Ruling 481

Chapter 481

Jackson laughed, “I wouldn’t dare. How could I have the nerve to call my sister-in-law that? I was only making a comparison. I wasn’t trying to put anyone on the spot. Don’t discredit me.”

Arianne was momentarily speechless, “Hey, Jackson, Tiffie was cursing at you not too long ago, saying how she was about to drive herself mad with her own cooking skills. She misses you and wants you to see her soon.”

Tiffany immediately ended the video call and curled herself around Arianne, “Don’t say things like that! It embarrasses me! I am not missing him!”

Arianne was laughing her head off, “You totally were! It’s your fault for directing the camera at me. My hands are oily and I’m still holding half a prawn. I can’t look undignified, even in front of a close friend like Jackson. You started it first!”

At the Tremont Estate, Jackson turned towards Mark, who was right next to him, “Did you manage to see Arianne? I’m pretty sure that you can go see her now. Otherwise, Tiffany might think that I’m only dating her so that it’d be more convenient for you to get to Arianne… It’s unfair to me…”

Mark shook his head, “Not yet. I can’t relax as long as Ethan is still alive.”

Jackson turned serious, “I’ve sent someone off to do it. Carrying that kind of thing out in a foreign country comes with a set of challenges. You know this too. It’d take at least a year and a half, or more. Who knows when this will be done. Are you just going to wait? Can you endure it?”

Mark walked towards the French windows and picked up a sleeping Rice Ball, who was on a chair, “I have to. As long as Ari is by my side, Ethan would consider her as my weakness and think that I haven’t completely given up on her. He wants me to suffer, even if it comes to a fight to the death. I can’t take that risk. I can’t ensure total flawlessness, so it’s much safer to stay this way. Maintain a close eye on Ari’s side. Tell them to watch them, very closely.”

Jackson sighed, “Don’t worry. They’re very safe. Didn’t you plant Lynn Brooks in her shop? She’s a bodyguard. Even if she can’t beat up as many people as I can, she can definitely hold her own against ten. Why worry? I’ll free up my schedule and visit them. Let me spend a few days with my woman, at least. I’ve been so busy with your shit that I’ve completely forgotten about mine.”

…

The next day was a weekend. The café was busier than ever. Tiffany was too busy to even look up, Arianne never left the kitchen, and everyone else was wading through a mountain of work.

When Jackson walked into the café, every space was pretty much occupied. He squeezed his way to the sales counter. Tiffany was behind the counter with her back against him, making drinks.

“Hello, what would you like today?” Naya asked in her habitual manner, “We’re only available for takeaways at the moment, I’m afraid. We’ve run out of seats. I’m very sorry.”

He gazed at Tiffany and smiled, “Just a drink will do, thanks. No need for a takeaway.”

Tiffany abruptly raised her head when she heard his voice. Her surprise soon turned into embarrassment, “I’m sorry, I’m really swamped right now. Wait for me, my schedule will free up around noon!”

“What’s going on?” Naya asked, confused.

“My boyfriend…” Tiffany explained bashfully.

Jackson was very pleased with her introduction, “Alright. I’ll wait for you. Then we’ll have lunch together at noon. Could you make me a drink, while you’re at it? Something simple will do. I came here immediately after my flight, so humoring me a little still seems reasonable, right?”

A lightbulb flashed in Tiffany’s mind, “Can you make desserts? Ari’s overwhelmed. Would you mind…”

“Would you have a heart? I just got down from the plane, my dear!” Jackson cut her off before she could finish.

His rejection was no match for her incessant coaxing and pestering. Finally, he downed a glass of lemonade, changed his clothes, and headed into the kitchen. Arianne burst into laughter at the sight of him. “Do you have a health certificate and training as a pastry chef?” she asked him out of formality.

“I’ve been more than capable of cooking back at White Water Bay Café, and we do serve desserts,” Jackson answered sulkily. “What do you think? I shouldn’t have come. Should’ve gone back to the hotel

and gotten a nice, long nap. Now I've ended up getting dragged into this war from the moment I arrived."

Arianne gave him a new apron to stop him from grumbling any further, "Here, put this on. Talk less. Once we're done with this wave of customers, it'll be alright. I'll let Tiffie have half the day off, and you two can go off and have fun. I can ask someone else to help out with the beverages."

Jackson let out a long sigh before burying his head in work. The worst part of it all was that he wasn't getting paid for it. The thought of this really upset him. No one else would work in such a small kitchen, dressed in an expensive suit.

Traffic at the café naturally slowed down around noon, and Jackson was finally liberated. Tiffany gave him a big hug in order to make it up to him and even buried her head into his neck, sniffing him, "You smell amazing! Just like dessert."

"Want a bite?" he asked, raising his brow.

She blushed and punched him in the chest, "Cheeky! Where are we going to eat? Your restaurant?"

He nodded and automatically helped her with her bag. Naya sighed as she watched the pair leave, "Tiffany's boyfriend sure is handsome. From the looks of it, he probably comes from a good family too. Plus, he's good at everything. I'm so jealous. He's definitely a better catch than the one I have at home."

Arianne instinctively compared Jackson with Mark as well. Mark seemed like the type of person who'd never cooked a day in his life. He was, however, a champion in pretentiousness.

Chapter 482

“What do you all want to have for lunch? Shall we order together? Just tell me what you don’t want, and I’ll leave it out,” Tanya suddenly interrupted.

An idea suddenly popped into Arianne’s mind, “Leave it to me. We’ll have a feast.”

Arianne didn’t want to eat the boring takeouts anymore; she’d grown so tired of eating the same thing everyday. Since Jackson was coming over today, she might as well just order lunch from his restaurant. She had the number anyway and the food would be ready much quicker. After all, it was necessary to show some appreciation to her employees occasionally. Although she was stingy when it came to herself, she was generous to others.

