Ruling 601

Chapter 601

Mark glanced at Tanya's grandfather and had an inkling of what happened. He curled his lips into a faint smile when he thought of Arianne's 'wildness'. He was surprised by this new facet of his woman. She was like a… tiny wild cat?

Naya pushed the medicine box over to Mark. "Mr. Tremont, Ari is hurt as well. Please take care of it for her."

Mark used an alcohol cotton swab to disinfect Arianne's wound.

Arianne felt a piercing pain on her wound but was too shy to give voice to her pain. Mark's handsome face was magnified before her eyes. His aura was stronger with his close proximity as he dabbed the cotton swab on her cheeks. His expression was solemn and focused. She did not know the thoughts that ran through his mind and wondered if he was humiliated by her actions.

"Ari, don't you think your rebellious stage arrived a little too late?"

He was blaming her, right? Annoyed, Arianne avoided his hand. "I'm not being rebellious. I tried negotiating with that woman, but she refused to resolve it amicably. There's nothing I can do. Based on her appearance, you can tell she's rich. If I lodge a report to the police, she'd get a slap on the wrist at the most. Then, Old Anderson would have gotten beaten up for nothing. I just can't take it. You're an honorable man so you won't stoop so low to do this kind of thing. However, I'm just an ordinary person. I don't see anything wrong with what I'd done."

Mark narrowed his eyes and held her chin in his hand. “Don’t move. You’ll look less pretty with a scar. What do you mean there’s nothing you can do? Your man pretty much has the capital under his thumb. I didn’t say you’re wrong. Next time, leave these kinds of things to me.”

Arianne blushed.

Naya smiled meaningfully. “Ari, your husband is so good to you.”

Arianne felt embarrassed so she remained silent.

After the dust had settled, Tiffany finally arrived. “Is everything okay?”

Tanya who felt guilty said, “I’m sorry, Tiffany, for causing you trouble.”

When Tiffany saw they had found Old Anderson again, she sighed in relief. “It’s fine as long as he’s alright. How did both Ari and the old man end up with injuries?”

Naya gave Tiffany a brief summary of what happened.

Upon hearing that, Tiffany was even angrier than Arianne. “Where is she? Where’s that woman? Ask her to come here, and I’ll give her a proper beating. How dare she cause trouble on my property? Who does she think she is?”

“Seriously…” Naya said helplessly, “Thank goodness you weren’t here to deal with this. It’s fine now. They aren’t badly wounded. It’s a false alarm.”

Tiffany simply could not stand it. She said in an attempt to instigate Mark, “Someone hit your woman. Aren’t you going to do anything about it?”

Mark reached up and straightened his tie before he calmly said, “Who says I’m not doing anything? I have her in the palm of my hand. You don’t expect me to handle this during the party, do you?”

An ominous feeling rose in Arianne’s heart. She vaguely knew about how Mark dealt with things. That woman would be in trouble soon.

After the party, Mark had the bodyguards take the woman into a lounge. Naturally, Jackson would not miss out on joining in the fun. Even the sickly Eric had come.

The man in front of her could not be trifled with.

Chloe turned pale from fright. “I didn’t mean it… Moreover, Mrs. Tremont started it…”

Tiffany glared at Chloe, “Who started it? Repeat it again!”

Chloe quickly changed her tune. “It was me… I shouldn’t have hit the old man… But he pushed me… He seemed like a mentally unstable beggar who lived near the hotel. I only did it out of fear. It’s an instinctive reaction. You can’t blame me for this!”

Tanya burst into tears of anger when she heard Chloe insulting her grandfather. “My grandfather isn’t crazy, and he’s not a beggar either!”

Eric was already having a headache from his cold. His headache seemed to intensify when he saw Tanya crying in front of him. “Okay, okay… Don’t cry. We’ll deal with this appropriately. It is deplorable that she hit an old man. She should at least apologize. That’s the basic courtesy. Moreover, compensations have to be made as well.”

Since it was just an apology and compensation, Chloe, naturally, would not hesitate. She hastily pulled out a wad of cash from her wallet as she said, “I’ll apologize, and I’ll compensate! I’m sorry, sir. I shouldn’t have hit you. It’s all my fault. Here is $1,500. It should be more than enough to cover the medical fees. It’s enough, right?”

Tanya was dissatisfied with these. She ignored the money from Chloe as she wiped the tears off her face.

Mark said nonchalantly, “I’ve had you investigated. You’re just an unknown model. How did you get in here?”

Upon hearing this, Chloe was hit with a slight pang of guilt. She only came here to look for a rich boyfriend. She had expended much effort to coax her boss, whom she had once dated, into bringing her here as his date. Initially, she thought she would be able to meet a few rich men, she did not expect something like this to happen. “I… I came with a friend.”

Mark's eyes flashed with a hint of disdain, "Right. It's truly unfortunate that someone like you managed to weasel your way in. You should think about switching careers. You'll never be able to work in these circles again."

Chloe slumped onto the ground, looking like a deflated balloon. Her face was ashen. Since Mark had spoken, there was no doubt she would not be able to socialize in this circle again. She was brimming with hope when she had first arrived earlier. It was unfortunate, everything had come to an end here.

Arianne said with a frown, "It's over. Let her go. She'll only bring us bad luck."

When Mark saw Arianne had relaxed, he waved his hand dismissively and had the bodyguards escort Chloe out. He did not expect Arianne to let Chloe go so easily. After all, Arianne had retaliated fiercely earlier.

Chapter 602

Tiffany stepped forward and handed Chloe's money to Tanya. "Keep it. Don't refuse free money. Consider it a bite from a dog. There's no point in being calculative with people like her. Do you have a place to stay? Let me book a hotel room for you. Try and cheer up. Let's have fun for the next couple of days."

"Stay in this hotel," Jackson suggested, "I'll tell the front desk to prepare a few rooms for you. The hotel belongs to my family so there's no need to be modest."

Tiffany looked at Jackson in shock. She was still quite in the dark about the West family's wealth. They actually owned such a big hotel. The Wests seemed to have their fingers in every pie.

Mark suddenly grabbed Arianne by the shoulder. “Let’s go. Come home with me.”

“I don’t want to.” Arianne shook him off.

