Ruling 651

Chapter 651

Aye spotted Bernadette and Jackson sitting by the window when they walked in. Her expression changed instantly, “Tiffany, I think we should leave…”

Tiffany shot Bernadette a look then nonchalantly strolled to find a table and sat down, “Why? I’m not doing anything wrong. They can have their dinner, we’ll have ours. It’s fine.”

Tanya noticed that something wasn’t right, “Who is that woman?”

“A flirtatious sl*t!” Tiffany replied, shooting Bernadette a glare, “I’ve never seen anyone more shameless in my entire life! Ignore her.”

Aye looked at her admiringly, “You’re still able to muster your appetite, after this? By the way… doesn’t it feel awkward at all?”

Tiffany flipped her hair, “The sl*t isn’t embarrassed. Why should I be?”

Bernadette noticed Tiffany’s unfriendly gaze and smiled at Jackson as she said, “I think your fianceé has a problem with me.”

“She’s not the only one,” Jackson calmly replied, “I have a problem with you too. Next time, if money is what you want, just say it. I don’t have time to waste on you, and you’re not worthy of my time either.”

The smile on Bernadette's face remained. It was just as gentle as ever, "It's boring to eat alone. I hate being alone. You don't have to keep me company. Ignore me then. Would you dare?"

Jackson looked sullen and remained silent. He had to wait until the child was found. Once he could confirm the child's identity, he wouldn't need to pander to her needs anymore.

A short while later, Bernadette got up to go to the bathroom. Tiffany followed with a deadpan look on her face. They ran into each other in front of the sinks. Bernadette was putting on her lipstick, facing the mirror, "What a coincidence, Miss Lane."

Tiffany smirked, "What do you mean? You're having a meal in my fiance's restaurant. Isn't it expected for us to run into each other? How's the meal? Tastes good, doesn't it? Absolutely delicious, correct? I wonder if it'll hurt for you to spit it all out."

Bernadette paused, then turned around to look at her, "Why would I spit out the food I've consumed? Besides, it really tastes so… good. I'm sorry for holding up your time with Jackson. There will be a lot more of this in the future. You should get used to this."

She wants her to get used to it? Tiffany nearly lost control and lunged at her, "What do you mean? How long do you plan on doing this? What do you want?"

Bernadette remained candid and kept no secrets, "Oh, me? I want to have everything I could ever want for the rest of my life. An endless stream of cash is certainly more secure than a one-time offer. It's not too bad right now. I want something, and Jackson gives it to me. I deserve it."

Tiffany's stomach churned when she heard the way Bernadette mentioned Jackson's name, "Don't talk as if you're that close to him. His father was the one who was involved with you, not him. You can't possibly want to have sex with both father and son, right? I used to think that every mother would teach her daughters dignity and self-love. Looks like not everyone has a mother."

This did not infuriate Bernadette, "Are you very angry? The more angry you are, the more it proves that I've been doing a splendid job. You all hate me, but you can't do anything about it. I know that you're trying to locate my child, but I won't let you. As long as I have my child, the West family will have to give me anything I want. I've taken a liking to this villa, so you should have some form of mental preparation. After all, I can't possibly stay in a hotel if I'm going to live here temporarily. It's not convenient."

Chapter 652

Tiffany was close to having a stroke. She was no match for Bernadette. This woman was too high ranked. She had never met anyone who acted out such a shameless schtick in such an outstanding manner. That explained why Jackson, who was used to dealing with women, had no way of getting rid of her. She was too terrifying!

Bernadette walked out of the bathroom and went back to her table, as usual, "I just had a chat with your fianceé. I think she's pretty mad at me. I'll let you off for today. Go and keep her company. I have something to attend to. Goodbye."

Jackson watched her icily as she walked away. Then, he immediately got up and walked towards Tiffany, who was shaking with anger, "F*ck. She wants a villa too! I'll build her a gravestone instead!"

Aye and Tanya were too afraid to speak. Both had no idea of the situation.