In the restaurant, Tiffany tried to be more ladylike and even ate slowly. She never cared about things like this when she was dining with Jackson in the past. Being in a relationship had changed her thinking; she wanted to at least make a good impression in front of him.

Jackson frowned and teased her, “Cut it out, just open up wide. You’re not being yourself. Why are you acting as though I’ve never seen how fierce you could be?”

Tiffany shot him a glare, “Oh God… Do I look like I’m that shameless? Can’t I just be ladylike for once?”

He shrugged, “There’s no need for you to do that at all. Just relax around me. Where do you want to go after this? I’ll accompany you.”

She thought for a moment but couldn't think of a place to go. "I have no idea. I usually spend my free time at home watching serial dramas instead of shopping around. Since we don't really know our way well around here, why don't we just stroll around?"

After pondering for a moment, Jackson made a suggestion. "I didn't get much sleep last night since I went to the airport before dawn. Why don't you go to the hotel with me in the afternoon? I need a nap first, then we'll have dinner with everyone from your shop. As for the rest, we'll just plan that after dinner. What do you think?"

Tiffany nodded. With mutual agreement on this matter, the two went straight to a hotel after their lunch.

Coming to this kind of place alone with him made her a little shy, but at the same time, it also filled her heart with a little anticipation. After all, being in a long-distance relationship meant they couldn't see each other frequently, so it was only natural they would be lovey dovey to each other. However, the reality was far from her expectation. Jackson really came here just to sleep! In fact, he laid down on the bed as soon as he entered the room!

Bored stiff, Tiffany nestled herself on the sofa and watched a serial drama at a barely audible volume. When she got tired of sitting, she moved to lie down beside Jackson and continued watching the drama. The entire afternoon passed in a flash. As she was about to laugh at a funny scene, Jackson beat her to it. The chuckle behind her startled her. "Was I being too loud?" she asked.

He pulled her closer into his embrace. "No, I woke up on my own and had been watching with you for quite awhile. Took you long enough to notice."

Tiffany felt weak in his arms; there was no way she could focus on her drama anymore. “Then… are you getting up now? I’ll call Ari and the rest for dinner. We’ll just close the shop up earlier today.”

Jackson glanced at the watch on his wrist. “Maybe you can just inform them to go over to my shop around six. It’s only five now, let’s lie down for a while longer.”

She relayed the message to Arianne. After receiving a reply from her, Tiffany continued watching her show, but Jackson’s hands became naughty. She caught his hand with a red face, “Where do you think you’re touching? Go back to sleep.”

He bit her earlobe accurately. “You won’t even let me touch you now? I’ve been wanting to do this for so long, but it wouldn’t have been appropriate for me to do this back then, unlike now.”

Tiffany didn’t put up that much resistance, just allowing his hands to roam freely. “When did you start having such sinful desires toward me? You’re really naughty…”

He replied without any hesitation, “Ever since the first time you slept with me… Would you consider staying in the hotel with me tonight? I came all the way here to see you. You wouldn’t bear to leave me all alone here, would you?”

Tiffany outright refused him, “No… I’ll just stay a little longer with you at most. Can you not think about things like that all the time…? What a pervert...”

Jackson didn’t even insist. He fell silent for a few seconds and said, “Alright, I’ll go take a shower first. We’ll go out once I’m ready.”

She watched him walk into the bathroom, feeling a little stunned. Was he angry? Did he suddenly get up to shower because she killed the mood? Tiffany was well aware of the fact that she wasn't as interesting as those girls he used to hang with. As a man who never lacked women around him, it was impossible for him to abstain himself from that kind of thing at her request once they started dating. Hence, she couldn't keep this up for too long. However… her horrible past made her feel revolted with herself and she worried if he would be bothered by it. Even if he did assure her that it didn't bother him, she still couldn't stop herself from overthinking.

By the time Jackson came out to change into a fresh set of clothes, he looked a lot more refreshed and no longer looked as dazed as he did when he just woke up. "Let's go."

Little did he know that when he was in the shower, Tiffany's thoughts had run several miles away and dampened her mood. "Oh…"

He noticed the strange emotions in her tone. "What's wrong?"

Tiffany hung her head as she made her way to the door. "Nothing, hurry up."

Of course, someone who understood women well like Jackson would notice that she was upset. Though he definitely didn't know the reason, he knew that a little coaxing would end it. "What's wrong, brat? You can just tell me if you're unhappy with something I did so that I can reflect on my mistake and punish myself. Please don't ignore me. I won't be able to stand it."

Chapter 483

"Do you think I'm a boring mood killer?" she asked glumly.

Jackson's mind was full of question marks. "Huh? N-No… I think you're alright. Why do you ask?"

Tiffany interpreted his answer as telling her that she was indeed a really boring person. What kind of answer was 'alright'? It was a yes or no question. 'Alright' was just another way of saying 'yes'! She ignored him and entered the elevator without waiting for him. Jackson quickly followed behind her in confusion. "What's wrong with you? I finally came here and you have to waste time picking a problem with me? What did I do wrong? Just tell me and I'll change."

She lifted her head and looked at him. "You haven't stopped seeing other women, right? If I tell you to abstain yourself from that kind of thing after dating me, would you be able to do it? Technically, you're already doing that since we're in a long distance relationship. But if you've been smashing some other women behind my back, then forget what I said."

Jackson didn't understand what she was going on about. "T-There's… no need to be this ruthless, ok? I definitely wouldn't do anything bad behind your back, but you gotta let me have a taste of it… In any case, I won't do anything to you without your consent since I'm a person with principles. We can… always do that kind of thing every day after we get married."

His words completely removed the little discomfort in her heart. What did he mean by every day? Was it possible to do that kind of thing everyday? She shot a half-hearted glare at him, "Get out!"

Jackson secretly breathed a sigh of relief at her reaction. He never cared about any woman's feelings before, but now, he'd learnt how to act cautiously. It seemed like it was true that everyone had an Achilles' heel. Mark's weakness was Arianne while his weakness was the woman in front of him.