Mark lowered his head and whispered into Arianne’s ear. “Mary has been unwell recently. Don’t you want to see her? She used to dote on you so much.”

Arianne gritted her teeth. “Fine. I’ll go. I’ll see Mary and Henry, and then, I’m heading back to the hotel. I won’t be staying in the Tremont Estate.”

Jackson let out a dry cough. “Ah… Well, you see, business is booming in this hotel. We don’t have many empty rooms left. It’s better if you stay in the Tremont Estate.”

Arianne muttered, “This isn’t the only hotel in the capital, you know.”

Mark smirked. “Hmm? If I want to, I can make sure you won’t be able to stay in any hotel in the capital. Don’t be stubborn.”

Unfortunately, Mark was not lying. With just a word from him, no hotel would dare to take Arianne in.

Tiffany joined in and sang the same tune as Jackson. “Ari, return home with Mark. Go visit your grandmother, Mary, and Henry. It’s been such a long time since you went home. They must miss you. It’s not like it’ll kill you to stay for a few days, right?”

At this point, Arianne knew she could not escape this. This was the capital after all. How could she possibly escape from Mark? She had no choice but to follow him home.

After leaving the hotel, Mark dutifully helped Arianne’s grandmother, looking like the poster child of filial piety. “You’ve been talking about leaving the house to have fun. Did you enjoy yourself?”

The old woman seemed to be in a good mood. “Not bad. I feel like I’ve been transported to the past. It’s been a while since I attended an event like this. The Wynn family did well in the past. What a pity!” She sighed before she continued to say, “Anyway, there’s no use talking about the past… I would love to have grandchildren while I’m still alive. The situation between you and Arianne simply won’t do. How can you live separate lives?”

“I’ll do my best to rectify things,” Mark replied solemnly.

Arianne remained silent as she walked ahead. Mark clearly did not have the nerve to tell the old woman that she could no longer bear children. He was only skilled in putting up this act of filial piety. He was really skilled at persuading the elderly. In just a short time, he managed to get into the old lady’s good grace. The old woman had never been nice, not even to her own granddaughter.

When they arrived at the Tremont Estate, Mary’s eyes brimmed with tears when she saw Arianne, “Ari- Ah, no… Madam, you’re finally home… How have you been? You’ve lost so much weight. Haven't you been eating?”

Arianne sniffled when she heard the concern in Mary's voice. "I'm fine… Really. There's no need to worry about me. I'm not a little girl anymore..."

Mary forced a smile on her face. "You'll always be a little girl in my eyes. I used to take care of you in the Tremont Estate, making sure you didn't go cold or hungry. I've been worried sick since you left the Tremont Estate. You won't be leaving now that you've returned, right?"

Arianne could not answer Mary's question. She gave a half-hearted excuse before she went to a guest room to get some rest. A wave of gratitude rose in her heart when she returned to the Tremont Estate. After all, she had lived here for more than ten years. It really did feel like home, it was as though she had come home. Although it felt good, she could not stay. She had no reason to stay. Apart from attending Tiffany's engagement party, her purpose of coming back to the capital was to take the old woman with her. Despite the irrational urge to leave the old woman with Mark, she knew she could not let him have control of this. Otherwise, she would be left with no way to turn back.

Mark followed her into the guest room, disrupting her thoughts.

She quickly concealed her emotions before she turned to face him. "Tell Mary to set up the guest room for me." There was only one bed in the guest room. She could not possibly sleep in that. It needed to be made.

Mark approached her and grabbed her shoulders, "Do you really need the guest room? What's so difficult about staying with me? Now that you've returned, I have no intention of letting you go."

Arianne panicked. She could see into the depths of his eyes behind his glasses, and yet, she could not read his thoughts. "Are you going to force me? Mark Tremont, we have an agreement. You promised to

give me more time. I won't stay no matter what you do! Can you focus your attention on something else? Stop watching me! Let me go! Can't you do that?"

"Yes, I promised to give you a year, but I know you're only trying to stall for time. You're being half-hearted with this," Mark said resolutely, "Do you have any idea what life was like for me during your absence? You're going to come back sooner or later so why not now? I… don't want to wait anymore…"

Chapter 603

Arianne felt slightly guilty now that her thoughts were exposed. She was too afraid to meet Mark's eye. "I… I won't stay. That's not all, I'm taking my grandmother with me. Even if my grandmother insists on staying, do you dare to confess everything you've done? You'll give her a stroke if she discovers the truth one day! Don't burn the bridges. Please be kind and leave my family alone, okay? I won't pick on what had happened in the past, but let's just draw a clear line between us, okay? I really… I really don't see any way for us to be together…"

Although Mark was long aware of Arianne's promise to return to the Tremont Estate was only a half-hearted one, he was still provoked by her words. They could not draw a clear line between them. He was already at his limit for letting her leave his side for so long, and yet, she would jump at any opportunity just to leave him. A chaotic mix of complicated emotions swirled in his mind. He took off his glasses and threw them on the floor before pulling her to him. "You don't see any way for us to be together? And I thought I was cold-blooded. Your blood is obviously much colder than mine. How many years has it been? Do you really think you can forget me just like that? Can you really sever all ties with me just like that? You're not affected at all, are you? Do you dare to say you have no feelings at all for me? Look at me!"

Arianne looked straight into his eyes that were brimming with rage and slowly waning patience. She pushed him away fearfully. There was only one thought left in her mind at this moment; she had to run away from him!

"Let me go or I'll scream!"

Mark smirked. “Go ahead. This place is filled with the Tremont’s staff. Do you really think screaming will do you any good? Oh… That’s right, you have your grandmother. Do you really think that she’ll help you? I’m making love to you, not abusing you. Granny isn’t going to care. Don’t you think so?”

The expression on his face and the way he smiled when he said those words filled Arianne with fear. She thought that she had gradually broken away from his control, but it seemed like she was wrong. She had always known the best way to make him happy was to give in to him. However, she could not give in to him all the time. However, she knew once she angered him, there was no turning back.

During their struggle, she accidentally stepped on his glasses. The loud crack smashed through the last line of defense in her heart. He had pressed her up against the window, and there was no way out. The Tremont Estate’s employees would walk around the garden from time to time, but she was too afraid to scream for help because she knew it would be futile. It would only serve to alert people to what was going on.

