Ruling 501

Chapter 501

Jean walked to the door and looked through the peephole. It was pitch-black outside, he could not see anything at all. It seemed like someone had covered the peephole. He began to feel nervous so he made himself sound gruff and fierce as he said, “Who is it?”

A few seconds later, a male voice rang indifferently from the other side of the door. “There’s a problem with the electricity in your home. I’m here to fix it.”

The lights in the condominium immediately went out, as though working in tandem with the man’s answer.

Aery jumped in fright. “Dad, get them to come and fix this. Something’s wrong. It’s too dark!”

Jean believed this matter was not as simple as it seemed. The lights were still on when the man knocked on the door, and they only went out after the man spoke. He did not let down his guard. “The electrical boxes are outside, right next to you. You’ll have to get a key from security downstairs. It’s locked so I can’t help you!”

“I have the keys,” the man outside replied, “I’ve checked. The problem isn’t with the external circuitry, it’s an internal issue. It might be a hazard if we don’t fix it. I’ll leave if you’re opposed to this. Get someone else to fix it tomorrow.”

Jean began to relax when he heard the man’s words. What if he was really here to fix the power? He did not like the idea of pawing around in the dark. After a bout of hesitation, he decided to open the door. Just as he turned the knob, someone outside violently pushed it open and knocked him to the ground.

A few burly men stormed in and restrained Aery and Jean to the sofa in the dark with complete accuracy.

The power came back at this very moment.

At this moment, Jean and Aery finally saw the faces of the intruders. The brawny men were all strangers to them, but they were familiar with Henry's face.

Aery's face turned ashen. She lowered her head guiltily, too afraid to speak. At this moment, she finally remembered Helen's warning. She should have taken her mother's warning seriously. Arianne still had Mark supporting her…

"Mr. Kinsey, allow me to introduce myself. I am the Tremonts' family butler, you may call me Henry. You should be well aware of the reason for my visit today. I'm sure an explanation isn't needed?" Henry said icily as he sat on the sofa across from Jean.

Jean was still adamant about denying everything. "N-no, I don't. Isn't this blatant intrusion of privacy a little inappropriate even if you are a member of the Tremont family? I don't want to make a big deal out of this so I'll just be frank. You're going to scare my daughter if you do this…"

Henry glanced at Aery. "Frighten your daughter? Your daughter's not that timid. There's nothing she wouldn't do. She's already gone out of control. Why would this frighten her? You're entirely welcome to call the police if you think we're trespassing. I'd love to see if the cops would apprehend me or you. I'll give you five minutes to tell the truth. After that, I'm going by the book."

Jean had heard many stories about the Tremont family's tactics. Although Mark had never been associated with anything shady, no one could say for sure if he had done anything illegal behind closed doors. After some deliberation, his mental defenses broke down and he immediately confessed everything. "Yes! I did it! It's Arianne's fault for hitting my daughter. I've never laid a finger on my daughter, who the hell does she think she is? All I've done is smashed her shop's windows and door. I didn't do anything else to her. I've been very nice!"

Henry sneered. "Who does she think she is? Well, your daughter caused Mrs. Tremont's miscarriage, as a result, she can no longer have children. That alone is enough reason to forfeit her life. What's a beating compared to that? If it weren't for Mr. and Mrs. Tremont's kindness, I'm afraid you'd have to visit your daughter at the cemetery to show your love. So, how should we deal with this? Any suggestions?"

Aery grabbed the corner of Jean's shirt fearfully. "Daddy…"

Jean was utterly terrified, but he did not want to show it in front of his daughter. He tried to suppress his fear as he said, "What… What do you want? I can… compensate in cash."

Henry narrowed his cloudy eyes. "Compensate in cash? Do you think the Tremonts need your money? Do you think I came all the way here, on my boss' behalf, just to ask for an insignificant amount of money? Mr. Kinsey, you've underestimated us. Looks like you haven't completely realized your present circumstances. Don't worry, Mr. Tremont has left us his instructions. He doesn't wish to spill blood now. Take your daughter and surrender yourselves to the authorities. If you have the nerve to leave jail in these three to five years, then, I'm afraid… You won't live for much longer than three to five years…"

Jean leaped to his feet. "What? Jail? I don't want to go to jail!"

“I don’t want to go to jail either!” Aery cried, “I want to see Mark!”

Henry shot the bodyguards a look, and they immediately pushed Jean and Aery back down on the sofa. “Stay down!”

Aery burst into tears. “Please let me see Mark. I don’t want to go to jail. I’m still so young. My life will be ruined if I go to jail. I’ll apologize to Arianne, okay? I’ll apologize to that b*tch!”

Henry’s eyes turned cold at the mention of the word ‘b*tch’.

The bodyguard restraining Aery slapped her twice across the face. Aery screamed and buried her head in her hands, too afraid to speak now.

Jean’s heart ached. He gritted his teeth. “Stop it! I’ll confess. Will that do? I’ll go to jail, just leave my daughter alone!”

Chapter 502

Henry was unmoved. “Mr. Tremont has made it very clear, both of you will have to go. Mr. Kinsey, your only crime is hiring thugs to vandalize personal property and issuing threats. Your sentence will probably be quite light. However, your daughter deliberately rammed her car into someone else’s car, causing the victim to miscarry and unable to have children so I’m not too certain about her. Will your daughter give up the people who helped her cover up? Well, that all depends on her.”

Jean widened his eyes. “Didn’t Mark cover up for her as well?”

Henry furrowed his brows. “Mr. Tremont is a kind man. His kindness simply stems from the fact that your daughter is slightly related to Mrs. Tremont. Mr. Tremont is a victim after all. Your five minutes are up. Would you like to go to the police station or shall we settle this here?”

