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On the dining table, Arianne twirled the spaghetti on her plate restlessly with her fork as she threw occasional glances at Mark who was indulging in his dinner. After holding back for a long time, she finally said, “Maybe… I should just go find Tiffie at the hospital. The longer I delay this, the more anxious I feel.”

Mark stopped the movement of his fork. “Must you really?”

Arianne knew that Mark was probably not very keen on the idea of meeting Ethan since they were half brothers. Seeing Ethan would certainly bring back some unpleasant memories.

“I’ll be back real quick. Regardless if Ethan really got into an accident or not, he can’t possibly do anything to me in the hospital, right? Don’t worry. If you’re really concerned, you can have Brian accompany me or send two bodyguards with me.” Arianne made the biggest compromise to express her determination in going to the hospital.

“I’ll go with you. Finish your food first,” Mark said coldly and put a piece of beef into her plate.

His action somehow made her feel guiltier. After all, she had told him she did not want to see him when she was in the hospital after her miscarriage. Arianne wondered how he felt back then. Did that hurt him just a little? Although Aery Kinsey was to blame for her miscarriage, it might not necessarily be the outcome he wished for despite his ambiguous relationship with Aery.

Arianne lowered her head so Mark would not notice the change in her emotions. Unspoken feelings were normal between family members. No matter how angry she was, life still had to go on. Even if they really divorced, and she left the Tremont Estate, she was not certain she would not think about him

again. After all, Mark had been in her life for more than two decades. He was a big part of her life. His existence was deeply ingrained in her mind.

After their meal, Mark drove to the hospital where Ethan stayed.

To prevent Ethan from taking any preventive measures if he knew they were coming, Arianne did not inform Tiffany about her intention to visit the hospital.

When they arrived at the hospital, they directly asked a nurse for the ward that Ethan was staying in.

By the time they rushed there, they discovered it was empty. The bed was neatly made, and there was nothing on the side table.

The scene before their eyes stunned them. Mark was the first to recover from his shock and went to ask the nurse if Ethan had been discharged from the hospital.

The nurse checked the records and told them, “No, maybe he went out for a moment.”

At this moment, Arianne decided to call Tiffany only to find that Tiffany’s phone had been switched off.

Mark hesitated for a moment before he finally looked for Ethan’s number. He did not expect he would call this number so he did not save it in his phone. He had to search through his call logs to find the number. However, he discovered Ethan’s phone was also switched off.

“I’ve underestimated him. He probably planted an informer near the hospital and left when he realized we’re coming. We can’t stay here. As long as we’re here, he won’t come back. We’re just wasting our time here. If he doesn’t want us to find Tiffany, we’ll never be able to find her. He’s probably trying to complete his plan while he’s in the hospital.”

Arianne inhaled deeply when she heard his words. “Then, what do we do now? Is there anything else we can do other than sitting around and waiting for the inevitable?”

Mark shook his head in reply. “We’ll go directly to Lillian. Finding Tiffany isn’t the priority now. Getting that land is.”

At this point in time, this was their only option.

On the hospital’s rooftop.

Tiffany leaned over the railings and looked down. The people walking down there looked really tiny under her feet. She puffed her cheeks angrily at Ethan. “Look what you’ve done! I dropped my phone! If you didn’t scare me like that, I wouldn’t have dropped my phone! I’ll have to spend a lot of money to get it replaced even though I’m damn broke now! What if my falling phone accidentally kills someone? That’d be the end of me! You’re really…!”

Ethan looked at her disapprovingly. “There aren’t many people walking around on this street. Don’t worry, I’ll buy a new one for you so stop complaining. Look, the stars are out!”

Tiffany looked up and saw a few stars sparsely scattered in the sky just like Ethan had said. Stars were difficult to be spotted in the sky above cities like the one they were in. This was also a sign that the weather would be good tonight. She withdrew her gaze after one glance. “Alright, let’s go down now. You looked so frail earlier, but you still pulled me up here to look at the stars. I wouldn’t have stayed if the doctor didn’t tell me that you might experience dizziness or even faint.”

Ethan suddenly approached her from behind and wrapped his arms around her. “Tiffie, will you marry me please?”

Tiffany was so shocked by his sudden embrace that she stiffened instead of struggling to break free from his embrace. It was only natural that she was flustered. “What are you saying out of the blue?”

“We were going to get engaged when we returned to the country but that didn’t happen because of me. At that time, I wanted to kickstart my career because I didn’t want anyone to say that I’m riding on your family’s coattails. Little did I expect that it would take so long. I really don’t want to let you go again. Let’s just pretend we didn’t break up. Marry me, please?” He whispered affectionate words in her ear. Even in the darkness, the determination in his eyes was frighteningly clear.

“I think it’s going too fast…” Tiffany began to say.

However, Ethan interrupted her. “No, it’s not! Things are going too slow for me!”

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Ethan clearly had come prepared. He brought out a diamond ring from the pocket of his hospital gown. He did not give Tiffany the chance to reject him and directly put the ring on her finger. “I bought this ring a long time ago. Whenever I miss you at night, I’d always look at the ring. That’s how I endured it.”

The size of the diamond ring was just right. The light reflected on the diamond, and it shone brightly under the night sky. Tiffany, who was still stunned and confused, remained in his embrace. She could feel his sincerity and urgency. However, his urgency and desperate appearance made her feel suffocated. “Ethan...just let go of me first.”

However, Ethan did not listen to her. He turned her around and bent down to kiss her lips. He tightened his grip on her, trapping her in his embrace.

The night was quiet. He had proposed to her with a diamond ring under the starry sky. There was no one around to disturb them. It should be romantic, but Tiffany did not feel that way at this moment. In the past, she had loved him with all her heart, but somehow, his actions did not move her now. When she felt him trying to slip his tongue into her mouth, she became frightened and shoved him away. “Ethan!”

At this moment, Ethan also felt he was moving too fast. He stood motionlessly. “I’m sorry… It seems like I’m the only one who’s feeling it. Tiffie, do you… feel nothing for me now?”