“Mark… I’m exhausted. I don’t want to fight with you… Please let me go for now, okay? I’ve already agreed to stay in the Tremont Estate for the time being. What… What more do you want from me?” In the end, she gave in just like she used to do. She had reverted to her old self upon her return, back to the weakling that she used to be, back to being controlled by him. She hated this feeling and was afraid of his anger.

“What makes you think you can get away with acting half-hearted with me? Let me make myself clear; you’ve made a mistake.” Mark grabbed her by the wrist and dragged her out into the master bedroom.

As she passed the staircase, Arianne saw Mary who was on her way upstairs. She shot Mary a pleading look.

Arianne could see Mary struggling with herself when the old woman suddenly called out from downstairs, “Mary, do you have any more of that tea? Make some for me!”

Mary quickly replied and ran down.

Arianne’s heart sank. No one could save her now. Her return was a mistake! She was mercilessly flung onto Mark’s bed when they arrived in the master bedroom. When he climbed above her, she reached out and placed her hands firmly on his chest. “Don’t do this! Why can’t you keep your promise? I’m really not trying to stall for time... One year, just give me a year, okay? No… It’s less than a year now. Two months have passed, right? There are only ten more months left… Don’t do this…”

She could not see any hint of rage on Mark’s face, she only saw his obsession with her. This frightened her even more. She felt as though shackles were closing in around her, and she would not be able to get rid of them no matter how much she struggled.

“What are you afraid of? Hmm? That I’d touch you? Or that you’d realize you missed me too?”

Arianne shut her eyes, refusing to look at him. He knew that she still loved him. Was that why he was forcing her like this? She had given everything she had to draw a line between them, but he always managed to destroy her hopes just when she thought she was close to success.

He buried his face in her neck, willfully taking in her unique scent. His hands moved with even greater urgency.

Arianne tried to ignore his existence, but her senses heightened with increasing speed. She was in his room that was filled with his scent… Everything was real and so difficult to ignore.

Her body stiffened when he suddenly let loose. She tensed up, feeling at a loss. A myriad of complicated emotions rose in her heart. She felt as though she had sinned, as though she was corrupted, and had plunged into hell with him…

He liked it when she let her hair down. Her hair was like a waterfall. His long and slender fingers pulled off her hair tie, releasing her long and fragrant hair. This served to arouse him even more. “Stay… Stay here, okay? I’ll atone for my sins for the rest of my life. Isn’t that enough? I’ll do anything as long as you stay. Please stay...”

Chapter 604

Arianne didn’t answer. She turned her face to the side, shut her eyes and gripped tightly onto the covers. Her cheeks were blushing furiously, which spread throughout her entire body, a bright red as clear as day.

He kept on mumbling to himself, then collapsed on top of her and stopped moving.

Arianne finally realized that something was wrong with him. His body felt extremely hot! She panicked instantly, then soon relaxed. She picked up the clothes on the ground and put on his pajamas for him. Then, she called the Tremont family doctor.

The doctor quickly rushed over. After a simple check-up, he concluded, “Mr. Tremont has been over exhausted for a long period of time. Furthermore, he’s caught a cold, which has caused a fever. His body has been overtaxed, so he’s lost consciousness. The temperature has gone down lately. It’s pretty normal to catch a cold under such capricious weather.”

Arianne heaved a sigh of relief after determining the cause behind Mark's collapse. A cold was nothing. Eric has caught a cold too. It wasn't unusual during this season. However… How did Mark over exhaust himself? And over a long period of time to boot. It was only once… She nearly thought that she had caused this!

After administering an injection and prescribing Mark's medicine, the doctor left. Mary sighed at the doorway, "Ari, Mr. Tremont hasn't been able to sleep very much in your absence. He would usually sit in front of the window at night, all alone. Then he'd go to the office the next day. I don't know how he managed to pull through… It's been so long since you've left… He would take a nap on the couch from time to time after work but would wake up after a very short while."

Mark was still unconscious at this point, so Arianne could freely do anything to him. She ran her slender finger across his collarbone. It seemed like he had lost weight. How could he not? He had been torturing himself for so long. He looked like the god of plague every time she saw him, so she didn't look at him too closely. Hence, she never noticed this change in him.

The insufferably arrogant Mark Tremont had fallen into her grasp in the end.

"Come home, Ari. Regardless of what Mr. Tremont has done, he's repenting for it. How is he going to live without you? He's close to death. He's always been head over heels for you. You were only eight when he brought you home, and he was only an eighteen year old boy. What would a wealthy boy like him know? No one has ever taught him how to get along with people since then. He will change slowly in the future. I can't bear watching you two like this…"

Mary wiped the tears from her eyes, her tone filled with denunciation. Arianne wasn't exactly hard-hearted either. Despite all of the horrible things he's done to her, she didn't hate him, not completely, "Stop it, Mary. I will carefully consider this. I'm not that cruel or that cold blooded. I…" Love him too…

Mark slept for two days and two nights. It was likely that he hadn't had a good night's sleep in too long. Now, he finally managed to get a good rest.

Jackson and Tiffany came over for a visit after learning about his collapse. He was still asleep at the time, so they left. Eric did not visit, afraid that someone might blame him for giving Mark the flu…

When Mark finally awoke, it was the middle of the night. The first thing he did was turn on the light, get down from bed, and search for Arianne. Just as he had opened the door and was about to run out, Arianne sat up in bed, rubbed her eyes and asked, "Where are you going?"

His body stiffened then turned around to look at her. He was in momentary shock before giving a sigh of relief, "I thought…"

"You thought that I ran away after you collapsed?" Arianne raised her brow. "Don't worry, I'm not that cruel. I'd be under suspicion if you died. Go back to sleep. It's been a while since you've had a good night's sleep. It's still dark out."

Mark got back into bed and lay down. He turned his head to the side and looked at her, "About what happened today… I'm sorry. I was too rash. Can you stop making me angry?"

