Ruling 301

Chapter 301

Looking around at the pregnant ladies accompanied by their husbands, Arianne felt slightly gloomy. When it was finally her turn, Tiffany went in with her. After a blood draw and an ultrasound scan, the doctor looked at the results and said, “Baby is 12 weeks old and is quite healthy. This is your first checkup? You shouldn’t be so careless. Have your file documented and come back punctually for your checkups.”

It was already past two in the afternoon when they left the hospital so they headed to a nearby restaurant for lunch. Tiffany had two big servings since she was extremely hungry. “It’s so troublesome to do a checkup. One full day is gone. There are too many people in the public hospital. Why don’t we go to a decent private one? Otherwise, I’ll suffer and you’ll suffer even more each time.”

Arianne stroked her belly. It was slightly protruding, and she could feel a tiny bump. She could not help but smile. “Yeah, let’s go to a private hospital next time. I know of one.”

When they returned home, Tiffany jumped again as they walked through the door. “Rice Ball’s been staying in the same room as you while you’re pregnant. Will it give you TORCH?!”

Arianne had already thought about it so she replied, “No need to be alarmed. Rice Ball doesn’t necessarily have toxoplasma, and you’re the one who cleans its litter box every time. I haven’t even touched it, how could I get infected? If you really feel uncomfortable about it, we can shift it to another place?”

After surveying the house, Tiffany moved the bed and litter box to the balcony. “I’ll get someone to seal the balcony so Rice Ball won’t get hot when my mom runs the air conditioning in the living room. Carry the cat less and wash your hands after you do. Watch your cleanliness, it’s for the baby.”

Taking in how cautious Tiffany was, Arianne chuckled. “Why are you more worried than the baby’s father?” Her grin froze as soon as she finished speaking.

Hearing their voices, Lillian stepped out of her bedroom with a yawn. “Baby? What baby?”

Tiffany informed her in delight, “Ari’s pregnant! 12 weeks into it. Rice Ball will be moved to the balcony. Mom, you’re not allowed to be mean to it. That’s Ari’s baby too!”

Lillian was stunned. “For real? Is the baby Mark’s? Uh… Sure, sure. Forget about the balcony, you can even keep it in the kitchen!”

Tiffany saw through Lillian at once and reminded her, “Don’t try and do something stupid. Ari is staying with us for now, but she’ll move back to the Tremont Estate sooner or later. You mustn’t tell anyone about her pregnancy, especially Mark. Ari isn’t ready to tell him yet. Don’t be a busybody.”

Chapter 302

Lillian agreed easily and showed Arianne her loving side. She reminded her what to watch out for and what to eat during her pregnancy, citing herself as an experienced person. However, in Tiffany’s words, Lillian’s experience was only limited to being pregnant and giving birth. She did not know anything else. Her daily meals were prepared by nutritionists, so Lillian actually knew nothing.

Early the next day, Tiffany went downstairs to queue up for some Chinese-style omelet wraps. She was reluctant to see Arianne line up with a baby bump. Her line of vision involuntarily traveled to the front of the line. It had been a while since Ethan showed up. Was he tired of the dish or was it his current partner who was tired of it? He probably wouldn’t be coming anymore…

Realizing that her thoughts had gone astray, Tiffany shook her head. That man was not worthy of her longing anymore.

As she bought the breakfast, Arianne came out with her purse as well. Tiffany passed her the steaming omelet wrap. “I’ve asked the vendor to add more ingredients. Try it.”

Arianne was abashed. “Are you trying to see if it's a boy or girl? I don’t think I’ve had any changes in appetite for now, and not like I eat a lot too. I don’t have any morning sickness either. It’s strange. I threw up so badly the last time I was pregnant. My first term this time is a bliss.”

Tiffany joked, “I heard from the elders that a child is either here to repay a kindness or seek revenge. The last one was obviously here for revenge. Look at how good this one is behaving, not giving you a hard time. You look great and relish in whatever you eat. There’s no difference from when you weren’t pregnant.”

