Ruling 691

Chapter 691

Mary hid all of these details, too afraid to tell Arianne. All she said was that the old woman was having a bad cold and nothing was wrong. She waited until Arianne went back to her room before calling Mark, “Sir, something’s happened to Mrs. Wynn. Zoey Harris and her husband have pushed her into acute pneumonia; continuous bouts of fever have damaged her brain. She’s old. Even if she can be saved, there will be side effects. I can’t bear to tell Mrs. Tremont… What should we do?”

Mark frustratingly rubbed the space between his brow in the office. “I knew something would happen… I understand, I’ll handle it. You’ve done the right thing. Don’t let Ari find out.”

After ending the call, he told his secretary, Davy, to cancel all of his meetings for the afternoon and rushed to the hospital.

The old woman was in the Intensive Care Unit. Zoey and her husband were standing watch outside, seemingly sad and desolate. Everyone was well aware of whether it was faked or not.

“Mark, Ari isn’t here?” Zoey hurriedly asked, seeing that Mark was the only one who had arrived.

“Mm, she is inconvenienced. I’ll handle everything,” he calmly replied.

“She’s her granddaughter. Her grandmother is very, very sick. She’s only pregnant, isn’t she? Is she really that delicate? She won’t even come to the hospital!” Zoey’s husband snapped irritably.

Mark frowned and scowled at Zoey's husband. The man was immediately silenced. Zoey dragged her husband towards her and mockingly said, "It's fine, it's fine. The baby is most important. It's all the same with you here. We're all family. Mother's condition is severe. They won't let the family into the Intensive Care Unit, afraid of an infection. The daily fees are pretty expensive, and we've just moved here to do business. We're already in debt so we can't sustain the medical fees, but we can't ignore her. We'll do what we can physically… I was thinking, maybe Ari can take care of the finance, as her granddaughter, while we physically care for her. What do you think?"

Mark scoffed disdainfully, "No need, you can go home and rest. You're not needed here. I just want to know this — Granny was fine when she moved out of the Tremont Estate, and it hasn't been that long since. What happened?"

Zoey was defeated and a little guilty. She was too afraid to speak. Mark did not interrogate any further. "Fine, don't talk. I'll ask the doctor myself."

Zoey and her husband had no choice but to slip away, seeing as he really was heading to the doctor's office. "We'll be going home then. Call us if you have any updates!"

Zoey heaved a long sigh of relief when they walked out of the hospital, then gritted her teeth and said, "What is wrong with Mark Tremont… We're family, why must he be so guarded against us? The old woman must have said something to them both. I'm just taking back what's mine. Is that wrong? I'm not her biological child after all. The old woman is only ever concerned about Arianne. After all, they are blood relatives. I, on the other hand, am an outsider. I get nothing for my efforts!"

Her husband had a grim look on his face. "Zoey, I don't care. We won't be able to continue living our lives if we don't get the money back. The old bat has been living with us for so many years. You owe her for raising you, but I don't. Get Arianne to give us back what's due, as soon as possible. Zachary Wynn's responsibilities shouldn't be my burden to bear, even if he's dead!"

Zoey was enraged when she heard this. “How dare you speak to me like that? You’ve been spending the old woman’s money too, haven’t you? In reality, you haven’t spent a single cent on the old woman when she lived with us, and I’ve always been the one taking care of her when she was sick. Instead, the old woman has poured quite a lot of money on you. Don’t you have a conscience? My need for Arianne to pay me back is a Wynn family matter. What does it have to do with you? Humans should always have some conscience in everything they do! You’re just a jobless oaf whose only talent lies in being opportunistic. What right do you have to stand here and complain? I’m the one who’s been suffering here, and even if I did touch your money, it has nothing to do with you! And you dare say that we can’t go on with our lives? If that’s the case, let’s get a divorce, right now!”

Chapter 692

Her husband was promptly silenced. He turned around and left in a huff.

Mark listened to the doctor’s explanation in the hospital. His expression gradually sank.

The doctor looked very sombre. “She’s at such an old age, and the weather is bad. She should have been well taken care of. They should have paid close attention to her once she caught continuous bouts of fever. How could it have developed into acute pneumonia? I really can’t understand what her dependents were doing. The old lady was already unconscious by the time she was sent here. This wouldn’t have happened if the fever hadn’t gone on for three days. Didn’t the family notice the fever at all over the past few days? We can only keep her alive with an oxygen tank and medicine now. The fever hasn’t subsided, so the critical stage isn’t over yet. After all, she’s not young anymore. You’d better prepare yourselves.”

Mark balled his hands into fists. “Please, do your best. Medical fees won’t be a problem. Use every medication and treatment you can. I can’t see her now, can I?”