Aery was completely terrified at this point. Without any hesitation, she screamed, “The police! Let’s surrender ourselves to the police!” She would much rather go to the police than face a horrifying and unknown consequence. She could always ask for Helen’s help when she arrived at the police station. It was better than dying here. Regardless of her current animosity with Helen, Helen was still her mother. She refused to believe Helen would abandon her and watch her life go to ruin! Most importantly, Helen was one of the people who had covered up for her. If Helen refused to help her, she would reveal everything. At that time, Helen would not be able to escape as well!

Henry no longer said another word. He sent the father and daughter to the police station before calling Mark. “Sir, we’ve sent them to the police station. They definitely won’t go to jail without a fight and will certainly ask Helen for help. I’m afraid… Helen might ask Mrs. Tremont for help…”

“Do not let them contact Helen until they’re safely behind bars,” Mark bluntly replied.

Henry mumbled a response and ended the call.

At the police station, Aery noticed the bodyguards left just as she was about to give her statement so she promptly refused to give a statement. She asked to make a phone call.

The police denied her request and said apathetically, “No one can help you now. I’m sure you understand what I mean. If you refuse to stay in jail for three to five years, the consequences will be worse. Quit while you’re ahead.”

Aery was like a deflated balloon upon hearing this. “Mark… You’ve been so cruel to me all because of Arianne, a woman who doesn’t even love you! Why are you doing this to me… What does she have that I don’t? What does she have that I don’t?”

No one answered her. After completing their transcript, she and Jean were placed behind bars. Their trial would come sooner or later.

Henry rushed back to the capital once everything was settled.

A few days later, Arianne discovered Jean had stopped causing trouble for her. She could not believe that the matter was put to rest just like this. Knowing Jean and Aery, they would not know when to stop. An idea popped into her mind, but she was too afraid to dwell on it. There were things she was not willing to think about.

Tanya was promoted to barista in half a month. Young people were always fast learners and carefree after all.

The shop closed early the day before Tiffany’s departure so they could give her a farewell celebration.

The celebration was held in Jackson’s restaurant as usual, and Jackson paid for it as well.

However, this time, everyone was feeling somber.

Tiffany raised a glass at the dinner table. “Take good care of yourselves, everyone. Work hard with Ari, don’t let anyone take advantage of her…”

Naya spoke on everyone’s behalf, “Don’t worry. You take care as well. Come and visit us whenever you can. We’ll miss you.”

Jackson disliked this kind of atmosphere. He had always enjoyed a light-hearted atmosphere and could not stand these kinds of situations so he remained silent. However, the thought of being with Tiffany made him very happy. It seemed like he was the only one who was happy about this farewell.

After dinner, Tiffany suggested going to a karaoke lounge. She did not ask to go to a bar because goody-two-shoes like Naya and Tanya would not be comfortable in places like that. A karaoke lounge was pretty intimate with just a few friends. They would be able to let loose that way.

Tiffany had a lot to drink and sang quite a few songs. She was not the best singer but was not a bad singer as well. However, it was clear that she was releasing a lot of suppressed emotions.

Arianne had a lot to drink as well. It would be a lie to say that she was not depressed. She would be all alone from now on… She had tried her best to leave Mark even if she had to abandon everything. Now that she had succeeded, she realized it was not as perfect as she had imagined. Being all alone made her feel as if the world had abandoned her. There could be throngs of people on the streets, but she could never open up to any of them. None of it had anything to do with her…

After they emerged from the karaoke lounge and sent everyone else away, Arianne took the initiative to bid Tiffany and Jackson goodbye. “I can go home on my own. You’re taking a flight back to the capital,

right? If it's possible, Jackson, can you please check on Rice Ball when you have the time? Take a few videos for me. Take good care of Tiffie. If you ever make her cry, you'll have to deal with me."

Jackson nodded. "I know. I'll never make her cry. Actually, I don't need to check on that cat to know that it's been living a pretty good life. Rice Ball has pretty much replaced you after you left the Tremont Estate. It has been given the best food and is sleeping well. Mark cuddles it every day. It's really living the best life. I'm going back to the hotel with Tiffie. You stay safe on your way home."

Chapter 503

Arianne glanced at the passed-out Tiffany, smiled, and nodded. Once she turned around, her tears that she had been holding back for a long time finally streamed down her face.

She did not call for a cab and decided to walk home along the empty streets. Every step felt fleeting to her. Her past experiences began to flash in her mind. The highs and the lows of her life felt like a blur to her. Perhaps, she would be able to forget them all soon, forget all her experiences and all those people…

Suddenly, she heard footsteps closing in on her and trembled. She was too afraid to turn back and look so she quickened her pace. Unfortunately, her alcohol-muddled brain and limbs refused to cooperate so she stumbled a few times. Only a small sliver of sobriety warned her of the dangers of walking alone at night.

She arrived home with great difficulty and broke out into cold sweat. Her hands were shaking when she pulled out her key to unlock the door, refusing to comply with the instructions from her brain. No matter how hard she tried, she could not seem to insert the key into the keyhole. At this moment, she was close to tears, too afraid to turn around. For some reason, the lights along her corridor went off, and she was shrouded in darkness. She pulled out her phone, turned on the flashlight, and aimed it at the keyhole. Just then, a tall figure loomed over her petite shadow, creating an inverted image on the door and walls, making it look like a demon!

She seemed to have lost her voice. She felt as if some shapeless force had taken over her, and she could not move at all.

She stood frozen for a while before a hand snatched the key from her and inserted it into the keyhole, opening the door for her. She thought she would be shoved into the house and was too terrified to think about what might happen next. Contrary to her expectations, the person behind her did not make any violent moves as though he simply wanted to help her open the door.

She carefully pushed the door and entered the house before swiftly closing and locking the door behind her in one breath! She leaned against the door and gasped for breath once she had completed all of this, feeling exhausted. From now on, she would have to face too many things on her own. She had to learn to get used to this. She regretted drinking too much. If the other party harbored ill intentions, she would not have the strength to retaliate!