Arianne burst into laughter, "Today? You've been sleeping for two days and two nights. That did not happen today. Tiffany even brought Naya and Tanya for a visit and showed them around. I've never met anyone who'd sleep that long… Next time… You have to sleep well when I'm not around. You might die from sleep deprivation. I'm not trying to scare you. About… that thing, I won't stall you. I will seriously consider it."

He turned his body to the side and pulled her into his arms. He didn't say a word and simply held her in silence. He could tell when she was lying. When she agreed to take a year off to think, he knew that she was only stalling for time. But now, he knew that she wasn't lying to him.

It's been a while since he felt so peaceful. She really was in his arms. It wasn't a dream. It wasn't a figment of his imagination.

After a long pause, he asked, "Are you still going to leave?"

Arianne nodded, "Mm. I don't want to get rid of the dessert shop. I have Naya and Tanya. They need this job, and I can't leave them. You… can come and visit me whenever you have the time."

Mark rubbed his chin against her hair, "I don't want to let you go… The dessert shop can stay in business in your absence. I'll send someone to replace you."

Chapter 605

She struggled away from his grasp, "Alright. Didn't I promise not to trick you? I haven't made up my mind… You've been asleep for so long. Isn't your germaphobia acting up? Mary has prepared some porridge for you. I'm exhausted from looking after you over the past two days. I need to sleep."

Before she could finish speaking, Mark began feeling uncomfortable. He got up and ran into the bathroom. Arianne heaved a sigh of relief, closed her eyes, and allowed her thoughts to gradually enter a state of peace. She soon fell asleep.

The next day, Mark went to the office as soon as he woke up. She went straight to Tanya and Naya's hotel. Naya and Tanya were still around, so she couldn't just ignore them. She was the one who brought them over, and they were not familiar with anyone in the capital.

Naya was a domesticated woman. She did not plan on having too much fun in the capital, because she could not afford to spend too much money. She simply wanted to take Lulu around for some sightseeing. The weather was just right, so going anywhere was convenient. Tanya had intended on taking her grandfather for some sightseeing, but her plans were delayed due to the old man's wounds. Only now could they begin their fun.

Tanya remembered Eric's offer to be her tour guide whenever she came to the capital. She took his offer to heart, decided on sightseeing, and sent Eric a message: 'Do you have some free time? Do you know anywhere in the capital that serves authentic food? I'd like to let my grandfather try them out and walk around a little. Tiffany has just had her engagement party, so she's probably busy. Ari's husband is sick, so I don't want to disturb her. Is this a convenient time for you?'

Eric was surprised upon receiving the message, because he wasn't really serious about the agreement. He was just making casual conversation. He did not expect for Tanya to come looking for him.

He couldn't refuse her, now that she had contacted him. When it came to food, the best food that came to mind was the food at White Water Bay Café, Jackson's restaurant. Hence, he replied: 'Sure, give me two hours. I'll finish up some work and pick you up. Wait for me in the hotel. I'll call you.'

After confirming their journey, Tanya told Naya and Arianne, "I'll be touring around with my grandfather. No need to make arrangements for me."

Arianne was surprised, “You’re not familiar with the area. Where are you going? Why not come with us?”

“I have a ‘private tour guide’...” Tanya answered mysteriously.

Arianne didn’t ask any further questions. As long as Tanya was with her grandfather, it was good enough.

Tanya received a call from Eric at around eleven, where she took her grandfather and left the hotel. Tanya greeted Eric when she saw him and sat with her grandfather in the backseat of his car. Eric found this very strange. It was as if… he were a taxi driver…

Tanya carefully put on her grandfather’s seat belt for him, “Ricky, is the restaurant going to be expensive?”

Ricky? Eric’s lips twitched, “Not… Not bad. It’s Jackson’s restaurant. I don’t mind dining and dashing if you want.”

Tanya quickly said, “No… How could we dine and dash? Forget it. I don’t care if it’s expensive, since we’re going. It’s my dream to take my grandfather on a trip to the capital for a few days. Enjoyment is our top priority. No need to budget too much. The money I’ve brought is for my grandfather anyway.”

Tanya broke out into cold sweat after they had arrived at White Water Bay Café and began to order their meals. She now understood the meaning of a high class restaurant. One dish was more expensive than the most expensive meal she’s ever had. The money she had saved may be enough, but her heart still ached. She chose two of her grandfather’s favorite dishes after a bout of hesitation. Then, handed

the menu to Eric, “Here, Ricky. What would you like to eat? I’ll pay. Thank you for taking the time out to accompany me.”

Eric had no intentions of letting a poverty-stricken girl like her pay the bill; otherwise, he wouldn’t have brought her here. He ordered a great number of dishes without batting an eyelid then handed the menu back to the waitress. Tanya’s heart bled. This meal was going to bleed her out…

When the dishes were served, she carefully asked, “Ricky, would it be humiliating if I wanted a doggy bag later? I’m not afraid of being humiliated, I just don’t want to humiliate you…”

Eric shrugged nonchalantly, “I’m fine. What’s so humiliating about a doggy bag? That’s how you avoid wasting food. One should enjoy their meals; that’s most important. So order whatever you want, don’t worry about not being able to finish them. Otherwise, it’ll affect your mood. Just get a doggy bag if you need to.”

Tanya slowly calmed down. It was fine as long as Eric didn't mind. There were so many dishes. The three of them wouldn’t be able to finish all of them… right?

As time went on, Tanya completely disregarded her notion for a doggy bag because there weren't a lot of leftovers. The food was simply too delicious. The old man loved it, so did she. She had grown on doing menial work, so she had a big appetite. The old man may have mental issues, but he was still pretty energetic when it came to food.

When he saw that they had pretty much finished eating, Eric made an excuse to go to the toilet and paid the bill, “I’m stuffed. Where would you like to go next? Describe where you’d like to go and I’ll take you there.”

Tanya took her wallet and headed to the cash counter, “To the beach. My grandfather has never seen the sea before.”

When she was told that the bill was already paid for, she confirmed it with the cashier a few times before returning to her senses, “Ricky… You paid for the meal? How much was it? I’ll pay you back.”

Chapter 606

Eric patted her on the back, “No need to be calculative over such a small sum. Consider it my honor as your host. Let’s go. I’ll take you to the beach. It’s pretty close by from here.”