Tiffany did not answer his question. She took off the ring and put it in his palm. “You’re behaving strangely desperate. I haven’t thought things through. You’re now staying in the hospital. Let’s talk about this when you’re discharged. It’s time for you to return to the ward.”

The atmosphere was rather tense now. Ethan walked toward the fence. Suddenly, he smiled. “Did you sleep with Jackson? I saw you attending a party with him that time. Did you find a better man than me? I worked so hard, and yet, I still can’t fight against the cruel passage of time. Am I too late?”

Tiffany was slightly stunned. At the same time, she felt guilty as well. After all, she did sleep on the same bed with Jackson even though they did not do what Ethan thought they did. Ethan probably looked into her affairs. She calmed herself down and said, “It’s not what you think. I’m confused and tired. Can we just return to the ward?”

However, Ethan acted like a stubborn child. He refused to move. She could only move forward and grabbed him. “Let’s go. Don’t act so childish. I promise you that I’ll give you an answer when you’re discharged from the hospital. Is that okay?”

Upon hearing Tiffany’s words, a smile bloomed on his face. He lowered his head slightly and asked for a kiss. “Just kiss me once. What you did earlier hurt my feelings.” At the same time, he put his hands into his pocket and switched on his phone.

Tiffany felt slightly unwilling and awkward. However, in the end, she kissed him softly on the cheek. Otherwise, she did not know how long they would have to stay here.

Ethan noticed that he had received a message. It meant that Mark and Arianne had left the hospital. Only then did he hugged Tiffany’s waist and went downstairs.

Meanwhile, Arianne was counting the floors carefully downstairs. She realized that Tiffany’s home was not lit up. She became even more anxious. She stomped her feet. “There’s no doubt her mother’s not home. She’s probably out playing mahjong. I’m not sure when she’ll return. Sometimes, she doesn’t even come back that early.”

Mark remained calm as usual. “That’s enough. It’s useless for you to be so anxious. Let’s head home for now. I’ll send someone to stand guard here and bring Lillian to my office as soon as she returns.”

All their efforts were wasted tonight. Arianne was truly reluctant to give up. However, it would not be right to drag Mark into this. In the end, she could only comply with Mark's wish for the time being.

The night was rather hot, but it seemed like it might rain soon.

The moment they reached the Tremont Estate, Mark went into the bathroom first because he could no longer endure the heat.

Meanwhile, Arianne was hugging Rice Ball in the living room, sending a few messages to Tiffany. However, the result was the same. She received no response from Tiffany. Due to her exhaustion, she fell asleep on the sofa. After some time had passed, she felt herself being carried. She could feel the silk pajamas against her cheek and the strong chest underneath. It smelled good.

She was woken up by the feeling of weightlessness when she was put on the bed. She instinctively clung on Mark's neck tightly. When she opened her eyes and found herself looking directly into his eyes, she saw the frown on his face. She reflexively released her hold on him and rolled off the bed. "I'll go shower!"

She had not taken a bath after they returned home. There was no doubt he would not be able to stand it if she did not shower. She wondered what was going through his mind earlier? Did he really carry her up to the room? Was he such a thoughtful person?

Mark looked at her as she ran away in fright. He smiled faintly. Was he not gentle enough when he put her on the bed? That was probably why she had woken up. In fact, he had never done such thoughtful things before.

When Arianne came out of the shower, she saw Mark was still awake, sitting on the bed. She tucked the strands of loose hair behind her ear and asked, “Why are you still awake? I’m sorry for making you run around with me for nothing for an entire night.”

He glanced at her. “I’ve already expected it.”

She was slightly shocked. Did he foresee it? Then, why did he go along with her plan when he knew it would all be futile?

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Mark seemed to sense her doubt. He explained, “If I didn’t go with you, would you be able to stay calm? Now that we’re done, you can stop and rest now. Just go to bed.”

Arianne climbed to the other side of the bed and lay down. She watched him take off his clothes, he was slowly unbuttoning his light grey silk pajamas. His muscular upper body was slowly exposed before her. She was so stunned by the sight that she did not avert her gaze until he had completely taken his top off.

“Are you sure you’re going to watch me until the end?” He was clearly teasing her.

“Can’t you wear your pajamas to sleep?” She hid her face under the blanket as she blushed.

“No,” he said firmly. After taking off his pajamas, he slid into bed after switching off the light.

She was really having a difficult time at this moment. She knew he had a habit of sleeping naked, but she was not used to it. In fact, she did not think she would be able to get used to it for the rest of her life.

Before she could calm her complicated thoughts and feelings, he suddenly said, “Why don’t we adopt a child in the future?”

She stiffened immediately. Before she could reply, he said, “Forget about it. I don’t want to talk about divorce. Let me remind you again; it’s impossible for us to divorce. Don’t even think about it.”

She remained silent. She was not thinking about divorce earlier, she just did not know what to say. In fact, she wanted to ask why he suddenly had such thoughts. She could not see through him. The Tremont family was an influential family with high status. How could he let an adopted child inherit those things? How brave and daring was he? Although the child would take after his surname, ultimately, the child was still not his biological child. Even if he wanted to adopt, she would not agree to it since she felt it would be unfair to him.

The next morning, she was startled by the ringtone of the notification of a message. Her first thought was it might be Tiffany responding to her messages from last night.

She took her phone from the bedside cupboard and had a look. She was disappointed to see it was a message from Helen instead of Tiffany.

“Ari, are you feeling better now? I know you don’t want to meet me so I didn’t come to meet you. But I’m worried.” Arianne did not want to reply to the message, but she had always been soft-hearted so she replied, “I’m quite good.”

After putting her phone down, she realized she was leaning against Mark, and his strong arms were around her waist.

He was naked. The only thing between them was her thin pajamas. She could even feel the heat from his body. They stayed in that position for a short while before he finally moved. She tried to break away from his embrace by turning her body away slightly.