She could hear the sound of footsteps fading away from the door, loud and heavy, as though he was deliberately telling her he was leaving, and it was safe.

After a while, she realized the man had not done anything to her. Why did he follow her home? When she turned on the lights, she found a set of keys on the ground near the door — the keys that she had forgotten to remove from the keyhole. The man actually slid them inside for her.

She put the keys away, made sure that the door was properly locked before going to the bathroom to take a quick shower. She had considered sending a message to Naya and the others to tell them what had happened. Then, she remembered how Naya had to put her child to sleep at home and that Tanya had to care for her grandfather. Apart from that, she was not well-acquainted with the newly-hired staff, and they had not really spoken to each other. In the end, she dismissed the idea. This was her circle of friends.

She had unconsciously tapped on Nick's Facebook page. She sent him a message. It was a good idea to have someone to talk to at this time, at least, it would calm her down. Nick had not contacted her in a while, and she did not expect she would take the initiative to send him a message. She was surprised when she saw he had deleted her when she saw a bright red exclamation mark next to her message.

She did not feel any particular way about this. Perhaps, he realized he would never get what he wanted from her so he gave up. This was good too. At least, she would not be burdened by this.

Downstairs, Mark paused for a very long time, staring at the light in Arianne's bedroom for a very long time before turning around to leave. Initially, he had intended on sending her home and finding a way to speak to her. Unfortunately, she was too afraid to turn around and believed that he would attack her. Seeing her in such a frightened state, he wanted to speak up and tell her that it was only him. Unfortunately, she was too fast. He had also considered giving up on following her home but was afraid that she might actually run into trouble.

When they arrived at her door, he had intended to leave, but she took so long to unlock the door. He could not bear watching it anymore so he helped her open the door and ended up having the door cruelly slammed in his face. Furthermore, she had forgotten to take her key out from the keyhole. She did not even look at him.

The next day, it was past ten in the morning when Arianne arrived at the shop. She had dark circles around her eyes.

Everyone was out enjoying themselves until late last night so they were less energetic than usual. However, none of them looked as haggard as her.

“Are you so sad about your best friend leaving that you ended up staying up the whole night?” Naya asked, half-jokingly.

Arianne smiled. “You could say that. Tiffie should be getting on the plane with Jackson right now. She won’t let me send her off so I won’t. Just in case we end up bursting into tears and embarrassing ourselves at the airport.”

Naya did not think too much of it. She pointed at the office building across the road and said, “I saw a Rolls-Royce parked outside the office building when I arrived today. My husband loves cars so I can recognize them. That car is really expensive. It probably belongs to a boss from one of the companies in that building, but I wonder which one is it?”

Arianne stiffened. She instinctively connected the dots about everything that had happened at the end of last night. Could it be that… Mark had arrived?

Chapter 504

However, that didn’t seem possible. He was in the capital. How could he possibly be here and doing such ridiculous things? Besides, he never replied to her message when she asked him to take Lynn away. It would seem that he had truly given up on her, so he certainly wouldn’t do such a thing. She must be overanalyzing.

Tiffany may be gone, but it was still business as usual; life went on. The weather today seemed pretty good, as if it was meant to cheer Arianne up. It was slightly breezy, not too humid or too hot. The sun was just warm enough, and business was good.

Just as noon arrived, Naya suddenly cried out in surprise, “Ari, we’ve received a huge order from a finance company in the office across the street. I think it’s from your… husband’s company? A hundred desserts and cups of americano. Americanos are easy to make but making those desserts might exhaust

you… Was that your husband's Rolls-Royce this morning? Only a company boss would treat his employees to these desserts. I mean, who else would have that much cash?"

Arianne's mood plummeted after hearing Naya's exclamation. Was Mark really here? Dessert and americano, that was definitely Mark's usual. And he wanted a hundred of them too. Was he trying to work her to death?

Only a fool would refuse money. She put on her apron and asked, "When does he want these? If he's expecting an immediate delivery, I'll rush it all out right now."

Naya shook her head, "No, it's fine as long as we deliver it by four."

Arianne gathered all of her strength, "One more thing, he's Mark Tremont. Don't call him my husband!"

Naya made a gesture to indicate silence. Everyone had been working here for a while, so they understood what this meant.

Arianne produced a hundred desserts by afternoon. Tanya had also managed to finish making all of the coffee with help from everyone else. Due to the sheer volume of the order, they couldn't possibly send one delivery girl, and there were only a few staff members. So, everyone had to deliver the items together. They didn't serve any other orders this afternoon, and put all of their attention on this large order.

Initially, Naya did not include Arianne to help with the delivery. Arianne herself volunteered, however, as she wanted to find out once and for all if Mark really was here…

She couldn’t remember a lot of details from that stalker from last night, as she had a lot to drink. But now, as she recalled everything that had happened, it didn’t seem too scary after all. Who was that stalker who followed her home, helped her unlock the door, and stuffed the key underneath the door?

When they arrived at the office building, Arianne led her staff as they placed the delivery items on the receptionist’s desk in Mark’s office. The receptionist seemed to have gotten a heads up on the situation, so she cleared an area earlier on. The front desk was completely clear, but it still didn’t have enough space for all the items. The desserts took up a lot more space.

Someone walked into the foyer and said loudly, “If there’s no space, please bring the delivery items inside. Bring the items in your hands to the office, lady boss.”

Arianne’s face immediately blackened when she heard the words “lady boss”. However, she couldn’t be sure if the person was referring to her. She did not say a word about it and brought the items in her hands inside. The person who had called out to her was very polite, bowing and scraping at her, doing everything to flatter her except take the items off her hands.

