Ruling 661

Chapter 661

It was soon proven that he did. It had been less than half a day, but he seemed to be back to his normal self. He was dressed in white woolen home clothes with an apron around his waist. He looked like a decent man from a good family. She knew that this picture of calm was superficial. His heart was riddled with gaping wounds. Her heart went out to him. She stepped forward and wrapped her arms around his firm body and pressed the side of her face firmly against his back, “Jackson…”

Jackson stiffened and smiled, “Why so emotional all of a sudden? I just wanted to cook, since I have nothing to do at home. Go and get showered. Dinner will be ready soon.”

She pinched his waist provocatively, “Alright, I’ll wash myself clean…”

Perhaps it was the effect from Jackson’s efforts to bring comfort, as Tiffany now felt much happier. She hummed a tune as she arrived downstairs after her shower and quietly waited for dinner. She stared at the glistening and fragrant feast all over the table and nearly drooled, “You’re put in a lot of effort, Jackson. It must have taken you a long time to prepare these. There’s only two of us here, so there’s no need to be so extravagant. We’d have to throw it all out if we can’t finish it.”

Jackson didn’t seem to mind, “I’m pretty sure that you can finish this. There’s just enough in every dish. It only looks overly done. I’m going to fatten you up again. With some extra flesh, I’d have more to grab. Any less and I’d feel like I’m hugging a bag of bones.”

Tiffany’s heart overflowed with sweetness. She heartily inhaled two large bowls of rice. As mentioned, the dishes on the table were pretty much wiped clean. After dinner, the pair cleaned up the kitchen together and curled up on the couch and watched television, the quiet passage of time feeling wonderful. An air of seduction inadvertently and gradually permeated the air.

Tiffany was lying down with her head on Jackson's lap. She did not notice the gradual rise of thirst in his eyes. By the time she realized, his hand had created a warm sensation from rubbing the nape of her neck. She looked up at him, "What are you doing?"

He bent down and kissed her lips. Breaking away, then kissing her again from time to time. This lukewarm sensation piqued her loins. Finally, when he landed another kiss on her, she reached out and wrapped her arms around his neck, fixing him in place and initiating the start of their dirty tango.

Just as the make out session had grown hot and heavy, he straightened her body. They were wrapped intimately around each other. Their bodies and hearts began to enter an all time high. Slowly, he pushed her down on the couch. A boring soap commercial was now playing on the television, but no one was watching.

At that moment, Tiffany felt a slight sting, a sting mixed with an indescribable kind of sensation. She blushed and stared at him helplessly, looking utterly innocent. He smirked evilly, "You slapped me. I should at least get some form of payback, right?"

He was actually being petty! She was beginning to regret getting on his deceitful ship. She wanted to struggle away, but his large hands pinned her delicate arms down. On this night, she finally understood the scale of surprising tricks he had up his sleeve when it came to sex, tricks that she had never experienced before. Despite the cold, freezing, wintry night, she panted and sweat.

Meanwhile, in the Tremont Tower, the CEO's office.

Mark stared at Bernadette, who sat right in front of him. While he had a grim look on his face, Bernadette seemed very calm. Her tightly crossed arms betrayed the nervousness she felt, deep down, "Mr. Tremont, I never expected for you to resort to such cheap shots to get me here."

Mark didn't care, "I extended you a conventional invitation, but you avoided me. Hence, I had no choice but to use force. You know why I've asked you here. Speak, what do I have to do to make you change your story?"

Now that she was here, Bernadette had no way of turning back, "This is a matter between me and the West family. It has nothing to do with you. I don't want to talk to you."

Chapter 662

Mark pulled out a cigarette from his cigarette box. A bodyguard quickly lit it up for him.

He exhaled a puff of smoke before carelessly saying, "I can represent the West family, so you may speak freely. I'll be honest with you, no West will see you now. You have nothing to do with Mr. West at all. Everyone knows this. Consider it our way of getting rid of a problem with money."

Bernadette gritted her teeth, "And what if I don't want to talk to you?"

He lifted his gaze at her and smirked, "I'll give you one more chance. If you won't talk, then you won't ever get to talk again."

Bernadette's fingers tense, "Fine, I'll talk then. I want a villa on San Pelegrino Hill and $15 million in cash. These are my terms. They are non-negotiable."

