Ruling 281

Chapter 281

Saturday and Sunday passed in just a blink of an eye.

Tiffany did not show up in the office on Monday. She assumed Jackson had gone partying during the weekend and did not see her email. He would probably reply to her once he went to work on Monday. If it was not necessary, she did not want to go into the office and speak to him face to face. Whenever she met his gaze, she felt like running away. It was truly perplexing.

At Bright Incorporated, Jackson was made aware of the situation when he passed by the working space and saw Tiffany's desk was vacant. After he sat down in his office, he turned on his computer to reread her email. After considering it for a moment, he called her. "The company rules state that resignation requires the employee to show up in person." He hung up as soon as he finished speaking, not waiting for her to reply. He was certain she would show up. After all, she would not abandon her salary that had yet to be paid.

Just as expected, Tiffany arrived half an hour later. She knocked on Jackson's door.

Jackson swiveled on his chair lightly as he said, "Come in."

Tiffany panted slightly, she had clearly rushed here. "I'm here. Let's go through with the resignation."

Jackson looked at her questioningly. "Why are you resigning? Did someone headhunt you? Where are you planning to go? Did they offer you a higher pay?"

“No, I… I’m planning to join Eric’s company. He just set up a new company, right? Ari is working there as well. I want to be with her. Money isn’t my biggest concern. I can gain experience in a new company as well. Working in a big company like yours puts a lot of pressure on a newbie like me. I can’t keep up with everyone’s pace and keep making mistakes. As the boss of the company, you should be happy I’m leaving, right?” Tiffany replied. She did not expect Jackson to ask her for the reason of her resignation. How could she tell him she wanted to resign because she did not want to see him since it made her feel awkward?

“Your way of thinking is wrong. Big, established companies are your best choice if you want to gain experience. Isn’t it too childish to resign just because you want to be with Arianne? This isn’t a matter of kids going to and returning from school together. You should have a plan in life. Your mistakes aren’t serious. I can overlook them. I think you have potential so there’s no need for you to leave.” Jackson closed the email window on his computer, looking as though he had no intention of approving her resignation.

Tiffany panicked and gave up on speaking to him formally. “I really want to leave! Even if not for the reasons above, I still want to leave! I’m just a newbie who has just passed probation. There’s no lack of people like me here! The company doesn’t need me.”

Jackson froze for two seconds before he suddenly said, “I do.”

Tiffany froze, not quite understanding what he meant. She was unsure why someone who had always seemed playful suddenly turned solemn. Especially when he had said, ‘I do’. His stare flustered her. She lowered her head guiltily, not daring to meet his eyes, as she said, “I… I’ve made up my mind to leave. Just approve it. I told Ari I’ll report for work today. You didn’t see my email during the weekend so the matter got dragged until now.”

Jackson inhaled deeply before he said, “I saw your email during the weekend. I deliberately postponed it until now. I know you’re in need of money, I can double your pay. You don’t have to leave now, do you?”

Double her pay?

“What?” Tiffany did not expect Jackson would rather double her pay than approve her resignation. It would be hypocritical to say she was not tempted by the offer. She was just a newbie. If her pay was doubled, it would be equivalent to a veteran’s pay. A little more than that was equivalent to a supervisor’s pay.

Chapter 282

Tiffany pondered over Jackson’s offer. If Lillian knew Jackson made such an offer, she would never allow her to resign. This was truly an appealing incentive. However, once she recalled that it would be awkward since they would still meet in the office if she stayed and the rumors that had once spread online made her feel like hiding in a hole, she felt this was not a matter that could be resolved with money.

“Thank you, but I decline.” Tiffany decided despite her aching heart. She could almost hear her heart weeping for her. After all, she was honestly in need of money.

Jackson fell silent. He knew he was acting out of character. He was retaining a newbie who wanted to resign with a double increment in pay. It was unprecedented. He was also shocked that his offer had been declined. He did not want to force the matter, but he could not help the feeling of frustration that clawed at him. After a while, he finally said, “As you wish. Claim your salary from the general accounting department.”