The old man suddenly smiled when he saw his reaction, “Grandson-in-law…”

Tanya and Eric were stunned at the same time. Tanya blushed, “Grandpa! You can’t just say these things! Ricky is a friend. Not… Not my boyfriend…”

Eric was feeling awkward too and walked out first.

In the old man’s mind, any man who touched his granddaughter was her boyfriend.

In the car, the old man spoke seriously to Eric, “Tan is a good girl, very obedient. She’s a good girl.”

Eric couldn't deny this, "I know."

The old man looked very proud, "You must take good care of her."

Eric was having a slight headache, unsure of how to explain this to the old man. Tanya was embarrassed, "Ricky, you know how my grandfather is like… You touched my shoulder; he has misunderstood. Please don't mind him…"

Eric shook his head and smiled bitterly, "It's fine, I don't mind. I can understand." He was able to tolerate her calling him "Ricky". This was nothing.

White Water Bay Café was located close to the sea, so it didn't take too long for them to drive to the beach. The current season brought powerful sea breezes at the beach. It was a little cold, so they couldn't go into the water, and simply stayed by the shore and enjoyed the view. This was Tanya and the old man's first time at the beach. They could barely contain their excitement. The old man's mental state suddenly stabilized, "So that's how big the ocean is…"

Tanya was meticulous. She draped the coat that she had brought along with her over her grandfather, "I can bring you here regularly, if you like, grandpa. You have to be well, you'll definitely live to a ripe old age."

The old man shook his head solemnly, "I've never done anything great in this life. I won't be able to live for too long. I just want to see you have a home of your own before I close my eyes forever. You've sacrificed too much for me. Life will be easier for you when I'm gone. You've grown and have become a sensible child. I'm just dead weight. You are such a good girl, you'll definitely find a good family."

Tanya's eyes brimmed with tears. She had a rough idea of how long her grandfather still had to live. The term "ripe old age" was her way of lying to herself, "You're not dead weight, grandpa. You raised me. I'd stay single for the rest of my life to make sure that you'd have a good life. No one is more important than you are."

Eric was worried about the old man's health, "Tanya, the winds are strong here. The weather here is different from your home. I'm afraid that Old Anderson might not be able to adapt to it. Shall we go back soon?"

Tanya nodded. The old man couldn't stay too long outside either. Their trip for the day had to end here.

After sending them back to the hotel, Eric drove back to the office straightaway. He was only fulfilling a promise by driving Tanya and the old man around and thought nothing of it. When he arrived at the office, he suddenly noticed a new message on his phone — $150. Tanya had transferred it to him. Although it wasn't enough to cover the bill for their lunch, he found the little girl quite intriguing. She was clearly broke, but she cared about these small details. It should be fine to take advantage from time to time, right? He didn't mind anyway.

Arianne, Tiffany and Naya were still walking around in the afternoon. Tanya chose to stay in the hotel, as her grandfather wasn't feeling well.

Mark immediately called Arianne after work, "What are you doing?"

His tone was gentler than usual. Arianne didn't notice, but the corners of her lips lifted upwards, "Shopping with Tiffie and Naya. I won't be home for dinner. Please tell Mary when you get home."

Mark noticed her use of the word “home” and his spirits lifted, “Sure. Have fun shopping. Come home early. I’ll send you some money, so buy whatever you want.”

He ended the call before Arianne could reject him. Arianne was feeling depressed. She believed that he wouldn’t give her too much money, even if he did transfer the money to her bank account. There was nothing wrong with holding on to the money. It was his fault for bullying her anyway. She could always send it back to him. However, she was wrong. He sent $150,000 to her. That’s right, she counted every digit, ensured that she was right, then sent him a message: ‘Are you sure your hands weren’t shaking? Did you add one or two zeros by mistake? Why would I need $150,000 for shopping? Why don’t you just give me all your fortune? Are you crazy?’

Mark soon replied to her: ‘No wealthy man’s wife is as thrifty as you. One piece of jewellery or watch costs up to tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars. No need to be thrifty. Spend as much as you want. Call me if you need more.’

Arianne was speechless. She wasn't used to overspending. She considered it a fit of madness on his end. $150,000 may not be much to him, but it certainly frightened her.

Naya curiously glanced at the screen on her phone, and gaped, “Your husband is so generous. He’s given you $150,000 just for a shopping trip?”

“Uh… He’s got a loose screw, added one to two zeros by mistake…” Arianne unwittingly flaunted her wealth and felt extra awkward about it.

Tiffany wasn’t too surprised, “Don’t be surprised, Naya. The Tremonts are loaded. Even my Jackson isn’t as rich as Mark. I’m sure that $150,000 isn’t much to Mark. He did not add one or two zeros by mistake. He added too little. Better get used to it.”

Chapter 607

“Tiffie, stop teasing me, okay?” Arianne said helplessly, “Jackson’s been pretty generous with your allowance too, hasn’t he? I’ve noticed that your clothing style has changed after the engagement party. The clothes you’re wearing right now are this season’s latest from a luxury brand. They cost at least a few thousand. How lavish!”

Tiffany had no choice but to confess, “You’re right, I’ve been on a budget ever since my family went bankrupt. Of course, I’m going to relive my princess-like days, now that I have someone who’s willing to spend on me. You’re the silly one here. You have money, but you won’t spend it. Mark has given you $150,000, yet you’re frightened by it. $150,000 is like spare change to him. You should at least see if the other party has the money to spare. It’s perfectly logical for you to hesitate like that if he’s not rich. With someone like Mark, on the other hand, it feels silly for you to save money for him.”

Naya felt slowly alienated from the conversation. Arianne did not continue discussing money with Tiffany, “Naya, get Lulu two new dresses. I’ve never gotten her anything. I think the children’s clothes over there look pretty good.”

Naya hurriedly objected, “No need. There’s absolutely no need. Lulu has enough clothes. I’ve never treated her unfairly.”

Arianne insisted and chose two dresses that fit Lulu. Most little girls loved pretty pink things. Lulu loved her new clothes so much that she refused to let go of them. It was clear that she really wanted them, so Naya couldn’t bring herself to deny her, “Go on, thank Ari.”