A villa in San Pelegrino Hills? And 15 million dollars? Mark chuckled, but his eyes were cold and terrifying, “Heh… Do you really think… that you have the right to make these demands? A villa in San Pelegrino Hills already costs more than $15 million, and you want $15 million more? You do have a big appetite.”

“If I didn’t, I wouldn’t have set my sights on Atticus West,” Bernadette said, acting calm. “It’s been so many years. I actually think that it’s a small amount. If you’re going to reject my demands, we have nothing more to say.”

Mark narrowed his eyes and released a dangerous aura, “Since you have the nerve to ask, I’ll give it to you. The Wests won’t be able to afford it, so I will.”

Bernadette felt frightened under his gaze. She could not afford to provoke this man. That’s why she had refused to see him from the beginning. She had a fleeting moment of hesitation, but she soon hardened her resolve. As the saying goes, one can get rich through risks. This was probably the only way, “Alright, since you’ve agreed, I’ll wait for you to transfer the goods.”

Mark nodded, “Sure. I have investments in the San Pelegrino Villas. House ownership transfer would be a walk in the park. I’ll transfer the money to your account in three days. Take care, Miss Legrand.”

Bernadette secretly heaved a sigh of relief. She got up and promptly left Tremont Tower. She still felt uneasy when she stepped outside. However, when she remembered that she would soon receive a large windfall and a luxurious new home, she calmed down.

She waited in the hotel for two days. Mark’s staff did not come looking for her. Although she felt anxious, she was too afraid to ask him. There was one more day left. One more day and she would leave the country, far away from this place as a form of conclusion to her past, nine years ago.

Unexpectedly, on the third day, her entire family background and all of her messages were published online, effectively outshining the discussions on the West family. The entire internet was rife with people cursing at her! She couldn't believe it; she was only an obscure artist. In contrast to an affluent family like the Wests, she shouldn't have drawn too much attention. She went through the news and finally understood. There was a short voice clip, which turned the tides of public opinion.

"You have nothing to do with Mr. West at all. Everyone knows this. Consider it our way of getting rid of a problem with money."

Chapter 663

"Fine, I'll talk then. I want a villa on San Pelegrino Hill and $15 million in cash. These are my terms. They are non-negotiable."

It was the contents of her conversation with Mark from three days ago, trimmed into a few sentences, enough to simplify the matter, enough to clearly define her as a wicked, gold digger!

Her pregnancy out of wedlock had also been dragged out and turned into a cock and bull story by netizens. Some netizens had even published her phone number and identification number. Her phone was ringing off the hook from spam phone calls, forcing her to turn off her phone. She was now holed up in the hotel, too afraid to even step out! Previously, when she met up with Mark, she was very careful with her words, as she was afraid that the conversation might be recorded. Unfortunately, her nervousness in the process was her downfall…

At that very moment, Atticus calmly faced an interview by the media, detailing his dispute with her. Atticus's previous students also stepped out to be his witnesses. As she watched the scene unfold before her on television, she screamed like a madwoman, "What did I ever do? Atticus West! Why did you have to do this to me?"

After letting out her frustrations, she pulled out her phone and tremblingly dialed Mark's number, "Why? You did this, didn't you?"

Mark sounded completely nonchalant on the other end, "Didn't I say that I'd give you whatever you wanted? Did you change your story? I only publicized the truth, just like you. Was that inappropriate? Don't worry. The money will be transferred soon. Do come over to my office to finish escrow when you can."

She never intended on selling herself out so completely. Now, the situation had developed to the point of no return. She couldn't even leave the hotel, let alone go to Mark's office to close escrow out in the open. That villa and $15 million was like a hot potato. This man had vicious tactics; how could she possibly have the nerve to take anything from him? She might have to spit out whatever she asked for, "Mr. Tremont… You never intended on letting me off the hook, did you?"

Mark refused to comment, "Humans shouldn't be too greedy. When asking for something that doesn't belong to you, you should be prepared to face the consequences. Since you've already decided to make exorbitant demands to have everything you could ever want for the rest of your life, reputation shouldn't mean anything to you, right? People used to see you as an intellectual, a refined and elegant artist. Now, I'm afraid you'll have to consider a career change. Find a place and hide away for the rest of your life, like a rat."

Bernadette's phone slipped from her fingers, onto the ground. Her lips trembled, her heart completely desolate. She never wanted to destroy her reputation and future prospects; she was at a high point that she had worked very hard to obtain. Her sudden downfall was an unbearable feeling. From now on, she would have to live like a rat. That wasn't a good feeling either. News had already spread out of the country. She had no way of establishing herself, in or out of the country.

