Ruling 311

Chapter 311

“Ari is pregnant. I’ve checked the medical report, it’s been twelve weeks. About three months, I’m guessing. She’s not alone now, and she’s had to work overtime until very late recently. She always looks pale and exhausted when she arrives home, all for the sake of some meager salary. It’s heartbreaking. I don’t know what’s happened between you two. She’s probably refusing to tell you because she doesn’t want to move back home. She’s pregnant, after all. It’s more important for her to remain happy. I’m just giving you a heads up. It’s still best to let her stay wherever she wants. What do you think?” Lillian tread cautiously with her every word as she tried her best to read Mark’s expression.

Mark shivered. She’s pregnant again? His mind immediately thought of the day Arianne had been admitted to the hospital, bleeding profusely. He also remembered what the doctor had said — the chances of her getting pregnant again are very slim… Later, they had only made love a few times, and it wasn’t frequent. Even though they didn’t use protection, how could she have possibly gotten pregnant so easily under such slim circumstances, and so coincidentally to boot? Besides… She was precisely around three months along. It also coincided with the time she was at Summer Hotel with Will…

His expression remained unchanged. He turned around and put his coffee cup on his office desk. “It doesn’t matter if she doesn’t want to come home. That’s completely up to her. Thank you for telling me. I’ll have my secretary get you some money later. You don’t have to tell her that it’s from me. Just use it on her daily food. Please take care of her.”

Lillian’s entire goal for this trip was for the sake of money. So, when Mark said this, she could not conceal her glee. “Okay, okay, okay! I understand.”

Soon, Ellie walked in from outside and pulled out a large envelope full of cash from a black handbag. Lillian’s great love for money allowed her to discern that there was at least $100,000 in the envelope, and this was her first time asking for money too. Arianne’s pregnancy would last for many months… The thought of this filled her with absolute glee.

After emerging from the building with the cash in hand, Lillian's back was much straighter than before. She couldn't conceal the smile on her face, no matter how hard she tried. She turned a corner and arrived at a jewelry store. She had thought it through — buying clothes would easily draw Tiffany's attention, but buying jewelry was less risky.

…

Despite having said that she wouldn't be doing overtime, Arianne still wasn't the first to leave every day. It was 10PM again by the time she finished work at night. Eric had volunteered to drive her home, but she refused. Her tummy was rapidly developing lately, and she wore thin clothes due to the summer weather. It would be easy to spot once she sat down.

Transportation wasn't too convenient in this area, and she didn't want to go through the changing stops that were involved when using public transportation. She was simply too exhausted. Hence, she walked down the street, trying to hail a cab along the way. The temperature had gone down at night, but it was still pretty hot. Before long, her clothes were drenched in sweat. Sweating seemed to be a more frequent thing for her, now that she was pregnant.

Suddenly, she heard the sound of a car's honk from behind her. It sounded pretty far away, so she ignored it and continued walking ahead. However, the car suddenly stopped next to her. She shivered. She didn't remember this vehicle, so naturally, she would believe that the driver was a stranger. What would she do if she ran into a criminal?

In the midst of her panicking state, the car window winded down. Brian stared at her in surprise. "Have you just gotten off work, Mrs. Tremont? Would you like me to drop you off?"

Arianne was confused, "What are you doing here? Aren't you driving Mark around today?"

Brian chuckled and replied, “Mr. Tremont drove himself today, so I took the day off. This is my personal car. Get in. I’ll drop you off.”

Arianne was both hot and tired. After a bout of hesitation, she nodded and sat in the shotgun seat. She didn’t seem too skeptical over Brian’s explanation, because this car seemed to be worth around thirty thousand. Mark’s cars were mostly luxury vehicles. She believed that Brian just happened to bump into her on a drive out using his own car during his day off.

The lights in the car were dim. Brian would say a few words to her from time to time, asking her very normal questions such as “Are you tired?” or “How’s work?”. The pair tacitly agreed never to mention Mark Tremont.

While waiting at a traffic light, Brian glanced at Arianne’s lower belly using the glow from the street lamps. There was a tiny bump on her tummy beneath the dusky lights. It wasn’t hard to see it, as she was wearing a white skirt made from thin material. This bump was much too obvious for a woman who’d been pregnant for three months.

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After dropping Arianne off downstairs and making sure that she had entered the elevator, Brian pulled out his phone and made a call, “Sir, I’ve sent Mrs. Tremont back home. Do you want me to drop her off every day? She’d get suspicious, wouldn’t she? Once or twice can be written off as coincidence… She won’t be fooled if it’s any more than that…”

“Figure it out yourself,” Mark’s cold and clear voice echoed through the receiver.

Brian's mind began bitc*ing incessantly, "I can't… Sir, how about you just tell her that I'd be taking care of her journeys to and from work? Or… You can give Tiffany a car and ask her to drive Mrs. Tremont home from work?"

He didn't get a reply from Mark, because he had already ended the call.

At the Tremont Estate, Mark stood in front of the French windows in his bedroom and called Jackson, "Think of a way to give Tiffany a car so that she can drive Arianne to and from work."

Jackson burst into laughter. "I thought you didn't know. I was hesitating over whether to tell you or not. She's pregnant. Can't you man up and be more generous? Just take her back to the Tremont Estate so that she can nurture the baby. Wouldn't that solve everything?"

