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Chapter 291

Her question made Jackson chuckle. “Stop it. Call me daddy.”

Tiffany rolled her eyes at him. “You wish! Speak if you have something important to say. Don’t disturb me while I’m at work.”

Jackson drummed his finger rhythmically against the table. He paused thoughtfully and said, “Send a message to Arianne and ask her out for a meal after work at my restaurant. My treat.”

Tiffany was immediately suspicious. “Why? Why are you buying us a meal for no good reason? Those who are kind for no good reason usually harbor evil intentions. You better be frank or I won’t move an inch!” At the same time, she gulped instinctively as she spoke. She had dreamed of the amazing dishes at White Water Bay Café many times. She would be lying if she said she did not want to have a meal there.

Jackson saw her gulping very clearly, and his grin turned even wider. “I’ll tell you when we’re there. Call her as soon as possible.”

Tiffany lowered her voice and said, “Can I use your phone? My phone has run out of credit…”

Jackson was taken aback. He was unable to comprehend the concept of running out of phone credits. He finally regained his senses and pulled his phone out. He fiddled with it for a while before he said, “I’ve topped it up for you. Call her yourself. I’m going back to work.”

Tiffany cursed at him inwardly for being miserly and vulgar. She only wanted to use his phone for a little while, and yet, he would rather top up her credits than lend it to her. Was he afraid of her discovering his pornographic material on his phone? She sighed. She would have to pay him back for this as well. The thought of it vexed her, especially after she had received the message notification for the receipt. She was nearly driven into madness. One thousand dollars? Was he insane? She still had to hesitate half a day over repaying a hundred dollar loan! She took deep breaths as she dialed Arianne's number. When the call connected, she asked bluntly, "Ari, why haven't you replied to my message?"

"I didn't see it… What's up?" Arianne's dispirited voice rang from the receiver.

Tiffany could not conceal her excitement. "Come with me to White Water Bay Café for a meal after work. Jackson's treat. I don't know what he's up to, but we can't pass on a free meal."

"Oh… Got it," Arianne replied monotonously, "I'll get a cab to White Water Bay Café immediately after work. Let's meet there."

Tiffany did not notice Arianne was upset and happily ended the call. However, when she remembered the thousand dollar credit top-up, her heart ached again.

After work, Jackson, Tiffany, and Arianne met up at White Water Bay Café. Jackson had specifically set a private room aside for them. There were only three of them. It made the large private room feel very empty. It was too extravagant.

Tiffany ordered two of her favorite dishes and handed the menu over to Arianne. "Here, Ari. Choose your dishes."

Arianne shook her head. “I’m fine with anything. Both of you can choose.”

Tiffany finally noticed that something was amiss. “What’s wrong, Ari? Why do you look so depressed? Why do I feel like you’ve gotten thinner compared to when we last met?”

Arianne glanced at Jackson.

He pursed his lips. “I’m just asking you out for a meal so that you can relax with your best friend and talk to her. Don’t overthink it.”

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Arianne smiled bitterly. “What do you think will happen when Mark finds out you brought me out for a meal? I had an extramarital affair. Shouldn’t you, as his friend, be mad at me?”

“There’s no such thing. That’s a problem between both of you. As long as you’re not divorced, you’re still my sister-in-law. Whatever you said, won’t happen.” Jackson did not expect Arianne to be so blunt.

Tiffany was completely dumbfounded. “What are you talking about, Ari? What extramarital affair? What happened? Why wasn’t I aware of this? I was wondering why things have been so weird between you two…”

Arianne knew Tiffany very well. She would not back down until the situation was made clear to her. So she recounted everything that had happened in detail to her.

Tiffany was suitably shocked. “You’ve clearly been set up. Doesn’t Mark believe you?”

Arianne lowered her head. “It doesn’t matter to him, I guess? It’s true that I went to see Will during lunch break. This would never have happened if I didn’t go. It’s my fault, I admit it.”

Jackson chimed in, “Alright, let’s not talk about that anymore. Enjoy the meal, then, I’ll take both of you shopping. I’ll pay for everything today. There’s no need to be modest with me.”