In the past, she had many admirers. Now, even the fact that she had given birth to a child, which was her closely guarded secret, was now public knowledge. She had been forced to the end of the line. It

was obvious that her losses did not make up for the gains she wanted. Mark had completely foiled her plans.

After staying in the hotel for a month, she was now at the verge of collapse. She had to admit that public opinion had the power to drive a person into madness. She was afraid that someone might end up locating her child, so she had no choice but to contact Atticus, “Atticus… I concede… Let me go, let my child go! Come and see me at the hotel for the last time, or I will jump down from this window!”

Atticus was not that cruel, but he wasn’t stupid enough to meet her on his own. He brought Summer along.

When they arrived at the hotel, Bernadette stared at Summer for a very long time. Her eyes changed from surprise and astonishment upon her first impression to a deathly stillness in the end, “I understand why no other woman has been able to entrance him… If I had met you earlier, I wouldn’t have even dreamed of doing this.”

Summer walked towards the window with a deadpan look on her face. She reached out and drew the curtains, which had been tightly shut for a week, “Aside from our age, you really are no match for me. If you have something to say, get on with it. We’re very busy.”

Chapter 664

Bernadette sat decrepitly on the side of the bed; her hair was in a disarray, and the look in her eyes towards Atticus was complicated. In the end, she chose not to say a word. She had thought that he would come alone, but now Summer was here too. She couldn’t possibly reveal such unbearable details to the world. This was her final shred of dignity, “It’s nothing. I’ve lost. Nothing happened between us. That child isn't yours. That’s all.”

Summer looked at her, utterly disgusted. She thought that she would hear some new piece of revelation from her. She did not expect to hear that, “You’re nothing. We’ll be leaving now. Take care, Miss Legrand.”

In the end, Bernadette did not take Mark’s villa or his money. Aside from complete and utter ruin, she gained nothing from her exploit. Her final request was for Mark to get rid of the internet discussions and grant her peace. She couldn’t afford to offend this man.

A great divide that could never be patched up now separated Jackson and Atticus. Summer no longer asked Jackson to have dinner at the West residence every week. If father and son should ever meet, they would only act like enemies.

Atticus and Summer had initially planned on throwing a party to express their gratitude towards Mark. However, the said man refused. He had only involved himself in the first place to help his best friend, Jackson. Their gratitude did not matter to him. Besides, other than working in the office, he spent the rest of his time keeping Arianne company at home. He really didn’t have time for anything else.

Not too long after, the capital welcomed its first snow of the year. Arianne sat in her warm bedroom, reading a book. She sat on Mark’s favorite chair in front of the French windows. She now truly understood why he liked this chair so much — it presented a wide field of view, enough to look out into a part of the garden and the gates outside the compound. There was also an old tree right across the window, covered in white, fluffy snow. Looking out at the snow from her vantage point gave a completely different feeling.

The feathery snow did not seem to stop falling. Drawn by the scenery, she couldn’t help but put down her book to open the window and reach out her hand. The icy snowflakes fell upon her hand then quickly dissolved into nothing. This beauty was fleeting but splendid too.

Suddenly, she felt a thin blanket draped around her. She turned around; it was Mark. He had just arrived home, so he still carried the cold air from outside with him, “It’s cold outside. Close the window. If you’re bored, I’ll take you out for a walk when the weather improves.”

Arianne shook her head, “I don’t think I should go out for anything else, except my prenatal examinations. I’m afraid that something might happen… This child wasn’t conceived so easily. It’s only a few months, I can endure it. It’s ok.”

Mark felt slightly jealous. He knew that she was being extra careful, simply for the sake of the baby, not because this was their baby and certainly not because she cared about him, “Alright then. There’s enough things to do around the garden. If you really want to go out, just let me know. It’s alright to be careful, but you’re being too careful. Don’t get too anxious. You’re still in your early trimester; it’s not that risky. By the way… what would you like for Christmas?”

Christmas? Arianne was taken aback. She finally realized that Christmas was only ten days away. She had never asked him for any presents, nor did she want any, “Nothing much. No need to concern yourself with that. It’s not like festive seasons are all that important to us. We’ve never seriously celebrated birthdays or anything like those, right? That’s how it used to be, and that’s how it will be. Let’s just go through it like we used to. There’s no need for anything special, or I’d feel very awkward about it.”

