 1881

Since that incident, Raven's daily expenses had become Aristotle's responsibility. This was especially germane due to the injuries she suffered, as they hamstrung her so much that she could no longer resume her part-time work to survive. Taking her under his wing was the least he could do.

Since she temporarily lost the ability to care for herself, he invited her to move into his luxury mansion in France. Then came the time for Aristotle to return home, and he brought her along as well.

Granted, if he had any other choice, he would not have chosen to do this, either—Aristotle was used to being by himself. Having an additional member by his side felt awkward.

Raven Leigh started out as his compatriot, but at a young age, her mother married a French man. Shortly after, she brought young Raven with her abroad. One day her mother died, and she soon found it rendered her invisible to her stepfather's eyes. The young woman began living on her own for several years before getting into the same prestigious college Aristotle enrolled through exemplary grades.

The fact that a mere woman could survive all on her own abilities was nothing short of laudable, which was why it would be remiss of Aristotle if he abandoned her in the ruins he had indirectly caused. At the very least, he needed to make sure she was physically well again.

Immediately upon reaching the hospital, Raven was sent into the emergency room. Now that his mind was freed, Aristotle remembered his phone, and sure enough, he had several missed calls. Some of them were from Cynthia, others from Tiffany and Jackson.

Guilt unfurled in his mind. He scrolled through them and picked Cynthia, possibly out of the belief that it was always easier to explain oneself to their peers than to someone of a different generation. The call connected very quickly.

“Hey, I’ve got an emergency, so I can’t be there at the moment. I’ll have to visit Pa West and Aunt Tiffany a bit later than planned; I’m sorry.”

Cynthia considered the food laid out on the table and felt a little forlorn. “Oh. Um, what sort of emergency? If you can make it in a short while, though, we really don’t mind waiting a lil’ while longer. Dinner can stand to be a bit late.”

Aristotle shot a glance at the door barring the emergency room and thought for a while. “I’ll be there as soon as I can,” he finally said.

He ended the call and told his driver, who was waiting in the hospital with him, to keep an eye on Raven on his behalf.

Aristotle hated disappointing people, especially the two who acted as his father and mother figures, Jackson and Tiffany. He quickly arrived at White Water Bay Villa, stopping outside the door to recompose himself first.

Hearing the softest of his footsteps, Cynthia lurched to the door with lightning reflexes and yanked it open. “Ares! You’re here? I mean, you’re here! Come on in, dinner’s waiting! We’re all waiting!”

Aristotle nodded and took his seat around the table, though he did not pick up his fork and knife. Sending Raven to the hospital had taken at least one hour out of his time—a fact the coldness of the

food sprawled before him was keen to remind. He had no idea how to express the guilt welling up in him.

Tiffany watched his hesitancy and asked tentatively, “The food’s gone too cold for you, isn’t it? We can reheat ‘em…”

“No, that wouldn’t be necessary. The weather’s quite arid these days, right? So maybe cool food is what we need the most,” he supplied quickly. “It’s just… I’m really sorry. I was tardy because of an emergency, and I ended up making all of you wait.”

Jackson popped off the lid of a bottle of red wine and poured for everyone. “Blasphemy! Did you hear yourself, boy? You were just bogged down by an emergency. Waiting is what we’ll do, natch. Because it’s what a family will do.”

Cynthia was a little taken aback. Her father had never let her try even a little sip of alcohol in the past with the excuse that it would lead her down a slippery slope of debauchery. And yet, today he broke character and poured her a glass too, causing her to lift the glass skittishly and asked, "Y-You're really letting me drink, Dad?"

Jackson raised his eyebrow. “You could always trade it with juice, if that’s your groove. You’re a grown-up now, Cindy. Ain’t a kid anymore, are you?”

Cynthia held the glass in her palm with the sort of tenderness reserved only for one's prized treasure. "Heck nah; no way I'm switching to juice! I can drink now-finally! Your acknowledge that I ain't a kid anymore! Let me tell you, Pops, I've wanted to drink back on my eighteenth birthday, but you said 'noooooo! Thanks to you, became the only soon-to-be nineteen-year-old who's never gotten a taste of alcohol and I bet everyone in my class is laughing at me! How do you expect me to socialize with anyone if I don't even know how to drink?"