When she arrived at the office door, the person who had led her there left immediately. Her hands were too full to open the door, so she kicked the door open. The office door didn’t have a lock, so it couldn’t be locked from the inside. Once the door was opened, she finally had confirmation of Mark’s arrival. He was sitting behind an office desk, right in front of her, looking through documents, looking as if he were above all mortals.

She didn’t bother looking at him. She put the delivery items on his desk and said, “Your dessert and coffee. Enjoy.”

Then, she turned around and left. Mark didn't stop her.

After walking a distance away, he finally left out a huge sigh of relief. Meanwhile, she was puzzled as to why on earth he was tormenting her. He clearly wasn't interested in seeing her, and he didn't say a word…

Mark stared at the dessert and coffee on the table, entranced. He slowly put the documents down and opened the packaging. He smiled as he tasted the dessert. These were much better than the last ones. They were still inferior when compared to the ones produced by top class pastry chefs, but it wasn't too bad. At least, he wouldn't suffer from diarrhea after eating them, and he wouldn't need to be rushed into the hospital…

The senior executive stood at the office door, smiling as he asked, "Mr. Tremont, I've done as you've asked and told Mrs. Tremont to personally deliver the items for you. You've seen her, right? If you asked me, when it comes to arguments, it's best to end it with make-up sex. Can it really be that bad? Wouldn't settling it in bed solve the issue? There's no need to go through such trouble…"

The smile on Mark's face disappeared. He calmly shot the senior executive a look, "Your name is Dick Smalley, right?"

The senior executive looked embarrassed, "My parents gave me that name… I never changed it…"

"The office is a place for work. Not a place for you to meddle with your superior's private affairs," Mark icily said.

Dick really wanted to tear out his big mouth at this point. He quickly shut the door and scurried away. He hadn't been able to get a good grasp of his big boss's personality. His head was at risk of falling onto the chopping block!

When they arrived back at the café, Arianne immediately dove into the kitchen without another word. Her current and only hobby was making desserts, especially when she was feeling frustrated. Baking soothed her.

Chapter 505

Once she thought about Mark's nonchalance when she met him in the office, Arianne felt unnerved. If she weren't looking to make money, she would not have accepted his order. Not only had she wore herself out the whole afternoon, but she had the feeling that he was doing it on purpose to make her life hard.

Not too long later, Naya returned to the shop after picking up her daughter from preschool. It seemed to be a common occurrence recently. Others might not discern anything, but Arianne could see through it. "Naya, don't you have anyone at home who can help you look after the child? I don't mean anything, I like Lulu, but I just think that… it's too tiring for you. Can no one else pick her up for you?"

Naya shook her head with a bitter smile. "No. My husband is weary from work. He's a programmer and is always working late into the night from doing overtime. He can't help with our kid; not like he has the time to. As for the elders at home… I married far from my home. My parents aren't staying close, and my husband's parents can't be bothered. They think that they're at the age of enjoying life, so they're out and about after breakfast every day. I usually don't see them for the entire day. I've been the one sending and picking up Lulu. When I go home from work, I have to clean up the leftover dishes from their dinner and the piling laundry. Lulu doesn't go to school on the weekends, but the elders moan and groan about body aches when they take care of her for me during the day…"

Arianne frowned at what she heard. “Just bring Lulu to the shop on the weekends too. Let her play in the staff’s lounge when we’re busy and we can have her out here when business is slower. She can have her naps in the staff’s lounge too.”

Naya bit her lips, a wash of forbearance flashing in her eyes. “My husband’s parents didn’t raise me, so I can understand if they aren’t helping me. The child’s mine, I have no complaint. I don’t think that I’m pitiful. When they need me in the future, I have a reason not to care as well. We don’t owe each other anything. If my husband wants to repay his parents’ love and care, it’s his affair.”

Nobody had it easy, as every family had its own issues. Arianne did not know what to say to help. In hindsight, she did not seem to have faced the various issues that a normal person did in terms of family. The only person she had to face was Mark. She wondered whether or not it was her good luck.

Lulu was young and did not know what her mother was talking about, nor could she understand how tired and sad her mother was. She drew in a small book at the table. “Mommy, this is a drawing the teacher asked us to complete, but I can’t draw a sun properly. Can you help me?”

Naya was the utmost gentle with Lulu. “Be good, Lulu. I don’t have time. Mommy has to work. Can you draw it on your own? I can check it out when we go home tonight.”

Arianne was good at drawing. “I’ll do it. Naya, go ahead.”

Lulu liked Arianne. “Pretty miss, do you know how to draw a sun?”

Arianne nodded. “Yup, I know how to draw everything. I used to draw a lot. Not just the sun, but I can even draw you. Come here, I’ll teach you how to do it.”

Naya asked, “Ari, you used to draw? Why did you think of opening up a desserts shop? You must still like drawing, right?”

Arianne smiled. “I used to be a designer, but I didn’t want to do it anymore, so I came to start a desserts shop. I left drawing and stuff then. Doesn’t help that I like it, can’t be conforming to the box all my life. I like freedom, doing whatever I want. That’s life to me.”

Naya was envious. “Young people like you have time to spend and do what you wish to do. Even when you’re married, it doesn’t seem to affect you much. I’m not the same. I toil for life, for Lulu, and for my family each day, wearing myself out. The only time I stop is when I sleep at night. And I can’t even get a good sleep, always worrying about the child having a fever or cold. It’s crazy. I’m envious of you. I’ve been wanting to ask what happened between you and your husband, but it’s fine if you don’t want to talk about it.”

Arianne casted her gaze down. “It’s not that I don’t want to talk about it. I don’t know what to say. Don’t be envious of me. I’m not having it better than you. At least you have a complete family and an adorable girl. I look like I have everything, but I actually don’t. Everyone is envious of what they don’t have, but in actuality, what you have is also what others are envious of.”