Mark felt slightly dejected. It seemed like he could never make her happy. She was always so indifferent to him but would smile and come to life whenever she was with Tiffany or Tanya. Once, she had even beaten someone up in a hotel over Tanya’s grandfather. However, she was like a calm, silent, and deep body of water whenever she faced him, quiet yet inexplorable.

Arianne paused when she noticed a bleak glint in his eyes, then said, “By the way, Naya has sent the accounts for the month over to me. I haven’t had time to look at it. I didn’t want to check the accounts at first because I really trust her, but she insisted that I check them every month. I’m much too lazy to do it. Could you find some time to do it for me?”

She rarely spoke up so Mark gladly agreed, “Sure.”

In the middle of the night, when no sound could be heard, Arianne woke up from hunger. She didn’t have much of an appetite that night, so she didn’t eat much. Now, she was starving and her stomach was really upset.

Hunger drove her downstairs to the kitchen to search for something to eat. When she arrived at the kitchen, she saw that the lights in the kitchen were still on. She thought that it was Mary, so she quietly called out, “Mary, I’m hungry. Is there anything to eat?”

Mary had a habit of getting up in the middle of the night for a glass of watch. People tended to pick up strange habits as they grew older. To her surprise, it wasn’t Mary in the kitchen, but Mark. He was making coffee. When he heard her voice, he asked, “What would you like to eat? The leftovers have been thrown out. It’s not healthy anyway. Would you like some ramen noodles? Go and wait. I’ll cook.”

Chapter 665

She narrowed her eyes and surveyed him. He used to bark orders at her, but now, the tables have completely turned. She suddenly felt the urge to torture him, “Sure. Remember to add salt. Salt is finer, sugar is more coarse. Don’t mess it up. Also, you have to wash the vegetables.”

Mark felt helpless. “I only make mistakes once.” Yes, the last bowl of noodles that he had made in her condo was a failure. It should be much easier now that he had gone through it once. This time, he would perform well.

By the time he served the noodles onto the table, they smelled particularly delicious to Arianne, probably because she was starving. It tasted pretty good too.

When he saw how focused she was with her food, he couldn't help asking, "Does it taste that good?"

"Passable," she answered without lifting her head.

He was speechless. Was this woman incapable of sincerely praising him? Passable? What did she mean by that? If it tastes good, say so. If it doesn't, just say it. What kind of evaluation was that? After a short pause, he picked up his coffee and walked upstairs, "I'll be done with looking through the accounts soon. I'm pretty much doing overtime for you tonight."

Arianne stiffened. "It's late. Why are you checking through accounts for me? There's no need to rush. You don't have to finish it all at once…"

He turned around and looked at her, "I'm used to getting things done all at once."

She did not say anything more and quietly ate the noodles he had made. He actually had a lot of good qualities. Why hadn't she noticed them before?

She went upstairs after eating her fill and went into the study. He really was doing her accounts for her. He had to go to work in the morning too. In the end, she simply couldn't bear it, "You should stop. Get an early night's rest. It's really no rush. No need to be meticulous. Naya is pretty reliable in her work. There shouldn't be any major issues."

Mark closed his computer. "Are you showing me concern?"

She pursed her lips, refusing to answer. He knew that he wouldn't receive an answer to his question, so he mumbled to himself, "I'm done. Go and get some rest. I'm going to bed too."

She nodded. "Good night."

Just as she turned around, he suddenly pulled her into his arms. His magnetic voice whispered to her from behind, "I don't want to sleep in the guest room anymore. I don't like it. I can't sleep well…"

She felt her breath caught in her throat. "Then… We can exchange…"

He lowered his head and placed his chin on her shoulder, "I mean, can't we sleep together? It's not a good idea for us to be sleeping apart like that, right? We have many more days ahead. We should slowly get used to it."

Chapter 666

With him holding her from behind like that, she felt slightly nervous. She relented in order to quickly get away from this particular position. "Okay."

He smiled and released his arms from around her waist.

Back in the bedroom, the pair lay side by side but could not seem to fall asleep. Arianne slept whenever she wanted, night or day. She wasn't tired at all. Mark couldn't sleep because she was right next to him.

“Do you want a boy or a girl?” he suddenly asked in the dark.

“It’s all the same,” Arianne answered immediately, “As long as the child is born safely, I don’t care if it’s a boy or a girl. This will be the only child I’ll ever bear in this life. I can’t choose.” She paused for a while, then asked, “What about you?”