However, he suddenly said, “Don’t move!”

He sounded solemn so she did not dare to move. She stayed in his embrace quietly, feeling like a human pillow.

After a short pause, he asked, “Can I kiss you?”

She thought she had heard wrongly. Before she could respond, his kiss fell on her ears. It made her feel itchy, but she did not dare to move.

Why did he ask her such a question? Since he was going to do it anyway, he did not have to care about her feelings. In fact, he had never acted like that before. Why did he suddenly ask for permission? This was unlike his usual self!

The atmosphere gradually turned hot and passionate. The last tinge of coldness in the early morning was erased by that warmth. She could distinctly feel his warm body. She could also hear his erratic

breathing. She did not know why she did not push him away. It seemed like her body was unable to reject him.

He started his kiss from her ears to her cheeks and to her lips. Soon after, he turned his body and supported himself above her. She closed her eyes, feeling nervous. Her eyelashes fluttered slightly at this moment.

On the other hand, Mark was looking at her intently. He seemed to enjoy seeing her like that. He slipped his hand under her pajamas before moving it downward. However, before his hand could meet its destination, his phone began to ring. He cursed inwardly.

He got up and answered the phone while he put on his clothes. “Hello?”

“Mister, Lilian came home earlier. Someone was tailing her, but we got rid of them.”

Mark remained silent for a moment before he said, “Send her to the office safely. Take good care of her. I’ll be there soon.”

After he hung up the phone, he said to Arianne who was still lying in bed, “Lilian is home. I’m going to the office now. Would you like to come with me?”

Arianne blushed and nodded. Clearly, she had not recovered from the earlier intimacy. At the same time, she was curious as to why he could have such a quick transformation. Now, he seemed energetic. There was no sign of drowsiness in him after waking up from his sleep. Moreover, he did not seem even a little bit displeased from being interrupted.

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She quickly got up and cleaned herself before she went downstairs for breakfast. However, she did not see Mark. She only saw the cutleries he left behind after his meal. She was afraid he might leave without her so she decided not to have breakfast. She quickly grabbed her bag and prepared to rush out.

When Mary saw this, she quickly stopped her. “What are you doing? You haven’t eaten breakfast yet! Sit down and have your breakfast!”

Arianne put on her shoes as she looked outside. “I’m running out of time. Has Mark left yet? I’m busy now. I’ll have something to eat later.”

Mary was amused by her. “He hasn’t left. He said that he’s going to turn on the air conditioner in the car first. Otherwise, you’ll feel the heat when you get into the car later. He’s afraid that you might feel uncomfortable. Don’t worry. Just eat your breakfast. Brian is not here today. Mister is being extremely nice toward you.”

She was stunned. She stopped wearing her shoes. She asked Mary casually, to hide the strange feeling that welled up in her heart, “Brian hasn’t been around recently. What’s he up to?”

Mary lowered her voice. “He’s got a girlfriend. It’s time for him to get married and settle down. It’s not weird. Mister understands him.”

Arianne nodded and turned back to the dining room.

Although Mary might be exaggerating, she was still moved. Mark was never a man who cared about others' feelings. When did he become nice and thoughtful toward others? This was indeed strange.

She ate her breakfast swiftly. Mary did not stop her this time around. She walked toward the door and saw Mark's car parked beside the road, waiting for her. The minute she got into the car, she could clearly feel that it was indeed comfortable. It was neither cold nor hot. She could not help but remember what Mary told her earlier. Did he really do it so she would feel comfortable?

She abruptly asked a question that had been festering in her heart for a long time, "Are you saddened by the fact that I've miscarried twice?" She did not look at his face, fearing she would lose her composure.

Mark did not answer her question immediately. He rolled down the window of the car slightly and allowed the hot air outside to pour into the car. It seemed to help him alleviate some of his anxiety. "What do you think?"

She pursed her lips. "I don't know."

He smirked in resignation. He seemed to be filled with a sense of bitterness. "I'm human as well. My heart's not made of stone."

His words seemed to dispel some of her doubts. He was at least saddened by the loss of their children. This was more than enough for her.

When they reached Tremont Tower, Arianne put everything behind her. What she wanted to do now was to deal with Tiffany's problem. When she walked into the lobby, she bumped into Helen who seemed to have appeared out of thin air.

"Arianne."

Arianne heard her voice and looked over. Helen was wearing a beige work dress. Her bag was a branded bag of the same color. Her black hair was tied up in a tidy manner. Helen was still her usual self; a strong iron lady. Arianne did not know what Helen was doing here, but she did not want to make a scene here. She stopped in her tracks and asked coldly, "What's the matter?"

Helen had long gotten used to Arianne's cold treatment of her. She said calmly, "I'm here for work. I didn't expect to see you here. Naturally, I'll greet you since I saw you. You seem well. I feel relieved. It seems like Mark is taking good care of you. Your complexion is good as well."

Mark only nodded at Helen as a greeting.

Helen smiled at him.

Arianne took a shallow breath. "Then, go ahead with your business. We have something to deal with so we'll take our leave now."

Helen smiled and nodded without saying anything else. It was indeed a coincidence they bumped into each other.

Mark spoke again when they entered the lift. “I thought she came to meet you for the Kinsey family.”

Arianne was thinking about the land at that moment. She did not understand his meaning in that particular moment. “What? What’s wrong with the Kinsey family?”

There was a pause. “I withdrew my investment. The Kinsey family is bankrupt.”

She remained quiet. Those things were not important to her, it was only natural she did not care about them.

When they entered the office, they saw Lillian sleeping on the sofa. It was only natural she was tired since she was out all night playing mahjong. She was sleeping soundly at the moment that Arianne found it hard to disrupt her sleep.

Mark went to his desk and sat down. He motioned to Arianne to deal with Lillian as she saw fit.

Arianne thought for a moment before nudging Lilian’s shoulders softly. “Mrs. Lane, please wake up. You can sleep later. I have something to tell you…”

Lilian’s eyes were swollen and red. It looked rather frightening. Her eyes were half opened as she said blearily, “Ari...What’s wrong? Why did you ask me to come so early in the morning? I’m sleepy.”