Arriving at the office, Eric came over once Arianne took her seat. “Everyone’s gotten thinner and duller from working overtime recently, yet you seem to look plumper and more radiant. I thought that you’d be somewhat sad leaving Mark, but it looks like you’re better off without him now. You women are heartless.”

Arianne did not have the spirit to banter. “What do you want from me? Just tell me straight. You don’t have to praise and jab me as if I’m loafing around on overtime.”

Eric looked serious. “I’m being honest. Why aren’t you able to distinguish it? But I also actually have something for you to do. Look at our new company, yeah? Our departments aren’t fully set up yet and we share the chores. It shouldn’t be a problem for you to go out and get a contract signed, right?”

Arianne rolled her eyes. “It’s not like you’ve never asked me to do these when we were in Glide. Were Glide’s departments lacking? Smart ass. The sun is murderous out there. I’m not going out under it.”

Eric bowed down immediately. “My fair lady, this is a huge case. A lot of companies are after it like us. I need to have a hundred percent confidence. We’re a new company here, so we’re one big step behind everyone else in terms of funding.”

Arianne was no fool. Eric’s meek pleading meant that this was a case that only she could handle. Why was he so sure? What else could it be other than a case at Mark’s? She rejected him straight away. “Eric, I know that it’s a case at Mark’s. I don’t want to do it. You have a higher chance of success if you do it yourself. It’s inconvenient for me to run around now too, just do it on your own.”

Eric scrutinized her. “Why is it inconvenient? Is that time of the month?”

She rolled her eyes. “Now you’re asking about this too, how annoying! I still have work to do, don’t disturb me. I don’t want to work overtime tonight!”

Looking at her firm rejection, Eric did not force her further. It was just that this case was a fair fight. He really did not have the confidence to get it because Mark would not have the backdoor open for him. The profit involved in this case was significant.

At the West’s Bright Incorporated…

Chapter 303

While she had time, Tiffany downloaded a maternal and child health app onto her phone and filled in the information according to Arianne's current state. She recorded everything that she needed to take note of, including what Arianne could and could not have. Engrossed in her phone, she didn't notice a large hand knocking at her desk. "Are you ever going to stop slacking off like this during work?"

Tiffany looked up at Jackson before returning back to her phone. "I don't have any tasks now. Are you assigning something to me? I'll do it right away if you are."

Noticing that she was focused on her phone, Jackson couldn't help his curiosity and decided to take a glance. He was stunned when he saw the maternal and child health app. He blurted out, "Who's pregnant?"

Tiffany was taken back. "I… I am… Aren't you getting a bit too personal as my boss?" She couldn't give away Arianne, for if Jackson knew that the latter was pregnant, that meant that Mark would know too. Panicking, she was unable to come up with a good response, deciding to direct all the attention to herself for now.

Jackson became silent, his expression unreadable. It made Tiffany anxious, causing her to ask, "What is it? Does the company have rules against being pregnant? I can get an abortion…?"

"Are you crazy? How could you abort a baby so easily? You don't have a boyfriend, so how are you pregnant? Are you intersexual?" Jackson was sharp-tongued when he got mean, even worse than Tiffany.

With that question, Tiffany's temper flared and she jibed back, "You looked unhappy when I said that I'm pregnant, so I went along with you and said that I would get an abortion. Besides, it's not like it'll affect my job. Can't I be pregnant even if I don't have a boyfriend? Does that mean all pregnancies

before marriage are the cause of intersexuality? Not having a boyfriend doesn't mean you don't have a sex life, you idiot!"

Jackson didn't reply, turning to go back to his office. Puzzled, Tiffany did not know what was on the man's mind. She said that she was pregnant, but that didn't explain why he was so grim. It wasn't like she was accusing him of getting her pregnant.

At lunchtime, Tiffany made her way to the company's cafeteria like she always did but was stopped by Jackson. "Let's go. I'm taking you out for lunch at the White Waters Bay Restaurant."