He turned to the side and faced her, then placed his hand gently on her abdomen, “Me too. I’ll love it, no matter if it’s a boy or a girl, as long as it’s from you.”

Arianne couldn’t describe how she felt when she heard this. She was too used to his cold and distant demeanor. Even if he poured all of his gentleness onto her now, she couldn’t get used to it. After all, She had faced his cold and distant temperament for more than ten years. Every time she wanted to lower her defenses, a little voice would ring in her head, telling her that he was not a docile cat. This was only a facade.

They did not continue the conversation, which naturally ended there. Mark fell asleep at some point, and Arianne quietly drifted off as well.

By the time she got up the next day, Mark had already gone to work as usual.

Mary chatted with her as she cleaned the room, “Did you get up for supper last night? Why didn’t you ask me to cook for you? You have to be extra, extra careful now. Mr. Tremont will eat us alive if anything happens.”

Arianne felt a little cold. She walked into the closet and pulled out a thick coat, “I didn’t do it myself. Mark made ramen noodles for me.”

Mary immediately widened her eyes. “What? Mr. Tremont has never cooked in his life, yet he’s cooked for you? Am I hearing things?”

This was the second time now, so it was no longer a novelty for Arianne, “You’re not. It’s the second time now. Although he made ramen noodles both times and the taste wasn’t all that great… there’s no need to be shocked. Learning to cook isn’t exactly an impressive thing. He’s just too used to living like a prince, so he never had to do these things. Now that he’s willing to do it, is that considered a grievance? I haven’t even mentioned my own grievances…”

Chapter 667

After getting over her shock, Mary smiled knowingly, “Yes, yes yes. Mr. Tremont cooking supper for you is nothing compared to what you’ve endured. Now, he’s acting more like a man. By the way, Mr. Tremont has asked you to avoid walking around the garden today, as it might snow. He’s afraid that you might get sick. It’s best to avoid getting sick during pregnancy, especially when it’s not advisable to consume medicine. Now that Mr. Tremont has you and the little one in your belly, your family is complete. We’ve been hoping for this day.”

Arianne remained quiet as she stared at the joy on Mary’s face. She was afraid of speaking up and dashing Mary’s hopes. Everything between her and Mark only seemed fine on the surface. To draw a comparison, the distance between them was as vast as the Great Rift Valley. Even if it were restored, would anything really be the same? How could there not be a gap?

Tabitha got up surprisingly early today. Usually, she would sleep until ten in the morning in this weather. The old woman seemed to be in a good mood, but her cough had not subsided, “Arianne, I’d like to go to your aunt’s house.”

Arianne was surprised, “Are you sure you want to go, granny?” She had chased her away before, and now, she was seeking her out. She was puzzled.

The old woman straightened out her dark brown woolen sweater and curled her lips, “She’s called me more than ten times and sent me countless messages. It’s driving me crazy. I’m going back to see her… I probably won’t be coming back. I’m not her real mother; I did not bring her into this world, but I gave her a second chance at life, a life much better than most. She’s never repaid me for raising her after all these years, but only ever making demands. It’s not asking too much for her to take care of me until the end of my days. I’ve never raised you a day in your life, nor have I ever even held you. You’re not obligated to take care of me.”

Arianne knew that the matter wasn’t as simple as it seemed. Zoey was very firm when she dumped the old lady on her and left. Now, she was trying every possible means to coax her into going back. She must have something up her sleeve. She wasn’t in the best state to argue with Zoey, “Granny, I don’t think you should go. Even if her conscience is compelling her to take you and continue looking after you, you should consider the Tremonts’ dignity. If she realizes that she’ll never be able to receive any benefits from you through me, she won’t leave the matter alone. I think you should wait until I’ve given birth. What do you think?”

The old woman acted as if she had already anticipated this, “Hmph… She shouldn’t try to profit from you. It’s the same with me; I’ve never had a day of peace ever since I’ve moved here. Since I’ve decided to leave, it will cut off her hopes of establishing a connection with you. Otherwise, she won’t leave me alone either. I’m old. I can’t put up with this torment.”