Jackson wore a complicated look on his face, “I’m going back home for a while. Keep yourself out of this.”

Tiffany grabbed his wrist in panic when she heard that he was going home, “You… You should calm down. Don’t be rash. You have to hold your temper. Understand?”

He nodded then left the restaurant.

Tiffany was still worried. She was afraid that Jackson might kick up an awful fuss at home. She could pretty much imagine Summer’s reaction to this affair, if she found out. She might actually have a stroke. Even though Summer and Atticus had been separated for more than twenty years, they did not divorce. Now, they had reunited. His relationship with Bernadette could be considered an extramarital affair…

Considering the situation, she was too afraid to follow him. After all, it was a family issue between the Wests. She had not married into the family yet, so she would make things difficult for Jackson too.

…

Upon his return to the West residence, Jackson immediately headed upstairs into the study. Summer had a habit of taking a nap after lunch; he knew this very well. That’s why he chose to come back at this hour.

Atticus was painting. When he saw him, he instinctively put his unfinished painting away, “Jackson, what are you doing here? Where’s Tiffany?”

Jackson balled his hands into fists. The man before him was his father. Regardless of whether one viewed it from the perspective of his character or his physical traits, he would never have done something so filthy. Unfortunately, it happened, “Bernadette Legrand has contacted me. I’ve pretty much spent all of the money allocated to me on her. I have no money to pay her anymore. If this continues, my mother will question me on my expenses. What do you think? I have no intention of cleaning your filth. I’d make you deal with that woman if it weren't for my mother!”

Atticus stiffened at the mention of Bernadette’s name, “She… She’s contacted you?”

Jackson didn’t answer. His face was a horrifying sight.

Atticus let out a long sigh, “I thought she’d completely disappeared… Tell her to come and see me. You won’t be able to handle this…”

Chapter 653

“So, you were involved with her. And produced a b*stard too!” Jackson snapped through gritted teeth.

“What? She has a kid? That’s not possible!” Atticus’s face changed as fast as a horse race lamp.

“Are you really unaware of the disgusting sins you’ve committed? And you have the nerve to come home. I wish you died long ago, away from this home! If my mother ever finds out about this, I will kill you!” Jackson growled. Then, he turned around and left the West residence, bringing his fiery rage along with him. He had long been fed up with this issue and no longer wanted to care. Since Atticus was willing to take care of it on his own, he was happy to leave him to it.

Atticus slumped down into his chair in a decrepit manner as he listened to Jackson's car drive away. He went into a momentary daze then pulled out his phone and dialed a number, "Bernadette Legrand's contact details, please. Thank you."

…

At 8PM, Atticus and Bernadette met up at a French restaurant. It was a reunion between old friends, but the sentiment from their past was long gone. Bernadette was no longer Atticus's young and naive student.

Atticus was dressed in a suit, probably to suit the occasion. He didn't look half a century old at all. Instead, he carried a sense of maturity and the steadiness of a middle-aged man.

Once they sat down, Bernadette calmly ordered her meal and ordered Atticus's share too. She seemed completely familiar with him, "Mr. West, you're just as handsome as ever. You don't seem a day older from when we last met. I know your tastes, if they haven't changed. You don't mind that I've ordered for you, do you?"

Atticus understood Bernadette very well and emotionlessly replied, "Same as ever. Of course, I don't mind. I've asked you out today to talk about a serious matter. You know that this meal isn't my objective. I don't like beating around the bush either."

Bernadette giggled, covering her lips, "Hehe… Mr. West, looks like you really have gone home to your family. Why so distant with me? I'm a little sad."

Atticus's eyes flashed with forbearance. If it weren't for his upbringing, he would not have been able to sit still, "Bernadette, I'm not here to reminiscence with you! Why did you contact Jackson? Nothing ever happened between us. Nothing!"

The smile on Bernadette's face gradually disappeared, "Oh? Really? You've become rather forgetful in your old age, Mr. West. Regardless of whether you're going to admit it or not, everyone in our circle is well aware of our… special relationship. How do you plan on wiping common knowledge away? You know how I am. If I want something, I'll do anything to get it. I'll be frank, I like your talent and your familial background."