Heaving a sigh of relief, Tiffany took the letter that he had signed and went to said department without any hesitation. When she completed the claim, she met Lillian before she could even step out of the doors.

When Lillian saw the payment in Tiffany's hand, she knew her daughter had completed the resignation procedure. "Tiffany Lane! I've asked around. Eric opened a small company after some conflict with his family. How can you compare a small company to the West's headquarters? Are you stupid? I don't care. Go to Jackson now and tell him you're not leaving!"

Tiffany clenched her teeth before saying resolutely, "I've resigned. You came too late. There's no turning back."

Lillian gritted her teeth. "Then I'll go to Jackson personally and tell him that you're insensible. You've had it easy in the past and know nothing about being in society. He'll agree to have you back to work!"

Tiffany felt like exploding from the anger. "Stop being so materialistic! I'm not a kid anymore, I can make my own decisions. Stop making a fuss here. I can't bear to embarrass myself. Don't blame me for flipping out if you continue being irrational!"

Unlike her usual unreasonable demands and pestering, Lillian's eyes turned red. "Do you think I want to control you? This is for your own good! It's not like I want you to have anything to do with Jackson, but Eric can't even take care of himself. He left the Nathaniels for his own startup, it won't be easy. Why are you stepping into the mess? You lack experience, it's best to stay in a big company like this. No fool would leave a big company for a small one. You don't even know if you'll survive!"

Tiffany was at a loss from her mother's sudden change. "Mom… don't cry, alright? I know what I'm doing. Please, stay out of my issues. I'll work hard and earn money. As long as you don't spend lavishly, it's enough for both of us."

Lillian did not care about Tiffany's words. She entered the company despite Tiffany's attempt to stop her. It, naturally, attracted people's attention.

When they finally arrived in front of Jackson's office, Lillian knocked on the door politely. It was as though the old Mrs. Lane was back. She no longer seemed like the middle-aged woman who was materialistic and unreasonably demanding.

When they entered the office, Jackson was stunned. "You're…"

Lillian forced a smile on her face. "Tiffie is not resigning. She's too young to know anything. I think your company is pretty good. She lacks experience and is always up to no good. I'll decide for her. Let's pretend this never happened, okay?"

Jackson looked at Tiffany. "Uh… She has to speak for herself. I've persuaded her earlier and even offered to double her pay. However, since she insists on leaving, there's nothing I can do about it."

Lillian looked appalled. "We're not leaving. Tiffany Lane, speak up!"

Tiffany felt as though her entire life was in Lillian's control. This was her mother, someone she would not be able to abandon no matter what. She felt as though she was going to suffocate from the pressure. "As long as you agree to stay out of my way, no mahjong, and no luxury goods, I'll listen to you. Otherwise, I'll leave right now. I won't be able to cover your expenses even if I make fifteen thousand dollars a month! I'm tired."

Seeing that Tiffany had relented, Lillian quickly said, “I agree. I’ll do it!”

Chapter 283

A barely noticeable smile tugged at Jackson’s lips. “Sure, I’ll take it that she didn’t mention anything about resigning. I’ll keep my words and double her salary. However, please keep this to yourself since it’s unprecedented.”

Tiffany placed the cash that she had just retrieved from the general accounting department on Jackson’s desk. “Here’s the wage that I took earlier.”

Jackson shook his head. “Hold on to it. Your salary will still be remunerated this month. These will be considered as your annual bonus. We’ll subtract them at that time. Take the day off and come back to work tomorrow. Adjust your state of mind for now.”

Noontime. Arianne called Tiffany. “Why aren’t you here? You didn’t complete your resignation in time?”