By the time they arrived at the private room they reserved in the restaurant, Arianne and the other employees in the shop were already there. The restaurant that Jackson opened was relatively high-class, so Tanya and the rest were a little self-conscious since it was their first time dining at a place like this. They couldn't even sit and eat comfortably.

Although Naya was slightly younger than the rest, she was the most mature among them. She'd brought her daughter, Lulu, along with her and seemed to be a lot more comfortable than the rest. "Thank you for your generosity."

Jackson waved it off, "No need to be so polite. Just order whatever you want."

Lynn and Jackson's eyes met briefly before they looked away from each other.

By the time the dishes and wine were served, Lynn poured a glass for Jackson first before filling the other glasses up. Tiffany didn't think there was anything wrong with it, but Arianne could tell. Lynn had always been cold to others and never showed courtesy to anyone; hence, her initiative in offering to fill the glasses seemed strange. Not only that, her eyes were on Jackson when she was filling his wine glass...

Arianne's oversensitivity couldn't be blamed since this concerned her best friend's life-long happiness. She must be on better guard and make sure that nothing could go wrong again. Given how Jackson was someone who had an unruly 'past', he might not be able to break his bad habit of being a womanizer for a while and Tiffany might be driven crazy. For all she knew, Lynn might be a seducer, so Arianne must make sure nothing bad would happen.

After Lynn filled the other wine glasses, she casually took the seat on Jackson's right while Tiffany sat on his left. Before this, Lynn had been sitting beside Naya and the seat on Jackson's right was left vacant.

When Arianne noticed this, she got up with a smile, “Lynn, can we change seats? It’ll be more convenient for me to chat with Jackson and Tiffie.”

Lynn offered up her seat without a word.

Arianne sat down and very casually started a conversation with Jackson, “How long are you planning to stay this time?”

Jackson thought about it for a moment before throwing a teasing glance at Tiffany, “That would depend on how long Tiffie wants me to stay.”

Tiffany rolled her eyes at him in response, “I wish you would leave tomorrow.”

Arianne smirked at her. “Stop lying. You were the one who kept talking about how much you missed his food everyday and had been looking forward to his visit. Why aren’t you telling him that now that he’s here? You were never this timid before.”

Jackson’s lips couldn’t help but curl into a smile when he saw Tiffany blushing. “I know, she’s always been like this.”

All of a sudden, Lynn stood up with her wine glass and looked straight at Jackson. “Here’s a toast to you, Mr. West.”

The entire table instantly went silent. To anyone else, Lynn's behavior might seem normal, but it actually wasn't. For starters, if she was only trying to express her gratitude for the meal, she should have invited everyone else to toast. Second, she was only toasting to Jackson and not Tiffany, who was the reason why this meal was made possible. Lynn was behaving as though she and Jackson were acquainted before this.

Jackson cleared his throat, then raised his wine glass a little uncomfortably, "Thanks."

Tiffany gave him a strange look. Jackson was not a cold ice block who would only say a word to someone else. His curt response to Lynn's toast felt strange to her.

He only took a sip of the red wine, but Lynn emptied the entire glass.

"Lynn, we haven't even started eating yet. Don't drink that fast yet," Arianne reminded her.

Chapter 484

Lynn pressed her lips into a smile, "I'll be fine."

Naya helped Arianne ask the awkward question that she was hesitating to ask, "Lynnie, are you and Jackson already acquainted with each other?"

Lynn quickly glanced at Jackson, then lowered her head slightly. "No."

“Nope, but I tend to get along well with anyone. All of you should take care of each other since you’re working together. Please look after my girlfriend too in my absence,” Jackson said.

Naya smiled at him. “Don’t worry. We never get a chance to take care of Tiffany since she’s the one who’s always taking care of us and treating us kindly. I’d been jobless for the past several years after giving birth and was really out of touch with the working society. On top of that, I have to take my daughter to and from pre-school every day so it’s difficult to find the right job. I guess I made a good choice working at the dessert shop since Tiffany and Ari are great bosses.”

Conversation and laughter resumed at the dining table again. Lynn was the only one who didn’t really speak or eat. She just kept drinking a lot. Arianne’s instinct as a woman told her that things between Jackson and Lynn weren’t as simple as they seemed.

Jackson went to the washroom in the middle of the meal. Less than a minute later, Lynn got up and went out too. Tiffany was busy playing with Naya’s daughter, so she didn’t notice anything. Arianne sighed and followed them. When she was outside the washroom, she could vaguely make out two figures standing in front of the sink. It was none other than Jackson and Lynn, who seemed to be chatting with each other.

Instead of going in immediately, Arianne just went a bit closer to eavesdrop on them. She’d feel guilty every time someone passed by the washroom. After all, being an eavesdropper was a pretty shameful thing to do.

“Why did you toast to me just now? Do you know what trouble that will cause?”

It was Jackson’s voice!

Arianne was startled but continued listening more carefully.

“I’m sorry… for causing you trouble. I’ll be more mindful next time,” Lynn sounded a little dejected.

Jackson paused for a few seconds before speaking again. “Never mind, I didn’t mean to blame you. I have a girlfriend already. Just be helpful in Arianne’s shop and don’t think about anything else.”

“Is Tiffany Lane any different from the women in your past? You had so many girlfriends back then, so she’s just one of those women, right? You’ll dump her very soon…”

Although Arianne couldn’t see the expression on Jackson’s face, she could tell that he was a little angry from his tone. “She’s not. I’m serious about marrying her. If I was only fooling around, I would have slept with her a long time ago. Besides, given my relationship with Mark and Arianne, do you think I’d treat Tiffie like those women? Let me warn you now, I’m sure you know what you should and shouldn’t do. Mark and I have only allowed you here to protect Arianne. You mustn't forget your duty just because of the relationship between me and Tiffie. Otherwise, I can easily get you replaced at any time.”