Arianne calmed herself down. She decided to be frank with Lilian. “Mrs. Lane, do you still remember that your family owns a land, and you rented it out thirty-five years ago? We would like to purchase that land from you. It seems like there are five years left before the contract is up. We would like to sign the contract beforehand. Moreover, we can negotiate on the price. However, you would need to find the lease for the land first.”

Lilian recovered her wits as soon as she heard Arianne talking about money. “Land? It was rented out 335 years ago? I’m unaware of this. I wasn’t married to John 35 years ago. His father was the one who owned the land and rented it out. At that time, I did take some things from the Lane family that are passed down from the older generation. I didn’t even have time to take a look at them. By the way, it’s all at home. However, I’m not sure if I can find the lease.”

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Arianne instinctively glanced at Mark as she asked, “Can we search for it now? We need it urgently!”

“Of course!” Lilian answered excitedly as though she was high on drugs, “It’ll be good if you can find it as we’re in need of money now. The land is like an umbrella on a rainy day since it’s so valuable! You’re like a lucky star to me, Ari! I don’t even know we have a piece of land. It definitely belongs to us mother and daughter since my father-in-law and Tiffie’s father have passed away. There’s no doubt about it! Hurry up, help me find it!”

Mark rose from his seat since they were ready to depart. However, the phone on his desk suddenly rang. He heard Ethan’s voice at the end of the line before he even managed to speak. “I guess you’re heading to Lilian’s house to find the certificate of the land, aren’t you? Well, I have something to tell you before you leave.”

Mark asked with a frown, “What are you trying to do?”

Ethan chuckled coldly, “I found an unsent letter when I was going through George’s belongings, and it was for you! Can you guess the content of the letter?”

Mark paused for a moment before he asked, “What do you want?”

Ethan laughed heartily. “Nothing, but I’m definitely going to get the land. You can compete with me if you have the guts. Let’s talk another time. I’m sure you’re in no mood to talk now. I only called to make a deal with you. I’ll keep your secret if you keep mine. Oh, sorry, I’m your scapegoat.”

Mark’s knuckles turned white as his grip on the phone tightened. After a momentary pause, he said, “Let’s talk somewhere else. I’ll text you later.” He hung up the phone without waiting for Ethan’s reply. However, he sent a text to Ethan asking him to leave Tiffany alone.

Ethan’s reply came almost instantly. “This is my personal matter. Stay out of it.”

Mark’s gaze was trained on his phone, but he did not continue his conversation with Ethan. He finally regained his composure and shifted his gaze to Arianne. “We’ll have to go another time. I’ll get someone to send Lillian home first.”

Arianne was confused as to why things changed so abruptly after Mark had received that call. After all, they had just agreed to a plan a moment ago. She was able to vaguely guess the reason after a while so she decided to comfort Lillian first and question Mark later. “Mrs. Lane, why don’t you go home first, and we’ll discuss this later. Perhaps, you can search for it first. If you find it, just give me a call.”

Lillian was worried they had changed their minds so she asked, “What’s happening? Are you giving up on the land? The Tremont family is the only one who can afford to offer this price…”

Arianne tried to calm her, “No, it’s not what you think. We just have an emergency to attend to. I’ll get back to you as soon as possible, alright?”

Lilian clearly knew she could not rush this matter. It was better for her to find the lease for the land first if she truly wanted to make money from it.

After Lillian left, Arianne asked immediately, “What’s going on? Who called earlier?”

Mark sat on his office chair silently, deep in thought. He finally answered before Arianne questioned him again. “Ethan wants the land and Tiffany. He seems serious about it.”

Arianne was stunned for a second before she asked, “The call was from Ethan? What does he want? Tiffie will never forgive him for what he has done to her family. What he has done is completely unforgivable, and he’ll ruin Tiffie’s life!!’

Mark rubbed his brows in frustration. His mind was occupied with the letter that Ethan mentioned. “I’m certain now that Ethan has enough money to buy the land. However, he wants the land and Tiffany. I’m genuinely surprised he likes Tiffany. However, I’m also certain love is not his top priority. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have done all those wicked things.”

In fact, Arianne knew this even without his explanation. She just wanted to know what they should do next. “What can we do now? Why are we not searching for the land ownership certificate? We can still look for the certificate and tell Tiffie the truth when we get the land. At that time, his plans would be foiled. Why aren’t we going to Tiffie’s house?”

Too many uncertainties lay ahead, and the letter had thrown a wrench in his plans. He was reluctant to tell her the truth. “Leave me alone. Don’t get involved. I’ll resolve this on my own. It’s not just about Tiffany. This matter is between me and Ethan.”

Arianne no longer persisted with her questions. After she calmed down, she called Tiffany again. She was surprised when the call actually connected. “Hey Ari, I’m so sorry. Ethan just got me a new phone. I broke mine yesterday. Is there anything urgent? Should we talk on the phone? I’m at work now, and I have to look after Ethan after work.”

Arianne decided to tell Tiffany the truth through the phone. She was worried the situation would change again. “Stay away from Ethan as far as possible, he...”

Before she could finish speaking, someone snatched her phone away. She turned around in confusion when she saw Mark standing behind her. “What’s wrong?”

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Panic filled his eyes as he cut the call. After a short pause, he said, “I think this isn’t a good time to tell Tiffany. I’ll talk to Ethan. Just leave it to me.”

She could not understand his actions. However, she chose to trust him. “Alright, please try your best to sort it out. I truly don’t want Tiffie to go through another hard time, please?”

He nodded stiffly before he returned Arianne’s phone. “Remember, don’t tell Tiffany about it. Let me handle it.”

She agreed. “I got it. Go get busy then, I’ll head back home.”

Mark made a sound of acknowledgment as he stood at the same spot. He had no intention of sending her off right now.