Despite his offer, the atmosphere remained gloomy. The meal felt depressing. When they emerged from White Water Bay Café and headed to the shopping center, they simply bought a few items as a token gesture. Just before they left, Arianne suddenly hugged Tiffany and said, “I don’t want to go home, Tiffie. Can I stay with you? The Tremont Estate feels empty, I’m scared…”

Jackson looked away with a straight face. The Tremont Estate was large, but it was filled with maids and bodyguards. How could it possibly be empty? It was just that a certain person was not around.

Tiffany patted her on the back sympathetically. “Alright, alright. No need to go back there. Come live with me and sleep with me. Don’t be afraid, Ari. You still have me. I’ll always be here.”

Jackson sent them home and watched them walk upstairs. He was not in a rush to leave. Instead, he pulled out his phone and called Mark. “Mark, Arianne isn’t returning to Tremont Estate. She’s at Tiffany’s house. She says… she doesn’t want to go home and that the house feels empty. It scares her.”

Only Mark's quiet breathing could be heard from the other end. After a long pause, he finally said, "I understand."

At past 11 PM, Tiffany received a message from the private investigator. "George Levin/Sloane didn't go to any other hospital or convalescent home after leaving the first convalescent home. I've checked, but I couldn't find him at all. He's probably in hiding and doesn't want to be found. It's a big world. If a man doesn't leave any trace of himself, it'll be like finding a needle in a haystack. I can only do so much. My apologies."

Tiffany was too afraid to reveal the contents of the message to Arianne, but Arianne could already guess based on her expression. She grabbed the phone to have a look. "He just can't find him, right? It's fine. It's been many years. Lady luck hasn't really been taking care of me since I was young. Life will always grant me some small, shining bit of happiness for a while before knocking me down painfully again. I'm used to it. I'm not surprised by this outcome. After all, even if the investigation continues, I don't have the money to pay for it anyway. I can't bring myself to spend Mark's money at this stage. It'd be really embarrassing if he bars my credit card."

Tiffany did not answer. This time, she chose silence. She did not verbally attack Mark or blame anyone for being wrong or right. That was because she realized that the situation was far more complicated than she had imagined. Her brain did not have that much capacity to think about this.

The next day, early in the morning, Arianne and Tiffany went downstairs together to buy some Chinese-style omelet wraps from an old shop that claimed to have been around for a hundred years and was apparently the only authentic shop around. There was always a long queue so they had to come early or they would not be able to buy their share.

To cheer Arianne up, Tiffany said teasingly, "I'm surprised that you look better in my clothes than I do. Look at your waist! I'm so jealous at how lithe and slender it is! You're meaty in just the right places and slim in just the right places. You've got a hot, devilish body while I have small boobs, and I'm fat like a pig…"

“Stop it, you.” Arianne giggled. “You’re not fat.”

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In the midst of joking around, Tiffany’s gaze landed on a familiar figure queuing up at the front end of the long line. She thought she was seeing things so she rubbed her eyes to confirm it. Ethan was actually queuing up to buy Chinese-style omelet wraps. Moreover, he had arrived even earlier than them. It was almost his turn now!

She wanted to lower her head and hightail it out here, but she summoned her courage to stand still so Arianne would be able to taste the delicious Chinese-style omelet wraps. Moreover, when she saw the extremely long line, she really could not bear giving up her spot, especially after she had waited so long.

Arianne had spotted Ethan as well. She was not as timid as Tiffany in this regard, she had no qualms approaching Ethan as she bluntly said, “Can you help us get two Chinese-style omelet wraps? The line’s too long. Thanks!”

Ethan was mildly shocked when he saw Arianne. Then, he instinctively turned to the side and looked at Tiffany. He said, “Sure.”

Arianne did not feel like she was being shameless. Although she had used some harsh words when they had last met, it was Ethan’s fault after all.

After buying the Chinese-style omelet wraps, Ethan handed their share over to Arianne. “Here. There’s no need to pay. My treat.”

Arianne accepted her share and casually asked, “I don’t think you live around here, do you? Why did you come all the way here just to buy Chinese-style omelet wraps?”

Ethan glanced at the watch on his wrist and replied hesitantly, “I made a special trip here since I have a sudden craving for it. You can give Tiffany her share as well.”

Arianne shook her head. “Do it yourself. Tiffie treated you very well in the past after all. Although you’ve broken up, I don’t think it’s too much for you to treat her to a simple Chinese-style omelet wrap, right?”