Tiffany sighed. “My whole life is a mess because of my mom. I won’t be able to work with you. I’m sorry, Ari…”

Arianne knew what had happened without needing Tiffany to go into details. “It’s okay. Jackson’s company is not bad at all. You’ll have a lot of opportunities there. I’m just asking. I’ll hang up now since there’s not much else.” Arianne did not say much, it was not in her place to intervene.

Hanging up, Arianne continued to work. The startup company was bustling. Eric had a lot of deals that were signed within the day. A few of them were from Mark, and they were passed to her without any hesitation.

When she returned home, it was already past eleven at night. Arianne could barely lift her legs from how exhausted she was. The bedroom was lit so she knew Mark was home.

Arianne returned to the room only after showering in the bathroom downstairs. Mark was still awake. He lay on the bed with his arms crossed behind his head as though he was thinking of something. Based on his bare arms, he was clearly not wearing a shirt.

Arianne was not still not used to seeing him barely clothed. She made her way to her side of the bed and lay down further from the man.

“Why are you so far away? Do you think I’ll eat you?” Although his expression was serious, his tone was teasing.

“It’s nothing… C-can you wear something when you sleep?” Arianne suggested meekly.

“No. I used to sleep naked. You just didn’t know that. I’ve been exhausted recently. It feels better to sleep like this,” he said solemnly, no longer seeming like he was joking.

Arianne was alarmed. She had assumed he was only not wearing a shirt. She did not expect he was not wearing anything at all. She was honestly unaware that he had such a habit. She felt the temperature rising in the room. She quickly said, “I’m exhausted. Good night…”

Mark moved and easily scooped her into his embrace. “I want you…”

Hearing his husky voice saying something so direct, Arianne felt like a current course through her. It went to her head, and she felt herself turning weak. “No… I’m not in the mood. It’s been pretty hectic recently. You’re exhausted as well. Sleep early.”

Chapter 284

God knew why she was still unable to get used to the deed after so long. She was not particularly fond of it so she would rather not do it. However, her rejection was usually futile.

Mark lowered his head and softly bit her lips. When Arianne recalled his naked state, she stiffened, no longer dared to move. She was afraid she would unintentionally touch something forbidden. She could only try to evade his kisses. “Don’t…”

“You don’t like it?” Mark’s breath was puffed against her ear, making it feel itchy.

“Mm… It feels strange,” Arianne answered honestly.

“Strange? How?” He asked patiently.

“Um… I always feel like we shouldn’t be doing this. To me, you’re not a man…”

Before Arianne could finish her sentence, a murderous expression appeared on Mark's face.

She quickly said, "I don't mean it like that! I'm saying, I was only eight back then, and you were already an adult. You're like a brother figure to me… That's why I feel strange…"

Mark's expression darkened even more. "It's been so long but you still don't see me as your man? Looks like I haven't done enough."

Before Arianne could react, he flipped them around and pressed onto her. Her thin pajamas did not last half a minute in Mark's hands. The room was filled with carnal passion for two hours before the pants and moans ended with Mark's tense and low breathing.

Some of Arianne's hair was stuck on her cheeks, bringing out their rosiness. Her slightly gaping mouth made Mark feel like kissing him. However, he stopped when she protested that it was already three in the morning.

"If I didn't have a morning meeting tomorrow, I'll make you admit I'm your man with your own words!"

Arianne wanted to shed tears, she should not have let her mouth run loose. He was always angry for no reason when it came to her.

When morning dawned, both of them had dark circles around their eyes when they woke up. Lack of sleep and fatigue were practically stamped on their foreheads.

During breakfast, Arianne's eyes were closed. When she suddenly recalled that Eric's new company was located further away and she needed to take a different bus, she realized she was going to be late. She shot out of her seat and grabbed her bag and left before she finished her breakfast.

Mark called out, "What are you doing? Can you finish your breakfast?"

As Arianne changed her shoes, she replied, "No time. I'm going to be late. Enjoy your breakfast, I'm leaving."