Arianne did not think much of it and left the office obediently. She was not completely obtuse, she had noticed the drastic change in Mark after receiving that phone call.

Mark drove to the hospital where Ethan was staying during lunchtime. Surprisingly, Ethan did not escape but waited for him patiently.

Ethan absolutely did not look like a victim of a car accident. Apart from the bandage on his head, he seemed like a healthy person as he stood by the window, looking down at the scenery that was bathed in sunlight.

Ethan did not even turn his head around when he heard the sounds of footsteps. “It seems like you vaguely know about the content of the letter...”

Mark did not look at him as he asked, “Where’s the letter?”

Ethan took out the letter. It was obvious the letter was a photocopied version instead of the original letter. “Take a look. The original letter is with me. I’m sure you know I won’t hand it over to you. I thought it won’t be easy to deal with you since it seems like you don’t have any weaknesses. Who knew I’m so blessed?”

Mark took a quick glance after he grabbed the letter and tossed it into the trash can. He asked furiously, “What the f*ck do you want!?”

Mark rarely cursed. However, he had completely lost his temper now. He did not like to be threatened.

Ethan chuckled as he turned around to look at Mark. “I’m sure you remember that George Sloane was hired as your father’s driver. He was the one who sent your father each and every single time he met my mother. George witnessed it. My mother and I had spent 10 years together in the dark, living in the apartment. She had to take care of me alone whenever I was sick. She didn’t even have the courage to call that b*stard. She only cried in secret when she felt miserable, unwilling to bother your family. However, you’re different. You live a completely different life. You’re admired wherever you go…”

Mark did not think Ethan and his mother deserved any sympathy. He clenched his hands as he said, “Why are you acting like the victim when both of you are the third party that ruined someone’s family? Both of you deserve it! You should blame your shameless mother for what you had experienced. Not only was she not ashamed of being a homewrecker, but she even gave birth to you. Your mother is the cause of all the tragedies.”

A hint of anger flitted through Ethan’s eyes, but he concealed it flawlessly. “A single hand could not clap. How can you put all the blame on my mother?! You’re such a ruthless person, Mark. I’m truly amazed. My mother was seriously ill at one point, and your father didn’t even have the courage to visit at all. I pleaded with him on the phone, but he refused to see us. George, the driver, was the only one who helped us when we were struggling. At that time, I swore I wouldn’t leave your family in peace. That’s why I planned the plane crash when I found out your family was going on a vacation. After that, the world seemed fairer to me.”

“I always thought that George gave the drugged drunks to the captain, Zachary Wynn, who was Arianne Wynn’s father. However, I’m surprised George hid this from me for so many years. He felt guilty and

didn’t drug Zachary in the end. Fortunately, the plane still crashed. But how? I’m sure you’ve gotten the answer in the letter. Your family is ruthless, one is worse than the other. You can even destroy your family just to achieve your goals. How impressive!”

Mark’s hands trembled slightly at this moment, but it escaped Ethan’s notice since Ethan was not paying close attention. Although his heart was in turmoil, he tried to remain calm outwardly. “You’re not bad either. You got George to drug Zachary by using the love he had for your mother, am I right? He left the Tremont family after the plane crash and brought you and your sick mother away. He played the role of a father and raised you after your mother passed away, but what did you do to him? You even evicted him from his house when you found out he was trying to contact Arianne to tell her that her father was innocent. He had cancer at the early stage. At that time, you were dating Tiffany, you could have afforded to pay for better treatment. Although you didn’t personally kill him, his death is on you. He was probably counting down the day until he died in the rehabilitation center. Do you feel remorse for letting him suffer for such a long time?”

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Suddenly, Ethan got agitated, “Why should I feel guilty about it? I did in the beginning, but not anymore. No, not at all. After all, not only was he a watchdog for your family that couldn’t change his habit of being loyal, but he also made me your scapegoat for so many years! I honestly would have thought that our plan succeeded if I hadn’t found the unsent letter he left for you.

“The reason he decided to hide it from me until he passed away was to protect you, isn’t it? Apparently, the grace of the Tremont family was so great, to the extent that he was willing to be a loyal servant. By the way, I’m really curious about what made you kill your family members.”

Mark remained silent but tried his very best to suppress his urge to kill someone. His hands shook more vigorously at the mention of his ultimate secret, which he hadn’t wanted to remember about.

Mark’s father called him into the study the night before the air crash.

He entered with a heavy heart. While an 18 years old rich boy was supposed to live a relaxed life and enjoy their fun stage, he was completely different, as his maturity level was beyond that of his peers.

“I have something to tell you, Mark. You have a younger brother. I know it’s my mistake. I don’t need you to be understanding, but I hope that the two of you could interact harmoniously and won’t fight.”

Mark could not accept that when he heard his father narrate it in a very casual manner. His image of a good father was instantly ruined.

Once upon a time, Mark’s parents had a loving and harmonious relationship, to the extent that betrayal was unimaginable and he had never seen them argue even once. At least, they were always loving in front of him. The members of the Tremont family, starting from Mark’s grandfather and the older generation, did not run legal tradings, so the source of their income was not legitimate, although they were wealthy. Fortunately, his father ventured into a proper and legal business with the influence of his mother when he became the successor. Hence, Mark’s father still carried a very strong and strict charisma and taught him to be independent even though he looked gentle and polite when he dressed in a suit.

Mark’s mother, on the other hand, was a knowledgeable and highly educated lady. Her gentle and polite nature complimented Mark’s father perfectly well, making her a good match for him. Mark honestly thought that their family would be harmonious forever, but he had no idea when it had changed. Perhaps, it was when a third party wedged themselves into his parents’ marriage...

His father became panicked when he did not respond, “Mark, it’s all my fault. Your younger brother and his mother are innocent. Leave them alone, would you? This is the first time I’m begging you, please?”

He did not question his father further, nor did he vent on the spot. Instead, he calmly asked, “Is my mother aware of this?”