The old woman had always been very stubborn. Now that she had made up her mind, any advice from Arianne would be futile. She could tell that the old woman was doing it for her, “Alright, I can see that you’ve already made up your mind. Her house is pretty far away. Have you bought your plane tickets? I’ll send you to the airport. I’ll be in the car the entire way, so it’s fine. I can send you off. Also, you shouldn’t feel troubled about staying here; you should have a peace of mind. If you ever want to come back, you’re always welcome.”

Her words did not bring an amiable presence from the old lady. Her mouth was just as sharp as ever, “Actually, there’s nothing really good about this place, aside from the large compound. There’s no one to talk to; I can’t seem to adapt. I don’t want to stay here. Zoey and her husband are here in the capital. They’ve rented a place and plan on staying here to do business. Their initial business did not take off. Have someone drive me over there. You shouldn’t follow me, since it’s not like we’re that close.”

Mary couldn’t help but butt in, “Mrs. Wynn, you’re not a bad person, you’re pretty nice to Mrs. Tremont. Why must you use such harsh words?”

Arianne didn’t mind. She smiled and said, “It’s alright. I’ve gotten used to it. I’m still going to send you off. Mary, have Henry prepare a car.”

The old woman brought luggage bags before she left. Arianne knew that she had no intentions of coming back. She did not point it out and silently got into the car.

Suddenly, Tabitha’s mood changed along the way. She began chattering endlessly, “Arianne, the Tremonts are highly affluent. You’re very lucky to have been able to join the family. Thank goodness Mark loves you. It’s not easy for a woman to meet a man who would give his heart to you. Leave the past in the past. Regardless of the truth, humans should keep moving forward, instead of remaining stuck in the past. Deliver the baby safely and live happily ever after with your family of three. Mark is much better than most men. He would never be unkind to you.”

Chapter 668

Arianne lowered her head in silence. She did not agree with the old woman’s advice. Mark’s feelings for her may not necessarily be good luck; it felt more like misfortune. The old woman was only saying this because she was unaware of what had happened in the past. If she knew, she probably wouldn’t advise her to look ahead. Mark was the one behind all of her grievances. How could he not?

Suddenly, the car jolted. The old woman's temper immediately flared, "Hey, driver, watch it! Don't kill us with your shaky driving! What are you doing? You're such a bad driver!"

A Tremont family bodyguard was behind the wheel. He apologized profusely after being scolded by Tabitha, "I'm sorry, I'll be more careful…"

"It's fine," Arianne said helplessly, "Just drive a little slower. It's no rush."

Not long after, the car stopped in front of the address that Zoey had given Tabitha. Zoey's residence in the capital wasn't too far from the Tremont Estate, almost as if it was done on purpose. Of course, the rent would certainly be high for such a nice area. Even an old, unnoticeable neighbourhood would have an unaffordable rental fee. Arianne felt worried as she stared at the neighbourhood, "Granny… I think it's better if you stayed in the Tremont Estate."

The old woman got down from the car, refusing to waste a single second, "The rental fees here are expensive and small. But it's alright, as long as I can stay here. A big house doesn't really feel like home. Don't worry about me. Go home."

Arianne did not tell the bodyguard to go home immediately. She got down from the car. It was snowing now. She faced the old woman. At that moment, it seemed like she had a thousand things to say, but she couldn't bring herself to say them. The old woman stared at her calmly, then suddenly asked, "Can I hug you? You look so much like your father."

Arianne felt strangely forlorn. She smiled and opened her arms.

The old woman seemed slightly teary-eyed, probably because of the strong wind. She wrapped her frail arms around Arianne gently, as if she was afraid of breaking her. Arianne could clearly feel the old woman's shivering. She was crying.

"Ari… Remember what I've told you in the car. Live well with Mark. He's already told me…"

Arianne trembled. Her eyes widened.

Mark told the old woman the truth behind the plane crash? How could he possibly have the nerve to confess this to an old woman? He'd even received her forgiveness. She was shocked and in disbelief. At the same time, she asked herself — if the old woman could forgive him, why not her? Could she? Or perhaps Mark had given the old woman a lie?

After a while, she carefully asked, "Are you sure that he's told you everything?"

Tabitha gently released her, "Mm, I know whatever you know, and a bit of what you don't. I may be old, but I'm not senile. Go home. It's snowing."

Arianne fumbled over her words. The old woman prevented her from speaking and pushed her into the car, "Go."

As the car drove off, she saw Zoey and her husband rushing out of their house. That explained why the old woman was trying to push her away. She would not be able to leave if they got their hooks on her.