Her words had opened up memories that Atticus had wanted to forget. Bernadette wasn't his only student that year. He treated every student the same way and noticed Bernadette's subtle actions toward him. She purposely grew close to him and tried to seduce him. He never gave her a clear rejection because no one actually broached the subject. They met frequently, but as an exemplary character, he would never do such a thing. Instead, he satirically diverted her attention onto her studies.

However, for some reason, rumors began to circulate, talking about his inappropriate relationship with Bernadette. He valued his reputation, so he put on his wedding ring, the one he wore when he married Summer, and made no secret of his status as a married man. However, Bernadette seemed to tacitly approve of the rumors, which made him very annoyed.

Time soon passed and it was soon Bernadette's graduation. He thought that he could return to his normal life. Unfortunately, Bernadette threw a party as her way of thanking her teachers. He couldn't turn her down. That very night, he simply had a sip of fruit juice and lost consciousness. The next day, he woke up in a hotel with Bernadette next to him.

Chapter 654

Setting aside the fact that he wasn't even drinking alcohol, even if he was, he would never have collapsed after just one glass. Everyone knew what happened. Bernadette made no effort to hide it at all, "If I hadn't resorted to this, how could I expect to be with you? You kept refusing to cooperate, so I

had to go through such painstaking efforts. It's so exhausting. I don't care if you're married. Your marriage is only a place card anyway. I don't really need an official title."

Atticus knew that nothing could have happened between him and Bernadette while he was unconscious, so he was very calm about it, "Please have some dignity. Nothing happened between us. You're still young. Don't soil your own reputation."

Bernadette smiled silently. Then, they heard a knock on the door. She opened the door, dressed in a half transparent nightie. Outside the door was a group of teachers and students. At that very moment, Atticus knew that this woman had trapped him.

After that incident, he left the city and left nothing behind. Bernadette did not contact him again. He was nowhere to be found, but she didn't need to look for him. They finally met again today.

No decent man would easily fall for a woman who pursued him openly and with ulterior motives. However, once she ensnares him, it would be difficult to get rid of her. Atticus knew this, so even if nothing really happened, their fake affair would turn into a real one, as long as Bernadette wished it, enforced by the rumors that once circulated their circle.

"What do you want from me?" he asked through gritted teeth.

Bernadette smiled as she picked up her glass of red wine and took a sip. "Take care of me, and… our baby…" she drawled, "Give me whatever I want and I guarantee that our lives will be peaceful. It's been so difficult for me to find you, Mr. West. Now that we're finally reunited, I won't let you get away so easily…"

Atticus was so enraged that his chest hurt, “What baby? Where would that baby come from? That child can’t possibly be mine!”

Bernadette gently swirled the red wine in her glass, “It doesn’t really matter if it’s your child or not. You won’t be able to find it. You’re sure that it’s not your kid, right? I have no intentions of tearing your family apart. I just want what I want. You know me; once I’m thoroughly disappointed, I’ll get a scapegoat. So don’t try to annoy me. Maybe I don’t actually love you; I might even hate you, just a little. You drew my attention, yet you caused my spectacular failure and my corruption. Otherwise, I don't think that child would have ever existed. Consider this my revenge.”

Atticus truly wasn’t in the mood to eat whatever fancy meal the waiter had served him. The woman in front of him felt like a psychopath, “It was not me that drew your attention, but my status. There’s a difference between a yuppie and a vulgar person. Your tactics are disgusting. I’m leaving. I’ve paid the bill. I won’t agree to your demands. Go and find yourself a different spendthrift fool to be your ATM. You’re messing with the wrong person.”

Then, he got up immediately and left the restaurant without another word.