Jackson feigned a frown of disapproval. Plese, honey, this is exactly why I've banned you from drinking. I ain't gonna let you drink with god-knows-what kinda hooligans! You're not your brother. Ares and your brother are men and drinking is a man's thing. But you're different... You're a woman! And when women drink too much, they set themselves up to be exploited!"

Chapter 1882

Cynthia stuck her tongue out at Jackson before turning to take a sip of the wine, letting its sweetness pervade her tongue. She fell in love with it at first taste. “Mm, it’s good!”

Aristotle’s lips curled slightly. “Don’t drink too much.”

Tiffany considered him and mulled her question over for a while, before finally asking, “So… You tied down to a girl yet?”

That came out of nowhere. Aristotle had to reel back a little after his initial bewilderment. “Wha? No. Of course not. Why did you ask?” he replied. “I’m afraid my busy life has provided me no luxury of time to look for one.”

Cynthia’s tongue moved on its own. “But you brought a girl back home already,” she blurted out. “How’s that a no?”

Aristotle seemed a little helpless. “No, you misunderstand. She’s just a schoolmate. A bit more than an acquaintance, but not much. Her stay is temporary.”

Tiffany let out a long sigh of relief. “Ohhhhh! Well, that’s good news! I really thought you were taken.”

Sitting next to her, Jackson had to furtively nudge his wife. “All right, that’s enough distraction from dinner. What’s with the questions? Aristotle is a grown man with his own agency, hon.”

Tiffany pursed her lips, obviously unhappy and reluctant that her interrogation had to end so soon.

At first, when she thought her daughter was going to be mentally-challenged, she gave up grooming Aristotle and Cynthia together as a couple. But now that her daughter turned up a normal young woman by all accounts, the seed of her old dream had taken. root in her heart once again. She hated the idea of a fine young man like Aristotle ending up as some outsider's son-in-law. The fact that she practically raised Aristotle as his adopted mother of some sorts was also good nurture to that dream, and soon, the seed sprouted and grew into vines crawling all over her mind.

Back in the hospital, Raven opened her eyes as though she had just woken up. To her sullen frustration, she discovered Aristotle already long left the building the moment she was sent into the emergency room. Did that not mean she had gone through all that trouble for nothing at all?!

She asked the driver to pass her his phone and dialed Aristotle’s number. When he picked it up, she seized the silence before he could say a word and sobbed, “Where are you now? I’ve thought you would at least wait until I’m out of the emergency room… You know I’ve got nothing... right? You’re the only one I can rely on. And now, being in the hospital all alone frightens me. You should see how much the back of my hand turned blue-black because of the IV drip. Please, Ares, can’t you just come over?”

On the other end of the line, Aristotle had only begun warming up to chatting with the Wests after dinner. Despite his return, he had not gotten the time to make up for his lost times with them, and now, this was the second time Raven’s call forced him to leave.

He drew a deep breath. “Fine. I’m on my way. Bye.”

“Who’s that? Is it that ‘Rey’ gal again?” Tiffany wondered aloud. “It was her the last time too, wasn’t it? You sure she’s just a ‘schoolmate’, hon? She strikes me as a clingy type—almost as if she’s your girlfriend or something!”

Tiffany had always detested clingy women, but she reserved extra contempt for those who cling to their men at the most inopportune times On the subject of this mysterious 'Rey' though, all of her knowledge was secondhand information from Cynthia, who never kept secrets from her growing up. What particularly ticked Tiffany off was how it was always Raven's calls that took Aristotle away from them. He was practically like a son to her, yet even after finally returning home, this woman kept depriving Tiffany from enjoying him hanging out with the family.

Aristotle, not wanting to worry them, decided against divulging the details about Raven. “It’s fine. She’s got a sickly constitution and is currently lying in the hospital, so I need to check on her and see if she’s okay. Pa West, please join me tomorrow in the company, okay?” he said. “Don’t worry. I’m not going abroad anymore; we’ll have plenty of time to catch up and hang out like a family again. But today, you must excuse me.”

Tiffany waited until he left before finally releasing her spleen as an epic nag against her daughter. "God, look at you! I can't believe you fail to keep someone who's grown up alongside you for life firmly in your hand! Whoever that chick Rey' is-who the hell does she think she is, huh, snatching your brother away. like that all the time with her stupid phone calls?! She's practically owing you Cindy and you're not even gonna react? Don't tell me you're taking the L already, young lady! I, for one, don't believe that there's anyone in this entire goddamned world who's better suited to be a bride to the Tremont family, be it in terms of social status or whatever! ...Christ, I've practically written you a script that ends with you two being together already. You've got only one job, and that is to play your role! I swear to God, if your Aunt Arianne knew just how spineless you are, she'd leap up from her bed and choke you for losing this hard!"