Lulu smiled sweetly, “Thank you, Ari.”

Arianne bent down and scooped Lulu into her arms, “How adorable you are. If only I had a little girl like you.”

Naya knew that Arianne was hurt, deep down. Everyone fell silent.

They shopped until past five, then discussed where to have dinner. Tanya suddenly called Arianne, sobbing on the phone, “Ari, something’s wrong with my grandfather. He’s been asleep since we came back from the beach and hasn’t woken up. I can’t seem to wake him. His body feels cold. Please come back… I’m scared…”

Arianne was shocked, “Okay, we’ll come back at once. Don’t panic, and don’t move him!”

By the time they arrived back at the hotel, Tanya was already reduced into a puddle of tears. The old man lay very silently in bed. His breathing was so shallow that they could barely feel it, but his expression was very serene. Arianne realized something and shakily pulled out her phone to call 911.

The old man had breathed his last by the time he arrived at the hospital. Everything happened so suddenly, no one could react to it. Deep down, Tanya had already expected it, but she never thought that it would happen so soon. She suddenly remembered how strangely normal the old man suddenly looked after his trip to the beach. That was probably an omen… Those words that he had said to her were probably his last.

With her only relative now gone from the world, Tanya sobbed so much that she nearly collapsed in the hospital hallway. Tiffany’s eyes moistened as well. At this moment, Tanya reminded her of herself, back when her father passed away. This was exactly what she had experienced too.

The hospital suggested a quick cremation. Tanya was still an inexperienced little girl and wasn't sure what to do. Tiffany and Arianne had to help her sort it out. The old man's remains could not be sent back home. After confirming all related matters, Tiffany drove Tanya and Naya back to the hospital.

Arianne went back to the Tremont Estate on her own and was met with the old woman's nagging when she entered its threshold, "What's a girl like you doing so late at night? Your husband is back, yet you're still running wild outside. How inappropriate."

Arianne really wasn't in the mood to square off with the old lady. She trudged upstairs dispiritedly. Just as she was about to grab the doorknob, the bedroom door opened on its own. It was Mark.

He smiled when he saw her, "Did you shop yourself into exhaustion?"

Arianne lifted her gaze towards him, "Tan's grandfather passed away. It just happened. I came from the hospital; his remains will be left in the hospital for now and will be cremated tomorrow. Tan brought her grandfather for a nice trip. I never thought… that this would have been his last holiday. Nothing is permanent in this world. It hurts…"

Mark had gotten so numb over death that he no longer had any sentiment over it. However, he knew that the woman before him needed consoling. He reached out and pulled her into his arms, "It's alright. You're tired. Have a good night's sleep. It'll get better."

When did he become so considerate and good at consoling others? Arianne didn't want to think at this point. She relaxed and sunk into his embrace…

"Ahem…"

The old woman's dry cough interrupted them. Arianne wiggled away from Mark's embrace and awkwardly tucked her hair behind her ear, "Granny…" She always felt awkward every time she addressed her grandmother, but she was afraid that her grandmother would cause trouble for her if she didn't.

The old lady shuffled towards her own room, "If you plan on hugging each other, do it in your own room. I'm old. I can't look at these kinds of things."

Arianne cut across Mark and walked into the room then headed straight for the bathroom. The only thing she wanted at this point was a long shower and a good night's sleep.

When she entered the bathroom, she realized that she had forgotten her clothes. She carefully listened to the movements outside. Mark didn't seem to be in the room. She hesitantly opened the bathroom door, intending on slipping out to grab her clothes. To her surprise, a hand reached in and handed her her pajamas, including her underwear, before she could step out…

Chapter 608

Had Mark been waiting outside the bathroom door, all this time?

She couldn't be bothered with shyness. She grabbed her clothes, shut the door, and quickly put on her clothes. Then, she walked out, acting as if nothing had happened. Mark didn't seem to have any plans to do anything to her, and his temper seemed particularly gentle today, "You have a good rest. I have some work to complete. Good night."

She could tell that he was using gentleness to trap her. It was just too strange. She got goosebumps after hearing him wish her good night for the first time ever. She was no stranger to cold-blooded and vicious words from him. The words “good night” filled her with panic. Her heart would skip a beat every time she heard him say it.

Tanya plunged into a severe anxiety, late at night. She couldn’t sleep. Her grandfather’s death had hit her — hard. She couldn’t accept it. The silent night was like a lingering death for her. She was going mad and needed comfort. In her helplessness and anxiety, she tapped on Eric’s social media account. She typed into the messenger app: Ricky, my grandfather is gone. My only relative is gone. I can’t do this…

She pressed the “send” button, shut her eyes, and sobbed softly.

Her ringtone pierced through the silent night. She wiped the tears from her eyes and answered the call, “I’m sorry… Ricky, for disturbing you at this hour.”

Eric was a resolutely masculine man and had no clue of how to console anyone. He paused for a long time before answering, “It’s fine. Just talk to me. I’ll listen.”

Tanya didn’t say a word and sobbed instead. So Eric listened to her weeping for more than half an hour. Just as she thought that he had ended the call, she looked at her phone and realized that it was still ongoing. Then, she spoke, “Thank you for taking my grandpa to the sea. He’s done everything he’s ever wanted in this lifetime. That’s why it happened so suddenly.”

Eric blamed himself. The man was in his old age. He shouldn’t have gone to the beach in this weather. He never considered this before they went, “Don’t cry, I don’t know what to say… Would you like to go out for a drink? Jackson, Mark, and I used to go out for drinks when we were in a bad mood. Our spirits were lifted after that.”

A drink? Tanya had never touched alcohol. This time, she was willing to give it a shot, “I… I don’t want to go out. Can you come over to the hotel? Bring the alcohol.”

Eric found this inappropriate. He was a man, going to a hotel to drink with a girl. It seemed inappropriate, no matter how he looked at it. However, he couldn’t bear to object to the naive Tanya’s request. He certainly wouldn’t dare have any shady thoughts, “Sure, I’ll come over now.”

As he walked into the hotel with the alcohol, Eric felt guilty, like a thief in the night. He was afraid of being spotted and let out a sigh of relief after entering the room. He pulled out the wine, “Here, I’ll drink with you.”