Mark was in no mood to joke around with him. "I'll foot the bill. You think of a way to give it to Tiffany. That's all. I'm hanging up.

The next day, at the office. Jackson summoned Tiffany to his desk and gave her the keys to an Audi, "Here, it'll be more convenient for you to go to and from work from now on. You can drive Arianne around when you have the time too."

Tiffany raised her brow. "Have you struck gold?"

"Would you believe me if I told you that it's a company benefit for you?" Jackson irritably said. "If not, use your brain and think, see if you can figure out who gave this car. I did not tell Mark about this. He somehow found out about Arianne's pregnancy."

Tiffany was flustered and exasperated. “I only told you! If it wasn’t you, who else could it be? I’ve always known that you men were unreliable. Young unbearded men like you are always unreliable!”

Jackson felt completely wronged. “I said, I did not! Mark suddenly called me last night and told me to give you a car, saying that it’s for you to drive Arianne around and told me not to mention that it was from him. He told me to figure something out. I don’t know how he found out, but someone must have told him, right? Find out yourself if you want to know. Oh, right. Lunch, here, go.”

Tiffany glanced at the thermal lunch box and chose to believe him for the time being. She took the car keys, lunch box and left. There were only a few people who knew about this. If Jackson kept quiet about it, there was only her mother, Lillian, left. She had already urged Lillian not to cause trouble, but they ended up fighting. Lillian hasn’t spoken to her to this day and hadn’t asked her for money either…

She went straight into Lillian’s bedroom when she arrived home from work — this was suspicious on its own. Lillian would never leave the house if she didn’t have money. That $5,000 she gave her should have been used up by now.

She knew Lillian very well. She could never hold onto money once she had it. Buying things was most important to her. Hence, she searched through Lillian’s room. As expected, she discovered a brand new ring in the drawer of her bedside cupboard. Based on the clarity of the ring’s embedded jewel, it probably cost five figures. She was thoroughly enraged but tried her best to restrain herself, sit down, and wait for Lillian to come home.

Around the end of Arianne’s workday, Lillian still hadn’t come home yet. She decided to pick Arianne up first. Arianne was surprised when she saw her driving a car. “Where did you get this car?”

Tiffany was too afraid to tell her. “Well… I don’t know what’s gotten into Jackson. He gave me this car. It’s not a gift though, he just wants me to drive it. I didn’t want it at first, but I remembered that you’re pregnant and it’d be more convenient for you if you had a car to get to and from work. I’ll drive you to work and take you home from now on.”

Chapter 313

Arianne was worried, telling her, “Tiffie, be honest with me. How are things between you and Jackson? You can’t give up just for the sake of money. It’s fine if you really like each other and plan on getting married, but if you’re just playing around for the sake of money or clothes or cars, don’t do it. I’m afraid you might end up suffering. I know I’m not overthinking it; no man would bring you lunch and a car for no good reason!”

Tiffany was going stir-crazy. She was afraid to reveal that Mark had found out about her pregnancy, and certainly didn’t want to reveal that it was Mark who gave her this car. Furthermore, she suspected that Lillian was the one behind all of this… She was afraid that she might not be able to keep up the charade if Arianne asked any more questions. She wasn’t a girl who could keep secrets, so why did they have to put her in this position?

“It’s really not what you think, Ari,” she replied nervously, “Stop asking.”

Arianne was under the impression that she didn’t want to talk about it. After all, it was a personal question, so she didn’t ask any more, “Alright, I’ll stop questioning you. You’re not a kid anymore, you know what to do. Just know, I’ll always be here for you, so if you need anything, just tell me.”

Tiffany was very close to tears. This clearly wasn’t any of her business… She had nothing to do with this… It was suffocating for her, to be squashed in the middle like this!

Lillian finally returned home at twelve in the morning, after many rounds of mahjong. She thought that Tiffany had long gone to bed, so she did not plan on turning on the lights. To her surprise, the lights turned on by themselves. She jumped in fright, lifting her gaze and finding Tiffany standing at her bedroom door, staring at her.

“What are you doing? Why are you trying to scare me to death in the middle of the night instead of sleeping?” Lillian asked, acting self-righteous.

“Get your a*s in here,” Tiffany was extremely tired at this point. She was furious, so her choice of words left much to be desired.

Lillian realized that something wasn’t right. She purposefully dawdled around, showering before going into her room, “Speak up if you have something to say. I’m old and should be sleeping early.”

‘Old and sleeping early?’ This sounded like a joke to Tiffany. “If you don’t mind, old fart, please take a look at the time. Is this your definition of sleeping early, old hag? I have a question; did you pay Mark Tremont a visit?”

Lillian sat in front of her vanity mirror, stroking her expensive skincare product while looking extremely calm, “No.”

Tiffany pulled out the ring. “This ring should be worth at least five figures, right? If it’s not worth eighty to ninety thousand, it should be worth at least fifty to sixty thousand. Where did you get the money for this? Don’t deny it. We sold off a lot of your expensive jewelry when we were in a bad financial condition and dad had to be treated for his illness. We weren’t left with many valuables. I remember very clearly, so this ring is definitely new.”