Tiffany was confused, saying, "Huh? It's quite far though. We'll be late if we go there and come back. It doesn't have to be lunch, does it? We can have dinner after work and I'll ask Ari along?"

Jackson ignored what she said, pulling her into the elevator and not letting go of his grip until they were in the car. "Noon is noon, night is night."

Unable to fight him, Tiffany was happy to get a free meal from the boss, especially since she would not be penalized for being late. On the way there, Jackson suddenly asked, "How far along are you?"

"Three months," Tiffany replied.

Jackson's gaze sank a little and he continued with his questioning after a beat, "Whose child is it? Can you get married for the child's sake?"

Afraid that she would give too much away, Tiffany stuck to simple, general answers. “I don’t know who the father is, so no, we’re not getting married. Don’t you worry, it’s certainly not yours.”

Jackson was silent for some time, only speaking again after ten minutes or so. “It’s alright for a woman to love herself more than a child she didn’t want or expect. At least find someone who’s willing to take care of you. From your current family situation, it seems that aborting the baby is your only option. Don’t let your mom know but find some time for the surgery in a hospital. I’ll go with you.”

Chapter 304

Tiffany’s heart rate sped up. She didn’t have any man around her usually and she wasn’t close to her colleagues, so there was hardly anyone to show concern for her. She did not expect Jackson to believe her casual lie and actually take responsibility for it!

“There’s no need for that… Don’t worry about me, I can handle it by myself,” Tiffany rejected kindly, the offer very nice for a pregnancy that didn’t exist in the first place. She would expose herself if the topic continued to be discussed.

“It’s better to have the abortion as early as possible, since dragging it out won’t be good to you. That aside, from now on, I’ll pack you lunch every day. You need to stop eating at the office’s cafeteria. The food there is decent, but the meals don’t exactly maintain the balanced diet a pregnant woman needs. We’ll make do with the White Waters Bay Restaurant for today.” Jackson was composed, perfecting his plans for Tiffany within minutes.

Tiffany would feel worse and worse if she continued lying but she knew that she wasn’t as clever as Jackson. If she denied being pregnant now, he would force the truth out of her. The only thing she could do was ignore her conscience and accept the free meals he offered her. “Um… Thank you.”

Jackson had been very concerned for her just moments earlier, but he pulled a long face now, looking like he did not want to talk to her anymore.

When they arrived at the restaurant, Jackson got a quiet booth for them and went out alone. Tiffany waited for him, scrolling through her phone out of boredom, no one there to take her order.

A while later, a server came in with some dishes, surprising the girl. “Are you sure it’s for us?”

The server replied with a smile. “I’m sure. Our boss is cooking right now, but he said that you can start.”

Our boss is cooking right now???

The realization struck Tiffany like a bag of bricks to the head. Jackson had gone into the kitchen to cook. She couldn’t help but imagine how he looked in a suit, with an apron placed on top of that… Her joke had crossed the line. If he hadn’t thought that she was pregnant, he probably would not have done this.

With the matter weighing her down, Tiffany’s appetite shrunk, becoming smaller than usual. The last dish was served personally by Jackson, his sleeves rolled up effortlessly as he said with a serious expression, “You can only have mild flavors now, nothing too hot or sour. And you need a plan. Do you have one?”

Tiffany sniffed. “Um… you don’t have to do this. My baby has nothing to do with you…”

Jackson piled another serving onto her plate. “That is not what I’m asking. Let’s just say I’m a boss that is concerned about his employee. What’s wrong with that?”

Tiffany was dumbfounded for a moment, before finding the words to speak, “Nothing’s wrong… You’re a wonderful boss… I haven’t thought about it for now. Let’s just eat.”

Jackson didn’t say anything else. As the meal progressed, Tiffany couldn’t bring herself to finish what was on her plate, which was very unusual behavior for her. Noticing this, Jackson believed her pregnancy even more. “It’s normal to have a poor appetite in your condition. It’ll be better after some time.”