Mark’s father pondered for quite a while and continued, “I haven't told her, and I’ve kept it under wraps. It’s just a common mistake any man would make. It only happened once, but that one time was enough to ruin everything. I’m honestly not sure if she’s noticed.”

Mark did not provide an opinion but was silent and calm unlike an 18 year old. All of a sudden, he felt as if the man in front of him was no longer the father he used to look up to.

“As you know, your mother is sick and beyond any cure or treatment. I’ll bring her out and spend her last few days with her at her favorite place. You should spend more time with her too. She said she wants a burial at the sea.”

Yes, his father was right about his mother dying, and such hurtful news about him having a mistress and an illegitimate son should be concealed forever. Swiftly, he pulled his father’s collar as he finally regained his attention, “If my mother finds out, I won’t leave you and that woman in peace, nor that b*stard! People like you don’t deserve to live in this world!”

Mark bumped into the driver, George, who came to see his father when he stepped out of the study room. Apparently, he heard the conversation between the father and son, and that was the reason why George thought that Mark was the culprit behind the air crash. He did not converse with George or greet him, as George worked as his father’s driver. Mark was pissed at him as well, as he tried to hide the truth about his father cheating on his mother.

Every single word in the unsent letter written by George was engraved in Mark’s heart.

“Dear young master, I’ll have left the world by the time you read this letter. I’m writing to beg you to leave your younger brother alone. I watched him grow and he is a pitiful child.”

“When Mrs. Tremont was seriously ill back then, your younger brother’s mother wasn’t living an easy life either. Even so, Mr. Tremont told her in front of your younger brother that she could never be part of the Tremont family and he wanted to cut ties. Ever since I witnessed his wrongdoings, I also became aware that your younger brother and his mother suffered a lot. Ridiculously, I fell in love with his mother and felt that Mr. Tremont was too harsh to them. Sympathetically, I wanted to do something for both of them; hence, I agreed to put Captain Wynn on a drug before the departure for an air crash. However, I didn’t do that in the end, as Zachary’s daughter was still very young. Unfortunately, the air crash still happened, and we both clearly know who the culprit behind the scene was without us having to say it. Like father, like son, you’re as decisive and ruthless as your old man.

“Since we can’t change what has already happened, just leave the past in the past. I’ll be dying soon, so no one will find out the truth. I’ll just take on the sin as my own and bury the truth forever to atone for my past wrongdoings. Oh right, I’ve heard that you’ve married Arianne. I genuinely hope that you’ll be nice to her. In fact, I believe that you’re a kind person and you took her in out of guilt.

“I think I should put a full stop here since I have nothing else to say. Trust me, your younger brother is stubborn, and he will definitely look for you and cause a mess. I hope you could make peace with him, for I don’t want the two of you to fight. I treat him as my own son…”

Chapter 388

After listening to Ethan’s words, Mark discovered the lengths Mr. Sloane had gone to conceal Ethan’s involvement in the plane crash. He even chose to shoulder the burden alone.

Ethan was only about ten years old, and yet, he already harbored such intense malice and hatred. It was no surprise that such a boy would rise to this position today by leaving a trail of blood in his wake.

The most ironic thing, however, was that George was wrong. He knew about Mark's conversation with his father in the latter's study, but he had no inkling of what came after; the young boy had gone to his mother's room immediately later. It was that fateful night that Mark Tremont had to discard his innocence. It was that night when he finally understood how bitter reality was.

He had gone to his mother's bedroom straight from his father's study because his poor mother had become so bedridden that it was a toil for her to walk. He did not expect his mother was already aware of her husband's illegitimate son. She had always been the epitome of reason and rationality to Mark, and yet, that night she was a bitter scorned woman. Furious tears marred her twisted smile as she said, "So he told you everything, didn't he, Mark? He thinks I'm unaware, but I know everything..."

"I've always made sure that we never fight in front of you, haven't I? But behind closed doors, we fought countless times. We were never meant for each other, and yet, we're bound together in this godforsaken lifetime. However, I'm not as forgiving as everyone thinks I am," she rambled on. "Did you know, Mark? I was once pure. However, I made the mistake of being with your father. Before our marriage, his enemies found me and wrecked me. I wanted to die then, but your father said he didn't see me any differently, that I was untainted in his eyes. He said he would marry me. So we did. When we had you, I naively thought we would be loyal to each other until our deaths."

"But the real world is a cruel mistress. Since his enemies had sought their revenge on him through me, he never considered me a pure woman worthy of his loyalty. When I heard he had a mistress who had given him a son, I turned a blind eye to it. I let it be because I didn't think I had the right to stop him. What a joke! Oh, Mark, the only thing I fear the most is that two-timing b*stard would divide his fortune to that slut and her son. But don't you worry, mommy will fight tooth and nail to secure the Tremont's fortune and legacy for you. I've sacrificed so much for your father and this family that I won't… I won't ever let anyone else pry it from my hands!"

"I don't give a damn if that woman is just another naïve little damsel whom he had taken advantage of. She wrecked my home, my family. I won't forgive her!" His mother hissed, "It's okay, Mark dear, mommy will remove everything that's wrong with this family. I would get rid of that slut and her son as

well, but your father protects them well. I can't find them, and it seems like I never will. Especially now that my life is coming to an end."

"Listen to me very closely. Never, not even for a moment, be soft with that little b*stard brother of yours. Leave him be if he's disinterested in the Tremont's fortune, but if he ever covets what's rightfully yours, you make sure to nip it in the bud immediately. Mommy doesn't want your company during her last moments, Mark, so don't board the plane. Remember this!"

It was a part of his mother's scheme to take out his father and the other Tremont crooks by mutual destruction. This was also why Mark did not board that doomed plane. The plane crash had caused him the loss of his ailing mother, jacka** father, his predatory relatives, and the innocent Zachary Wynn.

Indeed, Mr.Wynn was the only one who was guiltless. Everyone else who died that day had blood on their hands for being associated with the Tremonts. Not even death could cleanse them of their sins.