Arianne did not stay back alone at night. When Naya and the rest of her employees went back, she closed the shop up as well.

It was nine at night. The breeze was cooling and there were more people on the street. Arianne felt relatively safer, so she did not hail a cab but decided to walk home. It was not a long distance.

Suddenly, the feeling of being followed crept in again. She cautiously looked back but did not find anything unusual. Nonetheless, she could not help but hasten her steps.

In the corner of the street behind her, Mark looked a little icy in a black Rolls-Royce. “If you scare her again, I’ll twist your head off.”

The chauffeur was a newbie and was not as skillful as Brian. His hands on the steering wheel shook. “Yes, boss… Then… do we still follow her?”

Mark paused and replied, “Yes. Keep some distance. You can leave after reaching the gate.”

Chapter 506

The chauffeur asked carefully, “Then… what about you?”

Mark’s patience had vanished. “Why are you asking about me? Who hired you? Did you take out your brain? Get me someone smarter!”

…

Downstairs of the apartment, Mark saw that the lights in Arianne’s unit were turned on as he stepped into the elevator. He could not wait to see her and speak to her, even if he ended up being scolded by her…

He had thought about taking it slow, but after seeing her today, he could no longer hold back. The forced patience felt like he was being bitten by millions of ants. He had endured it for countless nights, especially when she had been afraid of going home alone at night. He wanted to charge up and tell her that he had always been there for her…

Arriving at her door, Mark hesitated for a long time before knocking on it, but he received no response. The residential area was a decent one around, but the small scale of the apartment meant that the soundproofing was weaker. He could vaguely make out the noise of water flowing and guessed that Arianne was showering. He could only wait for her.

Suddenly, his phone in his suit jacket's pocket rang. Frowning, Mark picked it up and answered grumpily, "What?"

The smile in Jackson's voice was obvious when he asked, "How's your progress? Don't tell me that you didn't even get to hold her hand."

The veins on Mark's forehead throbbed. "Jackson, do you want to die?"

Jackson laughed even louder. "Don't be like that. I'm just concerned about you. You sure you don't want my help? Can you do it alone? I'm sure you won't even be able to step into her house unless you're forcing yourself in."

Mark calmed down for a minute and found himself asking, "Tell me, what are your thoughts?"

Jackson did not speak instantly. After a while, he told him his idea with a lowered voice, "What's Arianne like? You know that she's tenderhearted. You have to play pitiful to get her sympathy. If you call her

pitifully and tell her that you're dying, do you think she'll leave you to die? You'd have done it already if you were thinking of being forceful. Since you don't want to do that, do according to what I say."

Mark hung up swiftly upon hearing what Jackson said. His mind worked fast to consider what he had to do to look adequately pitiful and earn Arianne's sympathy so that she'd willingly let him go through the door…

After a while of contemplation, he couldn't think of anything better. Looking at the narrow staircase nearby, he went over to it and did not even flinch when he jumped down. Consequently... he landed safe and sound. When he realized what a foolish act he was committing, Mark cursed under his breath and called his chauffeur. "Come back."

Arriving at an abandoned alley, the chauffeur looked at Mark as he held a small hammer from the toolbox shakily. "Mr. Tremont… are you sure?"

Mark replied irritably, "Get it together. I've asked you to do it, so just do it. I'll give you $15,000 if you do a good job."

The chauffeur swallowed and closed his eyes as he hurled the hammer into Mark's left shoulder. It was not strong enough, only a little painful. Mark gave up and grabbed the hammer to hit himself on the forehead directly. In the next second, blood poured and the chauffeur was dumbfounded. "Bo – boss… you're bleeding!"

Mark could not be bothered with him. "It must be hard to be my chauffeur. Get a new job tomorrow. Go to the accounting department and get your salary," he said, tossing the hammer and turning to leave.

The chauffeur panicked. “Don’t sack me!” He picked up the hammer and caught up with Mark to hit him a few times in the back. “Boss, is this okay?!”

Mark’s breath was knocked out of him as he supported himself with the flower pots by the roadside. “You… Yes… You can leave now…”

He suddenly thought that it must either be him or the chauffeur who was a fool. He had never met someone so foolish and it was Brian who introduced the guy to him. Mark only wanted to do one thing right now, which was to beat Brian up.

The wound on his forehead was bleeding, but it was only a minor injury that did not affect him too much. After the several blows from the chauffeur, Mark did not feel too good. He could not even straighten himself up when he walked. Entering the elevator, he had to hold the wall, as he could barely stand upright.

He knocked on Arianne’s door again after exiting the elevator. Her alert voice swiftly sounded inside the unit, “Who is it?”

Mark breathed in deeply. “It’s me…”

It quieted down inside, and it took a while before she replied, “Is something the matter? Otherwise, you can leave. I’m going to bed.” Her retreating footsteps were then heard, but Mark could no longer bring himself to speak louder. He felt a stickiness on his back; he was probably bleeding there. Fishing his phone out to call Arianne, the line connected promptly and she sounded cold. “What do you want?”

Mark’s voice was genuinely weak, “I… ran into some trouble…”

The call wasn't disconnected, but neither did Arianne say anything. The door soon opened, and Mark sighed in relief as he looked up at her.

Chapter 507

Arianne was shocked when she took in Mark's state. "What happened to you? Who did this! Don't you have bodyguards when you go out? Why are you out and about alone!"

"Can I explain later?" Mark only wanted to go in and check what the dumb chauffeur had beaten him to.

Arianne finally reacted and helped him in with all her might. After sitting Mark down on the couch, she frantically went to look for the first aid kit. However, upon finding it and opening it, she felt rather hopeless. "Tiffie and I never anticipated any accidents happening so we only prepared some antiseptic and band aids. Do you want to go to the hospital?"