Mark put down his cutlery and went to the door to pull her back to the dining table. "I'll send you there after breakfast. My meeting is at eight-thirty. It's fine if I'm slightly late. I have enough time."

It was only then that Arianne ate in relief, but once she sat down, her eyelids began drooping again. She grumbled internally, not daring to verbalize her dissatisfaction.

On the way to the office, she had a short nap in the car, but it was futile. Arianne felt groggy the entire morning. Unable to accept it, after much pondering, she texted Mark. "Can we not do that in the middle of the night next time?"

Chapter 285

It was really bothersome!

Arianne regretted it after sending the text. Was she close enough to Mark that they could discuss such a topic? They looked like they were getting along, but they had yet to reach that stage!

Just as she put her phone down and was about to head for lunch, her phone suddenly rang. She thought it was Mark but discovered it was Will when she picked up her phone. She did not hesitate to accept the call. Will would not look for her for nothing.

Will's blurry voice came from the other end of the line. "Ari… I don't feel so well. I'm in room 205 at the Summer Hotel. It's near your office. Can you come over for a bit?"

Before she could reply, the line was cut. Arianne was puzzled, but she did not put much thought into it. Since it was lunchtime, she had time to go out for a while.

While she was on her way, she could not help but feel suspicious. It was only her second day of work in the new company. How did Will know she was here? Summer Hotel was very far from Glide and was close to her new company. Regardless, she would find out after seeing Will. She would not ask much. It was not strange that Will paid attention to her even though she thought it was unnecessary.

When Arianne arrived at room 205, she was about to knock when she discovered the door was ajar. Thinking that Will had intentionally left it open for her, she entered without any hesitation. As soon as she entered, a black shadow loomed over her before her mouth and nose were covered. Her neck was choked by a strong arm. She did not even have time to struggle before a smell wafted into her nose, and she fell unconscious immediately.

Arianne did not know how much time had passed. She woke up to the sounds of people talking around her. She felt weak all over as she struggled to open her eyes. When her vision finally cleared, she saw Mark and Aery standing in front of the bed while she and Will, both naked, were lying on said bed!

Will was still unconscious.

Arianne did not know what happened. After connecting the dots, she did not think Will was the culprit. Someone else had framed them!

Aery was incessantly snapping pictures of them with her phone gleefully, however, she wore a regretful and sad expression. “Mark darling is so nice to you. I didn’t expect you to do something like this!”

Arianne did not dare to look at Mark. He probably wanted to kill her now. She really wanted to know how Mark and Aery had come together to catch her and Will ‘red-handed’. She suspected Aery was the mastermind behind this. “You… Aery… You framed me!”

Aery clung to Mark. “I framed you? Forget it. You and Will were already like that when I got here. I just didn’t want Mark to continue being lied to. I want him to see who you truly are, that’s why I called him. As for how I know about this, I have a mysterious person to thank for this. I was rather surprised when I saw you and Will doing filthy things in Summer Hotel. I really didn’t expect you to seek your own end so quickly!”

Arianne pushed herself up and covered herself with the blanket, afraid of exposing her body.

Mark, who had been silent all along, finally said, “Why are you covering yourself? You weren’t ashamed when you did it. Arianne, you disgust me!”

Arianne froze for a moment before she mustered up the courage to meet Mark's eyes. She wanted to see his expression. It was one of hate and repulsion. In the past ten years, she had never seen him wearing such expressions no matter how much he had hated her. "It's not like that… Listen to me… It's really not like that!"

Mark bent down to pick her scattered clothes off the floor with two fingers and threw them in her face with an expression of revolt. "Stop being an embarrassment."

Then, he left the room with Aery following after him.

Chapter 286

Outside of the room, Mark spoke coldly, "If any of those photos you took are leaked, you know what the consequences are."

Aery was shocked. Mark looked as though he came from hell at this moment. This was the first time he had spoken so harshly to her. She instinctively said, "Don't worry… I'm only keeping the evidence for you. I worry that she'll extort money from you when you divorce her. I won't put it on the internet…"

Arianne teared up. She had no idea what had actually happened. She trembled as she dressed herself. Then, she shook Will to wake him up.