Tanya didn’t pay any attention to the kind of liquor he had brought. She grabbed a cup, filled it, and downed it. Eric didn’t even have the time to stop her. He swallowed his words after she drank her shot. It was late. He had no choice but to take the wine from his house. It would be inconvenient to go out and buy cheap beer. All he had at home were luxury brand liquors, which had high alcohol percentages. She would probably lose consciousness if she kept on drinking like that.

Tanya wasn’t drinking alone. She had even poured a glass for him, “I think you’re all great, Ricky… You and Naya, and Tiffany and Ari. I’m so lucky to have met all of you.”

Eric did not want to be a wet blanket so he drank anyway, despite his bad intestinal issues. The burning sensation from the wine trickled down from his throat to his stomach. That fiery sensation was exciting and addictive.

Wine filled their stomachs glass after glass, and the conversations between the pair increased. They talked about everything and exchanged life stories until they were drunk.

The next day, Arianne arrived at the hotel early in the morning to see Tanya. The door opened after her knock and her eyes widened in shock, because Eric answered the door, “Eric?”

Eric stared at her blurrily, “So early? Tanya’s still asleep. I drank with her last night, and my stomach hurt for the entire night. I couldn’t sleep. I’m glad that you’re here. I can go home now. I have to take my medicine, get a good night’s sleep, and rest. Otherwise, she might actually end up killing me.”

Arianne really wasn’t in the mood for analysis, but… But it seemed like Eric and Tanya had shared a bed last night. The signs on the bed were clear. Although Tanya’s clothes were still intact, but… was this… appropriate?

Eric wasn’t in the right mind to observe the changes in her expression. He pulled on his coat and left the hotel.

Arianne sat on the couch and waited for Tanya to wake up. She hesitated for a while before asking, “Do you remember what happened… last night?”

Tanya rubbed her pounding head and replied, “Of course, I do. Ricky came by and drank with me. He wasn’t lying. It doesn’t hurt so much when you’re drunk. Now that I’m awake, it hurts all over again… Where is he? Has he left?”

Arianne nodded then hesitantly probed even further, “What I meant to ask was… You two… seemed to have shared a bed last night. Did… anything happen?”

Tanya paused dazedly, as if she were trying to recall, “N-no… I don’t think so? I slept after I finished drinking. Ricky fell asleep too, right? He’s not that kind of a person. He wouldn’t take advantage of anyone.”

Chapter 609

Why would Arianne be afraid of Eric taking advantage of her? She was afraid of them having drunken sex!

However, Tanya really seemed fine, so she heaved a sigh of relief, “Uh… Could you get ready and come with me to the hospital? We have to finish up the funeral procedures for Old Anderson as soon as possible. Will you be taking his ashes back?”

Tanya hugged her blanket and fell silent before making a decision, “No, grandfather said that he wants his ashes sprinkled across the sea. That was his final wish. I have to fulfill it for him. I’ll be on my own from now on. It kind of hurts to think about it… Life used to be difficult, but I wasn’t alone… Now… I can’t even relax. It really hurts. It’s like I’ve lost hope. Ari, it hurts.”

Arianne could empathise with her pain. She had gone through it, after all, “It’s alright. It will get better. Trust me. No matter how painful your experiences may be, it gets better over time. Time is the best medicine. I’ve experienced it. Get up, wash up, and let’s go.”

Tanya forced a small smile. She got up and walked into the washroom. Suddenly, she ran out with a mouthful of toothpaste, “Oh no! I completely forgot! Ricky’s got a bad stomach, and I made him drink with me! His stomach must have been hurting since last night! I’m really so stupid!”

Of course, Arianne knew that Tanya had forgotten about that. She would never do it on purpose. Hence, she did not tell her about Eric's stomach pains, "He's fine. He seemed pretty energetic when he left. Don't worry. His stomach is alright. He's a 180cm tall man. A few glasses of liquor won't kill him."

Tanya believed her and heaved a sigh of relief. She gulped at the same time, and her expression changed. She retched and ran back into the bathroom, "God, toothpaste really tastes bad…"

…

Naya had to leave first, as she had brought her daughter along to the capital and couldn't stay too long.

Arianne and Tiffany helped Tanya in managing the funeral. The trio sat on a small boat in the middle of the ocean, their thoughts shrouded in mystery.

The old man's ashes had sunk deep into the bottom of the sea. Tanya lifted her head and looked up into the sky, took a deep breath, and shut her eyes, "Humans really are small. It doesn't matter who leaves this big, wide world. It's so easy to overlook them. I only have my sentiments for my grandfather now. If I die, I'll have nothing left."

Tiffany somehow managed to get a box of cigarettes; she took one out and put it into her mouth, "Would any of you like one? For some reason, I kind of want a smoke at a time like this. I believe that men have reasons for smoking. Cigarettes are more addictive than women."

At this time, they were floating in the middle of the ocean, far from shore. There was no one to control them, and none of them thought it inappropriate. Arianne reached out and took one. Tanya accepted

one as well. The trio took a puff and coughed. It felt better after the second and third puffs. They smiled at each other, like sneaky children up to mischief, far away from the complications of adulthood.

Once they arrived on shore, they would have to return to reality. The most unforgettable memory of all, for Tanya, was the fact that her grandfather had been slapped at the hotel, during Tiffany's engagement party. She believed that it was her negligence that caused her grandfather to suffer such humiliation before his death. Every time she thought of it, tears would stream down her face. She would never forgive Chloe.

Arianne had decided to bring Tanya back to stay over at the Tremont Estate for the time being, then leave together when the time came. She was worried about leaving Tanya all alone in a hotel at a time like this. Tiffany had some free time, so she followed Arianne and Tanya to the Tremont Estate. Unexpectedly, as it was a weekend, Mark and Jackson did not go to the office today, and Jackson happened to be at the Tremont Estate too.

Jackson stepped forward and gave Tiffany a hug when he saw her, as he usually would, "You're here too, Tiffie? Is everything done?" He had just finished his sentence when his expression changed. He inched closer to Tiffany's lips and sniffed, "Have you been smoking?"

Tiffany felt strangely guilty. Even Arianne and Tanya lowered their heads guiltily.