Chapter 1883

Cynthia cowered beside Papa Jackson, shivering like a kitten. “But Mom! Ares just came back after so many years! We haven’t hung out with each other for so long, it’s only normal if things get a lil’, you know, awkward? Weird? Not used to each other? But I’m sure that given time, we’ll just be back to normal again!” she protested. “Besides, what happens if he doesn’t like me that way? What am I supposed to do, then? This isn’t the kind of thing I should control, right? Like… what if he’s always seen me as his little sister growing up?”

Jackson, contrasting his wife, turned out to be a lot more zen about these things. “C’mon. Rest your heart, Tiffie. Let the kids explore and develop their love life at their own pace, okay? We parents have no business sticking our hands into their business. Besides, Aristotle said it already—Rey is just a schoolmate who’s taken up a temporary lodge at his place. She’s just not his girlfriend.”

The longer Tiffany stared, the more this father-daughter duo became an eyesore. “Look at the two of you taking an L without a fight—urgh! Jackson West, weren’t you a Casanova with a ton of ultimate-charm-hexes up in your sleeves back in those heydays, huh? Would it kill you to teach your daughter something? God, just look at her! Unlike you, this girl doesn’t even have half of your craft!” she snapped. “You know what? This conversation is over! I’m hitting the sack early tonight! Why? Because looking at y’all is giving me mental fatigue!”

Cynthia watched her mother storm up the stairs with steps pounding like thunder and asked under her breath, “Dad…? What does she mean, ‘ultimate-charm-hex’ back in ‘those days’?”

The corner of Jackson’s lips twitched. “Uh, about that… Look, it’s the sort of skills you awaken on your own, okay? You can’t teach ‘em. Besides, your mom was making stuff up, hon. Honestly, your pops has no super-secret technique to teach you other than… going to bed early, I guess? It’s the beauty sleep that makes the sleeping beauty! So... yeah. Go take a shower and go to bed.”

He left his daughter at that and rushed upstairs to appease his wife. After all, the presence of an upset Tiffany meant an upset household was on the way!

By the time Aristotle brought Raven back to the Tremont Estate, it was already late at night.

He had been even more taciturn than usual throughout the journey. The silence was so sharp, it prompted Raven to remark gingerly, “You think I’m too much trouble, don’t you? Have I... gotten on your bad side?”

“No. You are my responsibility,” Aristotle replied flatly. “Though I need to remind you: I’ll be taking care of the company starting tomorrow, so I’ll be very busy from then on. So if you have any trouble or need, please talk to Agnes. I wager there’s not much to worry, since the doctor had made the instruction clear. You just have to take your medicine on time, and you should be free from any health issues. Either way, you should get some rest.”

Raven fell into steps in her track. "Will there be a day when you'll cast me away?" she asked. "You know that with the way I am now, in this state, . I've lost the ability to live on my own. The doctor said that this sickness is bound to me for the rest of my life. I have no family. Nobody... except you. Ares, you're the only pillar I have in life. So please... Please, don't abandon me, okay?"

Aristotle frowned. "But you'll be someone else's wife one day, while I'll form a family of my own. That precludes you sticking by my side forever," he rebuffed. "I'll admit that it's all my fault that it cost you so much, and I'm willing to provide reparation for the rest of your f But it will only be monetary compensation. I'll be remiss if I promise you anything beyond that.'

Half a year of living together, breathing the same air under the same roof, and this was the first time he had ever been so candid to her. All this time, Raven had mistaken his promptitude to answer her every call as a tacit proof that she was his crowned priority—that she had succeeded in enthralling him.

The truth was that it had always been pure, objective accountability that was the sole reason behind Aristotle’s supposed care—

And it was not what she wanted at all!

She had enough of having rats and cockroaches keeping her company. Enough of gritting her teeth through abject fear for her life as she scurred back home after her late-night part-time shift. Before his arrival, her life had been nothing but a sliding gradient of grey!

It was only because of him that she even had a chance at comfort, riches, and bliss. After all that, Raven never wanted to go back to the nadir whence she came anymore. No, she would not allow herself to be forced back into her bleak origin!