Ethan did not want to get into an argument with Arianne so he walked to Tiffany and passed the Chinese-style omelet wrap to her before he left.

Tiffany chomped angrily on the Chinese-style omelet wrap as she complained, “That assh*le, throwing such a huge tantrum just because we asked him to buy a few Chinese-style omelet wraps. He just stuffed it into my hands without a single word. Were the breakfasts that I used to cook for him all dog food to him? I would have kicked him if he didn’t run away so fast!”

Arianne turned toward the direction where Ethan had left and said, “He’s dating someone right now. Naturally, he’ll be more distant toward you. He bought enough Chinese-style omelet wraps for two so he’s obviously buying them for someone else as well. His willingness to come all the way here so early in the morning means he’s buying it for his girlfriend. Don’t be angry. Let’s go to work.”

A hint of disappointment flashed across Tiffany’s eyes. She tried her best to widen her eyes and act as though she did not care. “I hope his girlfriend is a swindler who will cheat him out of his money and love before leaving him without any underpants!”

…

Arianne did not return to the Tremont Estate for a whole week. She borrowed clothes from Tiffany and bought new underwear. She would call the Tremont Estate every day to remind Mary to take care of Rice Ball. Initially, Mary had asked her when she would be coming back, but she gradually stopped asking.

When she called again over the weekend, Mary sighed and said, “Ari, Rice Ball is going to starve to death if you don’t come home soon. It hasn’t been eating well in your absence. I was afraid to tell you this since you’re in a bad mood. It seems listless today, and I’m getting worried. Won’t you come back for a while?”

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Arianne could no longer sit still when she heard of Rice Ball’s condition. “Alright, I’ll return and pack some of my clothes as well. I’m running out of clothes at Tiffie’s place anyway.”

She changed into a long-sleeved white dress after ending the call before hailing a cab. When she arrived at the gates of the Tremont Estate, she saw the house was brightly lit. Mark was home.

At this moment, Rice Ball ran to Arianne’s feet and rubbed itself against her legs. It looked energetic and did not seem like it had been starving for a few days. It was still as round and obscenely fat as ever. Mary had fooled her into coming home so that she would run into Mark.

When Arianne walked in, a forced smile could be seen on Mary’s face. Arianne did not say anything. Instead, she went upstairs to her room to pack her clothes.

Mark was sitting on a chair in front of the French windows. She did not greet him. She did not know if there was even anything left to say between them. She did not have many outfits for spring and summer so one luggage was enough to contain all her clothes. She managed to pack all her belongings at once.

As Arianne dragged her luggage and carried Rice Ball toward the bedroom door, Mark, who had his back against her the entire time, suddenly spoke up, “We haven’t divorced yet. Are you that eager to move out?”

She bit her lips and tried her best to stay calm. “Tremont Estate is too big for me, and I’ve always felt uncomfortable here. Tiffie’s place is pretty good, and you’re not always around anyway. Besides, you don’t really want to see me, do you? Call me when you want me to come back. A message is fine as well. At least I won’t be a sore sight since you don’t want me around.” Then, she dragged her luggage downstairs without hesitation. One girl, one luggage bag, one cat — this was all she had.

Mark clenched his fists until his knuckles turned white. His expression was hidden due to the low lights in the room. It masked the coldness in his eyes. He did not turn back to look at her even after the sound of her footsteps gradually faded away.

When she returned to Tiffany’s house, Arianne secretly settled Rice Ball down on the bay window in her bedroom. The litter box had been placed in the corner of the room.

Tiffany was delighted at the sight of Rice Ball, but when she remembered Lillian’s distaste toward small animals, she reminded, “My mom doesn’t like small animals. She thinks they’re dirty and carry bacteria. However, you don’t have to worry about her. Just leave Rice Ball in my room. It can have the entire bay window. We can leave it at home when we’re away during the day. Just keep the door locked.”

Arianne felt apologetic. “I’m sorry. I have no choice… I couldn’t bear leaving Rice Ball alone in Tremont Estate. The poor thing. I’m not usually around, and neither is Mark. It would only follow Mary around, but Mary is busy too…”

Tiffany was not bothered about this matter. “Oh, come on. It’s just a reminder. I’m just saying she doesn’t like it, it doesn’t mean she can’t tolerate it. She’s delighted that you’re staying with us, why would a cat matter? Here’s a dose of reality; she’ll tolerate you as long you have money. It doesn’t even matter if you bring a large wolf-dog home as long as you have money! Anyway, are you really planning to move out of Tremont Estate just like that? Countless people have been cracking their heads over how to infiltrate the place. You, on the other hand, ran away even when no one asked you to leave.”