Lillian stopped trying to hide it, “Yes, I went to see Mark Tremont. I bought this ring with the money he gave me. Why? You won’t give me money, yet you’re not happy that I’ve found a way to earn money for myself? As you’ve said, my old jewelry was all sold off. Who was it for? For this family, for your father. You have no right to scold me.”

Tiffany laughed in spite of her rage, “Then how did you get those jewels? Didn’t dad buy them for you? The family was in trouble, dad was sick. Of course we had to sell off anything that was worth something to us. Shouldn’t we have done that? You’re acting as if the whole world owes you something. Why not take advantage of your youthful-looking face with barely any wrinkles and find a new home!”

Slap!

A distinct slap hit Tiffany right across the face. Lillian glared at her with tears in her eyes, “How dare you! I love money, I love everything that most women love, but I loved your father too. I refuse to marry anyone else, even though he’s gone. How dare you say such things? What kind of a person do you think I am? You are no daughter of mine! Yes, I took Mark’s money. So what?”

Chapter 314

Tiffany regretted it. That’s right, out of all of her altercations with Lillian, this was the first time she felt that she was in the wrong. She had only said those things out of anger, so she couldn’t hold herself back. However, Lillian had crossed a line too. She had to clarify the matter before admitting to her mistake. She endured the pain she felt, took a deep breath, and said, “Would Mark give you money for no reason? The money he gave you was for Ari, wasn’t it? Don’t you think that you’re going too far by spending it on yourself?”

Lillian smirked, “This is nothing. This amount of money is like a drop in the ocean for Mark. Don’t you think that taking care of Rice Ball and Arianne is worth this amount of money? She’s staying in our house too. You’ve also been taking care of her in school. Let’s set all of that aside. She’s a woman with no family of her own. You have the closest relationship with her, so we’re her family. She’s living under

someone else's charity while pregnant. It's Mark who's crossed the line. What's wrong with taking his money? No one should be feeling guilty here."

Tiffany was close to grinding her teeth into pieces. "That is a sick mindset. You're sick! Regardless of how horrible Mark has been to Ari, that's between them. What right do we have to take his money? Please don't make it sound that great. What family? This is how you've been treating your own daughter, let alone a daughter that's not your own! My kindness to her has nothing to do with you. Her kindness to me now certainly doesn't have anything to do with you. Please give the money back! Or just give it to Ari and return the ring too!"

Lillian lay on the bed, looking as if she would rather die than submit. "Either you fulfil my every wish, or don't stretch out your hand like that. You're already so useless, yet you're dragging your own mother along into your suffocating life. How could you? At your age, your father had already started a factory, and at least he was a boss. You're nothing but trash."

"Yes, I'm trash. What were you doing at my age then? Meeting my father out of sheer, dumb luck. So you've managed to live the first half of your life as a rich man's wife, but your luck ran out, so it's only enough for you to live the next half of your life as a parasite!" Tiffany snapped, snatching up the ring and slamming the door shut. She was going to return the ring, then be honest with Arianne. Otherwise, she would be driven to madness.

Tiffany went out first thing in the morning during the weekend. She returned with Chinese-style omelette wraps and tens of thousands of cash — the money she had received from returning the ring.

She waited for Arianne to wake up before handing the money over to her. "Ari, I'm sorry. My mom went to Mark and received around a hundred thousand from him. I don't know the specifics, but my mom bought a ring with the money and I've returned it today. The ring cost $76,000. My mom spent the rest of the money on mahjong… I'll slowly pay you back. This is your money, here."

Arianne's mind was in a blur after having just woken up, so she was unable to react. She stared at the stack of cash and remembered Mark's face. A quiet gloominess appeared in her gaze.

"Ari, please don't be angry. That's just how my mother's like… I know that she's hateful, but I'm helpless… I'm sorry… I'm sorry…" Tiffany rambled incoherently. It was the first time she had ever seen that look on Arianne's face. It frightened her.

Arianne shook her head. "I just haven't come to my senses. I'm not angry. It's fine. Forget about the money that your mother's spent. I'll take this money, make up the difference so that the total reaches a hundred thousand and give it back to Mark."

Tiffany heaved a sigh of relief. She pulled out the car keys, "This car… wasn't from Jackson. It was from Mark. He left instructions to Jackson. You probably want to return this too."

Arianne nodded. After getting out of bed and washing up, she drove the car that Mark had provided to the Tremont Estate, with Tiffany tagging along. Mary served them with tea when they arrived. "Mary, get some warm water instead. Ari cannot drink tea," Tiffany said.

Mary didn't understand what she meant. "Madam has always enjoyed black tea, just like sir. Why can't she drink it?"

Tiffany sighed, feeling mildly disappointed. "Ask Mr. Tremont yourself."

Mary finally realized that they were here to see Mark. "Sir returned in the wee hours of the morning from the office. He hasn't had a good sleep and got up pretty late today. I'll go and call him."

Chapter 315

Arianne's heart gradually sank as Mary walked upstairs. She never expected for her pregnancy to be revealed so soon. How would Mark react when he saw her?

She didn't have much time to think before Mary arrived downstairs. "Ari, sir has asked you to come upstairs. He's just woken up."

Arianne sent Tiffany a reassuring gaze, then got up and headed upstairs. When she walked into the bedroom that belonged to them, she felt a sense of deja vu. The room was filled with Mark's scent. For some reason, it no longer made her heart feel heavy.