She heaved a large step forward and grabbed Aristotle's wrist gently. “Ares, all this time... You think I was only sticking by your side because I wanted your money? I would have asked for a sum for taking a knife for you if that were the case she said pointedly. Look, 11 admit it Money means a lot to me, but only because I need it to survive. But you know what's more important? To have a warm body I can fall back on! The only time when I feel... as though I'm truly, really alive is when I'm with you, Ares. Do you have any idea how that feels? I don't need your promise; none of it.

“All I’ve ever really wanted from you… is a place by your side.”

Chapter 1884

Bringing up that subject was deliberate. Raven needed to rouse the guilt inside Aristotle, after all.

The man sighed helplessly and slid his hand out of hers quietly. “I’ve never once thought of you that way, all right? I know it wasn’t for money—never mind. Perhaps we shouldn’t discuss something so far off into the future,” he said. “I’m going to bed. Need to rise early tomorrow.”

Raven knew that the most important matter to him at hand was the company he was about to inherit. “Let me join you tomorrow! I know there will be some things I can help you with. You’ve just come back, so it’s only logical that you might be lacking in manpower. I can help with that!” she volunteered. “Bonus point? You don’t even have to pay me a single cent.”

Admittedly, she hit the nail on the head—Aristotle was in need of human resources. But of course, Raven’s sickly constitution made him balk at considering her for the job. “I think you should sooner focus on your health for now. When you’re finally well enough to work, then I’ll locate a role to place you.”

At the end of the day, Raven was still a high-achieving graduate of a top French college; that accomplishment in and of itself entailed talent and skills. In addition to that, she had returned to the States with him and was pretty much alone, so taking both merit and personal reasons into account, giving her a position in the company was hardly undeserving.

Raven could tell that his stance was pliable, so she doubled-down on her insistence. “I can do it right now, really. You know my body’s condition, right? Medication as scheduled, no extreme sports of any kinds, and I’ll be fine. Come on, give me a chance, okay?”

Aristotle hazard to guess from her attitude that the young woman was not taking a no for an answer. The only way to put this issue to sleep for now was to just accept her offer, so Aristotle did with an extra caveat: she should never force herself at work.

The next day quickly came. A glowing, vivacious Raven Leigh had risen early and changed into the business outfit she had long prepared for such an occasion. She then spent the rest of her time on make-up to achieve a look of refined elegance before tying her flowy long hair into a horsetail.

By the end of her preparation, she looked so much removed from her usual pallid appearance. In fact, she radiated a sort of youthful, hip beauty that aimed to amaze.

As it was also the first day Aristotle was going to work, he seemed to be in high spirits as well. “You’re looking perky today,” he complimented, before adding, “Come on. Let’s not be late.”

Raven smiled sweetly and took a step closer to him, wrapping her arm around his. “How about this? I’ve put on the perfume you gave me the last time. Like it?”

Aristotle was not used to physical affections. As his usual veneer of coldness shrouded his expression, he withdrew his arm from hers. “The driver is waiting. We should go.”

Raven was not at all bothered. Honestly, she was already acclimated to Aristotle and his cool front by this point.

More importantly, she was well aware that becoming a part of a family with incredible prestige like. the Tremonts was no cakewalk.in the park. She was a nobody with no social standing or influence who came from the dirt, but her biggest asset lay in fier capabilities. All of Her best fortune had been used to direct her path into his on that luckiest night half a year ago, so now, her goal was to not squander her chance to bid a final farewell to her past. The way to live a life she had always yearned for was her talent, and she was nothing if not confident in her aptitude.

The two reached Tremont Tower and wasted no time sauntering into the CEO office.

That was when Raven stopped and stared ahead, a little flabbergasted. Far from her imagined scenario whereby it was pretty much just between her and Aristotle in office, the foom was already brimming with people. As it was Aristotle's first day at work, the Wests and the Smiths were already there to welcome him.

Tiffany and Cynthia automatically snapped their attention to Raven, who was standing behind Aristotle, in unison. The realization was immediate—this one, right here, was the chick who managed to snatch Aristotle away with her calls.

She was undeniably pretty. She was tall in stature and exemplified the best of the bony, lanky aesthetics topped with a delicate, doll-like face. Her all-white attire, meanwhile, radiated an air of business acuity and keen acumen.

However, for some reasons—and it did not matter if it was because of her personal bias or not, she insisted—Tiffany found Raven an irritating sight. Her first impression was that she hated the heck out of that one!