Bernadette felt a fleeting sense of disappointment and humiliation. She downed the red wine in her glass. Her mistake was to hang herself on a tree that did not even belong to her in her youth. Although she liked money more than Atticus, she would not have degraded herself and plunged into nightclubs if he had not suddenly disappeared. Not even she knew who the father of her child was. She had put all of the blame for her experiences on him. She became obsessed with what she could not have and was driven further into insanity.

The next day, “Famous Artist, Atticus West, Fooled Around With A Student’s Feelings, Impregnates Her And Ignores Her For Many Years” was widely spread news throughout the capital. The entire West family was dragged into an abyss.

When Jackson saw the news, he stormed out of the office in a rage.

Chapter 655

Tiffany still didn't quite understand. She finally understood that something had happened after listening to her colleagues' gossip. She checked the news and glanced through the articles. Her mind immediately went numb. By the time she recollected herself, Jackson had disappeared.

She had arrived at the office in Jackson's car today. By the time she rushed out, Jackson had already driven away. She knew that he was going back to the West residence to confront Atticus. Despite her fear, she couldn't ignore him at a time like this. Jackson could beat a man to death when he lost control!

By the time she arrived at the West residence in a cab, Jackson and Atticus were nowhere to be found. Only Summer was pacing around nervously in the living room. "Where's Jackson? Is he here?" She asked.

Summer nodded, teary-eyed, "He's here. In the study upstairs. He's locked himself in with his father. I can't go in. I'm afraid that something might happen, but I don't know what to do. I'm sorry, Tiffie, I must look like a joke…"

How could Tiffany possibly think of this as a joke? She rushed upstairs and knocked on the door, "Jackson! Open the door. Let's talk about this. Don't be rash!"

She could hear smashing noises from inside, but no response from Jackson. She was extremely terrified, "Mom, call the housekeeper and everyone else to knock this door down. Someone might die. I'm sure you're aware of your son's fighting skills. He will beat dad to death!"

This matter was undoubtedly the biggest blow to Summer. She might be angry, but she couldn't ignore the potentially dying Atticus. She quickly called her staff to knock down the door.

Unfortunately, the door was too solid. The housekeeper was a woman too. Collectively, the women tried, but to avail. In the end, their efforts were all for naught and they ended up panting from exhaustion.

After more than an hour, Jackson opened the door and stepped out. There were little spots of blood on his suit and clear signs of blood and swelling on both his knuckles. Vicious currents circulated his entire being, and he looked absolutely terrifying. Not even Tiffany dared to go near him. This side of Jackson felt like a stranger to her…

Summer tried to speak but then stopped herself. She peeped into the study worriedly. "Don't worry, I didn't beat him to death. This is the final act of kindness I'll ever show him," Jackson grimly said. "I thought that he would be able to handle this matter properly, and this is how he handled it. Do you think it was worth waiting twenty years for this man? Do you?"

Summer finally burst into tears, "Jackson… He's still your father. I should be the one beating him. Aren't you afraid of what people might say? You really are… a disgrace!"

Tiffany placed her hand on her chest as she stood in a corner, too afraid to speak. She calmed herself, summoned her courage and rushed into the study. Atticus had already managed to crawl to his feet. The study was in complete disarray, and Atticus was battered and bruised. Blood from his nose had scattered all over the ground and was still dripping down his nose.

She fumbled around for a tissue paper and rushed forward, "Dad… Do you want to go to the hospital?"

“Don’t call him ‘dad’, he doesn’t deserve it!”

Chapter 656

Jackson’s sudden roar frightened Tiffany into dropping the tissue in her hand. This was the first time he had ever yelled at her. She felt aggrieved.

Atticus steadied himself by holding onto a table and forced a smile, “I’m fine, Tiffany. He’s not wrong. I don’t deserve it. I shouldn’t have dragged the Wests into this. This is my problem. I’m a steady man; I will deal with this properly. I haven’t done anything wrong…”

Tiffany believed that Atticus was telling the truth. She simply couldn’t relate the man in front of her with the word ‘unbearable.’ “I believe you… Shall we go to the hospital? Please don’t be angry at Jackson. He loses control of his strength when he’s mad…”

Atticus shook his head, “I’m fine. He did control his strength. I’m alright. I won’t die. Stay with your mother-in-law. Tell her that I’ve never done anything to betray her. My only mistake was in managing this and causing everyone in the city to find out.”