He wasn't on the bed, but she could hear sounds of running water in the bathroom. It didn't sound like the shower; he was probably washing up.

She stood patiently in front of the French windows and waited for him. Ten minutes later, he emerged from the bathroom in his pajamas. His hair was unkempt, unlike his usual style. The casual look of it gave him a slightly disheveled and indolent air.

He glanced at her apathetically, then walked towards the head of the bed and sipped on the black tea that Mary had prepared for him. "Get to the point."

Arianne pulled out the cash and car keys and placed them on the small table next to her. "I'm here to return these. Thank you for your kind gesture, I won't be needing these for the time being."

His hand on the cup stiffened. He scoffed disdainfully. “It’s not your choice to refuse. I’ve never liked being denounced. We haven’t divorced yet. Don’t make it look as if I’m being harsh on you. I can’t control where you want to live or what kind of life you want, that has nothing to do with me. But as long as you are Mrs. Tremont, I will not allow you to tarnish my reputation.”

A chill ran down her hands and feet. She lowered her head and said, “I understand… Since this is all for show, I’ll play along. However, I will not use anything that you’ve given me. When the time comes, I’ll give back every single thing.”

This interaction gave a sense of helplessness. The temperature in the atmosphere had dropped to freezing degrees. Mark could not feel the warmth in his teacup, but he did not intend on going into another huge fight. It was a sense of powerlessness that he had never felt before, not even in his work. At this point, he felt it in full force. He never expected that she would be the one to bring him to his knees in the end.

“As you wish,” he finally answered, then ignored her and headed to the study.

Tiffany was surprised when Arianne walked down with the cash and keys. “How did it go, Ari? You didn’t give them back to him?”

She shook her head. “I’ll be holding onto these things for him, temporarily. It’s just for show. At least other people would think that he’s been a pretty good ‘husband’.”

Tiffany found this very strange. “Did you talk about the baby? Do you plan on keeping it? What does he think? Is that the stage you’ve both reached? Not caring about each other? Does he not care that you’re pregnant? Is the only thing left to do now putting on a public show?”

Chapter 316

Arianne couldn’t figure out what Mark was thinking either. She was also surprised that he never mentioned anything about the child. Remembering his cold personality, it made sense. How could a man like that possibly concern himself with a simple blood relative? He told her that he loved her, was that a mistake? Or… Was it really in the past?

Tiffany let out her frustrations on the Audi when they emerged from the Tremont Estate, “If I had enough money to say no, I would never drive this car again. Who allowed Mark to have so much money? In times like these, we have no choice but to lower our heads to evil forces. Speaking of which, my mother might come up with some other evil scheme if you keep staying at my place. By then, we wouldn’t be able to clean up whatever terrible mess she might have caused. I’ll help you find a room in the next two days. You’d better move out. I’ll visit you often and I’ll drive you to and from work every day. I’m not trying to chase you away; I have to make this very clear. You know that I’m doing this for your own good, right?”

This time, Arianne did not refuse the offer. It was a good idea to move out. Tiffany was frustrated enough with Lillian around. She was afraid that Tiffany might collapse if she stayed in the picture too.

In this world, money made everything easier. They soon settled on a rented room — Tiffany took care of it all on her own, Arianne only needed to move in. Her new accommodation wasn’t exactly far from Tiffany’s place, but it wasn't exactly close either. The neighborhood wasn’t too bad, it was a condominium with one room and one living room. She had enough space to live comfortably.

Arianne left with Rice Ball in tow, thinking it was inappropriate to leave it in Tiffany’s house. After all, Rice Ball would get sad whenever she wasn’t around for too long and she didn’t want to part with Rice Ball, no matter the reason.

During her first few days in the new condominium, she couldn't sleep, as she was unfamiliar with the bed. She suffered from horrible insomnia, and due to her pregnancy, got out of bed at night more often. She couldn't sleep at all. By the time she arrived at the office, there were severe dark circles around her eyes, and she looked really exhausted and pale too.

Regardless of how long Eric took to catch up on the latest news, he should be aware of her pregnancy by now. When he saw the look on her face, he panicked. "Hey… Would you consider moving back to the Tremont Estate for the duration of your pregnancy? It's scary to see you torturing yourself. How have you been? Why do you look so pale? It's like you haven't slept at all."

Arianne felt slightly embarrassed, "I just moved into a new place and I'm not used to it yet. It's been hard for me to sleep in a new bed. I'll get used to it in the next two day. It's alright, I know my own body, so don't worry."

Eric furrowed his brows when he heard this, "You had the courage to stay out on your own? I thought you were close with Tiffany? It'll be even more inconvenient for you to do things on your own when your belly grows bigger. What if you accidentally knock into something? Wouldn't that be annoying? You really are open-minded!"

Arianne felt strangely sad. Initially, she never considered herself to be that pathetic, and did not see her current situation as some sort of torment. However, there were many worried people around her, she couldn't help but suspect that she really was that pitiful. "If I'm not worried," she said, acting careless, "why should you be? As long as nothing happens to me in the office, it wouldn't have anything to do with you."

Eric was immediately silenced. He paused for a short while before saying, "From now on, you don't have to do overtime. It's alright if you arrive at work a little later in the morning and you can leave earlier in the afternoon as well. Your health is my top priority now. Don't be so pig-headed with me, I'm not Mark. I am your boss, and in this office, my word is law."