Arianne sighed. “Tiffie, It’s not as simple as you think. Mark wouldn’t have let me leave if this happened in the past, regardless of what reasons I had. He was there when I left today, but he didn’t stop me. He must be thoroughly disappointed in me. It’s fine… I’ve lived in the Tremont Estate for ten years. I’ve gotten my money’s worth. This is no loss to me.”

“Ari, if you want, you can stay with me as long as you like. I’ve been wanting to kidnap you back to my place ever since we were in school, but you refused every time. We can stay together now. It’s pretty good like this.” Tiffany changed the topic since she did not want the mood to turn somber.

Arianne chuckled, “Back then, Mark was really strict with me. He’d scold me if I didn’t come home on time. How could I have had the guts to leave? Don’t worry. I won’t be staying with you for free. It’s just me and my cat now, and I have enough money from my salary. I’ll share the rent and living expenses with you. That way I can also help alleviate your burden. Hey, Tiffie… I have a question… How does it feel when you’re in love?”

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Tiffany combed her fingers through her hair. “It feels like... back when I was still with Ethan. I can’t really describe the feeling, but when I see anything delicious, I’d think of leaving some for him. I’d be worried if he catches a cold or if it gets too hot. I’d be worried if he gets sick or if he’s upset. I didn’t worry about

myself back then. At that time, I thought he'd be the only one for the rest of my life. I'd do anything for him and forgive him unconditionally. I'd forgive him no matter how many times he had upset me. On the day of our break up, I felt as though… the sky had fallen on me. He was right in front of me, but he wasn't mine anymore. I couldn't hold him or continue loving him because he didn't love me anymore…"

Arianne began to cry when she heard these words. She had never experienced the things that Tiffany had described, but she could understand the hurt she felt.

Early in the morning, the next day, Arianne prepared a bowl of cat food and water for Rice Ball before she and Tiffany went to queue up for the Chinese-style omelet wraps. There were many customers. This proved it was delicious and the portions were generous.

Coincidentally, Ethan was there again today. He was earlier than the pair again, and he had bought two for them on his own initiative. He remained silent the entire time.

Tiffany took the Chinese-style omelet wrap from him but continued complaining as she munched on it, "Damned ba*tard, I live to eat. At least he can repay me for the food I've given him."

Arianne simply chuckled but did not respond.

The uneventful day passed in just a blink of an eye. Arianne arrived home after completing her overtime.

Tiffany informed her, "Rice Ball's poop is like a nuclear weapon! The smell lingered for half a day even though I've cleaned it up!"

Arianne changed the cat litter. “This should do. It’s a waste of cat litter, but at least it wouldn’t be that stinky. Rice Ball is very disciplined and only poops once a day. Just change the entire litter box every time after it poops and it’ll be fine.”

Tiffany flopped on the bed with her pajamas on, bored to death. “Do you work overtime every day? Jackson’s company doesn’t usually have overtime. Since I arrive home earlier than you, I’ll take over poop duties for you.”

Arianne sniggered wickedly. “I’ll pay you a small fee for that! I’m going to take a shower now.”

The warm water ran down her body, washing away her exhaustion. This was probably the most relaxing part of her day. When she emerged from the bathroom, she found Lillian standing outside the bathroom door. She was more reserved, seeing as she was living under someone else’s roof. “Mrs. Lane.”

Lillian smiled. “Ari, do you normally take such long showers? You must have used up a lot of water. You were using the heater the entire time as well.”

Arianne understood Lillian’s meaning. “I will contribute to rent, water, and electricity bills every month. I don’t eat at home either…”

Lillian lowered her voice, “That’s not a bad idea if you’re staying here permanently. By the way… Can you give your share of the money to me? Tiffie’s too petty. She’s only giving me a meager allowance. It’s not enough for my mahjong sessions. What am I supposed to do without mahjong? I’d be bored to death.”