He had just spoken when Jackson lunged at Tiffany, dragging her away, “What are you doing? Do you pity him? Don’t you know your place? Get back to the office!”

Tiffany never had a mild-mannered temperament to begin with. Now, she, an innocent bystander, was suffering from casualties too. She flew into a rage and slapped Jackson right across the face, “He’s your father! I understand how you feel. I might even be convinced that you’ve done nothing wrong. But you cannot force me into your position. I am your fianceé; I should be calling him ‘dad’. I have nothing

against him. This is my responsibility! Am I supposed to just let you beat him to death, instead of smoothing things over? Calm the heck down! Scream at me again and we're through!"

Summer forcibly dragged Jackson downstairs, "You jerk. Who are you yelling at? Tiffie's done nothing wrong. How are you any different from your father? Violence is still violence, no matter the degree of it. No man in our family should ever scream at his wife. If one slap isn't enough, I'll give you another! Why can't we just talk things out? Give your father a chance to speak, for goodness sake!"

Jackson was conflicted over his actions too. He simply couldn't bring himself to calm down.

He rushed out immediately and drove away from the West residence, afraid that he would lose it again if he stayed any longer.

No matter how strong Summer was, she was still a woman. She didn't know what to do now, except cry. Both father and son plagued her with worry.

Tiffany helped clean up Atticus's wound. The trio sat in the living room, facing each other to clear the air. Atticus was no longer as uncommunicative as he used to be. At this moment, holding back would mean digging his own grave.

Summer still complained despite his explanation, "You caused this. It doesn't matter if it happened or not. It's a huge scandal now. I can't bear to show my face anymore. I don't blame Jackson for getting angry at you, and you deserve to be beaten up. Thank goodness you're his father. You'd probably be dead by now if you weren't. I've waited twenty years for you, yet this rotten mess is my reward. It's irritating. You've never given me any surprises, only shock. That Bernadette Legrand is the most shameless woman I've ever met. She's not even Jackson's age. Why on earth would she try to seduce you? Women these days would do anything for money and fame!"

Atticus paused then said, “I knew that Bernadette wouldn't let things slide when I spoke to her yesterday. If she wants a life or death struggle, then I don’t need to concern myself with any sentiment as her teacher. She wants to take my life. I’ve always been an honest man. I never thought that I’d end up getting trapped by her.”

Tiffany had had first-hand experience with Bernadette’s shamelessness. However, she never thought that she would stoop so low. She’d managed to fabricate something out of nothing with such finesse. The masses would much rather believe in shocking gossip than the truth. It would not be easy for them to turn the tables. Even if they did publicize the truth, the masses would think that it was simply a public relations stunt by the Wests, and they might even bite back…

Chapter 657

After some deliberation, Tiffany carefully asked, “How about… I ask Mark to take care of this? I understand that it’s inappropriate for me to interfere in your matters, but you’ve been doing battles with an artist’s pencil for your entire life, dad. You’re no match for this woman. At this point, getting back at her would be the most crucial thing to do in regaining your reputation.”

Jackson could have solved this too, but he would never help Atticus. Father and son were now mortal enemies.

Atticus was hesitant. Summer made the decision first, “Then… Please ask Mark for help, Tiffie. I can’t manage this situation either. The Wests are now in the eye of the storm. I’m afraid that we’ll never be able to squash this scandal without the Tremonts. I’m thoroughly humiliated too. I’ve been upright and disciplined all of my life, yet I’ve ended up falling head first in my old age, and in the hands of a woman much younger than I am. I’m going to give her a slap in the face if I ever see her!”

Tiffany found it strange and awkward to ask Mark on her own. As the saying goes, don’t air your dirty laundry in public, but now, they had no choice, “It’s fine… I’ll go right now. Besides, Arianne and I aren’t

just best friends, but Mark and Jackson are like brothers too. Mark will definitely help us. Please don't quarrel. Father isn't in the wrong here; it's that disgusting Bernadette. I'm going right now."