Arianne nodded and didn't say anything else. Eric sighed, then turned around to head back to his office and call Mark. "Are you aware that your wife has moved out to stay on her own? Are you really that open-minded? She's young and naive, but you're not exactly a child, are you? Even throwing a fit has its limits. If something happens to her and the baby, it'll be too late for regrets!"

Mark stayed silent on the other end of the call. Pursing his thin lips, his expression was slightly complicated. He wanted to ask why Arianne had moved out of Tiffany's place to stay on her own, but felt as if an invisible weight was pressing down on his tongue. Then, his office door suddenly burst open. Aery walked in carrying a box of cookies, "Mark, darling, are you tired? I've brought you some cookies…"

Eric's entire mood soured when he heard Aery's voice. "Mark Tremont, are you still fooling around at a time like this? Is Aery Kinsey a woman that you can fool around with? She's Arianne's younger sister! Your own wife is pregnant and living an inhumane life, and you're having fun??? Forget it! I can't be bothered with you. Just don't regret this! Of course, if the child in Arianne's belly isn't yours, you have a reason to act out like this. However, if it is, then please remember, you'll feel the bitter taste of regret soon enough!" He immediately ended the call after saying his piece, his mind in disarray.

Mark put down his phone and shot Aery an icy glare, asking, "What are you doing here?"

Aery had a wounded expression on her face, saying, "Darling Mark… I know that my sister has forbidden you from contacting me, but I can't help it. I wanted to see you… Haven't I been keeping you company during your depression after my sister cheated on you? And what has she done? Who knows, maybe she's mourning Will Sivan's departure… She's probably moved out to lash out on you over Will, right? I don't want anything else, as long as I can stay by your side. At least let me stay with you when you're feeling frustrated, okay?"

Chapter 317

Mark gritted his teeth. He never thought of Arianne's reasons for moving out of the Tremont Estant. It had been more than ten years, a very long time, and she'd never left the Tremont Estate. But now, she

was suddenly leaving. Previously, he couldn't be bothered with figuring out why, and he never earnestly tried to get her to stay. He finally understood after hearing Aery's reminder. Did she really move out out of retaliation towards him over Will?

Aery's eyes flashed with a victorious smile when she saw the increasingly complicated look on his face. "Alright, Mark. Don't think about such sad things. Try the desserts I've brought you. They're delicious. I've loved the desserts from this shop ever since I was a child. I'll stay here and wait for you to get off work, then we'll go and have a meal together, okay?"

Mark did not refuse the dessert that Aery had put into his mouth. However, that dessert that should have tasted sweet seemed tasteless in his mouth, as if he were chewing on wax.

Helen and Jean Kinsey emerged from the civil affairs office, one walking behind the other.

"Is this… really the end for us?" Jean was in disbelief. They had spent half their lives together, and now they were suddenly parting ways. He never thought that Helen, whose world used to revolve around him, would initiate their separation. He thought that she had used the word "divorce" out of anger. He hadn't expected for it to turn out to be real.

"The official divorce papers are already in your hands. What do you think? Jean Kinsey, I believe that my life has truly fallen apart in your hands. My greatest mistake was to follow you without any second thoughts. I've wronged Arianne and Zachary in too many ways. You, on the other hand, are never satisfied, no matter how much I give you. You are a useless piece of trash!" Then, Helen immediately got into her sports car and drove off. She suddenly felt lighter. This was probably the only good decision she'd ever made in her life.

Aery looked slightly annoyed when she received a call from Jean. It hadn't been easy for her to get some time alone with Mark. She certainly didn't want other people to spoil it, not even her own father. When

she found out that Helen and Jean had gotten a divorce, she was astonished. However, that was the only emotion she felt, no sadness. Conscious of Mark being nearby, she purposefully pulled a saddened face and began tearing up. “I understand… I’ll try to persuade my mother.”

She cleverly began sobbing to irritate Mark so that he would ask, “What’s wrong?”

Aery put down the phone and wept. “My mom and dad have gotten a divorce… It’s too sudden. I just found out about this. Mark, it hurts…”

Divorce was nothing to Mark, who had lost both his parents at a young age. “So what if they’ve divorced? It’s pretty normal to get a divorce at that age these days. It’s not big news. You should go home. I have work to do.”

Aery wiped the tears from her eyes and pitifully whimpered, “I don’t want to go home… I’m sure that no one’s at home at a time like this. No one’s around, it’s too quiet. I won’t disturb you, please don’t send me away…”

Mark ignored her; he didn’t have the time anyway.

Arianne felt very uncomfortable in the afternoon, probably because she hadn’t slept well over the past few days. She did not push herself and left the office at five. She knew that Tiffany wasn’t done with work, so she went home on her own. She plopped herself down on the sofa and let out a long sigh. Her body felt strangely heavier lately, and she would pant after taking just a few steps. She stroked her small bump, which couldn’t be more than four months old. However, she was showing more than the average pregnant lady. If this went on, her tummy would probably expand over her feet before the baby came to term.

She had just managed to catch her breath when she suddenly heard a knock on the door. Her first guess was that Tiffany had gotten off work. She quickly got up to open the door but accidentally sprained her back. She had to support herself against the sofa for half a minute until the uncomfortable sensation disappeared.