Tiffany was speechless. When she exited the restaurant after lunch, she exhaled a long breath, feeling the guilt of lying for the first time.

Chapter 305

When office hours were ending, Jackson texted Tiffany. “I’ve got a dinner to attend tonight so I can’t watch over you. Remember, don’t eat what you shouldn’t.”

Tiffany felt bewildered reading the text. Why was the man being so nice? It was as if the baby was his. A sense of frustration clawed at her as she went home after work without replying.

Upon arriving home, she found Lillian having fruits on the couch. “Tiffie, I don’t have any more cash. Auntie Renee invited me for mahjong tomorrow. Give me three hundred dollars.”

“Three hundred? Just sell me off, okay? Are you still eating? Still turning the AC on? You always lose but you keep going at it. I have nothing to say.” Tiffany changed out of her shoes and went back to her room.

Lillian’s face fell as she said in a louder tone, “If that’s the case, do you think Mark will thank me and offer me some reward if I tell him that Arianne is pregnant? I’ve got no choice but to ‘make’ money on my own if you refuse to give me some. Say, he’ll agree if I ask for one hundred and fifty thousand dollars in exchange for a piece of helpful information to him, yeah?”

Tiffany barged out of her room when she heard the woman. “How dare you! Lillian Lane, I realize that you really can resort to anything for money! Have some dignity, will you! You’ve got no morals at all! If you dare do it, I’ll cut ties with you from now on! Go wherever you want. You’re completely able-bodied, you’re not sick, and you can keep yourself alive. The law can’t penalize me. You haven’t reached the stage of needing financial support!”

Lillian was relentless. “I haven’t stooped to that stage yet. However, if you don’t give me the money, I’ll definitely resort to that. Being poor is a disease, it makes one insane. I’ll do what I say, no matter what your opinion is.”

Tiffany knew that she wouldn’t need to wait another two days before Lillian would come back asking for more in the exact same way if she complied to her wishes now. She was just an ordinary girl. She had to calculate her expenditure carefully each month when she received her salary. With a mother like Lillian, she was left with nothing every single time! She could not afford any unnecessary expenditure. In spite of it, she knew Lillian well. If she did not give her the money, the woman would certainly go to Mark!

“I’ve had enough. One hundred dollars, take it or leave it. If you insist on telling Mark, you’ll offend both me and Ari. If Ari moves away and cuts ties with me, it wouldn’t mean much even if you got the one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. It won’t even last you a month! If Ari and I are still friends, when her baby is born and she secures her place as Mrs. Tremont, she could have anything she wants! Is your brain damaged?” Furious, Tiffany could only reason with Lillian using profits even though she never once imagined of gaining anything from Arianne.

Lillian gave in a little after listening to her. “Fine. Since you say so, I’ll put up with it. Our family is still dependent on you. One hundred dollars, give it to me.”

After she gave Lillian the sum, Tiffany went back to her room and locked the door. Lillian had ordered takeout on her own. Compared to Tiffany’s home cooked meals, she preferred takeouts.

It was past eight at night when Arianne returned home from work. She caught a whiff of a strange scent once she entered the house. It was unlike Rice Ball’s poop, and more like stale takeouts…

Glimpsing at the coffee table in the living room, it’s surface was filled with everything that Lillian had ordered from the past few days. Despite the air conditioning, there was still a lingering stench since it was summer.

“Auntie Lane, leave the takeout packing at the door after you finish the food. We can throw it with the trash downstairs when we go to work in the morning. It’ll smell if you leave it at home,” Arianne could not help commenting, feeling a slight headache.

Lillian answered with a smile, “I haven’t done these before and Tiffie is too lazy to clean them up, so I’ll just leave them here. When she can’t stand it anymore, she’ll take care of them.”

Chapter 306

Arianne was speechless as she walked over to clean the mess. The takeout from two days ago smelled horrible, as if it had started to rot. Being more sensitive to smell now that she was pregnant, she couldn’t help but dry heave. Suddenly aware of the situation, Lillian exclaimed, “I forgot that you’re

pregnant! Leave it, leave it, I'll clean it up. Wash up and go rest! Do you want to eat anything? I can order takeout for you!"