Aristotle greeted everyone in the room. He was about to get straight to the agenda when, hidden behind the crowd and curling up on his couch, Melissa Smith raised her snow-white arm. “Ex-cuuu-se me, mister, but are you really gonna skip introducing that new girl behind you?”

Aristotle was all-too-familiar with his cousin's temperament, so he forced himself to be patient and explained, "This is a fellow schoolmate of mine back in France. Her name is Raven Leigh, and she'll be here on a temporary past suggest you. refrain from starting a fire from this, Millie."

Chapter 1885

Raven greeted the assembly with a smile. “Thank you for taking me in.”

Melissa was charmed by canned courtesies. She chewed her gum with a new air of contempt and blew a large bubble. “Puh-lease. The only people who could join this company are the real deal with skills to back ‘em up, man, they deserve to be here. No one’s ‘taken in’,” she stated sharply. “Read the room, new gal. Can’t you see we’re trying to host an internal meeting here? Outsiders who are not part of the group, here’s the door.”

Raven, sensing Melissa’s acute hostility, tried to contain the unfurling self-consciousness inside of her as she walked out of the office.

Melanie poked her daughter on the back of her head. “What was that? That was your cousin’s classmate you’ve just chagrined. Please, at least show some decent reception.”

Melissa felt not even the slightest tinge of guilt. “Hey, I was only spitting facts. This is a family meeting. Why is she standing there gawking at us like a dumba**?”

That immensely gratified Tiffany. Before Tiffany needed to express her disdain, Melissa had spoken it right out of her mouth, and honestly, the girl earned a lot of brownie points from Tiffany the longer she considered her. Heck, she was willing to pardon every bad blood she had with Alejandro in the past over this. “Millie, sweetie, you’re formally invited to a dinner at our place tonight.”

Melissa gave her an OK gesture. “I’m game. Then I’m gonna go shopping with Cindy. My old man’s placed me under house arrest for so long I’m gonna go nuts soon.”

Alejandro knew a chance to rib on her when he saw one. “Maybe if you’re a little less of a troublemaker, you might not be grounded… Ever thought of that? Anyway, enough chit chat. Let’s get down to business.”

The door barring Raven and the CEO office was shut for three hours.

Raven waited outside for three whole hours.

At this time, she knew better than to cross even a single one person inside that office. The only way she could possibly stand on equal footing with them was to win Aristotle over, and then she would get even with them.

Raven waited and waited until finally, the door opened. The first to step out was Aristotle and Melissa—in a pair. A pair! She even had her arm slung around his, causing the two to press together in proximity.

It might as well be a direct assault to Raven’s eyes. Before she could open her mouth and say something, Melissa filled into the space before she spoke with a pointed reminder. “Excuse us, but we’re going out for lunch. You’ll begin work today, right? Well, you can go to the workers’ canteen and enjoy yourself there. The food’s not bad.”

Raven looked at Aristotle with an affectation of forlornness, causing the man to frown. “Well? Go. You’ll have to get used to it sooner or later.”

Of course, she was not going to allow herself to be ostracized from the group like that. “I don’t know the way,” she muttered under her breath.

Melissa released her grip around Aristotle’s arm and loomed closer to her. “Oh yeah? Well, come with me then. I’ll show you the way.”

Raven clenched her jaw silently before forcing out a smile. “Sure. Thanks.”

They stepped into the elevator. Melissa waited for everyone else to leave.

Then, she dropped her act and asked with contempt dripping from her tone. “So, I heard you landed yourself a place in the Tremont Estate, huh? B*tch, you’ve got skills.”

Raven smiled slightly. “The compliment is ours. Though I have to ask you: why the hostility toward me? This is the first time we’ve ever seen each other, but you apparently decided to hate me already.”

Melissa was not the type to argue via reason. On the contrary, she much preferred to go straight to provocative verbal spars. "You might need to polish your social senses a little, honey, because that isn't hostility-it's pure disgust. You are an alien from a world different from ours; for f**k's sake, everything on you, in you, and of you combined can't even beat the value of a single one of my piercings. Seriously, how do you expect an alien to even mingle with people of different backgrounds and social classes, huh? We don't even share the same values or understanding about the world, duh! I don't know why Aristotle brought you home with him, but I suggest you know your damn place in this world and get real. He's the only heir to the goddamned Tremont family, b*tch. His wife will never be someone who originates from rags and dirt like you are."