Mark's goal here wasn't to go to the hospital. "No need… it's not a good idea either…"

Arianne was surprised when she heard him. "Was it Ethan? Did he get someone to do it?"

Mark did not deny it. It's not like he could admit that he did it to himself. Let Ethan be the scapegoat; not many knew that he was dead anyway.

Without questioning the incident further, Arianne began to treat the wound on Mark's forehead carefully. The wound no longer looked big after it was washed with the antiseptic. It could be dressed with a band aid. "Anywhere else that you're injured?"

Unable to speak due to the pain, Mark began to unbutton his shirt while Arianne quickly turned away.

"What are you doing?"

Mark breathed in helplessly. "My back…"

Feeling slightly awkward, Arianne turned back to help him with removing his shirt, but she sucked in a breath when she saw his bloodied back. "Why don't we just… go to the hospital? I can't do it… My hands are already shaking…"

Mark held Arianne's trembling hands. "Don't be scared… Just disinfect it and treat it with a simple dressing."

She shook her head. Due to her fear, she did not realize that her hands were being held. "No… I can't… It's too serious… and it'll hurt a lot. Why are you here at this forsaken place? You should've just stayed in the capital!"

The words that she blurted were those of reprimand, but they were also full of worry. She was scolding him because she was worried about him.

A weak smile tugged at the corners of Mark's lips. "It's okay. Just do it."

With Mark's repeated requests, Arianne braved herself to disinfect the wounds on his back. It really did hurt, for Mark was tensed, with his hands clutching the edge of the couch. If he did not have excellent resilience, he would have gone berserk…

After she was finally done, Arianne was still worried. "Why don't we call a doctor here? I don't know if your bones were injured too. It won't be good if there's a sequelae. Should I call Henry and have him send someone to pick you up?"

Mark lay on his side on the couch, not wanting to move from the exhaustion. "It's fine… You don't have to. I just need a little rest…"

Then, Arianne realized that both of them were in the same space. With Mark's state, he was certainly unable to leave. There was only one bed at home. She could not ask someone who had injuries littered all of him to sleep on the couch. She tucked her hair behind her ear uneasily and said, "Go to the bedroom. I'll sleep on the couch. Leave tomorrow morning so that I don't have to worry about you once I wake up tomorrow," Arianne said as she took the duvet from the bedroom.

Mark's gaze sank. "It's fine… I'll just leave. Sorry for disturbing you." He tried to get up after that, but his face drained of color from the pain. He knew for sure that Arianne would never let him leave.

Arianne helped him settle down again. "I said, leave tomorrow. Where are you going now? Where can you go alone? What if something happens to you again when you go out?"

"Are you worried?" Mark looked up at her.

Arianne's gaze was fleeting. "No… no way… Whether you're dead or alive, it's nothing of my concern! I just can't take things like this. Even if it were just a stray animal on the road, I'd do the same!"

That's right, she was speaking the truth. If it were anyone else or even an animal, she would kindly help them. Bitterness washed over Mark's gaze. "Am I like that dumb cat at home to you?"

She frowned. "Rice Ball is not a dumb cat. What did you do to it? You didn't hit it, did you?"

Mark closed his eyes and said in a muffled voice, "I hit it. I killed it."

Believing him, Arianne exclaimed, "What?! How could you do that?"

Mark threw her his phone. "The video's inside."

She quickly picked his phone up and checked, entering the password without hesitation. She did not realize that she was familiar with his passcodes. When she saw Rice Ball's video in the album, she heaved a sigh. Mark had bluffed her. Rice Ball was alright in the few-days-old video. It was just that it was as round as a ball now and it was snuggling to the hem of his pants. Mark's face could not be seen in the video, but Arianne was familiar with the slippers on his feet.

"Why did you lie to me? It's being taken good care of. It's too fat, though; it'll get sick. Let it eat a little less in the future. It has to be healthy." Arianne's tone involuntarily softened.

“How much do you hate me?” Mark suddenly shifted the topic.

“As much as I can,” Arianne answered easily, and her expression turned somber as well as she placed his phone back to his side.

“Good… At least, there’s still hatred…” Mark mumbled softly, as if muttering to himself.

Looking at Mark, who could not move freely, Arianne hesitated for a moment before saying, “Do you want my help to get into the room?”

Chapter 508

Mark gave a slight nod while Arianne moved rather stiffly. She had not expected them to formally meet again under such circumstances. Despite her apprehensions, she could not chase him out now.

Once Mark settled himself down in bed, Arianne turned to the living room after closing the door for him. Laying on the couch, she was hit with a flurry of thoughts and was unable to fall asleep. No matter what, they had an unbreakable line between them. Seeing him injured, of course she would be worried.

Like her, Mark was also unable to fall asleep. He was on a video call with Jackson with a pair of Bluetooth earphones lest Arianne heard them.

When Jackson saw the wound on his forehead, he was disdainful. “That’s all? And she let you in?”

Mark's exasperation was threatening to spill. "That's all? My back's looking like a beehive now; why else would she have let me in? Your idea isn't all that mighty. I got in, but she's sleeping on the couch. She didn't even spare me an extra word. What do I do now? I'll give you another chance."

Jackson was laughing to his heart's content. "Go big or go home, huh? How did it become a beehive? But that's all you can hope for right now. You can't expect to succeed in one step. It's already good that she let you in. Repairing a relationship is very difficult. You need to take it slow. Even if I asked you to force it now, would you have the strength to do it? It's either you use force right from the start or you take it slow like now. Since you've gotten yourself hurt now, you shouldn't change your strategy, or it'd be in vain. C'mon, tell me, how did you get yourself into this state?"

Mark no longer wanted to mention the source of his frustration. "Get out! There has to be a way even if I'm taking it slow, right? What do I do next?"