She opened the door and was taken aback. Then, she icily asked, “What are you doing here?”

It wasn’t Tiffany. It was Helen.

Helen forced a smile. “I heard that you’ve moved out, so I came to visit you.”

Arianne turned around and sat back down on the sofa. Helen didn’t mind. She walked inside and changed her shoes. “I’ve gotten a divorce.”

“You abandoned everything to be with Jean Kinsey, why did you give up all of a sudden?” Arianne replied snarkily, “Giving up on something that you’ve painstakingly worked for for more than half your life at the drop of a hat. That doesn’t sound like you.”

Helen did not explain too much. Her gaze landed on Arianne’s stomach. “You’re pregnant?”

Arianne reached out and shielded her small bump. “What does that have to do with you? What are you doing here? If you have something to say, say it. If not, please leave. I’m very tired, and I don’t have the capacity for entertaining guests.”

Helen took a deep breath. “I’m sorry. I promised that I wouldn’t disturb you, but I couldn’t help wanting to see you. I just think… that I’ve given the Kinseys too much and mistreated you and Zachary in too many ways. Could you give me a chance to make it up to you? Even if… it’s only from a material aspect?”

Material aspect? Arianne found this hilarious. She didn’t need familial love from her, so she was using material possessions to bribe her? So that her heart would be at peace? She really wanted to see what Helen could offer her. “What do you mean? You want to ‘settle’ every material object that you’ve owed me, all at once? Are you still hoping for me to call you ‘mother’?”

Chapter 318

Helen took a property deed and a bank card out of her purse. “These are my savings in the Kinseys throughout these years. My divorce with Jean was amicable. The company and the house go to him while I take eighty percent of the home savings and two other properties. I’m giving you one of the houses and half of the money. I plan to open up a small company of my own with the remainder. When I die, the company will go to you. The Kinseys weren’t doing good previously despite managing to survive now with Mark’s company, so I didn’t get to take a lot away. Don’t think any lesser of it, you’re in need of money now.”

Arianne looked at the items in her hands but did not accept them immediately. The property must cost at least several hundred thousand dollars while the card must contain the same. If the Kinseys did not go through the financial crisis, the amount could be several times more. These things were useful to her currently, but she did not want them.

Regarding Helen, she only wished for this person to disappear from her world without any more connection to her. This was the extent of Arianne’s disappointment, not finding it within herself to even accept her generosity.

“Hold on to these. Isn’t this what you’ve wanted all this time? They should belong to you. I don’t need them. I only need you to vanish from my life, like how you left back then. Don’t appear ever again.”

All these years that Helen had spent in repute, she had still stumbled before Arianne. “Arianne, think of it this way. This is what I owe you. It’s a waste if you don’t take it. Don’t you hate me and the Kinseys? If you don’t take them, these will belong to your younger sister sooner or later. They’ll go back to the Kinseys. Why don’t you take them then? I won’t feel less guilty because you accepted them… so keep them.”

Helen was persuasive. Arianne had to credit her for being so skilled that she had the impulse to accept the offer. Nonetheless, the rush of impulse was fought over by her rationale ultimately.

“You’re Aery Kinsey’s mother. What the Kinseys own should be given to her. I have no comment. I’m not accepting them because I don’t think I’m related to you. I shouldn’t be taking gifts for nothing. No need to try and pull strings here. I’m tired, and I need to rest. Please leave.”

Helen did not insist on staying. She held onto the items and left. Hearing the door being closed, Arianne got up to lock it. When she stayed alone, she had the habit of locking the door from the inside. Just as she turned after locking the door, she saw the property deed and bank card left on the shoe rack. Helen had still left them with her. Slightly vexed, Arianne locked the items into a drawer.

When morning came the next day, she found a bunch of vegetables and breakfast by the door when she was heading out. The vegetables were fresh, and there were also fruits and meat. They were of a variety, all costly. The breakfast was a takeout from a deluxe restaurant too. Arianne had considered the possibility of Tiffany leaving them here, but her financial situation could never afford these. It could only be Helen.

Arianne moved the items aside, as she did not want them, but two steps later, she thought that it would be a waste of food. She could only toss the fresh produce into the fridge and take the breakfast downstairs to share it with Tiffany since she could not finish the large portion alone.

Tiffany would never refuse food, asking while she ate, “This shop is rather far from your place. You ordered it? That’s great, you’re finally acting like a pregnant woman in terms of food. You’re finally picky about what you eat. This breakfast isn’t cheap at all.”

Arianne was frustrated. “Ugh, do you think I’d have it in me to order something like this? It’s most probably Helen. She sent vegetables, fruits, beef and whatnot as well. She came to me last night and left me some money and a property. I didn’t want them, but she left them anyway without my knowing. Then she did this early in the morning.”

Tiffany gulped down what was in her mouth. “It’s a waste not to want it, it’s also a waste not to eat it. That’s your mother. It’s no one’s fault if you take from her. She didn’t do her duties when you needed her. Now that you’re taking from her, you’re not extorting her. Of course, I’m not advising you to forgive her like a saint. Do what you think is right, it’s not my place to say anything,”

Arianne was about to head out for lunch during noon when the front desk girl ran over to her with a thermal lunchbox. “Arianne, someone sent you lunch.”