Raven smirked: “And yet, his father married a normal orphan, didn't he? Everyone and their grandma know that his mother has been adopted into the Tremont family since she was just a child, she riposted. "More importantly, I believe that nothing is impossible in this world. twouldn't go off like that as though I'm a smarta** if I were you."

Blizzard shadowed Melissa's mien. "Did you hear what you were saying? You f**king insane or what? You really think you can compare your lowly self with his mother?! Wake up. She might have been an orphan adopted into the Tremont... household, but the Wynns used to be an actual upper-class family, you dolt. She was a princess fallen into hard times, you are a dirt eating baseborn pleb. You see the huuuuge difference there, smarta**? Ha, I bet none of what you know came from Aristotle himself, which means our little opportunist has done her homework, huh?

“Well, then. Do you also know he’s already engaged?”

Chapter 1886

Raven’s heart skipped a beat. Outwardly, however, she affected indifference. “Oh yeah? And who’s that supposed to be? You?”

Melissa was just about to drop an F-bomb when the door to the elevator suddenly opened. Employees from other floors swarmed in and filled up the space around them.

The two women tacitly decided not to continue their previous exchange. It was only after the two of them walked out of the lift that Melissa broke their feigned truce by pointing in a direction with a scowl. “There’s your canteen. Go there yourself; I’m not gonna waste my time taking you there—it’s a place even a pig would know.”

“Huh. Turns out that a high-class socialite representative like yourself is just as uncouth and jerkish as the rest of us ‘plebs’, too,” Raven riposted acridly. “You think everyone who goes to the canteen for

lunch is a pig, huh? Well, I'm gonna skip the canteen and order a takeout instead; at least I wouldn't be derided as a mere pig by some high and mighty aristocrat. Thanks for leading the way, I guess."

With that, she spun on her heels and strode away.

In her entire life, Melissa had never once been slighted by anyone like this—never, not even once! Had it not been her mother—who drilled into her head the concept of adhering to sensibilities and avoiding the creation of trouble before their family meeting started today—she would have caught up with Raven and decked the nose off her face.

Melissa was just about so apoplectic that she could tear her hair off her scalp when Aristotle and the rest caught up to her. Still in a rage, she stormed toward the group and yanked Aristotle over to a corner.

"If you even so much as insinuate to that woman of yours that we're cousins," she threatened in an undertone that only she and Aristotle could hear, "—I'll f**king beat you to death!"

The corner of Aristotle's lips twitched. "What? Why?"

She snarled, baring her teeth. "None of your business! The point is—don't break a word about our connection to that skank. I! Hate! Her!!!"

Aristotle was too cognizant of her temperament, so he kept quiet. One thing was for sure; no sane person would ever think of crossing a Smith.

Although the Wests were the ones who did most of the heavy-lifting in raising him, his Uncle Alejandro did not shirk his duty in helping him either, right down to personally sending him to France. Hence, Aristotle liked his cousin, who was also a frequent playmate when they were younger, quite a bit. Melissa did not have a bad core—she was just a bit more prideful and haughty than she probably should display, and exhibited a penchant to take a “my way or the highway” approach to things.

The Wests and Smiths left for their respective agendas altogether after lunch, leaving Aristotle to return to the Tremont Tower alone. Jackson had ensured that everything. Aristotle needed to know had been laid out in no hazy terms, and if the young man still had more questions; he could always just call him.

It was only a matter of time before Aristotle had to plant his feet on the ground and take charge-after all, his father inherited the company as the CEO when he was just eighteen. An exemplar like that served as a sharp reminder that Aristotle still had much to learn and perfect.

He had only just taken his seat in the office when he heard a series of rapping on the door. Without lifting his head away from the (frankly) bothersome documents, he said, “You may enter.”

Raven pushed the door open and went inside. As she was the secretary’s intern who was meant to succeed her soon, she knew what her job-scope was. She brewed a pot of coffee for the man, seizing the moment to ask, “So, who was that beautiful girl with you today?”

Aristotle’s mind was so devoted to his work that he could hardly divide his attention to anything else. “Who?” he echoed offhandedly.

Asking him in terms that were too blatant and obvious would do Raven no good. “It’s the nice girl who helped show me the way to the canteen.”

He suddenly remembered the words Melissa told him as he sipped on the coffee. “Well, her father’s one of Tremont Enterprise’s shareholders. Personally, we have been playmates since we were kids. What is this about?”

