Ruling 1901

Chapter 1901

Arianne had not heard that name for so long, she had to reel back in bemusement for a few seconds before finally remembering her face.

Shelly-Ann Leigh… She must have spent all those years in the mental institution, right? God knows if the woman's hair was now grey and white all over.

When someone was near death, one could stand to forgive all of the history between them—even the dark ones, even if the ledger was brimming—for good. So, Arianne replied, "I'll go with you. No matter what happened, she's still your mother."

Mark did not expect that answer from her at all. In his surprise, he bent down and left a kiss on her lips. "I knew I picked the right woman as my wife. I thought you wouldn't agree to let me accompany her for the last of her days…"

Arianne replied nothing. She was not so obtuse that she would try to win over a woman whose days were numbered. No matter how much of an a**hole Shelly was, Arianne was still the one who came out on top. That victory was all she needed.

On their way to the institution, a puzzled Arianne asked, "I didn't think her disorder was gonna need that much time to fix, you know. How is she still in there?"

Mark furrowed his eyebrows. "She recovered a long time ago, honestly. Yet she was the one who decided not to leave; her excuse was that it turned out to be a pretty okay place to be. Naturally, I had no time to dance with her on this subject since I was already in Switzerland with you, so I just let her do

whatever she pleased. Then, a few days ago, she suddenly called me. Only then was I told that she had been ill."

The pair reached the mental institution, and Arianne gazed upon the woman on the bed. The sight took her by surprise: Shelly was old, really old—even older than Arianne had imagined. Her hair was now a mop of snowy-white, as though nineteen years alone were enough to bleach it. Her face was marred by criss-crossing creases. Gone were the doll-like features she was once famed for; Arianne could hardly recognize the woman.

Shelly was so ill that she needed a respirator just to breathe. Hearing them, however, she opened her eyes slowly and found Mark.

A kindly expression shadowed her wrinkled face. "Mark, my boy! You're here…"

Mark took a few steps forward and stood still. "Mm. Ari is here too."

It was then that Shelly noticed Arianne and her wheelchair. "Oh-ho? Turns out you haven't exactly lived comfortably yourself, have you?" she remarked. "But in the end, I lost, didn't I? I lost because I got old. You won, girl. You're never going to be haunted by this nasty old hag from now on."

Arianne was not inclined to don any pretension or spout insincere platitudes, so she eschewed those and flashed the old woman a slight smile instead. "I never wanted it to be some win-lose contest, you know. You were the one who loved creating drama. Well, at least you can stop for good now."

Shelly looked out of the window and into the sunlight. A thin layer of yearning crossed into her murky eyes.

“Wouldn’t it be nice… If I can just hear you both address me as ‘Mom’... just this one time?”

Arianne and Mark linked glances. In a flash, they simultaneously came to an agreement.

“Sure… Mom.”

There was no response. A little confused, Mark leaned closer to the old woman.

He discovered that she had stopped breathing altogether. Who could tell if she managed to hear them before she shrugged off her mortal coil?

No matter how dark the night has been, dawn will always break.

Half a month passed. That day, Cynthia West put on an evening dress brimming with absolute elegance and splendor. It was her engagement party, which was also held on a cruise ship.

It was almost as though Destiny herself had tied Cynthia to cruise ships. After all, had Tiffany not suffered that accident in a cruise, she would not have had to join this world so soon…under the threat of suffering from cognitive impairments for the rest of her life, at that.

Meanwhile, Aristotle, donning a stylish tuxedo, was standing amidst the guests as he welcomed and entertained them with an air of composed grace. His demeanor was simply a deadringer to his father's.

Tiffany was pushing Arianne's wheelchair as the best friends strolled around. "Everything is going just as we wanted, huh? My lil' Cindy and your son—finally becoming a couple! It's like all of my dreams have finally become real, Ari! Okay, maybe not exactly. There is another one. I wonder when my sorry excuse of a son will ever finally settle down!"

Mentioning Plato reminded Arianne to ask, "Well, has he returned from abroad? I don't recall seeing him anywhere…"

Tiffany wore an expression that screamed helplessness. "Oh, he's back, all right. And then he hauled his a** to join his friends on some roadtrip or whatever immediately *** after that! It's like he doesn't miss his home at all, goddammit!" she moaned. "I told that punk today's his sister's engagement day, and his arse better show... or else I'll fix him so hard he won't be able to walk for weeks!"

Speak of the Devil. A hubbub of merriment blared from a distance where the Devil's airy, uninhibited guffaw was the most sonorous. Tiffany's eyes narrowed into a glare before she declared, "Oh, that no-good punk is here!"

She pushed Arianne as fast as she could to the source of the laughter, catching Plato on the spot. She raised her voice and began, "You lil' twerp! How could you be late, huh? It's like you don't even care about the biggest, most important event of your sister's life!"

A debonair smile hung on Plato's lips. Combined with his incredibly handsome features, the young man was a snazzy sight to behold—just as his father used to be. Unlike Aristotle, who carried himself with serenity and grace, Plato was vogueish and bold. One could tell from the number of piercings on his ears that they were looking at a cavalier pretty-boy.

“Really, Mom? The point is, I made it here in the flesh, innit?” he riposted. “Look, today’s supposed to be this merry, festive day. So why sully the ambience by shouting at me? I mean, I don’t think my darling Aunt Arianne’s gonna be pleased with that, amirite?”

Arianne could not help but laugh. “Gee, you really are an exact replica of your father when he was your age. Found a girl for yourself yet?”

“Nah,” Plato answered without a moment’s hesitation. “A man’s gotta enjoy himself for a few more years before—”

He suddenly spied Melissa standing next to Cynthia in a nearby crowd, and the cavalier smile on his lips faded. “—I stand corrected.”

Tiffany followed his line of sight. “Who the heck are you lookin’ at—oh no, oh no, no. Nope; not that one, young man! Plato West, do you know who that is? I’ll give you a hint: her surname is Smith!”

If Plato's intention was a fling-well, he would survive better from kicking an actual hornet's nest. If he was serious about this relationship, though, he would have to contend. with Jackson, who would definitely not approve of it. No matter how she looked it became clear to Tiffany that she could not, under any circumstances, let this no-good punk touch Melissa Smith!

Unfortunately, Tiffany's warning fell onto Plato's deaf ears. The young man had already begun musing to himself, "Oh, so that's Lil' Mel? Long time no see, and suddenly, puberty's treated her nicely Well! Since we are childhood playmates. I already know what she's really like deep down inside. Don't try to fight

fate, Mommy dearest! Haven't you heard? There has never been a target I could not bag. Get ready- you're gonna be playing with your grandchildren pretty soon!"

With that, he patted his mother on her shoulder and took a courageous step toward Melissa.

Tiffany was so exasperated by her son’s antics that she was almost visibly steaming. Her mind was overrun with panic. This was bad! Very bad! Plato had always been stubborn in his goals—she could already tell that Jackson was going to erupt in flames over his son’s choice!

Arianne, however, was not the slightest bit worried. In fact, she could not stifle her chortle. Her bets were on those two successfully becoming an item.

As if to contrast the mental explosion in Tiffany’s mind, booming fireworks had taken the sky in a dazzling, brilliant display, adorning the night with fiery blooms signifying the turn of a new beginning.

The fireworks would eventually die. But the beautiful blessings life gives will never end—for they are sempiternal.