She felt lethargic looking at the lunchbox. Was Helen keeping this up? She hated wasting things. Looking at the prawn and beef, as well as the vibrant vegetables in the lunchbox, Arianne could not push herself to throw them in the bin. In addition, she was really famished now…

“Thank you.” She knew that Helen must have bribed the girl at the front desk. The lunch was not just sent here and Helen would not appear to upset her, so Arianne did not ask where the sender was. She accepted the lunchbox and opened it, greeted by an aroma that intensified her hunger.

When Tiffany called her to ‘report’ what Jackson prepared for her today, Arianne sighed. “Helen sent me lunch, can you believe it? She didn’t show herself, but the front desk passed it to me.”

Tiffany replied free spiritedly, “Then eat it. She’s already sent it anyway. She must be taking care of you so well because she knows that you’re pregnant, right? Don’t feel guilty about it. As someone who eats for free every day, I don’t even think as much as you do. Also, Jackson’s really great in cooking. His wife will be lucky. I better eat while I get to before he’s married. We gotta grab on to fortunes timely, you know?”

Chapter 319

Arianne teased, “You might as well marry him. You get to eat and spend.”

Tiffany suddenly laughed, her laughter sounding slightly evil. “Haha… My stomach is his captive now. I thought about having him as my lifetime goal too. Say, he’s tall, handsome, rich and knows how to cook – where can you find a man like that? And I sometimes dream about… heh heh… him being naked. He’s so stylish when he’s dressed, he must have a nice body when he takes off his clothes! Lucky, I’m just mildly infatuated. Otherwise, he’d have long been devoured!”

Arianne felt goosebumps rising. “Ah… you’re hopeless. Alright, I’ll stop here. Go have your lunch.”

Hanging up, Tiffany suddenly felt someone behind her while she was still wearing a hint of smile from the call. When she turned around and saw Jackson staring at her flabbergasted, a string tensed and broke with a pop in her head. He heard everything!

“Uh… I was just kidding…” She caved in a split second, wanting to hide in a hole from the embarrassment.

“Uh… I was just passing by. Have a good lunch. I’ll… head back to my office.” Jackson was perhaps shocked by her bold remarks that it took him a while to be coherent.

Tiffany’s face was so hot, it could fry an egg. That was awkward! – And embarrassing! How was she supposed to face him after this?

In the CEO office of the Tremont Tower, Mark sat face to face with Helen. Steaming cups of coffee were placed on the expensive coffee table, staining the air with its aroma.

“Mr. Tremont, I’m not here for business today. I’m here to talk to you about Arianne.” There was no expression on Helen when she spoke, making her unreadable.

“Oh? Do speak.” Mark’s reaction was mild as he picked up the coffee and took a sip. The bitterness and the coffee’s aroma exploded on the tip of his tongue, causing him to frown. “Ellie, change it to black tea.”

Helen furrowed her brows lightly at his attitude. “You know about her pregnancy, don’t you? She’s staying alone now and I’m worried, but she isn’t willing to accept my help. I’ve sent her fresh produce and fruits in secret and sent her lunch in the office too; she didn’t throw them away. But this won’t work long term. How can a pregnant lady have no one by her side?”

Mark crossed his arms and leaned back on the couch, closing his eyes leisurely. “She wanted to move out of the Tremont Estate, no one forced her.”

As a mother, Helen was upset. “You’ve been taking care of her since she was a small girl. Isn’t there any form of relationship between both of you? The baby in her womb is a Tremont!”

Mark wore a cold smirk. “Yes, I’ve taken care of her. As her biological mother, don’t you feel ashamed saying this? Compared to you, I’ve done a lot more. You really have no right to be looking for me.”

Helen’s temper was gone in a flash. “Yes… That’s a fact. I have nothing to say. Take it as a plea… For the sake of the time you’ve spent together and for the baby she’s having, I’m pleading with you to not leave her alone for the years … Her parents weren’t by her side since she was a child. To her, you’re her husband, her family. Don’t abandon her…”

“Mr. Tremont, black tea.” Ellie came in with the brew.

Mark opened his eyes, but his gaze was blank. “I didn’t abandon her. It’s her who’s abandon everything for a man, leaving the Tremonts without looking back. What do you want me to do? Wag my tail and beg for her to come back? Hah… absurd. I won’t refuse her coming back, nor will I stop her from leaving, but one thing is certain. I won’t divorce her.”

Helen did not know what happened, so she felt like she had been impulsive all of a sudden. “It seems that I’ve only understood the surface. I’m sorry. But… even then, I can’t find anyone else to help her. After all, you’re the closest person she has. Do what you can, I’ll make a move now.”

After Helen left, Mark lit a cigarette in vexation.

“After all, you’re the closest person she has.” – The words replayed in his mind like a spell. Was he? He dared not take the title. Only Arianne knew the answer.

The night of the capital was busy as usual, with neon lights illuminating the city. In spite of it, there was a sense of lonesomeness amidst the hustle and bustle.

When the lights of Tremont Tower gradually dimmed, the CEO office was still brightly lit.

Outside of the office, Ellie looked at the time and could not help knocking. “Mr. Tremont, it’s late now. We should head back.”

Mark was drunk alone in his office. “You can go first, I’m not going back.” Yeah, there was no need to. No matter how bright the Tremont Estate was, it was not warm. The spacious house had been cold for over ten years.