All it took was a night for his father's image to crumble before his eyes while his mother morphed from a kind, reasonable figure to a possessed vixen befitting her husband. Mark had reacted to his mother's hysterical breakdown with helpless stolidness, but deep in his mind, a thought had echoed, 'Let them destroy themselves… I'll be on my own after tonight…"

Despite George going back on his plan to drug Zachary before the flight, the crash still happened, and Mark knew who the culprit was.

When the media storm arrived, George became an important witness. He had pushed all the blame onto the pilot just as he and Ethan had planned. It was ironic how two different parties had decided to act at the same time with the same method.

Mark had changed since then. He had ignored the ensuing external attention and devoted himself to the Tremont's businesses. What he had not known was that the tragedy had left a victim; Arianne Wynn, who was orphaned by the scheme.

When the image of the orphan girl appeared in the newspaper. It had caught Mark's eyes. He was struck with a pang of guilt. He wanted to take her in. For someone who now lived in hell, the mark of innocence on her face stabbed him with jealousy. He craved for the innocence in her eyes. He believed the girl would be able to purify his tainted soul. He believed she would be able to be the stalwart keeper of the last light in his blackened soul.

However, whenever he saw Arianne in person, the weight of the guilt behind the incident crashed onto him. He would be seized by anger, regret, hatred — not at her, but himself. He contributed to the narrative and called her a murderer's daughter. To be precise, he did not openly blame Zachary. Instead, he let the masses do the dirty job. He kept quiet as accusations and insults were thrown at her. All those years of him telling her how much he hated her was just a pathetic attempt to bind her to his side. The truth was she was not a murderer's daughter. He was the murderer's son. Her mother made her an orphan.

She was innocent. Mark had never hated her. Amidst the battle he waged in his mind, he failed to protect her. When he saw Mr. Sloane had written her a letter, he panicked. He was so frightened she would leave him once she discovered the truth. She was all he had left. How could he let her go?

Chapter 389

Ethan relished in the ecstasy of revenge as he watched the conflicting emotions dancing on Mark's face. "If you don't want this letter to fall on Arianne's lap, then, stay out of my business. That land is mine and no one else. If you so much as let Tiffany know what I've done, you can bet Arianne will know about your matter as well."

Mark closed his eyes and inhaled deeply, steeling himself against the emotions rioting in his chest. He would never reveal the truth regarding the plane crash. He would rather shoulder it alone than to expose his mother. After all, his fervid impression of his mother being a reasonable and kind woman lay in the depth of his heart. He would not taint one of the last few pure impressions he had of her.

“What happens after you get that land and Tiffany? How long are you going to hold that letter against me?”

Ethan sneered. “Would you believe me if I say this will end with both of us enjoying our life peacefully with our most treasured women by our sides as we bury our dark secrets away?”

There was no way Mark would believe that. Currently, both of them wielded each other’s dirtiest secrets, but they were not equal in power. The women were the bargaining chips. Ultimately, it boiled down to how much Arianne and Tiffany meant to them respectively. It was clear Ethan could live without Tiffany, but Mark could not live without Arianne. Arianne was his Achilles’ heel!

Mark said with a growl, “What must I do for you to give me the original letter?”

“Aww, it seems like you care very much about Arianne.” Ethan jeered. “I guess it’s only natural, given the years you have lived together. You want that letter? Why don’t you cede everything related to the Tremonts to me?”

Everything related to the Tremonts? Only Ethan would dare suggest something so preposterous!

Mark did not even hesitate as he said, “Over my dead body.”

Ethan was not surprised. He had a different plan after all. “Well, I guess money trumps love in the end. Please, you really think I want any of the sh*t from the Tremonts? No. What I want is to watch you suffer the pain I’ve had to suffer,” he said honestly, “Well, it seems like none of us has a way to solve this problem. How about this? You want to sweep this under the rug, don’t you? Then, let’s keep our mouths shut, and we’re good. Deal?”

“Oh, by the way, Tiffany and I are going to get married very soon. If all goes as planned, can my dearest eldest brother buy that plot of land as our wedding gift? Heavens forbid Tiffany from suspecting that I only want her for that, you know.”

As soon as Mark left the hospital, he went to Tiffany’s house directly.

Lilian was still asleep when she heard the knockings on the door. All her indignance disappeared when she saw it was Mark behind the door. “Ah, I’ve looked all over the place, but I couldn’t find that deed. There’s a lot of junk around here, so would it be okay if you help me find it?”

Mark did not respond, he only silently searched through the Lane’s house. Due to years of neglect, by the time they found the title deed, his hands were already coated with a layer of dust.

Lillian sighed in relief. “We finally found it! How much do you think this plot of land will fetch?”

A stormy expression that briefly flitted past Mark’s face did not go unnoticed by Lillian. It served to scale down her expectations. “Er, on second thought, you can offer a price you think is fair. I’m not a greedy person. Moreover, Tiffie is best friends with Ari.”

Mark paused for a moment before he said, “Don’t worry. I won’t buy it for less than what’s fair. Now, keep this safely while I get legal experts to begin the procedures.”

Lilian was relieved. “I’m glad to hear that. I’ll leave it all to you then. Honestly, people like you are the best. You’re so clever and skilled that it leaves me stress-free.”

Mark did not return home that night. It was midnight so the whole building was pitch-black, saved for the light escaping from the forty-sixth floor. He had ignored every text and call from Arianne that day. The existence of that letter in Ethan’s hand was a ticking time bomb, and he did not know when it would be detonated. Rather than submission, foresight was the key.

At this moment, Mark could not get in the way of Ethan and Tiffany. Similarly, he must not let Arianne get involved. In retrospect, he regretted revealing so many things to Arianne. If he had kept his mouth shut, hiding this would be so much easier. Now, he did not even dare to return home in fear of her hounding questions. He feared he would not be able to weave a convincing lie.

It was deadly quiet on the forty-sixth floor so the sudden sound of clambering in the corridor was impossible for Mark to ignore. His security would not have allowed anyone to come up to his floor with their shoes on. More importantly, this person was stomping.