Chapter 669

Zoey and her husband were very attentive. One hastily helped Tabitha along while the other carried her bags. Zoey watched as Arianne left and asked, “Mother, did Arianne send you here? Why won’t she come inside and have a seat? Does she hate us for living in such a small space?”

The old woman wore a sunken expression on her face as she answered, “Yes, it is beneath her. I don’t want to be snubbed, even with your good intentions. Don’t embarrass me.”

Hearing this, Zoey’s husband felt that something wasn’t right, “Mother, we’re all family; it’s not like we can’t talk. Where did that come from? It’ll be the new year soon. We’ll be doing business in the capital, so we plan on staying here for a while. The kids will be on their winter holidays soon, so the whole family will be here. We might as well spend the new year in our niece’s big mansion.”

Zoey agreed, “That’s right. The more the merrier.”

The old woman smirked, “Don’t call her your niece like you’re on friendly terms. I can’t afford that kind of fortune. You’re distant relatives. Stop dreaming. Not just anyone can waltz into the Tremont family. I’m not worthy, and neither are you. Forget about it.”

Zoey’s husband’s expression sank, “Are you saying that you’re not going to speak to your granddaughter anymore? Are you afraid that we’d get the glory? Did they chase you out or did you come here willingly?”

Tabitha really didn’t like this self-centered son-in-law of hers. She turned her face away, refusing to speak. Zoey’s husband was so mad that he wanted to throw the luggage away, but Zoey stopped him

with a glare, “Don’t you ever learn how to talk? Even if mother’s been chased out, we should take care of her!”

It was obvious that Zoey was only saying these things for the old lady’s benefit. The observation skills of an old woman who had lived for much longer than them was obviously more superior. It was just so funny, everyone had an ulterior notice, and she simply couldn’t be bothered to point it out.

The elevator of their condominium was clearly very old. Sometimes, it would even make loud and strange creaking sounds. It was also narrow, which made it feel very claustrophobic.

When they entered the house, Zoey placed the old lady’s luggage in the master bedroom, “Mother, you can sleep in the big room. We only have two bedrooms, and the second one is a little small. That’s just how it is in here. It’s nothing compared to the Tremonts’. You’ll just have to stay here. If your granddaughter were more filial, she would give us a bigger house and we could share it with you.

The old woman irritably moved the luggage over to the second bedroom, “Stop pretending, ‘cause it’s not going to happen. I’d rather stay in this small place in case someone turns around and calls me a despot.”

Zoey shot her husband a glare. She then followed the old woman into the bedroom and smiled as she asked, “Mother, these clothes you’re wearing must be expensive. I can tell. Ari has been very nice to you. She must be worried about you now that you’ve moved out. She must have given you some allowance, afraid that we might not be able to spare much on you?”

Tabitha opened up her luggage, “See for yourself. Any money you find will be yours.”

Zoey's husband angrily stormed back into the master bedroom and slammed the door loudly on purpose. All alone, the mother and daughter could speak plainly. The old woman's eyes filled with clear disappointment, "Zoe, I'm your mother. I know that you're married and you should stand by your husband, but that doesn't mean that you should be like this. Look at whom you've married. It's like you've married a dog, so you've decided to follow the dog. You're inhumane! Let me be honest with you. Now that I've moved out, I have no intentions of contacting Arianne any more. Except for our shared DNA, she and I have nothing to do with each other. She doesn't owe me a thing."

Hearing this, Zoey slumped onto the bedside dramatically, "She doesn't owe you, but she owes me. I've taken up the responsibility of caring for you, which should have been her father's. She should pay! I don't care if you contact her or not, I just want what's mine. Don't worry. I'll take care of you until the end of your days, but I wouldn't mind it if she could clear her father's debt. The Tremonts can spare the cash. Stop defending her."

Chapter 670

The old woman was so angry that her face turned ashen, "Your brother has been dead for many years, yet you still insist on sucking the blood out of him. Is he some kind of bloody meal to you? Are you even human? If I'd known about this, I would have chosen to have only one child for the rest of my life, instead of taking in a heartless thing like you! I might as well have raised a dog!"