Raven shook her head. “Nothing. Just thought she looked friendly and maybe we could be friends.”

Aristotle nodded, intending it to be his last response to the matter. Even if he wanted to tell her Melissa was his cousin, it would only invite a very convoluted mess of explanation. Alejandro had long discarded his identity as the Tremont patriarch's bastard son, so only a selected, very intimate few knew about his past. If something like that ever became a mainstream story, annoying troubles were sure to follow.

A few seconds passed. Raven mustered her courage for a candid question. “She told me you’re engaged, and judging from the way she talked about it… Might the fiancée be her?”

Aristotle froze in mid-action as his face turned pale. “Why would you believe her nutty talk? Impossible. Complete bull!”

One had to be incredibly unlucky to find themselves Melissa’s husband! With a father-in-law like that—to be her husband was akin to having someone as powerful as Alejandro breathing on their neck at all times!

Raven was secretly delighted. “Really? She was joking?!”

Chapter 1888

As she watched Cynthia head upstairs, Melissa came up with a plan. “Agnes, you should hurry up and prepare dinner. Raven’s around, isn’t she? I’ll go look for her.”

Agnes nodded her head and replied, “She’s around. I’ll get on with my work then, while you youngsters go on and have fun.”

Hence, Melissa walked towards Raven’s room and knocked on the door. Raven had already heard the commotion earlier, but she deliberately holed herself up in her room. “Is something the matter?”

Melissa helped herself as she directly pushed open the door and entered. “Of course something’s the matter. Come on, we’re going shopping together. I’ll buy you dinner, you can eat whatever you want.”

Obviously, Raven knew that Melissa would not offer her something so nice unconditionally. The relationship they had had not reached to the point where they could go shopping and eat together. “Cough, cough… I’m not feeling so good, so I can’t accompany you today. You’d be better off going with someone else.”

Melissa’s intention was so that Raven would not be a third wheel, so how could she possibly give up so easily? Hence, she directly grabbed onto Raven. “Come on, experts have always said that an inactive person is prone to getting sick easily. I’m sure that you’re ill because you lack exercise. Allow me to accompany you for some exercise then.”

It was true that Raven had a fragile body, so how could she bear to be grabbed by Melissa? Hence, Raven’s face flushed red and her neck thickened as she struggled and desperately said, “Hold on! Shouldn’t you at least let me get changed first?!”

Melissa let go of Raven, but she did not intend to walk out of the room.

Raven asked, “Are you going to stay here while I get changed?”

Melissa stuck her chest up high. “I have whatever you have as well, so is there anything I should be embarrassed about? It’s not like I haven’t seen it before. Hurry up, stop dilly dallying.”

Raven was extremely disgruntled as she began changing her clothes with her back facing Melissa. She clearly knew why Melissa insisted on dragging her out, and rejecting would only be futile. Based on Melissa's personality, she would most definitely drag her out forcefully if she had to However if she refused and caused a scene, she would be deemed an ungrateful person. Therefore, Raven had no choice but to play along while she waited for another opportunity to get back at Melissa!

While she was spacing out, Melissa suddenly grabbed onto her chest. “You seem like you’re growing up pretty well! You don’t seem to have much flesh on the outside, but who knew you were packing so much inside. Could it be that you did surgery on your chest?”

Raven hurriedly jumped away. “What are you doing?! You yourself know that I’m extremely poor as well, so where would I have the money for… breast implants? Stop joking around. I’m done changing, so let’s go.”

When they passed by Aristotle’s room, Raven held her breath and instinctively wanted to listen in on what was going on inside. ‘What are Ares and Cynthia doing at this very moment?’

The faint sound of Aristotle's laugh could be heard from inside, causing Raven to frown. 'When has he ever laughed like that? Regardless of whether he was studying in France or when we'd been living under the same roof for the past half a year, I've never heard him laugh like that before…'

In the room, Cynthia was also telling stories about the interesting things that had happened when she was in school. Aristotle was listening intently, occasionally commenting too.

After they chatted for a while, Cynthia received Melissa's "secret message," which only consisted of two letters: "OK".

What that message meant was that the menace had been taken care of. Hence, Cynthia put down her phone and glanced at Aristotle, a hint of shyness flashing beneath her eyes. "Ares... It's so great that you're able to come bac I'm able to accompany you out to play while I'm still in my summer holidays. We won't have that much time to spend together once school starts again."