Shaking her head, Arianne held her breath and cleared garbage off of the coffee table. "Auntie Lane, Tiffie is tired from work too. You shouldn't trouble her with minor tasks like these when you can handle them too. The other chores, like mopping the floor or cleaning the house, can be done over the weekends."

Lillian agreed but her eyes were glued to the television, obviously making perfunctory replies.

Arianne did not have the heart to say anything else, taking her clothes and going for a shower. She got off work quite early today but still felt thoroughly exhausted. All she wanted to do was to get a good night's sleep, but she was hungry on top of everything else. There was not a single drop of energy left in her.

When she got out of the bathroom, Lillian passed her a plate full of fruits. "Have something to eat first. If you don't like these, ask Tiffie to make you something you'd like. By the way, I wanted to ask, you won't actually wait until after you've given birth to tell Mark about the baby, will you? Tell him now. He won't actually prohibit you from giving birth to the baby anyway. You're the queen if you go through your terms in the Tremont's, where there are so many people to serve you. You have to work so hard every day here, it will become tiring."

Arianne subconsciously thought that Lillian minded her staying here. It was upsetting to be unwelcomed, so she said softly, "Have… Have I troubled you?"

Lillian waved. "No, of course not. I just can't bear to watch you work so hard every day with a baby bump, so I'm just asking. Eat up, fruits are good for your baby's skin."

Forcing a smile, Arianne took the fruits into her bedroom. Tiffany was spacing out on the bed, making Arianne curious. “Tiffie, why do you look so lifeless today? Is it work?”

Tiffany shook her head. “Work’s good. It’s too good, actually. I feel anxious about that. I downloaded a maternal and baby health app when I had nothing to do in the office today, filling in your information to see what you can’t eat and what you should be consuming more of, you know, so it’s easier for me to take care of you. How was I supposed to know that Jackson would see it and ask me who got pregnant? So, I panicked. You didn’t want to tell Mark, right? I was afraid of Jackson finding out and telling Mark, so I told him that it was me. But that isn’t even the worst of it. Then he took me to the White Waters Bay Restaurant out of the blue during lunch and personally cooked for me. I can’t figure out why he did that! Is this what people mean when they call someone a nice guy? Isn’t this crossing the line though?”

“I couldn’t even eat at that point. I tried forcing some food down, but it didn’t work. I felt so bad because I didn’t want to lie to him. He believed me too, saying that he’ll bring me lunch every day and that pregnant women need to have balanced nutrition. As if I really was having a baby in and acting as if the baby was his! He even analyzed the pros and cons for me, saying that I need to abort it as soon as possible and that he’ll go to the hospital with me when I’ve decided. I swear, there’s something wrong with his head…”

Arianne felt her heart lurch. “Tiffie… are you usually close to him? Other than him being your boss, are the two of you close?”

She received a fervent shake of Tiffany’s head as a reply. “I don’t usually interact with him during work. We rarely talk, actually, or meet eachother.”

Arianne made a bold guess,“He doesn’t like you, does he? Otherwise, why would he ask you to sleep with him? Even though it’s only just sleeping, the act itself is very suggestive.”

Like her? Tiffany shuddered while hearing the term. “Ari, best not to say something like that. It’s not like I’ve never dated. Wouldn’t I feel it if he liked me or not? Besides, I don’t like him. He’s like a golden fountain to me: I can get a bit of gold from him when necessary but if you want me to swallow everything, I won’t be able to do it. And I’m incapable of managing the fountain too, I’m useless like that. As for his request of sleeping together, I think it’s just a fixation.”

Chapter 307

His fixation? In Arianne’s life, she had never met anyone who had any sort of strange fixation, so it was hard for her to imagine.

As if recalling something, Tiffany suddenly said, “You haven’t eaten, right? What do you feel like having? I’ll check the fridge to see what ingredients we have. Otherwise, we can only order takeout.”