Will looked as lost as she did. "Huh? Why are you here, Ari?"

With a sob, she replied, "You called me in the afternoon and asked me to come here because you weren't feeling well. The door was ajar so I came in. As soon as I stepped in, someone drugged me.

When I woke up, we're both lying on the bed naked. Moreover, Mark and Aery were here as well… I don't know if anything actually happened…"

Will blanched immediately. He flipped the blanket to check on himself and looked paler after he did. "I didn't call you! Where's this? I was having lunch with a client at noon. I had some wine and went to the washroom. Someone knocked me out from the back, and I don't know what happened after that!"

Both of them cleared their thoughts, confirming that someone had moved them to Summer Hotel and created this scene. Will did not even know that Arianne had changed workplace. He was having lunch in White Waters Bay. It was quite a distance away from here!

Seeing Arianne's swollen eyes from crying, Will comforted her. "If both of us are unconscious, nothing must have happened. Don't worry. Is Mark outside? I'll explain it to him. As long as he doesn't make things difficult for you, he can do whatever he wants to me!"

Arianne shook her head. "He only believes what he sees. Explaining will only make the matter worse. Don't step out. I'll leave first." She got off the bed and made her way to the door. The drug seemed to still be in her system, making her stumble when she walked.

When she finally reached the door with great difficulty, she opened the door and was greeted by the sight of Aery holding onto Mark's arm with one hand on his chest. Her heart sank.

Arianne was about to speak, but Mark beat her to it. "We're going to the hospital."

She was confused. "Why are we going to the hospital?"

Mark narrowed his eyes, exuding a chilling and dangerous aura. “For a check.”

Aery frowned. “Mark, you’ve seen it with your own eyes. Do you still think nothing happened between her and Will?”

Mark was the first to head to the elevator. “I only want results.”

Only results… What would he do when the result was out? What if something really did happen?

It was only when they exited the hotel that Arianne realized that it was already nighttime. She must have passed out for a long time since she had come at noon. She had missed calls from Eric and Mark… More than fifty in total. He had been looking for her? He must be worried sick. He must have been disappointed when he found her here.

Mark drove his car to the hospital. Brian was not around for some reason. Aery sat in the passenger seat while Arianne sat alone in the backseat.

Chapter 287

When they arrived at the hospital, Mark communicated with the doctor regarding what tests Arianne would take. She only had to obediently cooperate. She was immensely nervous when she was in the theater. Gynecological examinations were always awkward. When the ice-cold apparatus was inserted into her, she broke out in cold sweat from the pain.

After a series of tests, the doctor said emotionlessly, “It’s done.”

After putting on her pants, Arianne waited for the results quietly. She involuntarily glanced toward Mark and Aery seated together on the bench outside the room, looking like a couple. However, Mark’s expression was incredibly cold.

Around twenty minutes later, the doctor called Mark in. Arianne was beside them. She could feel Mark deliberately keeping a distance from her, as though disgusted by her filth.

“There’s sexual intercourse within a day. There’s obvious blood flow and swelling on this part. The swelling is slightly too much.” The doctor announced the result in a professional tone.

Arianne felt her legs weakened and she barely supported herself against the wall.

Mark’s hands were clenched into fists as he spat out his question, “Can the time be more specific?”

The doctor paused for a moment before he replied, “It’s within five to fifteen hours to be precise. For a living person, there’s no way to get a shorter time frame for accuracy.”

Mark said nothing and turned to leave instantly. Aery chased after him. “Mark darling, wait for me! Where are you going?!” Her voice drifted away shortly after.

When Arianne exited the hospital listlessly, it was completely dark. The doctor's examination did not save her from hell. Five to fifteen hours… It could not prove that nothing happened between her and Will. It had been almost six hours since she arrived at the hotel while Mark had been intimate with her until three in the morning. If that did not happen, it would have been easy to determine if something had happened between her and Will or not.