She didn't go to Mark's office, but to the Tremont Estate to see Arianne. She wasn't a total idiot. Jackson might have already informed Mark. She had to see Arianne first in order to achieve her objective.

Arianne finally understood the situation after listening to her explanation. Her reaction was the same as Tiffany's initial reaction, as if a large melon had been stuffed into her mouth. She was utterly stupefied, "Do people like that actually exist? But Mark is at the office now. Maybe I should come with you to see him?"

Tiffany shook her head, "If he sees me taking you out of the house, he'll tear me to pieces. You'd better call him and ask him to come home. Jackson may have already intervened by asking him not to get involved. You have to be more unyielding, act like a female tiger. Jackson hates his father now. He would never concern himself with this, even if his reputation goes down the drain."

Arianne knew exactly what to do. She pulled out her phone and gave Mark a call. Usually, he would pick up the phone in a matter of seconds whenever she called. Today, it took him a long time to answer her call.

"Are you at the office? Could you come home, if you have the time? I need to talk to you."

Mark fell silent for two seconds, "I'm a little busy. Can we talk tonight?"

Tiffany shot maddened glares at Arianne from the side. Arianne was helpless, "What's so important? If you don't come home, I'm coming over to see you."

Mark glanced at the unfriendly-looking Jackson next to him and rubbed his forehead, “Fine. I’ll come home right now.”

After ending the call, Jackson icily asked, “Was that Arianne? If I’m not mistaken, Tiffie is probably right next to her. Are you really going to get involved?”

Chapter 658

Mark shrugged helplessly, “I’m going to go home, even if you beat me to death. I don’t know your father too well, but if Tiffany is asking for my help, that means that the situation isn’t as shady as the newspapers say. You can ignore it, but I can’t afford to infuriate Mrs. Tremont and my son. You can stay in my office for a while and calm down. You’ve already hit him. Give it a rest, and leave it to me.”

Mark looked at Tiffany when he arrived at the Tremont Estate then sat down next to Arianne, “I know why you’ve asked me to come home. Jackson was right next to me when you called. I might get beaten up if I’m not careful…”

Tiffany was gripped with fear, “Well, we had no idea that he was right next to you… He really scared me to death today. I even slapped him back at the West residence. Now I’m kind of regretting it, but the situation was too complicated. I want to console him too, but he’s so stubborn… I really couldn’t reach him.”

Mark sighed, “Don’t worry, he’s not angry with you. I know his temper. At that point, slapping him would have been the only way to do it. You were right. I’ve pretty much come up with a plan to deal with this. I’ll speak to Bernadette Legrand personally and find out her demands. If anyone from the West family contacts her now, she would undoubtedly believe that the Wests were surrendering to her. It’s better if I go. I believe that we should give her every appropriate benefit, as long as she’s willing to change her tune and clear Mr. West’s name.”

Arianne paused thoughtfully then said, “Bernadette has made quite a name for herself in the artistic circle; she has a reputation to keep too. The truth of the matter would certainly put her at a disadvantage. Why would she give in? Either she fabricates a lie that’s beneficial for both parties, which would be extremely difficult, or she tells the truth. She would be completely ruined then. How much would she have to receive before agreeing to give in? A woman like her would have a pretty good income. The fact that she’s resorted to such tactics means that she has a big appetite. A small incentive wouldn’t be enough to put her off, and we can’t possibly give too much. It’s not that easy. I think she probably has some financial back-up, and she does have money. It’s a little… strange. Maybe there’s another reason? Like… maybe… she actually… is… in love with Mr. West?”

Tiffany felt goosebumps all over her body, “Bernadette is younger than Jackson. What could possibly possess her into falling for a man who’s old enough to be her father? I’m pretty sure that she has a loose screw somewhere up in her head. Your age difference with Mark is already big enough, Ari. Any older and the average person would never be able to accept it!”