Tiffany rummaged through the fridge but could not even find a piece of green. “Ari, we have nothing. I’ll wake up earlier tomorrow to go to the market. What do you want for tonight?”

Arianne was worried about the hygiene of takeout. In fact, a lot of shops had inferior cleanliness standards. No one was prepared for takeout either, hence she decided to eat out. “Can we go out for dinner? Anything is fine.”

Lillian, who heard their conversation, was the first to express her ardent support. “Yeah, let’s eat out. We have nothing at home, let’s go, let’s go!”

Tiffany sniffed the lingering scent in the air. “Mom, you’ve eaten, haven’t you? Can you still stomach more food?”

Lillian rolled her eyes at her. “Takeout doesn’t taste good. I just had a couple of mouthfuls. I’m already hungry now.”

Tiffany did not say anything. She did not know why Lillian was such a selfish person. When her father was still around, she did not feel it. Now, she felt it deeply. If she remembered correctly, never once had Lillian ordered her portion when she ordered takeout for herself. It became a matter of course for Tiffany to abide by her whims and fancies, and now it felt right for Lillian to only care about herself.

Arriving at an economical restaurant in their neighborhood, Lillian wiped her seat and the table with a napkin in disdain. She pulled a long face when the server arrived to take their order as well. “This isn’t even roadside. Why is your hygiene here so bad?”

The server was at a loss. They did not have a lot of patrons at this hour and the shop was considerably clean. It was not that bad.

Tiffany finished ordering with a smile and waited for the server to leave before letting the smile leave her face. “You pick on everything as long as you aren’t happy about it. I know you too well. You think that we should go to a high end restaurant, don’t you? Please take a look in your purse. Don’t fantasize about it if you can’t afford it. And don’t upset me all the time! Eat if you want to, go back if you don’t.”

Arianne stepped in to mediate the situation quickly. “Tiffie, it’s okay. Let’s have a good meal.”

Lillian looked angrier than Tiffany as she fumed. “It’s alright, Arianne, you don’t have to be the peacemaker. I know how Tiffany is. She’s thinking that I’ve burdened her. If I’d known, I wouldn’t have given birth to her. I did my best to give her the best in everything last time. Now, she’s incredibly dismissive toward me. I’m home alone when she goes to work. I can only have unhygienic takeouts. But

she pulls a long face at me every day and complains about me spending too much. She's only giving me $2,000 a month, which you can't even feed a dog with!"

Chapter 308

She had gone slightly overboard with her words. The mother and daughter may bicker most of the time, but this time, Arianne sensed it, the atmosphere was different than usual. It was more sombre, nothing like the explosions that usually happened after a huge suppression.

Tiffany did not yell at Lillian, but replied to her in a very calm voice instead, "Yes, I give you $2,000 a month. My pay is $12,000 a month. Once I exclude your $2,000, I have $6,000 to pay for rent. The remaining $4,000 has to be used for water, electricity and a month's worth of living expenses. Your $2,000 isn't calculated in the living expenses, and I've been paying for your takeout too. Sometimes, you ask me for extra allowance for mahjong games. Have you ever considered how I've been surviving?"

Lillian did not seem guilty at all. The expression on her face was of fury and disdain.

Arianne finally understood why Tiffany's financial situation was so dire. Actually, when Tiffany and Lillian were the only ones living together, a one-room apartment would have been more than enough, and it would have been much more affordable. However, in order to pander to Lillian's lifestyle, Tiffany had tried her best to give Lillian a slightly better living situation and had even given her two thousand dollars as allowance. However, after using the remaining four thousand for water, electricity and living expenses, Tiffany had nothing left to spend on herself.