Arianne was stunned. Lynn and Mark had something to do with each other too? She was actually someone that Mark and Jackson had sent to protect her? No wonder why Lynn didn’t even take extra days off during the holidays.

Now, she was almost sure that Jackson and Lynn told a lie at the dining table earlier. They knew each other a long time ago. Not only that, but they also shared an unusual relationship. Lynn wasn’t just a normal girl; she was definitely a bodyguard or some sort. Just when she was trying to find out more, Jackson suddenly came out. Their eyes met and she could see an obvious trace of fluster in his eyes. “Arianne? You’re going to the washroom too?”

Arianne also panicked a little in her mind and didn't know if she should expose him on the spot. Then, Lynn came out too, so she decided to keep things to herself for now and just nodded before entering the washroom.

Jackson frowned. He wasn't sure if Arianne had heard anything. "Go first, Lynn."

Lynn glanced in the direction where Arianne had disappeared to, then returned to the private room by herself. A moment later, Jackson came back too.

When Arianne came out of the washroom, she didn't mention anything about the incident earlier. When dinner was over, Jackson and Tiffany left together and the others went home. Arianne stopped Lynn, however. "Wait, I have something to ask you."

Lynn was neither panicked nor surprised. "You heard my conversation with Mr. West, right?"

Her bluntness made Arianne feel guilty about being an eavesdropper. "Y-Yes… I heard everything. Why did you two pretend to be strangers even though you've known each other for so long?"

Instead of answering her question, Lynn questioned back, "Why aren't you curious about the reason Mark Tremont has sent me here to protect you? I don't think my relationship with Mr. West is the biggest concern to you."

Arianne was taken aback. “Yes, that is very important to me too, but I’m here to solve Tiffie’s problem first. What’s your relationship with Jackson?”

Lynn turned around and slowly walked along the road. “I don’t know and I don’t want to talk about it either. But surely, I have the right to remain silent on my private matters, right? Since you’ve found out about my identity, I doubt you’ll want to keep me around. When are you planning to fire me?”

Arianne pondered for a moment. “I’ll discuss this matter with Jackson. Since you won’t tell me anything, I’ll just have to ask him myself. I won’t tolerate anyone deceiving me or my best friend. I’m calling him now.”

Chapter 485

Lynn stopped in her tracks and frowned. “I like him!”

Arianne didn’t actually reach for her phone, but the answer still made her gasp. “Tell me more…”

Lynn struggled internally for a moment before she decided to tell the whole story. “I guess it doesn’t matter anymore since I won’t be staying here anymore. I’m an orphan. I escaped from an orphanage with bruises all over my body, then spent the rest of my days begging on the streets. The darkest time of my life lasted until the day I met Mr. West when I was fourteen.

“The memory is still vivid in my mind. It was a cloudy day, but the rain never came. The chilly wind blew against my dirty body and tousled my messy hair. When he stood in front of me, I felt a strong sense of inferiority and desperation to be close to someone for the very first time. He told me that he liked the fierceness and tenacity in my eyes, then took me in and sent me to a bodyguard academy under the establishment of the West family. In order to receive his praise, I worked harder than anyone else.”

She paused and smiled bitterly. “I thought he liked me as a man would fancy a woman. Since he was only five years older than me, I thought there was a chance between us. I only wished to be a little closer to him, just a little closer. At that time, he was frequently training at the academy too. Apart from him, I was the best in the academy. I knew that he had countless women around him and I’ve always envied them for being able to be so intimate with him. When I took the initiative to confess to him, he rejected me. It was the first time he warned me so seriously that I was different from those women and that he wouldn’t do that to me. All he hoped for was that I could live a great life in the future.

“But I didn’t listen to him. I wanted to be… one of his women. When I turned eighteen, I begged him to celebrate my birthday with me and he agreed. I spiked his drink and thus achieved my long-planned goal. I thought he would accept the reality and accept me, but he was livid when he woke up the next day. After he left, we never met again. Seven years later, he came looking for me again. I was introduced to Mark Tremont and got hired to protect you.”

Arianne felt extremely conflicted; she never expected something like that between Lynn and Jackson. There was no doubt that Lynn was still very deeply in love with Jackson, but most importantly, they had slept with each other before.

If Tiffany found out about this, this history would surely cause quite a lot of trouble. Since Lynn’s arrival at the shop, Tiffany had been spending a lot of time with her. They could probably be considered friends. Wasn’t Jackson courting death by sending a woman who had a past with him near his current girlfriend?

Lynn broke the silence, “Do you think I’m shameless? He helped me by giving me the chance to lead a different life, but I drugged him and did something so shameful, hoping that he would fall in love with me as I do to him. I just can’t bear seeing him be so intimate with Tiffany, especially when he personally told me that she is different from those women. I used to be the only person that he said that to…”

Arianne bit her lips, “It’s useless to ask you to solve this matter, so I won’t ask you to do anything. I’ll get in touch with Mark to terminate your employment. I’ll also ask Jackson to resolve the issue between both of you. Since that incident happened seven years ago, it shouldn’t affect his relationship with Tiffie, and Tiffie shouldn’t be bothered by it. However, I definitely can’t allow your existence in our circle because you’re still in love with Jackson. Alright, you should go back now.”

After saying that, Arianne turned around and left.

Lynn seemed to disagree with her choice. She looked at Arianne’s back then said, “Tiffany and Mr. West aren't from the same world. She isn’t as smart or calm as you. How long do you think she can stay with him? Do you think someone as naive and sweet as her could spend the rest of her life with Mr. West? The gap between them will soon be evident. By then, even she would be stressed out. I’m pretty sure she will leave Mr. West immediately if I told her about that incident. Arianne, I don’t value this commission, but I’m sure you know the purpose of my desire to stay.”