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Arianne did not immediately refuse her. She replied tactfully, “We’ll… talk about this when the time comes. She heaved a sigh of relief when she returned to the room. “Tiffie, your mom just asked me to give her my share of the rent, water, and electrical fees. She complained the allowance you’ve given her is too little.”

Tiffany rolled her eyes. “Ignore her. I’ve been giving her a lot. I’m penniless every month, what more does she want from me? By the way, your phone rang while you were in the shower. I didn’t check. It sounded like a message.”

Arianne wiped her hair as she picked up her phone. It was a message from Mary. “Ari, Mr. Tremont has been coming home every day since you’ve moved out. Are you really not coming home? If you’re throwing tantrums, just throw a tantrum. Why must you move out? It’s not like you’re getting a divorce.”

Arianne mulled over her thoughts before she replied to the message. “Mary, please stop concerning yourself with our affairs. He refuses to come home when I’m around but comes home more often when I leave, this proves that he doesn’t want to see me. I’m doing very well in Tiffie’s house so don’t worry. Rice Ball is doing fine too. I’ll come back and visit you and Henry when I have the time.”

After sending off the message, she slumped onto the bed in a daze. It was as if she and Mark had both tacitly agreed to this kind of separation. They would remain husband and wife in name but live separate lives, not interfering with one another. This was good too. At least they would not feel frustrated.

The last spring rain signaled the arrival of summer in the city. The sudden change in temperature caused everyone to discard their heavy clothes in exchange for summer wear.

A new topic had entered Tiffany and Lillian's daily arguments — electrical usage. Lillian was not very willing to go out and play mahjong in the summer so she would hide at home, playing with her phone, watching television, and ordering takeout. Naturally, the air conditioning was left on all the time. The air conditioning in the living room ran for twenty-four hours. The monthly electric bill had gotten so high that Tiffany reproached her for it, saying that she was going to drive them into starvation.

During their free time over the weekend, Arianne dragged Tiffany out to shop for two skirts. She did not have much time to wash her clothes. Dresses and skirts were easier to wash.

However, before they could leave the house, Lillian, who was watching television, suddenly asked, "Where are you going? It's so hot outside."

Tiffany replied irritably, "It's none of your business. You can just stay home and enjoy the air conditioning. What are you worried about?"

Lillian ignored her and turned to Arianne. "Are you going shopping?"

Arianne did not want to be rude by ignoring her so she had no choice but to respond, "Yes, I'm planning to buy two skirts. We don't need to wear work clothes in our office."

Lillian's spirits were immediately lifted. "I'm coming too! I don't have anything to wear either!"

Tiffany's face turned green from restraining herself. "You have nothing to wear? Your precious clothes weren't sold off to pay our debts when our family went bankrupt! They're all branded items. They don't even fit in your cupboard. In fact, they've taken up a few luggage, and you still want more?"

“Those were bought long ago,” Lillian explained, “They’re outdated. I’m only asking you to buy me a few clothes. Have I treated you poorly when you were young? Seriously, how can there be a daughter like you?”

Tiffany was helpless against her mother. She relented. “You can tag along, but I want you to promise me this; no branded clothes! Don’t even think about buying anything over a thousand dollars!”

Lillian hurriedly turned off the television, went into her room, and changed her clothes. She even wrapped herself with a scarf to prevent sunburn, put on a sun hat, and sunglasses. She looked no different from the rich woman that she used to be. After all, everything she wore was branded. “I won’t buy any clothes, will that please you? I would never dare to put on anything that’s worth less than a thousand dollars. Buy me a bottle of perfume. My previous one is almost empty.”

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Arianne was dazzled by the sights in the shopping mall when they arrived. She shopped around for cheap brands and did not intend on buying anything too expensive.

On the other hand, Lillian lingered exclusively around the sales counters of big brands. She seized the opportunity when Tiffany had gone to the changing room and pulled Arianne aside. “Ari, look at how pretty those clothes are over there. I haven’t bought any new clothes in such a long time. My daughter is so useless. I used to indulge her so much in the past, and now, she wouldn’t even buy me a single piece of clothing.”

Arianne forced herself to ask, “Then, how about I buy one for you? I’ve left the Tremont household so I have to survive on my own. I don’t have much so I can only afford one…”

“Alright, alright, alright,” Lillian hurriedly replied, “Just one. You’re the best, Ari!”