Arianne did not know if she should return to the Tremont Estate. What would be waiting for her if she did? The relationship that she had painstakingly maintained with Mark had crumbled so swiftly and easily.

At the entrance of the Summer Hotel, Will was punched to the floor by a furious Mark once he got out.

Aery was so frightened she did not dare to make a sound. She did not even have the courage to step out of the car.

Will wiped the blood off the corner of his mouth and looked at Mark with a frown. "I don't know how I came to this hotel and how I ended up with Ari. I'll look into this. You shouldn't just look at this on the surface!"

Hearing the words 'ended up with Ari', Mark swung his fist again. "Shut up! I told you to stay away from her! Even if I don't want her and discard her, you'll never be together with her!"

After being knocked out earlier, Will was so weak that he could not fight back. He could only become Mark's punching bag.

When Mark stopped, panting harshly, Will could not even pick himself up from the ground.

It was only at this moment that Aery dared to step forward. “Mark, forget it. You’ll kill him if you continue this. Let’s go! I know you’re upset, no man can tolerate this…”

Mark said nothing as he got into his car. The pair of hands gripping the steering wheel was bloodied with both his and Will’s blood. The scene he witnessed in the hotel room replayed in his mind on a loop, making him grit his teeth.

Chapter 288

Aery’s heart burned with jealousy when she saw Mark behaving in this manner. Was he mad at Arianne for what happened? “Mark, darling, haven’t you always been aware of my sister’s obscure relationship with Will? You should have anticipated that something like this would happen, after all, they did… You know, three years ago. I’ve always thought that you and my sister are incompatible. She doesn’t love you anyway and is bound to betray you. Why won’t you let go? Why are you making trouble for yourself?”

Mark took a deep breath and leaned back against the car seat, “Who told you about this? Why were you, of all people, informed?”

“I don’t know,” Aery quickly explained, “I wasn’t aware of this at all. I was surprised when I received the news, I even called again, but the phone was off. It doesn’t matter who told me about it, the informant wasn’t lying. You and I both saw it with our own eyes, right? Can anyone really fake this kind of thing? My sister has only started work at Eric’s new company and something like this happens? It feels as if it’s been planned for a long time. How does Will know she’s there? Just think about it carefully. Will knows where she works on the second day of work. They must have kept in touch quite often.”

Aery continued to say, “I’m pretty sure the informant saw Will and my sister walking into the hotel and could not stand to watch it. They probably didn’t want to get into trouble that’s why they decided to

remain anonymous. Didn't you speak to Eric? My sister left the office during lunch. She took advantage of her lunch break to go on a date… That's crossing a line. She's doing all this because you're busy and your office is far away. If she didn't meet Will, nothing would have happened. No one could kidnap her and send her to the hotel after all"

Mark suddenly pressed on the accelerator, and the car sped on ahead. Aery was so frightened that she turned pale, clutching tightly at the seatbelt. "Slow down, Mark! Don't worry, I'll always be with you no matter what happens. You've already cut ties with me for her, but she's still acting like this. How ruthless!"

Mark did not answer. At this point, he needed an outlet for his emotions instead of staying here and listening to these annoying, rotten words!

Arianne waited at the Tremont Estate's main door until one in the morning, but Mark still did not return. She knew he would not come back today, but she still wanted to wait. Regardless if he believed her or not, she wanted to explain herself clearly.

Mary was unaware of what had happened. She discovered Arianne carrying Rice Ball and standing at the doorway, still awake in the dead of the night.

"Stop waiting," Mary said in a voice full of concern, trying to convince her to go back to her room, "Mr. Tremont probably won't be coming home tonight. He's a little busy. Get some sleep first. It's not like it's the first time he hasn't come home."

Arianne felt tears threatening to spill from her eyes. "It's different this time… Mary… Go to bed. Don't worry about me."