Arianne paused in her steps. “Are you trying to negotiate with me here? You wish to stay so that you can at least see Jackson when he comes to see Tiffie, right? If I won’t comply with this, then you’ll reveal the truth to Tiffie? Lynn, you underestimate me and Tiffie. She’s someone who has experienced a storm. She won’t break up with Jackson over you. You can give it a try.”

After saying that, she left without even looking back. Lynn clenched her teeth. Arianne was more difficult to deal with than she thought. This woman looked soft on the outside, but she was tough on the inside. No wonder why Mark Tremont couldn’t handle her either.

Chapter 486

When she toasted at the dining table, she simply wanted to talk to Jackson because she couldn’t stand the intimacy between him and Tiffany. She didn’t expect it to cause such an incident… When Jackson came to the shop during the day, she was away to assist Tanya with deliveries. She had this unpleasant feeling in her heart when she heard Naya tell them that Jackson actually put on an apron to help Tiffany in the kitchen. Even if it had been seven years since then, she still couldn’t let go of the past...

By the time she regained her senses, she took out her phone and sent a message to Jackson. ‘Arianne discovered us and talked to me just now.’

Jackson paled when he received the text while he was shopping with Tiffany. ‘You didn’t spout any nonsense, did you?’

Lynn stared at the reply on the screen as the corners of her mouth twitched bitterly. ‘I told her everything about us. I don’t want to lie to anyone. You can deal with the rest. I’ll be packing and return to the capital tonight.’

Jackson didn’t reply to her message again. He regretted introducing Lynn to Mark and sending her to Arianne and Tiffany.

Tiffany noticed the change in his mood while she was munching on a skewer. “What’s wrong? Who sent you the text?”

Jackson quickly returned his phone back into his suit pocket. “Never mind, it’s just about work… I might need some time to deal with it now. Can we stop shopping and go back to the hotel first?”

Tiffany thought for a moment before saying, “Why don’t you go back to the hotel by yourself and deal with it? I’ll go home now. Since you’ll be busy, I’m just going to sit there and be bored, so I might as well go home and sleep.”

After some consideration, Jackson concluded that he shouldn't let her go home. What if Arianne told her about it? Things were going to get even more troublesome by then. He wore an unhappy look on his face, "What do you mean by 'might as well go home and sleep'? I came all the way here, so can't you just accompany me? I'll be done very soon."

Tiffany couldn't resist his coaxing and finally nodded. "Fine, I'll go buy more snacks. I'll eat while you're busy so that I won't be bored stiff."

Back in her apartment, Arianne didn't contact Mark immediately after arriving home. She hadn't contacted him after leaving Tremont Estate for so long, so it was quite stressful now that she had to suddenly get in touch with him. In the end, she resigned herself to searching for the phone number that she couldn't be even more familiar with. Instead of calling him, she just sent a text: 'Get your people out of here. I don't need them.'

She didn't mention anything about Lynn and Jackson because she was still worried that Tiffany wouldn't be able to bear the truth. Jackson should at least solve this matter by himself. She only had to solve her own problem.

When Mark saw the text from Arianne, he read it over and over again. He was consumed with an endless wave of thoughts. This was the first time she had taken the initiative to contact him after she left...

He didn't reply, not that he even knew how to either. He called Jackson instead, but his call declined. Soon after that, Jackson sent him a text. 'Don't call me, Tiffie is with me. Arianne contacted you, right? She discovered that Lynn was hired by you and even found out about my past with her. Why did I even send her to Arianne back then? Deal with your woman by yourself. I have my hands full right now, and I'm panicking here. Tiffany will find out about it sooner or later. How should I explain it to her? I'm so confused now, so don't start lecturing me.'

Mark pondered for a moment before replying, ‘I’ll get it settled myself then. You should make sure you handle your side well.’

After reading the text, Jackson took a deep breath and went up to Tiffany. “Tiffie… I have something to tell you…”

Tiffany was watching her drama series while enjoying her skewers and had no time to pay attention to him. “Go on,” she said, half-hearted.

He picked up a tissue and wiped the corner of her mouth. “Can you be more serious? Don’t be mad after you hear it.”

She turned off her phone, then sat up straight and looked at him seriously. “Okay, tell me.”

When she obediently became serious, Jackson found himself unable to speak and thought that it would have been better to say that when she was absent-minded. “Never mind, just carry on eating and watching your show. I can’t bring myself to say it when you’re being so serious...”

Tiffany rolled her eyes at him, then continued what she was doing, “Just spill the beans.”

He took a few deep breaths, then tested the waters. “Actually… I’ve known Lynn for a long time. Mark hired her to protect Arianne.”

Tiffany instantly stiffened, then turned her head and stared at him with her eyes wide. “Y-You’re saying that Lynn is a bodyguard? She doesn’t look physically strong and seems just like any ordinary woman… What a surprise!”

The corner of Jackson’s mouth twitched. “Shouldn’t you be more concerned about the fact that I’ve known her for a long time? Is her career more attractive to you?”

“Of course. I’m not surprised that you’ve known her for a long time since she was sent here by Mark. I’m just curious how a good-looking lady like her turned out to be a bodyguard. Can she fight very well? Does Ari know about this? She definitely won’t allow her to stay if she finds out about it,” Tiffany replied very honestly.

Jackson felt like crying. “Arianne already knows and has looked for Mark. I don’t think Lynn can stay anymore. Now, I… I want to tell you something about us. It’s very serious. I have a confession to make, but you have to promise me that you won’t be mad.”

Chapter 487

Tiffany’s curiosity was piqued. She waited for him to drop more bombs in anticipation. “Okay, okay, I promise I won’t get mad. Tell me.”

Jackson knew that it was either him coming clean or Tiffany finding out. No matter how he looked at it, the former seemed to pose a more hopeful chance of survival. Hiding the truth was no different from lying. It would mean differently when Tiffany found out on her own. Determined, Jackson said, “I introduced Lynn to Mark. I’ve known Lynn for a very long time. To be precise, when I was nineteen.”