Jackson pondered for a moment and said, "Keep yourself there. Just say that you haven't arranged for a place to stay since you just got there and you didn't bring anyone with you. She can't ask you to stay in the hotel alone, now, can she? Now that you're staying under the same roof as her, find a chance to get close to her. You have to express your regret. I wish you luck in melting her determination!"

Mark did not want to listen to unconstructive nonsense from Jackson so he hung up the video call directly.

Regret? How was he supposed to make up for that? Express his regret in place of his mother? His mother had done it for him…

Getting to stay here at Arianne's was not a walk in the park. Arianne would rather call Henry to take care of him than take care of him herself. Mark knew that he had to consider things carefully. After some time, he could only inform Henry and Mary not to pick up Arianne's calls, and he would lie that he had given them a long break.

At the White Water Bay villa in the capital, Jackson called Tiffany on video after talking to Mark. This was his daily routine.

Tiffany answered the call, hiding in her room. She had just taken a shower and was wearing thin pajamas with damp hair. "What's up? My mom's home…"

Jackson was unfazed. "So? You haven't told her that it's serious between us this time, have you? She doesn't know yet?"

Tiffany nodded. "Yeah, I haven't told her yet. She's quite happy about me being back out of the blue, and I didn't get the chance to tell her. I'll look for an opportunity after this."

This ruffled Jackson. "It's not anything embarrassing. Why do you have to look for an opportunity? I'll give you one day. If you don't tell her tomorrow, I'll go visit her myself. Also, you haven't seen me since you came back. When are we meeting? How am I supposed to spend this lengthy night alone?"

Tiffany glared at him. "Quit it. You think I don't know what you're thinking? I just came back. Let me spend a few days with my mom. She's asking me to find a job. I'm going to be occupied for a while. Have fun on your own, but not too much fun. If I find out that you looked for other girls, I'll kill you."

Jackson was unsettled. “I won’t go to other women. You can come to my company if you want a job. It’s not an issue. You meeting up with me doesn’t affect you spending time with your mom either. I want to see you now. Can I pick you up?”

Tiffany was persuaded. They were in the honeymoon period of their date. She would be lying if she said that she did not miss him. They were in the same city and they could not even see each other, but she did not want to see him too frequently. When they started dating, Tiffany had looked up a lot of dating advice and concluded that when dating a man like Jackson, she had to keep him hanging to maintain the mystery and novelty. Once it wore off, they would have problems!

Thinking about it, she refused, “No, I’m going to sleep. My mom isn’t out for mahjong tonight. She’s home. I’m keeping her company. I’ll hang up now.”

Before Jackson could say anything, the video call ended. He took his car keys and headed out at once to go to Tiffany’s place. “I’m downstairs at your house. I’ll go up if you don’t come now. Stop finding excuses to not see me. What’s going on? We were fine when we came back. Why are you so reluctant to see me suddenly? Come down and explain!”

Chapter 509

Tiffany did not expect to trigger such a huge reaction from Jackson when she was just trying to leave him hanging to keep his interest. She took a peek downstairs but could not see anything since her new house was too high up. “Are you really downstairs? I… I can’t go down…”

She could not come down? Jackson lost his cool. “Don’t tell me you have a man at home? Did your mom ask you to go on a blind date again? Hold on, I’m coming up right now!”

Tiffany failed to remain firm, she hastily said, “Wait there! I’ll come down now.” After she hung up, she quickly changed her clothes and went out the door in a hurry. When Lillian asked where she was going, she only said she was meeting a friend and would be coming back shortly.

Tiffany was slightly panting when she came down and ran to his car. “What’s up? You’re like a kid, doing whatever you want. Didn’t I say that I can’t come down? How can there possibly be another man at my house?”

Jackson opened the passenger door with a glower on his face. “Hop in.”

After she obediently got into the car, Jackson stepped on the pedal and sped off before she even sat down properly. Her hands tightened around the seat. “Are you crazy? What’s wrong with you?”

“Why are you refusing to see me?” It was obvious Jackson was mad. As a womanizer, he could tell she was avoiding him. This made the alarm in his mind go off. There must be something going on.

“Didn’t I tell you? Why are you asking again? It’s really… really nothing…” Tiffany dared not say it was to maintain the feeling of novelty.

Soon after, they drove into White Water Bay. Looking at the scowl on Jackson’s face, Tiffany was nervous. “What are we doing here? Can’t you tell me what you want in the car? It’s too late, I should go back.”

“You sure you want it to be in the car?” Jackson turned to face her.

Tiffany nodded resolutely. “Yes, you can speak in the car. You want to see me, you’ve seen me. We just returned to the capital, let me take a few days off. After I tell my mom about us, we’ll be able to meet more often. It’s not like we’ll die if we don’t meet for two days…”

Jackson pulled Tiffany into his embrace and sealed her lips. “I’ll die!”

She widened her eyes. They were still in a public place after all. She panicked and patted his back. “Let… let go! People will see us!”

Jackson moved away slightly before he asked, “Didn’t you say to do it in the car? Your choice. My house is right in front. Are we going in or are we staying in the car? You have one more chance.”

Helpless, Tiffany could only opt to go to his house. She was thinking about keeping him hanging, but it seemed like it would be impossible with how domineering he was!

After they exited the car, Jackson pulled her to a nearby villa.

Tiffany could feel that Jackson was really mad. Why did he get mad over this? She really did not understand. Why was he being so petty? It had only been two days since they last saw each other.

As soon as they entered the door, Jackson pinned Tiffany against the wall, his movements were smooth.

As soon as she struggled, she was held and picked up. She could only passively latch onto him and cling onto his neck. This made it easier for him to achieve his goal.

Despite the darkness, Jackson carried her into the bedroom while kissing her passionately, clearly familiar with his house's layout. He dropped her on the bed without skipping a beat.