Arianne wiped the cold sweat off her brow when she saw the price of the clothing Lillian had chosen. She did not have much cash on her today. The material of that knee-length skirt seemed extremely thin at first glance, and yet, it cost more than three thousand dollars… None of the clothes she owned was that expensive. She was finally able to empathize with Tiffany’s frustration. It was difficult for her to pick herself back up again with a mother like Lillian!

Arianne was too shy and tactful to say she did not have enough money on her. However, the sales assistant had already wrapped up the skirt. She hesitated as she touched her wallet that held the black card Mark had given her. She had forgotten to return it to him and wondered if he had already canceled it.

The sales assistant approached Arianne and said politely, “Miss, please come this way to make payment.”

Arianne steadied herself and pulled out the black card, “Can you try swiping on this?”

The sales assistant’s eyes lit up when she saw the card. After all, no one under the billionaire bracket would have this card. The sales assistant’s attitude changed dramatically. “Alright, alright. Please wait for a moment.”

Arianne felt mildly surprised after the card was swiped. Did Mark forget about the card while she was away from the Tremont household? He did not cancel her card and it could still be used. However, it was likely he would cancel it once he received the payment notification from the bank, right? She put the card away in her wallet.

Lillian said enviously, “You may have left the Tremont household, but you’re not divorced yet. With that card, you don’t have to work or worry about food and clothes. It’s enough for you to buy whatever you want.”

Arianne was afraid of getting roped in by Lillian again so she quickly corrected her, “I have to return this card to Mark. We might not be divorced, but I’ve already moved out. I won’t be spending any of his money. When I visit the Tremont Estate next, I’m going to return the card to him.”

Lillian pouted. She thought to herself, ‘What a pity,’ Then, she said, “He didn’t ask you to return it so why should you return it? You’re really naive. Women are born to spend men’s money. Another woman will spend it in your place if you don’t.”

This was not the first time Arianne had heard such words. She smiled bitterly, unsure of how to respond.

Tiffany and Lillian ended up fighting all the way home due to the clothes Lillian had purchased. Arianne was growing increasingly frustrated with their squabbles so she excused herself by saying she needed to return to Tremont Estate and separated from them.

She wondered if Mark was home, seeing as it was the weekend… She did not really want to bump into him so she called Mary and asked her to meet her at the main gate. She pulled out the card when she saw Mary. “I’m not going in. Please return this to Mark for me. I used the card today, but I’ll transfer the money back to him later.”

Mary furrowed her brows as she held the card. “Ari, what are you doing? You’re not getting divorced, must you cut him off so clearly? Mr. Tremont isn’t so petty as to stop you from spending that meager

amount of money. You're Mrs. Tremont. It's your right to spend his money! I don't believe he would cancel this card. Mr. Tremont is home today, maybe you should personally return this to him?"

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Arianne shook her head. "I'm not going in. It's awkward to meet. Return it for me. I'll be going now."

Mary called out hastily, "What are you doing? It's so hot. Look how red your face is from the heat. How can your skin take this? Moreover, what if you get a heatstroke? Heatstroke can kill as well! You can stay away from him, but don't you want to see me? Come in. You can cool down in my room!"

After a moment of hesitation, Arianne followed Mary to the housekeeper's room. Everyone was working at this hour so no one was in the room. Although the room housed four people, it had everything and was very spacious. There were even an individual washroom and a kitchen.

Mary returned from upstairs briefly and returned the card to her. "I told you, sir isn't so petty. He doesn't want it and asked me to return it to you. He said to keep it for emergencies."

Arianne was startled. "Really? Did he say anything else?"

Mary shook her head. "Nothing else. He just asked if you're back. I told him yes, and that you came to return the card. After that, he said to let you keep the card in case of emergencies."

Arianne considered it for a moment before she kept the card. She was all alone outside now and it was inevitable that there would be times when she needed money urgently. It was not like she could not

keep the card anyway. “Alright, thank him for me. Tell him that I won’t be a spendthrift. I’ll only use it in case of an emergency. I’ll take my leave now. You and Henry take care.”

Mary sent Arianne to the door with a sigh and no longer persuaded her to move back. She was old now, there was too much for her to worry about.

As soon as Arianne returned to Tiffany’s rental, Lillian scooted close to her as soon as she entered the door. “Did you really return the card? That’s really foolish! It’s a waste that you don’t want it. Buying better clothes with your minimal monthly income is a challenge.”