“Mm hmm, and then?” Tiffany did not catch anything odd.

Jackson did not dare look at her eyes. With his head hanging, he sounded similarly low, “Lynn lived on the streets back then. I took her in and sent her to a bodyguard school… When she was eighteen, I was twenty-three. I didn’t know what I did to make her misunderstand, but she was determined to be together with me. On her eighteenth birthday, we… Ah, she drugged me and we… you know? After that, I hadn’t seen her in seven years. I just introduced her to Mark to protect Arianne before! You have to believe me. It wasn’t my intention!”

Tiffany’s expression gradually froze. She was unable to digest the bomb for the time being. Someone who was getting along with her in the shop had actually slept with her boyfriend? It was fine if she did not know the woman—she was not going to pursue what happened in the past—but why must it be Lynn?

She thought that this was out of her capacity so her immediate reaction was to call Arianne on her phone. “I’m going to tell Ari!”

Jackson was close to bawling. “Your Majesty, Ari knew!” Why would he come clean otherwise?

Tiffany put down her phone and looked at him begrudgingly. “What were you thinking? Sending a woman you’ve slept with to my side. Doesn’t your conscience hurt? What are you trying to do? You hadn’t seen her for seven years, so why are you suddenly looking for her? Was she the one who drugged you or did you drug her? With your character, I really don’t believe that she’s the one who wanted to sleep with you! How could an eighteen-year-old girl drug a man? Jackson, you’re lying to me!”

Jackson rubbed his throbbing temples. “I’m not lying to you. I swear on my family’s life! Now that I’ve come clean, you can verify it with Lynn, but I don’t recommend it. Everyone’s gonna feel awkward when bringing up the past. If you want to feel assured, you can go ahead and ask. Lynn is going back to the capital tonight. Hurry up if you’re doing it.”

Aggrieved, Tiffany kicked Jackson down to the floor. “How could I possibly ask? I get along quite well with Lynn usually; how am I supposed to ask her this? You’re the one to be blamed. Wouldn’t it be fine if you hadn’t contacted her? Since you want to be with me, why did you send her near me? You’re the one trying to upset me!”

Jackson did not dare pick himself up, only sitting on the floor. He knew that Tiffany would kick him again if he did, and he dared not fight back. “Yes, yes, it’s my fault. I’m already regretting it. I guarantee that I’m not contacting her anymore. I really don’t think of her that way.”

Upset, Tiffany no longer wanted to bother with him. It was a fact that Lynn was better-looking than her. She admitted it. Lynn had more grace than her too. She was a simple-minded person, lacking in comparison to Lynn. She subconsciously felt inferior. How was it possible that Jackson was together with her but did not have feelings for Lynn, who was better than her in everything? She had even taken the initiative by drugging him; did Jackson not feel anything at all? Tiffany was not sure.

Seeing her be silent, Jackson started to panic. “Your Majesty, you said that you won’t get angry… Don’t be like this. You can scold me and hit me. I can take it. Don’t keep silent, okay?”

Tiffany took a moment to suppress her anger and asked him, “Lynn is better than me in everything. She’s prettier too. She’s made her move first, yet you do not feel anything for her at all? People are always looking for something better. Yet, you don’t like her and are dating me instead. If you don’t tell me honestly today, this won’t end here!”

Jackson was truly unable to answer that. The women he had in the past were all prettier than Tiffany, but he had fallen for her. He could not even figure out why. How was he supposed to explain it to her? Facing Tiffany’s pressing gaze, he braced himself and said, “I… I’ve seen too many pretty ones. Looks don’t matter to me. As long as the feel is right…”

Tiffany landed a slap on his face. “Scram!”

Was he saying that she was not pretty? No one had ever called her ugly since she was a little girl. There were a lot of people courting her in school too. Did Jackson really think that she was not pretty?

Realizing that he had said something wrong, Jackson wore a smile that looked worse than a grimace. “I’m panicking a little now… I said the wrong thing. You’re the prettiest. I got my tongue tied because I’m too nervous. Give me a minute!”

Chapter 488

The panic on Jackson’s face did not look fake. Tiffany could see it too. It was her first time actually seeing him get overwrought. He was usually cool and nonchalant. Other than being enraged, she could not help feeling a little tenderhearted. Her tone softened as well, “I admit that I’m upset but… I’ll believe you this time, as long as you are good in the future. I feel super insecure. You’re not just with me due to a moment of impulse, are you? Could you actually quit having flings everywhere? Are you able to stay chaste when I’m not there in the capital?”

Jackson looked at her sincerely. “What should I say to make you believe me? I’ve never been an impulsive person. I won’t make decisions in the heat of the moment. My choice to be with you was a long time coming. Understood?”

Not in the heat of the moment, but a long time coming – Tiffany was defenseless against such unconventional words of romance. The corners of her lips could not help curling up. “Okay, you’re off the hook this time.”

Jackson breathed a long sigh of relief and held her face to kiss her, but Tiffany covered his mouth with her hand. “What are you doing? Weren’t you back for work? Go do it. I’ll stay with you for two hours at most, then I’ll go home. Go do what you have to.”

Jackson let her go sadly, not pressing it further. “Alright… Ten minutes is good. I'll tend to work and… keep you company later.”

Tiffany continued watching dramas, but her mind wandered away from the storyline. Even the snacks beside her were not tempting anymore. She was carefree but that did not mean that she would not feel sad. She could even picture the scene of Jackson and Lynn in bed together. The more she thought about it, the worse she felt. She threw away the remaining snacks into the trash bin and went to gargle in the bathroom to wash away the spiciness in her palate.