At this point, Tiffany could no longer stop, "If you were a fair and reasonable mother, we could have chosen to stay in a slightly more inferior home in the suburban district. The rent would have been cut into half. If you didn't waste so much money, we'd have some left. You make me feel as if my future is indefinite. If I didn't have you around, I could live on my own in my company's hostel. My daily expenses would be limited to one breakfast and one dinner a day. I'd have some money left, and I could save. Was your purpose in having a daughter just so that she could earn money and support your lifestyle? So I'm supposed to work myself to the bone and struggle, just because you've given birth to me? You have

brought me into this world, and my job is to send you away when your time comes, to look after you in your old age and arrange a proper burial when you die. You're only in your early forties. Is that considered old age? Am I supposed to start looking after you then? Do you want to force me into suicide?"

Lillian was completely unperturbed. "What's the use in having such a meager salary then? It's your fault for being so useless, why are you blaming me? I've never worked a day in my life, and I cannot be servile in front of other people. If I'm not working, you'll have to support me. Don't even mention an apartment. Our rent is already cut in half now, we don't have to move into a squalor apartment in the suburbs. Isn't Arianne living with us now? You've agreed to split the rent, don't you have $3,000 more now? You talk as if you're so pathetic. Find some other way to earn more money if you don't want to be pathetic. I'm definitely not going to work."

Tiffany was so furious that she was close to tears. "She's only staying temporarily, and you have the audacity to ask her to pay for half of our rent? There's two of us and one of her, yet she's having to share a room with me and doesn't even have a bathroom of her own. How could you have the gall to ask her to pay for half of our water and electricity bills? So what if she isn't calculative and is willing to pay anyway? We can't save much of the extra $3,000 anyway. It's only slightly better than our poverty-stricken circumstances. Where do you think this is? It's not that easy to survive in this city. I've only just started working. How much money do you expect me to earn each month?"

Arianne reached down beneath the table and squeezed Tiffany's hand. "Tiffie, stop. It's fine. I can share the rent, water, and electricity bills. It's not like our lives are completely unbearable now. We came to have a nice meal. Stop fighting, okay?"

Tiffany shut her mouth. She realized that she had completely humiliated herself in front of Arianne. If it were not for their close camaraderie, she would have been too ashamed to even look at her.

The meal was soon served, but the pair did not touch their food. Only Lillian ate her fill, completely unaffected.

Lillian left on her own to go home after the meal. Tiffany and Arianne journeyed home in a slow and deliberate pace. After a long time, Arianne finally spoke up, “Tiffie, I understand your circumstances. I had intended on asking Mark to help you out with your concurrent jobs, but it’s no use now… You’re exhausted. It’s alright. I’m fine with paying half the rent, water and electricity bills. Your life will be more comfortable that way. It’ll get better.”

Tiffany kicked a pebble on the road, “Are you pitying me? You’ve always been the pitiful one, back when we were at school. Life is really unpredictable. I don’t find myself pathetic at all. I think my mother is pathetic. Her world collapsed when my dad died. She’s nothing without him.”

The next day, Tiffany noticed an exquisite thermal lunch box on her desk when she arrived at the office. She opened it and found a high class meal inside, still piping hot. It wasn’t difficult for her to guess that this was a lunchbox that Jackson had prepared for her.

She was still rather fidgety from her fight with Lillian last night. So, when she saw the thermal lunch box, she felt that it was best to be honest and spare her heart from the extra burden.

Chapter 309

She carried the thermal lunch box over to Jackson’s office, asking, “Do you really plan on bringing me lunch every day?”

Jackson was in the middle of working on something, glancing over at her when he heard her voice. “Why? Does it taste bad?”

Placing the lunch box on his desk, she said, “It’s not that, I just want to know why you’re doing this. Don’t give me any of that crap about a boss being concerned for his employee. There are plenty of pregnant ladies in this office and I’ve never seen you do anything like this for any of them. And don’t say that it’s because Ari is my friend, either, or that you’re doing this for Mark. That’s a lie and we all know it.”

Jackson put down his work and stared at her, jokingly asking, “Come on, we’ve ‘slept’ together, haven’t we? After all that, you shouldn’t be concerned about a small matter like this, should you?”