As she watched him take off his clothes, she could not help but gulp nervously. She really did not understand. Was it not just two days that they did not meet? Must he behave in this manner?!

Ultimately, Jackson's action answered her question. Yes! He must! He really must!

When they were done, Jackson lit a cigarette, walking to the window after switching on the light in the room. "Tell me, why didn't you want to see me? Does my face annoy you?"

Tiffany did not dare to look at him. He was not wearing anything. "No… The dating advice on the internet says that I can't keep clinging to you when I date someone like you… Got to keep you hanging… Keeps the sense of novelty…"

Jackson laughed in exasperation. "Is that so? Someone like me? What's that? Tell me."

Tiffany hid under the covers and said in a muffled voice, "Dissolute! Playboy! Can't live a night without women!"

Jackson stubbed his cigarette out and crawled back into bed. He flipped the covers away and stared at her as he said, “I’ll tell you now clearly that I can’t live a day without women. If you dare to keep me hanging, I’ll go look for one outside, happy? So I’m this type of person in your eyes? I didn’t even go to the bar when we were dating long-distance, and yet, this is what you think of me?”

Tiffany shrunk. “How… How would I know? I wasn’t here anyway. Fine, go look for another woman if you want. We can just break up…”

Jackson’s gaze sharpened. A hint of danger could be seen flashing in the depths of his eyes. “Didn’t I say you’re not allowed to simply talk about breaking up?”

Chapter 510

Tiffany panicked. “You said not to mention break up. I didn’t say the words break up…”

Not wanting to engage in wordplay with her, Jackson pinned her down again.

Tiffany inhaled deeply as she grabbed the pillow. “I won’t mention it anymore… You...” Her voice trembled, and she could no longer make full sentences. The pillow she held in her hands was clenched on until it went out of shape as well.

Suddenly, her phone started ringing, startling her. “My mom’s calling!”

“Pick it up. Tell her you’re with me. She’ll understand what it means.”

Tiffany knew she had provoked him this time so she pleaded, “Fine, I admit I was wrong!”

Jackson looked slightly placated and allowed her to answer the call.

“Mom… I’m out.”

Lillian complained, “Are you not coming home? It’s so late. Which friend are you meeting? Don’t you only have Arianne? She’s not even in the capital… Come home now, it’s not safe being out so late at night!”

Before Tiffany could reply, Jackson spoke up, “Mrs. Lane, Tiffie’s with me. I’m Jackson. She won’t be going home tonight.”

Tiffany gave his arm a hard pinch and suppressed the urge to curse loudly. “Do you want to die!”

Lillian, on the other end of the line, heard the words clearly. She was stunned speechless that it took her a few seconds before she finally replied, “Uh… sure… take care of her then… Send her back tomorrow morning…”

After the call ended, Tiffany was clearly upset. Was her mother not worried?!

The next morning, Jackson had gotten up earlier as he had a morning meeting.

Tiffany had to peel herself off the bed no matter how much she wanted to sleep in. Since she wanted to return home earlier, it was better to catch a ride with Jackson than to hail a cab.

During the ride, she kept dozing off since she did not sleep much last night.

When they arrived at the entrance of her apartment complex, Jackson opened the car door for her. “Be good. I’ll come pick you up for dinner when I get off work.”

Tiffany glared at him weakly. “Get out of my sight! I’m going back to sleep!”

Jackson asked boldly, “Do you need me to carry you up?” His eyes were dark but his grin was wide.

…

When Tiffany arrived home, Lillian was already up. She asked Tiffany casually, “So early? Were you with Jackson the whole night? Since when were both of you so close? Is it serious?”

Tiffany was afraid of Lillian overspending again if she knew about her relationship with Jackson so she did not want to admit it. “No. There were other people as well. Don’t overthink it. I didn’t get a good sleep. I’m going to catch some sleep now.”

Taking in how Tiffany was supporting her waist when she walked and her hoarse voice, Lillian was rather worried. “How much did you drink? Your voice’s all hoarse. Youngsters! Oh, right, Tiffie, can I apply for a card at the beauty salon that I frequent? It’s around $700, I can use it for a lot of visits.”

This was the first time that Lillian was asking for her approval for just $700. Tiffany beamed. “Sure. Apply for it if you think it’s worth it. We should take care of ourselves as women. It’s never a loss to spend money on our appearance.”

Lillian counted on her fingers. “I think so too. After calculating, I save a few dollars with the card compared to paying every visit. It’s quite worth it. I’ll apply for the card once then I’ll put money in it after a while. Alright, go to sleep. I’m going out for a facial later.”

Arianne made Mark breakfast when she woke up. She left it on the table for him and went to work after that. She was still reluctant to interact with him on her own accord. Maybe he would leave soon. He would not linger in her small apartment, would he?

After hearing the door close, Mark walked out of the bedroom. The dumb chauffeur was heavy-handed last night, but he did not hurt his bones, Mark could feel it. When he saw the breakfast on the table, he stood frozen for a moment before he walked over and began to eat. It was the taste he was familiar with even though it still did not taste very good…

When he was halfway through it, Henry called. “Sir, we’re ready. Madam hasn’t called me or Mary up until now. We won’t pick up even if she does. Don’t worry.”

Mark hummed in reply and hung up. After that, he called to ask someone to send him a laptop. He was acting as though he was bedridden, he could not even go out the door. Although he thought Jackson's idea was rather lousy, since he had taken Jackson's advice, he decided to follow through for now. His work would have to be done via a laptop for the time being.

Arianne was distracted at work.

Upon seeing this, Naya suggested, "Why don't we hire another employee? Are you too tired? You don't look energetic."

Arianne shook her head. "We have about enough now. It's a little tiring, but it's fine. I just have something on my mind… Naya, I don't feel so good. I'm bothered, but I don't know how I should say it."