Looking at her own reflection in the mirror, she tried to make various feminine sultry looks, but without exception, all of them oozed awkwardness. No matter how seductive she looked, it was not her. Tiffany felt insecure and unworthy of Jackson, be it her family background or other aspects…

She did not know how long she spent in the bathroom when she broke out of her trance. Jackson knocked.

“What are you doing inside? Fell asleep?”

Tiffany opened the door and glared at him. “You’d sleep in the bathroom! You’re done? I… I’ll be leaving then. I’m tired, sleepy.”

Jackson took her into his arms. “I know that you’re upset, but I don’t want to let you go now. Who knows if you’ll just ignore me after you leave? I’ll only let you leave once you’re completely fine.”

Tiffany gave him a small shove. “I’m not upset. I’m just purely sleepy.”

Jackson was determined to not let her go. “Then sleep here. Don’t leave for the night; don’t even think about leaving.” His tone was not domineering. Instead, it was tinged with a childish sense of cuteness.

Glancing at the only large bed behind him, Tiffany shook her head decisively. “Forget it.”

Jackson’s expression changed faster than one would flip a page. He dragged her to the bed vehemently and caged her under him easily with the advantage of his height, rendering Tiffany without any defense. “Don’t push it. I can’t guarantee what I’ll do to you if you do…”

When seeing his eyes so closely, Tiffany could see the nervousness in his gaze. Jackson, who had countless women, was nervous because he was worried about her ignoring him? She felt herself giving in. “Okay, I’ll stay, but you can’t touch me. We just got together… It’s too early to… now. I’m not ready yet…”

There was a two-second pause before Jackson nodded. “Okay…”

Tiffany pushed him away at once. “What do you mean? Sounds like you’re being forced. Indeed, men are animals who think with their lower body! I’ll go shower, don’t peek!”

Watching her enter the bathroom, Jackson fully relaxed. At least, things did not develop in the direction that he was the most worried about. He still managed to maintain things as they were.

Suddenly, his phone, which was left aside, rang. Seeing that it was Summer who called, Jackson went up to the window and answered it. “Hello, mom?”

Summer questioned, “Where did you go? Leaving the company to me, huh? Are you trying to kill me with exhaustion? Stop fooling around outside. Either you get me a daughter-in-law properly or don’t have flings outside at all. You fooled around in the past too, but I’ve never seen you out for so many days without coming home. Bewitched? I want to see which woman enchanted you!”

Jackson felt his legs giving out beneath him. He had just settled one woman, now came another. “Mom… I’m not fooling around. This is serious. I’m not trifling anymore, okay? I’ll bring my girlfriend home to see you soon. That’s all, bye.”

He hung up directly after that, scared of Summer’s ceaseless nagging.

Summer was doubtful as she stared at her phone. She did not believe that her son would find a girlfriend and settle down to get married and have children so easily. She was unable to wait any longer. She was going to find out the truth!

In the Tremont Estate, Henry went to the door of the study room hastily. His expression was unreadable. “Sir, Nafaeth has news.”

Mark opened the door. “What’s the current situation?”

Chapter 489

Henry composed himself, speaking only when he caught his breath, “According to the reply of our hired hitman, Ethan was severely injured and fell into the rapids of a river twelve hours ago when he was escaping. Our men have seen it with their own eyes. It's a primitive tropical jungle all around. It’s very unlikely that he’ll survive, and it’ll be practically impossible to find his corpse. Sir, you don’t have to worry now.”

There was a smirk on Mark’s face. “True, with a place like that and his injury, his survival is impossible. I’ll be away for some time in half a month. While I settle the company within half of the month, the house is under your care.”

Knowing that his master had been waiting for the day he could go back to Arianne, Henry nodded understandingly. “Yes.”

Returning to his room, the iciness on Mark’s face slowly dissolved as he stared at the photo on the nightstand. “Ari… I’ll be coming to you soon. No matter how much you hate me, I’ll make you come back to me.”

The next day, Tiffany secretly left the hotel to go back to the apartment before the break of dawn. Upon contemplation, she was still scared of Arianne discovering that she had not returned for the night. They were all adults, but she was still worried about Arianne thinking of her as someone too casual, progressing to that stage even though it had only been a while since she had gotten together with Jackson. Of course, nothing happened last night. Jackson kept his word and did not touch her. However, it was just that they had not progressed to the last stage. Everything else, they had more or less done it.

When Tiffany had stealthily entered and closed the door with heightened caution, Arianne’s voice suddenly rang behind her. “You two are getting along pretty fast huh… Back so early?”

Tiffany froze in shock. At least she had not screamed from the fright. She turned around with a chuckle. “Girl friend, don’t tease me. We haven’t…”

Arianne had gotten up to use the toilet and came over to check when she heard noises at the door. “Alright, I’m going back to sleep. I have to get up and go to the shop after a while. You catch some sleep too.”

Tiffany caught her wrist. “You knew about Lynn and Jackson? I think Lynn’s left.”

Arianne turned to look at her. “You’re not mad? That’s good. I was so confident in front of Lynn, saying that you won’t break up with Jackson because of it. You aren’t that weak. It’s good that she left. She didn’t want to because she’d be able to see Jackson whenever he comes to see you. What I mean is, no need to be bothered with the past. As long as Jackson’s not playing around, you know? Okay, let’s sleep.”

Tiffany heaved a sigh of relief. She had thought that Arianne would have an opinion about Jackson due to the matter. It seemed like she did not now.

Nine in the morning, Jackson was woken up by hasty raps on the door. His head was heavy with sleep, not having a sound slumber after fooling around with Tiffany last night.

When he got up and realized that there was no one else in bed, he discovered that Tiffany had gone out. She was probably locked outside the door. Without putting on his clothes, Jackson hopped off the bed barefoot to open the door. “Babe, where did you go early in the morning…”

Before he finished, he was stunned. “Mom?”