Despite her annoyance, Arianne plastered a smile on her face. She did not say that she did not return the card. “I returned it. I don’t want to be indebted. I’m a little tired so I’ll take a nap.”

Lillian was relentless. “A nap at this time? You haven’t even eaten, aren’t you hungry? Sleep after you eat. What are we having for lunch? We haven’t gone out to eat for a long time. Let’s have lunch outside?”

Arianne opened the door to her room and called for Tiffany. “Tiffie, Auntie Lane wants to go out for lunch.”

Tiffany was tying her hair, and a frown appeared immediately on her face when she heard Arianne’s words. “We don’t have that kind of money. Eat at home. I’ll make lunch.”

Lillian was upset. “Is what you make edible? It’s awful. You don’t have the money but Ari does. She’s living alone now. She only has to take care of herself, she must have a lot of money. What’s wrong with going out for a meal every once in a while?”

Tiffany dragged Arianne into the room and slammed the door. “Order takeout. Ari and I will make something simple later. If you want to go out for lunch, go on your own!”

“I don’t want to have anything now. I’m going to take a nap,” Arianne said as she heaved a sigh of relief.

Suddenly, Tiffany’s expression turned solemn as she said, “Ari, why don’t you move out? I’ll look for a place for you. I don’t mean anything by it. It’s just that another day of you staying here means another day of my mom trying to take advantage of you. It’s fine that she squeezes me dry, but now she’s taking advantage of you as well. I can’t take it! You’re nice and shy so you’re unable to reject her. However, both of us won’t be able to feed her like that!”

Chapter 299

Arianne did not really feel like moving out. “Tiffie, I understand what you mean, but I moved here because I don’t want to stay alone. We can do this. I’ll save some for Rice Ball and my personal expenditure when I get my salary each month. I’ll pass everything else to you for food, rent, utility bills, and whatnot. I won’t have anything to give your mom when she asks for it since my money is with you.”

Tiffany could only agree. “I guess that’s all we can do. Don’t worry. You don’t usually eat at home, only during weekends. You don’t have to bear the living cost. After dividing the rent, utility bill, and everything else, I’ll save what’s left for you. I won’t spend it on nothing. Just don’t let my mom see that we have any money.”

Just as Arianne lay down, Tiffany suddenly exclaimed, “Ari, look! Someone took photos of us buying the Chinese-style omelet wraps! There are even photos of us coming home. Rumors are spreading that you’ve divorced Mark and moved out of the Tremont Estate. It’s said that you’re co-renting with your friend. It’s also suspected that you’re left without a penny and is living a hard life now! What? These media outlets are disgusting! Why do they wish for people to divorce?”

“What else did they say?” Arianne asked, feeling a headache coming on.

Tiffany’s voice turned grimmer as she said, “It’s said that… the reason for your divorce is due to you admitting that you’ve cheated on Mark previously. They said it must be true because both of you divorced quietly. You left like a pathetic stray so you must have been chased out or something. They said something about you being an ingrate and returning kindness with wickedness!”

Arianne was, naturally, upset listening to what was reported. Who could endure these baseless insults and criticisms, especially when they were not true? However, what could she do? She looked at the publishing date, it had been a week, but it was still a hot topic. This meant that Mark had opted to keep silent so everyone would speculate and condemn her. He did not care enough to silence these rumors.

“I know. It’s okay, let them be.” Arianne did not want to care nor was she in the mood to care.

Seeing that she was in a bad mood, Tiffany stopped talking. Instead, she took out clothes that Arianne could no longer fit into and had given to her. “Ari, these clothes that you gave me fit just nice. You’re thinner than me, how could you not fit into them?”

Arianne answered carelessly, “I don’t know either. I feel suffocated when I wear them.”

Tiffany felt as though she had been struck by a bolt of lightning. Her expression changed drastically. “Don’t move!”

“What?” Arianne was shocked.

“Something’s not right,” Tiffany replied seriously.

With her reminder, Arianne was stunned. She had been working overtime every day and had been so busy recently that she did not have time to think about anything else. She did not even know when her period was. Working so intensely daily, and she did not have a proper meal as well so she concluded her menstruation was just irregular. However, now that she thought about it, it was ridiculous for her period to not have come for months!