Before his mind could come up with a suspect, his office door was pushed open. Arianne stood there staring at him with a pointed gaze. Her cheeks were red, probably due to the summer heat.

Mark who was reclining languidly suddenly straightened his back, every fiber of his being tensing. “Why are you here?”

“Why on earth are you still working?” She complained. “I didn’t see anyone else working overtime on my way up, so why are you so busy? I’ve called and texted you, and you ignored all of them. Heavens, I know Tiffie’s trouble is a burden to you, but I… I just don’t know who else to turn to for help other than you, alright?”

At that moment, Mark’s haphazardly-constructed façade crumbled. It dawned on him that, despite everything, the first person that appeared in Arianne’s mind when she needed someone was him.

Chapter 390

Mark extended his hand in her direction and beckoned her over. “Come here.”

Arianne obeyed him obediently. It felt as though all the barriers between them had disappeared.

He pulled her to him, seating her on his lap before he rested his chin on her shoulders. He inhaled her scent, allowing it to soothe the turmoil in his mind. “Ari, do you truly wish to leave me?”

This was the first time Arianne had heard him referring to her as Ari while he was sober. It made her nervous for some reason. Her palms began to sweat, and her body stiffened. She stammered, “W-w-why are you asking me that right now? Y-you’re acting really weird!”

He responded by tightening his arms around her, it was almost as though he was worried she would run away. “I want to know.”

Arianne turned the question over and over in her head. She had always wanted to leave him, right? However, why was it so difficult for her to answer the question now?

As though he could sense Arianne's dilemma, he did not persist with the question and changed tack instead. "What should I do so that you'll willingly stay with me? I keep wondering… Can't we be good to one another just like everyone else?"

Mark's words thoroughly shocked Arianne. Was he being… sincere? He was acting so out-of-character that she suspected he was suffering from delirium caused by a fever. She quickly placed a hand on his forehead to check his temperature. She only withdrew it when she confirmed he did not have a fever. "Okay, what happened to you today? Why are you saying weird things? I… I need to think."

Mark could not help but laugh at her reaction. "I don't have a fever, and I haven't lost my marbles, thank you very much. It's just… We've never had heart-to-heart talks like this before, have we? Why is that? Why do you always look like you're frightened of me?"

Arianne studied his face for a moment before replying, "Because you're really frightening. You're always so gentle and kind to everyone, but you're always cold and mean to me. Moreover, you look at me as though you want to tear me apart and mess me up!"

Arianne was obviously alluding to Mark's blatant hostility, but he somehow interpreted it the way he wanted to. He said teasingly, "Oh, yes. I'll admit it, I do dream of making a mess out of you…"

The climate outside was hot enough — which the air-conditioning inside his office managed to alleviate — but his teasing caused the tip of her ears to burn. "T-t-that's not what I mean! I… I mean, you asked me why our relationship can't be better so I guess the real question is, how are we going to get there?" She explained. "I won't be able to investigate the truth about that plane crash since it happened so long ago. I'll always be branded as a murderer's daughter. I'm only around you to atone for my sins. I don't

know if I can ever be free of my burden. With all that, how can we be good to each other? If our relationship is not tainted by this, perhaps, things would be different..."

The very mention of the plane crash caused Mark's heart to wrench. "What if I tell you that I've never hated you?"

Arianne vividly recalled how they used to live since she was young. Even when she was a child, she knew Mark Tremont loathed her. The palpable bitterness in his gaze when he looked at her was forever etched in her mind. How could that same person say such outlandish words? It sounded so impossible to her that she did not spare any thoughts on it. "Impossible. I can't imagine it at all. Look, are you going to return home tonight? Also, what do you plan to do about Tiffie? You won't let me deal with it, but at least let me know what's happening. Please?"

In the end, the conversation still led back to this, disrupting the temporary peace Mark felt. He released his arms around her before he replied, "If it's Tiffany's wish to marry Ethan, then, we shouldn't get in their way. We'll have to feign ignorance."

Arianne was baffled. "Why do we have to feign ignorance?"

The only option Mark had was to lie to her, and he had to do it convincingly. "I've discussed this with Ethan. It has become apparent to me that he's… Well, that his love for Tiffany is sincere. He admitted to his wrongdoings and expressed a desire to atone for his mistakes now. And honestly, if Tiffany agrees to be with him, it means that she still loves him. We can't deny Ethan and Tiffany a future just because of a mistake he made in the past, right? Humans make mistakes. Everyone should be given a second chance. Moreover, Ethan didn't expect her father to fall ill because of that incident."

Arianne was thunderstruck. Mark's words were completely out-of-character as well. She did not believe he was speaking on Ethan's behalf because Ethan was family. Moreover, Ethan did not make mistakes,

he had committed crimes! He was twisted and unscrupulous, and he was beyond redemption! To allow Tiffany to be with him was akin to pushing her to the pits of hell!

“That’s not what we agreed on before, right? Some people can turn over a new leaf, but some never will. Ethan’s rotten core isn’t something that can be changed. No matter what he does, he can never atone for what he did!”

Once again, Mark found himself weary of Arianne’s stubbornness. “How about you look at it this way? Tiffany wanting to marry him implies that she loves him. Do you really think driving a wedge between a couple won’t cause both of you to fall out? Do you want to see her heartbroken and dejected?” He countered, “Think about it. Is it better to let her marry someone she loves or let her live a life of despair? Your choice, Ari.”

Arianne was, naturally, unaware of the real reason behind Mark’s words. At this moment, she was only focused on her dilemma; should she or should she not tell Tiffany the truth? If Tiffany truly loved Ethan and wanted to marry him, telling her the truth would be akin to stabbing her heart.

However, if Arianne chose otherwise, both she and Mark would be complicit in covering this matter up. They would be helping a criminal with a bloody track record cover up his crimes and watch as Tiffany devoted the rest of her life to a man who caused her father’s death and her family’s downfall.

Neither option was viable.