Ellie sighed, wanting to say something several times, but she kept quiet ultimately and left.

Around twelve midnight, Mark exited the tower with a stagger. Brian had been waiting downstairs for hours, quickly going over to help him when he saw the man’s intoxicated state. “Sir? Why did you drink so much? Are we going back to the Tremont Estate?”

Mark shook his head. “No, we go to her. She hasn’t stayed alone before… Weather forecast says that there’s a heavy downpour tonight, she’ll be scared…”

Chapter 320

Brian was disconcerted. “Yes, sir. Sit tight. I’ll send you over now.”

Driving all the way to Arianne’s apartment, Brian helped Mark, who was drunk, upstairs and arrived at Arianne’s unit. Brian dared not knock too hard as he called out softly, “Madam, sir is here…”

There was no sound on the other end. Mark rapped hard at the door suddenly. “Open the door!”

Brian jumped and quickly caged him to stop him from the reckless behavior. Arianne was pregnant. She could not take a scare like this in the middle of the night. If anything happened because of this, it would be too late to regret it!

Arianne, who was woken up from the knocks, checked carefully from the peephole. She breathed in relief when she saw that it was Brian and Mark; she opened the door. Before she spoke, Mark pounced at her and hugged her tightly, mumbling something that she was unable to make out.

“I’ll be leaving first. Sir is all yours,” Brian said when he saw that.

Arianne was not even able to react before Brian closed the door and fled. She could see that Mark was already drunk. Worried, she put an arm over her tummy and helped the man with one hand. “Slowly… Follow me…”

There was still a sliver of level headedness left in Mark. He did not lean his entire weight on her. When he saw how she was struggling, he gently pried her hands off and stood with his back resting against the wall. “How long are you going to keep this up? Are you not returning to the Tremont’s as long as Will doesn’t come back?”

Arianne paused. “What are you saying? You think that… I moved out of the Tremont’s because of Will?”

“Isn’t that the case?” Mark questioned.

She bit her lips without explaining. He had always assumed things without asking her. Why could he not ask her first?

Staying still for a while, Arianne hooked her long hair, locking it behind her ear. “Go back if you’re still sober. Call Brian to pick you up. I haven’t slept well in days, I can’t do this.”

Looking at her action, there was a momentary daze from Mark. Arianne’s thin figure was vaguely visible from her thin pajamas; the only part that grew was her tummy. She actually grew thinner despite being pregnant…

“Go back with me,” Mark said suddenly.

“A home that you don’t even want to go back to, what’s the point of me going back?” Arianne said and sat down on the couch in the living room. Giving it a thought, she got up again to make him a cup of black tea.

“There are people taking care of you in the Tremont’s. Whether I’m going back or not, it doesn’t seem to be relevant to you.” Mark did not move from the hallway. He knew that he was not able to stand upright

independently under the influence of the alcohol. He was barely maintaining his awareness and rationale when he spoke.

“It is,” Arianne said, taking a glance at him before continuing, “The Tremont Estate doesn’t have a life when you’re not there. I can’t sleep soundly.”

Mark’s eyes widened before they calmed down swiftly. “Don’t tell me that you’ve moved out because I didn’t go back there.”

Biting her lips, Arianne brought the tea to him. “I cooled it down. It’s not hot. Have a drink.”

Out of the blue, a crack of thunder struck, the heavy rain poured without a warning.

Arianne was quick to take the clothes at the balcony and close all the windows. The pitter patter of the raindrops on the windows was not soft, making prominent noises in the quiet night.

Mark put down the black tea and went to the washroom. While Arianne took the clothes, she listened for the sounds in the bathroom. He would not be able to leave tonight, would he? There was only a room and a bed. How were they supposed to sleep?

Before she could figure it out, Mark decided for her. When he stepped out of the bathroom, he only had a towel on, obviously having showered. “Sleep.”

Arianne thought about calling it a night on the couch, but the rainy night was stuffy. She was not going to sleep well like that. There was no air conditioning in the living room either. The quality of her sleep would directly affect her baby. No matter how reluctant she was, she could only enter the bedroom.

Mark followed her. The moment the door was closed, she fell into his embrace with her lips sealed in surprise. Arianne widened her eyes, her mind blanking out when she caught Mark's magnified face in front of her own.

She had thought that he was not that drunk, since he could still interact normally with her. It looked like she had overestimated him!

Avoiding his kiss, she said, "I'm pregnant…"

Frightened and gasping, Arianne's voice was soft. It did not do anything to deter Mark. He switched the lights off easily and laid her down on the bed in the next second. It was not a rough movement, but it was domineering, rendering Arianne unable to resist.

When Mark slid her pajamas up, Arianne pleaded with a tinge of a sob, "Don't do this… You're drunk. Can you not do this to me? Wait till you're sober, alright?"

She was terrified. She had lost a child, she did not want to lose another. He was drunk now, he must not have been aware of his force. What if there was an accident…

"I know what I'm doing…" His raspy voice by her ear was tinted with a hint of desperation.

“I don’t want to… Get up, let me go!” Arianne did not believe his intoxicated words. Tears welled up in her eyes, threatening to fall at any given second.

“Don’t forget that you’re still my wife!” As if losing the patience to pacify her, Mark reminded her of her duty.