Mark’s expression sank, “Are you here to cause trouble? Jackson and I are the same age. You and Ari are the same age. Why aren’t you using yourselves as an example?”

Tiffany rubbed her nose in embarrassment, “It was a slip of the tongue. You’re really good together… Back to the subject. I think Ari’s right. Either Bernadette is a true gold digger and the money she earns really isn’t enough for her expenses and her big appetite, or there’s some other reason. I believe in management skills. Good luck!”

“Why do you make it sound like it’s my problem?” Mark asked irritably, “Whatever Ari’s thought of, I would have considered as well. Please don’t put me on the same level as you, just because your brain isn’t fully functional. Jackson is still in my office. Go and fetch him yourself. I certainly don’t want to look over my shoulder every second of the day. He’s close to exploding in his current state. I value my life.”

Tiffany was about to say something more, when she was interrupted by Granny Tabitha, who was coming downstairs. It was better keep this matter from too many ears. After all, Tabitha did not read online news. Old people tend to be more conservative, who knows what she might think? Tabitha had been waking up late recently. Arianne got up and asked, “Would you like some breakfast, Granny? I’ll ask Mary to make some for you.”

Tabitha had caught a cold and coughed twice, “The house is certainly lively today. I just got up, so I don’t feel like eating. I’ll have some ginseng tea. Don’t mind me, carry on with your conversation.”

They were pretty much done with their discussion. Mark shot Tiffany a look, and the pair left together.

Chapter 659

Seeing this, the old woman couldn’t help curling her lips, “Look, your husband has gone out with another woman and you’re still so calm about it. Don’t come crying to me if something happens.”

Arianne’s head was spinning, “Granny! They just happen to be going the same way. Don’t ever say such a thing. It might happen with other women, but not Tiffie. Do not think of Tiffie in that way!”

Tabitha waved her arms as she walked out to the garden. Arianne let out a long sigh. People had more to say in their old age. She didn’t really mind. Once the old woman understood Tiffany more, she would stop saying such things.

Tiffany followed Mark into the office. She walked towards Jackson when she saw him and knelt down next to him to check his swollen hand, “Does it hurt?”

Jackson turned his face away and didn't say a word. The only thing he wanted to do now, was to stay quiet and do nothing.

Knowing that Mark was outside, waiting for her to take him away, Tiffany used up her lifetime supply of good temper, "Jackson… I'm sorry, I shouldn't have slapped you. You may not have known it at the time, but I was frightened. You yelled at me too. I know how you feel. If I were in your shoes, I would probably have done the same, but… your dad is innocent. All I can say is that he caused this scandal. Give him a chance to clear the air, okay?"

Jackson showed a look of disgust at the very mention of Atticus. He got up and walked out without another word.

Tiffany followed closely behind. As she passed Mark by at the doorway, she gave him an "okay" sign. Now that she had managed to persuade him into leaving, all that was left was to gently coax him.

When they arrived downstairs, Tiffany grabbed the car keys from Jackson's hand and sat in the driver's seat, "Your hand must be hurting. Let me drive. Don't go back to the office today; have a good rest at home. I'll send you home then go back to work. Just empty your mind and don't think about anything. When I'm in a bad mood, I like to shop or stuff myself with good food. You can try it."

Jackson finally reacted. He turned to the side and looked at her, "I'm not like you. I don't like shopping or stuffing my face. Otherwise, the muscles that you're so fond of would disappear."

He was finally in the mood to crack jokes, albeit with a grim look on his face. Tiffany heaved a sigh of relief, "Then go to sleep. You'll feel much better after that. You haven't told me that you've forgiven me. Otherwise, I'll be wracked with guilt over slapping you today."

Jackson stared at her, as if he were staring at an idiot, “Who forces forgiveness? Besides… you didn’t do anything wrong. It was my fault, I shouldn’t have yelled at you. There was only one thing on my mind at the time and that was to teach Atticus a lesson. The pain he’s caused me and my mum is extremely deep. Wouldn’t it have been better if he never came back? He comes back and we get tormented. He’s ruined my mother’s life.”