Zoey saw nothing wrong in her actions. In her point of view, she was the one who had suffered the most injustice. She burst into tears, "So you've finally said it. You've never treated me like your own child. You only adopted me so that someone would take care of your corpse for you, isn't that right? That's a business deal, not love! You think that I'm heartless, that I'm cruel. But you're the meanest old woman! If my big brother hadn't had any children, I admit that I'd have to take care of you, but he has Arianne. Why can't I recount this debt? Let's take ten thousand steps back and say that it would have been fine if she were poor, but her life is much better than ours. Why are you so biased towards her? You're accusing me of sucking a dead man's blood, then I must be less than dead to you. Why should I consider any form of sentiment? I'm not asking her to put in physical effort, all I need is money!"

The old woman had long been aware that things would turn out this way. If someone insisted on being competitive, there was no way of bringing her back. She couldn't be bothered to waste her time with idle chat, "Do what you like. If your plans somehow manage to bloom, I'd say you're intelligent enough."

…

That afternoon, Henry informed Mark of Tabitha's departure when he arrived home.

Mark was surprised, "She was doing so well here, why did she leave? Does Ari know?"

Henry nodded, "Mm, Mrs. Tremont knows. She sent her away herself. But there wasn't a lot of trouble along the way. Mrs. Tremont got down from the car for a little while and came home soon after. She's upstairs right now."

Mark furrowed his brows after hearing that Arianne had gone out, "Mm. Understood."

He saw Arianne sitting on the chair in front of the French windows when he arrived in the bedroom. Suddenly, he felt like they were much closer than before, because Ariane never sat in his chair or touched his things. He softened his tone on purpose, "You went out? Why did granny leave?"

Arianne had been dozing off. When she heard his voice, she immediately woke up and got up, "She wanted to leave, and I couldn't persuade her otherwise. Do you know that my aunt's entire family has moved to the capital? I'm afraid this doesn't bode well. Granny left to stop my aunt from giving me more problems."

Mark had a rough idea of what she meant, “I see… Then, you make the decision and solve it however you like. Next time, if you ever want to go out, let me come with you or I’d be very worried. It doesn’t matter how busy I am; as long as you call, I’ll come home at once.”

She roughly understood how he felt; she was worried about the baby in her belly too. Even though not going out whenever she wished seemed like an exaggeration, it was snowing and the ground was slippery. Besides, she had had two miscarriages. She couldn’t afford not to be careful, “I understand. Aren’t you busy at work? You’re coming home at 3PM nowadays. You used to come home on time. You don’t have to bother if it’s for my sake and certainly not for the baby. We’re still in the early trimester.”

Mark raised his brow and pulled out his pajamas, “I’m happy to do it, actually. I’m going to shower now.”

Arianne was taken aback. He’d really changed a lot. In the past, whenever she spoke to him like this, he would certainly reply to her with a sullen look and say something like, “Can’t I come home early? You don’t want to see me, is that it? This is my house, so I can come home whenever I want to…”

Since when did his cold exterior become part of her imagination?

A sudden phone ring snapped her back to her senses. She checked the call notification and switched her voice into a coy tone, “Oh, isn’t my little Tiffie supposed to be busy?”

Tiffany’s cheerful voice greeted her on the other end, “My period’s here. Jackson insisted that I take half the day off. I’m so fed up. I’m not that delicate. He says that it’s to console my disappointment in conceiving again. I’m not that hurt, okay? But it’s strange, why can’t I get pregnant? Why are you getting pregnant at every turn? We’ve been boinking like bunnies and I still can’t conceive!”

Arianne laughed at her, “What do you mean ‘boinking like bunnies’? This also depends on luck. It will come when the time is right. I’m just lucky… Actually, I don’t think it’s even considered luck. You and Jackson are fine. You’ll have a baby before you know it. Since you’re not at work, would you like to come over? I’m dying of boredom here.”

Tiffany immediately rejected her, “Nope, nu-uh, no way. That grandmother of yours will nag me to death. Besides, you’re already dying of boredom at home. Won’t I be bored too if I stay with you? If you asked me, you don’t need to be that careful right now. There’s barely even a bump on your belly. You should take this opportunity to have some fun. Once your tummy is bigger, you can lie in bed all day, every day. As your best friend, keeping you company on weekends is good enough.”

Arianne let out a long sigh, “That’s enough from you… My grandmother has moved out, back to my aunt’s. You’re right. Maybe I should walk around while I still can. Once my belly has grown, I won’t be able to go out at all. But it’s been snowing. Mark certainly won’t let me leave. I sent my grandmother away today, and when he came back, he told me that he intends to come along whenever I go out… I think it’s kind of weird to have this man tag along with us during our shopping trip.”