Mary knew that Arianne was stubborn so she did not continue persuading her.

Suddenly, the phone in Arianne's pajama pocket rang. She quickly put Rice Ball down and pulled out her phone. She teared up when she saw Mark's name on the screen. All sorts of possibilities flitted through her mind at this moment. Perhaps, he had gotten drunk somewhere and needed her to pick him up. Perhaps, he had called to scold her. However, when she answered the phone, she heard Aery's voice at the end of the line. "You can stop waiting, Arianne. Darling Mark's going to stay with me at a hotel tonight. He's just had a shower and gone to bed…"

Arianne stopped breathing for a moment. Aery had intentionally emphasized that Mark had just taken a shower and gone to bed. There was no doubt Aery was trying to tell her about what had transpired between Mark and her. It took a while before she found her voice again. "I understand. Don't get too pleased with yourself, Aery. If I find out you're responsible for this mess, you better prepare yourself for the fight of your life!"

Chapter 289

Aery giggled. "You're so stupid. It really isn't me this time. Someone must have seen you and Will entering the hotel together and secretly informed me about it. I really didn't expect to catch you red-handed. You seem honorable on the surface, you even shamed me after you found out about my relationship with Mark. Aren't you just the same? Why are you putting on airs?"

Arianne was speechless. She hung up the call at once and went back into the house. She could not sleep the whole night and did not go to work the next day. She asked Eric for the day off. She had considered the consequences. Would Mark divorce her? In the past, a divorce would be a relief, but now, she did not want it to end just like this. If she had to leave, she would leave with her head held high.

At around ten in the morning, she heard the screeching sound of a car outside and instinctively ran to the French window to look. Mark's car had returned.

He soon arrived upstairs but did not even look at her when he entered the room. He walked straight into the cloakroom and packed a bag. She stepped forward, bent down, and helped him with his things. However, he kicked the luggage bag forcefully, scattering expensive clothes all over the ground.

“Don’t touch my stuff. Disgusting!” Mark stared at her with cold indifference.

Arianne’s hand stiffened before she withdrew them. She muttered, “I’m sorry. I didn’t do those things. I was framed.”

Mark acted as though he had heard the biggest joke in the world. He laughed coldly before he said in disdain, “How could anyone frame you if you didn’t meet Will during your lunch break? Didn't you promise me that you wouldn’t contact him anymore? You didn’t just stay in contact, but you’ve even met secretly. I’ve given you a chance.”

She lifted her head and stared at him, “Didn’t you promise not to contact Aery again? After everything we’ve been through, is any of us really innocent? You think you can do whatever you please and ignore how I feel just because of what I owe you? I’m not a child anymore. I can feel hurt too. You’ve hurt me over and over again, knowing how much I hate Helen Cameran and Aery Kinsey! I’ve never betrayed you with Will, not even when I was with him three years ago! I lost my virginity to you!”

She felt strangely guilty after she had said this. “It’s true. I’m not too sure this time because I was drugged when I entered the hotel. I don’t know what happened either. I wasn’t conscious. What do you want from me? I can leave the Tremont family, I can agree to a divorce. I don’t want anything. I’ll leave the same way I arrived, but I want to leave with my head held high. You don’t have to chase me away!”

A complicated and unreadable emotion flashed across Mark's eyes. Then, he sneered and reached out to chuck her chin, "Oh, really? You lost your virginity to me? Then, why was there no sign of it on the bedsheets? I used to think you're different from other women, but it seems you're not that different after all. You think that I've been unfair? Then what if I told you that nothing has ever happened between Aery and me? I gave her the title of my 'lover' in name and bought her everything she wanted. The only thing I haven't done is sleep with her. It seems like you're capable of feeling hurt as well. I thought you didn't feel a thing."