“Tiffie, can you buy that for me? I’m scared…” Arianne said softly.

“Sure, wait up. I’ll get extra for you in case it’s not accurate.” Tiffany flew out of the door. They were both women. They, naturally, understood each other.

Chapter 300

After Tiffany bought the pregnancy test kits, Arianne tested it instantly and received the result in less than five minutes. Two bars. She did not dare to believe it and decided to test it again tomorrow morning. The results would be more accurate in the morning.

When morning came the next day, she was in despair. She was really pregnant. Calculating the time, it must be around three months now. It was then she realized how long it had been since she had left the Tremont’s. It felt surreal.

After Arianne confirmed the results, Tiffany asked, “What’s your plan? The baby is Mark’s, right?”

There was a momentary silence from Arianne before she answered, “Both Will and I were unconscious that day, it’s nearly impossible for anything to happen. It can only be Mark’s. However, he definitely won’t believe it. He didn’t believe it the first time, he definitely won’t believe it this time. I genuinely can’t stand how he questioned me about the baby’s father with his cold and indifferent tone at that time. I can’t stand the lack of trust. I don’t want any accidents to happen to this baby. Tiffie, I have an idea. I want to give birth to this baby. I’ll raise the baby on my own. I’ll work hard to earn money and buy a small apartment on the outskirts. If all else fails, I still have Mark’s black card…”

Tiffany thought that she was crazy. “Do you know how much money and time you need to raise a child in the capital? It’s still okay when you’re pregnant, and the baby’s in your womb. You can go to work and whatever, but your body wouldn’t be able to take it if you work overtime every day! When the baby’s born and your maternal leave is over, what about work? Nobody will be able to look after the baby for you, and you can’t possibly bring the baby to work. Have you thought about this?”

Arianne was determined. “I can resign from Eric’s company. I can stay home and work part-time. Be it drawing or selling designs, I’ll make money. I’ll breastfeed the baby and save on milk. I’ll take care of the baby on my own…”

Tiffany shook her head. “Don’t talk as though it’s that easy. You won’t even be able to sleep well with a baby, forget about working part-time. If the baby cries for milk when you’re drawing, you’ll have to stop work to take care of the baby. When the baby sleeps and you’re already worn out from pacifying it, your sense of inspiration will probably be gone, and you probably don’t want to move anymore. Either abort it or go to Mark. He’s the baby’s father. He can’t just do nothing. It’s fine if he doesn’t believe it’s his baby. When the baby is born and the DNA test is out, it’ll shut him up!”

Tiffany continued to say, “You miscarried your first baby, and you suffered heavy blood loss after that. It’s too much damage to your body. If you abort this baby, it’ll be hard for you to get pregnant again. You can ask the doctor if you don’t believe me. See how high a chance there is for you to get pregnant again. My advice is to go to Mark. Whether you both reconcile or ignore each other like this, there has to be a solution. He has to make sure that you’re well taken care of during your pregnancy and can live like an actual human after giving birth. This is what’s good for you and the baby.”

The long speech put Arianne in a stupor for a long time. She did a double-take at Tiffany. “Tiffie, I suddenly realize that you’re so much more mature than I am… It’s easy to reconcile, but it’s tough to go back to the old days. It’s either we live separately in peace or we spend each day getting on each other’s nerves in this lifetime. I won’t abort the baby, but to go to Mark… I need to think about it. Let me think about it. Maybe I’ll wait until the child is born before going to him. We can do the DNA test then, and I won’t have to listen to his hurtful words.”

Upon hearing this, Tiffany sighed in relief. “As long as you’re willing to go to him and make him take responsibility, it’s fine whether it’s before or after the baby’s born. You’re staying with me now anyway, I can look after you too. It’s okay. You must not have had a checkup, right? Apply for a day off today, don’t go to work. I’ll do the same and accompany you to the OB for a checkup. At least make sure the baby’s healthy.”

Not wanting to take too much time off, Arianne replied, “Half a day is fine. Half a day is a lot of time. Otherwise, I’ll have to write a report and all that.”

Upon their arrival at the hospital, they saw the obstetrics and gynecology department was teeming with people. Tiffany clicked her tongue. “And you said half a day is more than enough. Forget it. We’ll have to spend the entire day here.”