Tiffany was in no mood for jokes, continuing on, “You don’t possibly have feelings for me, do you?”

Jackson was taken aback, simply looking away and awkwardly reaching out to tug at his tie. “You’re overthinking.”

She heaved a sigh of relief, “That’s good. You don’t have to bring lunch for me from now on. I’m not pregnant, I was lying to you. It’s my friend who’s pregnant.”

A probing glint flashed across Jackson’s eyes as he asked, “Which friend?”

She panicked, “You don’t even know who her, why are you asking so many questions? I’m only being honest with you because I’ve felt bad for making you flustered. It’s not good to lie and I can’t do it either.”

Jackson stared intently at her, as if he could see right through her. “Is it Arianne?”

She frowned, “I’ve told you before, you don’t know her. How could it possibly be Arianne? Stop making blind guesses, will you?”

Jackson calmly went on, sating his reasoning, “Based on your reaction when you lied to me yesterday, you’re probably hiding it on purpose. That’s why you pushed the situation onto yourself. Would you even need to keep it from me, if it’s a friend whom I’m not familiar with? The only pregnancy you’d hide is Arianne’s. Don’t be surprised, I’ve studied psychology.”

Tiffany gave up, deciding to ask “Then… Could you please keep this from Mark? Arianne hasn’t thought of admitting it to him. Things are complicated enough between them, we shouldn’t get involved.”

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Jackson heaved a sigh of relief. “That’s fine. Eat the food, since it’s already here. Next time, if I happen to wake up early and have some spare time, I can make you a meal and bring it over for you, since I’m already doing it. It’s only out of convenience, so you don’t have to feel burdened.”

Tiffany heaved a sigh of relief as well. She took the thermal lunch box and left.

Tremont Tower.

Lillian fanned herself with a flyer while staring up at the large building. After a while, she walked in towards the front desk. “Miss, could you call your CEO for me? Tell him that I’m Tiffany Lane’s mother and that I have something to tell him. Your CEO’s wife is staying at my house.”

The receptionist picked up the phone when she heard this, “Alright, please wait a moment.”

The call was connected. The receptionist carefully said, “Mr. Tremont, there’s someone here to see you. She claims to be Tiffany Lane’s mother.”

“Send her up,” Mark’s apathetic voice responded through the receiver.

Once the call had ended, the receptionist personally sent Lillian off to the elevator door. “Just go all the way up to the 46th floor. Remember to change into slippers once you’re out of the elevator, and step lightly.”

Lillian obediently memorized it all, then smiled. “Thank you very much.”

The elevator went all the way up. As the floor to Mark’s floor drew nearer and nearer, Lillian fixed her appearance using the elevator’s reflective walls. Despite being an older woman, she still had to pay special attention to her appearance when meeting a man like Mark.

Once she stepped out of the lift, Mark’s secretary, Ellie, placed a pair of disposable slippers in front of her. “Mrs. Lane, please try to move as quietly as possible. Mr. Tremont does not like noise.”

Lillian nodded and walked into Mark’s office. His office door was open, and Mark was standing in front of his transparent glass windows, sipping on coffee and gazing out at the scene outside, seemingly waiting for her.

“Mark, this is our first official meeting, right? Seeing is really believing. Ari has really good taste.” Lillian was used to receiving flattery, so naturally, she knew some measure of eloquence.

“Mrs. Lane, please get to the point,” Mark was not interested in listening to her flattery.

“Well… Ari is staying with us, right? I have something to tell you, but Tiffie and Ari have refused to let me say anything. However, I think that you should know. Our current housing situation is sub-par, and it’s really not good enough for Ari. She’s had such a good life at the Tremont Estate, she must not be used to the average joe’s lifestyle…” Lillian lamented continuously, never reaching the point despite rambling on and on.

“Just get to the point,” Mark was extremely cold and distant. He did not want to know anything about Arianne. He had only agreed to see Lillian out of courtesy. After all, Arianne was still his wife and was living under her roof.