Tiffany smiled brightly at him, “It’s alright. So we’re even. From now on, I won’t hit you and you can’t yell at me. I don’t have the words for your issues with your dad. One shouldn’t advise another man based on his own experiences. As long as you don’t kick up a huge fuss again, I won’t get involved. I won’t force you; otherwise, everyone else will suffer too. Alright, I’ll take you home now. I’ll fix your wound once you’ve showered and changed. I’ll go back to the office once I’m done. I’d suggest taking a few days off. You know how big of a scandal this is. Everyone in the office knows now, and I’m afraid you might get upset if you overheard their gossip.”

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Jackson mumbled an indifferent reply, closed his eyes and leaned back on the car seat in silence.

Once they arrived back at White Water Bay Villa, he took off his bloodied shirt and got into the shower. Tiffany took out the first aid kit and quietly waited. She wanted to soothe the trauma plaguing his mind. She wanted him to really cheer up. She would always stay by his side.

Jackson suddenly slid his hand down her clothes from behind while she was lost in her thoughts. Then, he climbed on top of her, “I want you…”

They hadn’t been intimate for a while due to Bernadette’s troublemaking. She nearly lost control when she smelled the fresh scent of his body wash. However, she knew that he was only seeking psychological comfort and was simply trying to release it out of habit, just like his wanton, carefree past. She had to help him get rid of this habit. She only wanted to be intimate with him in the name of love.

She pushed him away, pulled out the alcohol swab to clean his wound, “No. I don’t like it when you let out your bad mood by having sex with me. I only want to be intimate with you when we both need each other. I know that you’ve been very lonely from a young age. From now on, I’ll be with you, every night. I will stay by your side. I hope you’ll think of me when you’re angry too. I want to be the one to bring you back to reason, no matter the situation. That’s the only way to define how important I am to you.”

Jackson stared at the serious look on her face and forced his impulses down. He reached up and stroked her hair, “Okay.”

Once she was sure that he had pretty much calmed down, Tiffany relaxed and went back to the office to get back to work.

She had just sat down at her desk when Aye practically pounced on her, “What happened? Is it true? The whole office knows now…”

Tiffany felt suffocated, “Pfft. It’s all fake. Allow me to enlighten you. The main female character is Jackson’s father’s student. She’s the one who has been harassing them all this time. Nothing considerable actually happened. That kid definitely isn’t Jackson’s half-brother. It’s absolutely impossible! We’re in the middle of solving the problem now, so stop gossiping. It’s driving me crazy.”

Aye heaved a sigh of relief, “And I thought it was all real… Thank goodness it isn’t. The people in the office are like mindless sheep. Just ignore them if you hear anything. Don’t be mad. No one knows that you’re Mr. West’s fianceé anyway.”

Tiffany forced a smile, “I’d really like to thank you for reminding me… I’ve already mentally prepared myself. Get back to work!”

The office staff weren’t the only ones aware of this, for even Lillian knew. She called and interrogated Tiffany. Lillian was a woman who prized her dignity. She complained incessantly now that this scandal had happened, “Why would your father-in-law do such a thing? His family isn't the only one with their names dragged through the mud; we’re dragged along with them. Like father like son, they say. Has Jackson been behaving himself?”

Tiffany was getting a headache from her interrogation, “Mom! Please, can you not involve yourself in this matter? His father isn’t like that, and Jackson certainly isn’t. Stop imagining things. If you don’t want to feel humiliated, just stay home. This matter will soon come to pass. I’m at work. Bye!”

Tiffany soldiered on until quitting time, then rushed home immediately. She had been feeling uneasy the entire day. After all, Jackson was all alone at home.

She caught a whiff of a fragrant, delicious meal as she changed her shoes in the front porch. She could also hear movements from the kitchen. She was surprised. Jackson can’t possibly be in the mood for cooking at a time like this, could he?