He continued to say, "A divorce would be too easy on you. I've told you before; that will never, ever happen. Since we can't live in peace, we'll torture each other instead. I can spare the time for that. From the moment I fell in love with you, I knew that I'd spend the rest of my life with you. You know how I am, I never go back on my decisions no matter what happens. However, don't ever hope for my love. That's a thing of the past now."

Chapter 290

Love? He loved her?

This was Arianne's first time hearing it from his lips. Many people had mentioned that he had feelings for her before. She had always considered it absurd. It seemed that it was true. She finally regained her senses when the bedroom door slammed shut. He had left, taking his luggage along with him. Who knows when he would come back?

As for his claims of never having slept with Aery, it did not matter if she believed him or not. She always thought that they had had sex anyway. That phone call from last night had further confirmed that fact. He thought she was lying, who could say he was not doing the same thing?

The next day, during breakfast, she received a message from Will. "I'm sorry, Ari. This would not have happened if I didn't move back to the country. My family and I will be flying overseas at eight tonight. You'll have some time during the day to think about whether you'd like to come along with me or not."

Will's family's migration to a different country was clearly due to Mark's influence. Arianne knew this, but she was helpless. She never thought of running away. Her slender fingers typed out her reply. "There's nothing to consider. I won't leave. I wish you a bright future. I'm very happy to have met you."

Ten minutes later, Will replied to her. "Me too. You are my life's greatest fortune and the greatest misfortune. I fear that I may never be able to forget you. May you be happy always."

Greatest fortune, and greatest misfortune.

Tears streamed down Arianne's face when she saw the words on her phone screen.

Mary was extremely startled by this sight. "Why are you crying, Ari? Did you fight with Mr. Tremont again? He's already an adult, and yet, he's still being mean to a little girl like you? Seriously. Don't cry, don't cry. Tell me what's wrong…"

Arianne shook her head. She was in so much pain that she could not even speak. This was the first time that she had ever felt so bleak. She had thought the biggest disaster in her life was when her father died and she had to shoulder the crime. However, this time, the wound felt deeper than ever. She felt as though a large mountain was pressing down her. She could not escape nor breathe. Worst of all, she could not die either.

After breakfast, she composed herself before heading to the office. Eric clearly wanted to say something but held his words in the end.

Arianne acted as though nothing had happened and smiled. “If you have something to say, say it. I’m fine.”

Eric checked his surroundings. When he confirmed no one was around, he said, “Are you and Mark… alright? He’s been experiencing problems in his company and someone’s been setting him up. He’s been extremely irritated, and at this crucial moment, that happened to you. It’s already a miracle that he’s been able to hold it all together. Will… is definitely going to meet with disaster. You better stay out of it. You should show Mark some consideration. He isn’t just someone who brought you up, he’s your husband. You weren’t too familiar with feelings when you were younger, but you should be slightly more familiar with them now, right?”

Arianne’s emotions were about to crumble again after she had composed herself with great difficulty. She took a deep breath before she said, “Yes. I was unaware back then. All of you knew he loved me then, but I was unaware. Now that I found out, it’s too late. His love for me is a thing of the past. Thank you for your reminder. If he asks you to fire me, just do it. I’ll be fine. I won’t die from starvation. Anyway, if there’s nothing else, I’ll get back to work.”

“No, no,” Eric quickly said, “He didn’t ask me to do such a thing. You’re overthinking things. It’ll be fine. He’s been busy lately. Both of you should take this chance to calm down.”

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Tiffany glanced at her phone from time to time as she worked. Arianne had not replied to her message. The embarrassing part was her phone had run out of credit. She was so short on cash that it was humiliating. She was reluctant to use her daily expenses to maintain her phone bill. She was ten days away from payday, and the money from her failed resignation was just enough for her to weather through the next ten days.

All of a sudden, someone knocked on her office desk twice. She saw Jackson's large and attractive fair hands immediately. She fell into an infatuated daze as she looked at his hand. However, when she lifted her head to look at him, her expression was solemn. "Do you need something, boss?"