Aristotle reached out his hand and pinched her small nose, affection beaming beneath his eyes. "How's that so? You're not even boarding there, so I could pick you up and drive you home every day and meet up whenever we want. However..... Why do I get the feeling that you've started to behave rather strangely ever since I returned? You don't seem to be... so glued to me like you used to."

Cynthia's cheeks turned slightly red. "Isn't that because… we're both grown ups? I doubt it would be appropriate for me to stay so close to you like when we were kids, wouldn't it? Aren't you afraid that you wouldn't be able to get a girlfriend if I stayed too close to you?"

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Aristotle suddenly turned serious as he said, "I'm not afraid. I like how you used to be. If I really end up not being able to find a girlfriend, you'll just have to pay by giving yourself to me then. That's what Aunt Tiffany has always expected anyway."

Although he may seem to be joking, he still managed to make Cynthia's heart skip a beat. As she panicked, her tongue seemed to have twisted together and was unable to utter a word for a while.

Aristotle squinted his eyes and suddenly inched close to her face. "I see that you're still the same as you were in the past. You'd begin to stutter the moment you got nervous and wouldn't be able to say a word for a while…"

Aristotle's voice had a hint of seductiveness in it, which caused Cynthia to be stunned again.

Ever since they were kids, Cynthia's biological brother, Plato, was the most unreliable one. On the other hand, Aristotle was quiet but gentle towards her and had always been very orthodox. However, at that very moment, Aristotle was behaving very "unorthodoxly"!

At that very moment, both of them were so close to each other that they were literally within a hair's breadth. Their breaths synchronized and it gradually extended into an intimate atmosphere.

In comparison to the sober Aristotle, who had a hint of slyness in him, Cynthia's eyes were wide open, seeming a little cute.

She had not noticed that the distance between them was still closing in, all she knew was that her heart was racing so fast that it felt like it was going to jump out of her mouth at any moment!

It wasn't until Aristotle's moist lips touched hers that she realized they were kissing each other!

There was only one thought in her mind: ‘He’s kissing me!

‘Although, this wouldn’t be my first kiss. As a matter of fact, my first kiss had also been given to him. It was when I was nine years old during a hot summer day. Plato and I had been playing outside for an entire day, and I was so thirsty that I was probably steaming up. When I got home, I coincidentally saw Ares finishing the last mouthful of ice cream. I remembered that the ice cream he ate was the very last one in the freezer, so I was so mad that I fought my tears and rushed up to him to get a taste of it. While doing so, I directly caused him to fall as I kissed him. Comment by Fo Nix: got? Comment by oh jaetzen: got home, not him

‘Since I was still a kid, I was still very innocent and all I wanted was a mouthful of that refreshing taste.

‘Plato tried to imitate me, but he was mercilessly slapped by Ares unfortunately…’

While Cynthia's thoughts ran amok, Ares used the tip of his tongue to try and pry open Cynthia's teeth without any familiarity. Cynthia was in a daze as she could taste the mint in his mouth. She didn't even know where she should put her hands. As a result, Aristotle guided her hands. and placed them by his waist.

Just as her body was slowly pressed down onto the bed by Aristotle, his phone began to ring at that moment, which killed the mood. Instantly, Cynthia regained her senses and pushed him away before rushing out of the room. "Remember to eat the sweet and sour pork ribs that my dad prepared for you, Ares! I'm going to go down and ask Agnes if she's done preparing the food!"

Aristotle looked at his phone screen and felt gloomy. ‘How depressing can this get? I really wish that I could beat the person who’s calling me to death.’

When Aristotle saw the words “Plato West” jumping around on his phone screen, he reached out and answered the call but remained silent. He did not have the slightest intention to be bothered with him at all.

“What are you doing, Aristotle?

“Speak up.

“Hello? Hello? What’s going on…

“Smore? Smorey, Smore Smore? You could at least grunt…”

Aristotle could not hold it in any longer. “Smore my *ss! F*ck!”

On the other end of the phone, Plato was laughing so hard that he was almost out of breath. “Hahaha, I thought that there was something wrong with the phone line and you couldn't hear me! I'm coming home next month, how are you at the moment? Have you met my sister? Has she become even uglier? She refuses to show me her face every time we're video chatting so that I don't have a chance to criticize her. Is my mom still forcing you to marry her?"