Seeing the changes in all three women's expressions, Mark's expression changed as well, "Ari, don't touch that stuff. It's bad for your health."

Tiffany burst into laughter, "We did not. Someone just happened to be smoking next to us when we went shopping. The smell of it must have rubbed off on us. We've never smoked, really! I swear!"

Jackson pinched her nose, “What are you going to swear on? Do you take me for a fool? If you’ve smoked, you’ve smoked. You are not allowed to touch those things from now on, or I’ll be very angry.” He dug out the box of leftover cigarettes from her bag as he said this, “I’m confiscating this.”

Tiffany gnashed her teeth hatefully, “You smoke cigarettes by the pack too! And you’re telling me that I can’t? Ever heard of the phrase ‘do unto others as you would have them do unto you’? Old b*stard!”

Arianne agreed with Tiffany’s objection wholeheartedly. She looked at Mark, who narrowed his eyes, “What do you mean? You think I’ve crossed a line too? Fine. I’ll stop smoking.”

Jackson summoned his courage and said, “I’ll stop too. It’s agreed. You can all rest. I have something to discuss with Mark.”

Arianne led Tanya and Tiffany upstairs and told Mary to prepare a guest room. Mary brought over a new set of bedding. “Ari, your relationship with Mr. Tremont seems to have improved. That means that you’re not leaving, right?” she asked Arianne, as she prepared the bed.

Chapter 610

This was a particularly difficult problem. Arianne didn’t want to see the disappointment on Mary’s face, but she couldn’t possibly stay, “I’ll be back, Mary.”

Tiffany sat herself down on the newly-made bed, “Don’t mind her, Mary. Your Mr. Tremont is a jerk. It’s no wonder Ari is giving him the cold shoulder. Ari will stay when the time is right.”

Mary sighed, “Henry asked me to ask the question. He doesn’t like talking and is a cold individual. He’s similar to Mr. Tremont in that sense. However, he’s not entirely cold. He’s still pretty humane. I’m not saying a word, since that’s the case. You should visit more often, Ari. I hope you’ll stay forever next time and live with Mr. Tremont. This house feels so lifeless without you.”

Arianne thought of how Mark had fallen sick after a long period of over exhaustion and had suddenly collapsed. This matter had really disturbed her. Her heart had softened long ago. When she found out that he hadn’t had a good night’s sleep in a long time, she was shocked. She never expected to have such a great influence over him. This was probably the greatest revenge and torture that anyone could ever experience. The problem would never be solved if she avoided him for the rest of her life. She had to reevaluate her relationship with Mark and think it over carefully.

Arianne kept Tanya company over the next few days, even in bed. Mark did not dare object to this. This was still considered reasonable. He finally lost it when Arianne was packed up and ready to leave, “Can’t you stay a few more days?”

Arianne only hesitated for one second, “No. I’ve stayed long enough.”

Mark snatched her luggage away, “Leave tomorrow. I’ll send you off to the airport tomorrow. It’s decided.”

“Ari, how about we leave tomorrow instead?” Tanya advised. “It’s not like we’ll lose out on one more day. We haven’t bought our plane tickets anyway…”

Arianne was afraid of getting dragged along by her hesitation, so she pulled Mark aside to talk to him in their bedroom, “I’ve really got to go. This is not a discussion. I’m only informing you. Stop making it difficult for me. We’ve agreed.”

It wasn't easy for their relationship to progress to this steady stage and for them to face each other calmly like this. Mark was well aware of that, so he did not urge her. Instead, he pulled her into his arms, closely against him, "I don't want you to go."

Arianne did not reject his intimate act, "You can come and visit me when you have the time. You'd better sleep while I'm away. You're an adult. Don't get all helpless."

"What do you mean? Am I too old for you now?" he objected, "Shouldn't you be well aware of whether I'm too old or not?" He slid his hand down her shirt as he spoke.

Arianne gasped. The warmth from his hand made her heart race. She nearly surrendered. She held onto her last sliver of sobriety and pushed him away. "Enough, I'm leaving," she smiled sweetly. Then, she tried her best to recollect herself and resolutely left the Tremont Estate.

She had to admit, the thought of refusing him did not cross her mind. If she were that compliant, she would never be able to leave. Wasn't that terrifying? Humans are contradictory by nature. She obviously loved him and couldn't bear to leave him, yet she insisted on leaving anyway. She couldn't stop now. She needed time.

…

She had returned to her quiet little condominium. She huddled on the couch, staring into space for the entire afternoon. Mark had a reason for releasing her so easily — she did not take the old woman with her. She left him with some control.

She simply cooked herself a bowl of noodles for dinner. She was alone anyway and wasn't that fussy. She had to start work tomorrow, so she went to bed very early after her meal. This trip back to the capital had brought many changes in her emotions. She had to fix them as soon as possible.

After some unknown amount of time, she was awakened by a slew of knocks on the door. She did not check the time and felt that it was probably still early so she opened the door without a second thought. Before she could get a good look at her visitor, a figure suddenly enveloped her and pulled her into his arms. She nearly jumped out of her skin. When she smelled Mark's unique scent, she was in shock, "What… are you doing here?"

If she remembered correctly, she had just returned today. What was he doing here?

A passionate kiss was his response. He moved from the side of her face to the sides of her lips. His hoarse voice purred from her lips, "I missed you, and I was afraid of getting insomnia again, so I came."

Even if she had any objections at this very moment, she didn't show it. He had travelled 2,000 kilometers without another word, just to see her. He followed her, and the first thing he said to her when he walked in was that he missed her…

He was like a fatal trap that one could fall into unwittingly, never to come out again. In his soft pillows of gentleness, there was an unmistakable dominance.

There was only one thing on Arianne's mind — she had gone mad, so mad that there was no cure for it. Ever since she had fallen for a man that she never should have fallen for, there was no turning back. However, she had managed to maintain some semblance of sobriety due to the boundaries from their difficult past. He, on the other hand, was now trying to overcome that boundary!

When she woke up the next morning, Mark's shadow had completely disappeared from the tiny condo. Rays of sunlight shone through the small gap between her curtains. She was momentarily dazzled, as if she had experienced an incomparably complicated dream.