Summer slapped his bare arm. “Who are you calling babe? I’m your mother! Is this what you look like with only your underwear? Get dressed. What time is it now? You’re still sleeping? Where’s the girl who’s with you? I want to see just what she looks like to bewitch you into coming here constantly!”

Jackson dragged his feet into the room to drape his robe on. “Mom, you’re… You’re here so early. What’s it for? To supervise me? There’s no girl. It’s just me.”

Summer pulled all the curtains in the room apart and sharply found two strands of hair belonging to a woman on the pillow. “You didn’t sleep alone last night, huh? I’d rather not babysit you either, but how old are you now? Can you treat love and romance properly? I’ll die young because of you sooner or later! If you still don’t consider getting married, I’ll liquidize all my assets, donate a portion, and keep a portion to travel the world. I won’t leave you a single cent!”

Jackson was annoyed. “Alright, alright. Don’t nag. I didn’t sleep alone last night. Tiffany was with me.”

Summer looked stunned. “Tiffany? Didn’t she… she accepted that… uhh, Ethan’s proposal? Why are you still messing around with her? Oh, I know. I saw it on the news. Ethan went bankrupt. He sold a plot of land and the unfinished building, then fled. So they broke up already? Whether Ethan abandoned her or she left after he went bankrupt, she’s not a good person. I used to be happy for both of you, but now that things have gotten to this stage, why are you two together again? Lucky you weren’t forced to get married by me back then. She turned out to be a gold digger after all!”

Chapter 490

Summer's change of attitude unsettled Jackson. "Mom, I don't condone you speaking about her like that. Back then, we lied to you about being together. I hired her to become my pretend girlfriend for peace. I wasn't really together with her then. Ethan was her boyfriend of three years when they were in college. They broke up after that and Ethan came back for her. There's the proposal that you saw in the mall too. She wasn't sure if she still loved Ethan. When they broke up, Ethan wasn't bankrupt yet. Besides, I'm richer than him. If she were a real gold digger, why would she have agreed to get back together with Ethan? She'd have found a chance to latch herself to me."

Summer was unfazed. "I don't care. Who knows if you're lying to me now? Besides, it was hot news when she was proposed to by Ethan in the mall back then. It's so grand that the videos are everywhere on the internet. How's it that you're together with her now? The Wests still have their pride. I gave you two a chance and even tried to force you both into getting married. You were the ones who didn't appreciate it. Now, I disallow you from being with a woman like this. That's all I have to say; you'd better stop this here! I'll wait here for you to go back with me, and I'll be staying in the room right opposite of you!"

Jackson palmed his forehead and pushed his mother out the door. "Sure, do whatever you want. But I'll tell you too. Other than her, I don't want anyone else in this lifetime!" He shut the door directly, feeling lucky that Tiffany had left early. He dared not imagine what would have happened if she had encountered Summer.

Knowing that Summer would keep an eye out on him, Jackson did not plan to go out. Tiffany would not usually come to the hotel to find him either, so he was not worried.

Summer was not as collected as he was. She had someone check on Tiffany and found out that she and Arianne had opened up a dessert shop here in this city. She headed over instantly. When she went out, she took care to be as quiet as possible lest Jackson notice it. If he knew, he would never allow her to go find Tiffany.

Entering the dessert shop, she saw Tiffany preparing beverages behind the counter. She looked for a table and sat down, ordering the most expensive dessert and coffee on the menu. Her gaze lingered on

Tiffany. If she had not witnessed the proposal with her own eyes, she would not have felt as disturbed as she was now.

When the shop had become slower during noon, Tiffany finally noticed her. “Mrs. West…? Why are you here? When did you come? It’s too busy, sorry I didn’t see you there.”

Summer gestured for her to sit down without batting an eye. “You aren’t busy now. I’d like to talk to you.”

Tiffany was a little embarrassed. Last time, she had pretended to be Jackson’s girlfriend. Now, she was really his girlfriend. Summer must have looked for her here after having found out about her and Jackson. “Sure, please go ahead.”

Summer fished out a check from her luxury purse. “Here, take this and leave Jackson.”

Looking at the large sum on the check, Tiffany was dumbstruck. “What… what are you saying? Why?”

Summer’s attitude was completely different from before. “Because. I don’t wish for Jackson to be together with you. I gave you both a chance before, but you were acting, lying to me. Now, I don’t like you anymore. I can’t accept a woman who’s been publicly proposed to as my daughter-in-law either. The videos of Ethan proposing to you are still on the internet.”

Her words had undoubtedly pricked Tiffany as the latter gripped the hem of her clothes. “Mrs. West, you don’t have to humiliate me with money. I’m not that greedy. The profit from this shop that Arianne and I have set up is enough for me. It’s not much, but I have more than I need. I don’t want your money.

I thought that this plot would only appear with the evil mother-in-law in dramas… You're not someone like that to me. I hope that you like our dessert. You're welcome to come again."

Tiffany wanted to get up and leave after that but she was stopped by Summer. "Don't think that I'll relent because of what you said. Just assume that I'm the evil mother-in-law in the dramas. If you think the money's too little, I can add to it until you're satisfied."

Tiffany was unable to hold back her temper. She had never felt such humiliation in her life and it was unexpectedly from Summer who had been so nice to her. She fumed inwardly. "I'll repeat myself. I don't want you money. Take it back!"

Summer was shocked by her shout. "You… You dare speak to me like that? What's wrong with you? Jackson's a womanizer, you know that. If you wait until he dumps you, you won't get anything. Take the money now and leave him while you still get to earn something!"

The others in the shop had noticed the two of them. Worried about Tiffany, Naya quickly stepped forward. "Lady, what are you doing?"

Hearing that Naya called her "lady", the corners of Summer's lips went up slightly in delight. "Nothing. I'm telling Tiffany a truth. Go tend to whatever you should be doing."

Tiffany gestured for the others not to intervene as well. She wanted to resolve her own matters. Moreover, it was quite embarrassing.