The doctor paused thoughtfully. “Seeing the patient might bring her further infection into the lungs. You should be able to see her if her fever has gone down temporarily. Let me have a look.”

The doctor walked in to check on the old woman. Mark waited anxiously outside. He was under a lot of pressure in the matter. If anything were to happen to the old woman, Arianne would be greatly affected. When the doctor stepped out, he stepped forward and asked, “How is she?”

The doctor nodded. “Her fever has subsided for the time being. However, there’s a high chance that it might come back. The patient isn’t exactly conscious now, but you can see her. Best to leave after five minutes.”

Mark grunted in reply, put on a set of scrubs, and entered the Intensive Care Unit. It had only been a short while since they last met, but the old woman looked much older than before, and had grown even skinnier. Her eyes were sunken and her lips were pale. “Granny,” he murmured softly as he approached her. “It’s Mark. I’m here to see you.”

The old woman seemed to have heard his voice and slowly stirred. “Zachary… Where have you been all these years? I’ve missed you so much. I won’t stop you from marrying Helen anymore, please come back to me…”

Mark’s eyes brimmed with tears at that very moment, consumed with guilt. “Granny… It’s me, I’m Mark…”

Tabitha’s pupils were cloudy, and she couldn’t seem to focus her gaze. “Mark, I’m dead. Don’t tell Ari, her health is fragile. You must make sure that she gives birth to your child safely. I don’t blame you for what your mother had done. It has nothing to do with you. Your mother lived a bitter life too… My son… He did not have a fortunate life. You must be good to Ari. That is my only wish. Don’t blame Zoey. I wanted to die. Her torment will end when I’m dead, and you will all have peace.”

Mark sniffed, “You won’t die, you’ll be fine…”

Tabitha shook her head. “Every night… That wonderful son-in-law of mine would quietly open the window in my room. The cold wind and snowflakes would always blow inside. I feigned ignorance. He wants me dead so that he can ask Ari for money. Everything will be fine once I’m dead. My son-in-law is inhumane, but my daughter… isn’t entirely evil. She’s just upset that I’ve been tagging along with her for so many years, so she wants compensation. But Ari shouldn’t be made to compensate. I’ve compensated them myself with my entire life savings. I have no regrets, and there’s no need for you to feel guilty either. I’ve lived long enough too… Every day, I always think — ‘If only I never stopped Zachary from marrying Helen Cameran, perhaps I might have been able to see my son, one last time’... Mark, I’m so tired of living, even my dreams are plagued with guilt…”

Chapter 693

Mark noticed that his time was running out and soothingly said, “Don’t worry so much, Granny. Focus on getting well. I’ll take you home, and you’ll stay with us from now on. You did nothing wrong in stopping their marriage, so no need to feel guilty. Ari is well aware of how good you are to her. She hopes for your recovery too.”

The old woman’s breathing immediately grew rapid. She could no longer speak. Mark quickly ran out to call the doctor, “Her breathing has gone rapid, please go to her!”

The doctor rushed into the Intensive Care Unit. At that point, the old woman’s breathing had grown steady, but it wasn’t looking good. The doctor tried to speak to the old woman, “Can you hear me?”

The old woman nodded heavily. The doctor heaved a sigh of relief, “You have to stay calm, you’ll get better then.”

“It’s… going to… be hard for me to get well again… Isn’t… It? Be honest…” the old woman said hoarsely.

The doctor paused before continuing, “It’s not entirely hopeless… The bodies of the elderly are no less stronger than the younger ones. However, it will take some effort. Hold on.”

Tabitha chuckled, “No, I’ve lived long enough. Please… write my will… for me… Say that… I’m leaving… the Wynn’s old mansion… to… my granddaughter… The… housing deed… is… is… in… the… Tremont…Tremont Estate...The house...that… I was previously… staying in… Under the mattress… Write it down…”

The doctor was afraid that the old woman might get overly agitated and had no choice but to do whatever she says. He then pulled out a white piece of paper, which was used to print out reports, and wrote down her will, “Look, I’ve done as you’ve asked. There’s no need to speak now. Just focus on getting better.”

Suddenly, the old woman pulled off the apparatus hooked onto her left arm. “Pen… I need to sign…”

The doctor was breaking out into cold sweat. He knew that this would never end unless he did whatever the old woman said, so he handed her a pen. Tabitha shakily signed her name. Just as she finished the final stroke, her hand dropped. Meanwhile, the heart rate monitor rang in alarm; a straight line was the only thing left on the screen…

Mark remained silent for a long time upon receiving news of the old woman’s death. The doctor sighed and handed him the will, “The old lady left this before she died. For her to refuse treatment in her sane mind meant that she no longer wanted to live. We’ve done our best.”

Mark accepted the will. “Thank you. I’ll have my people deal with the funeral arrangements.”

He took out the deed for the house from underneath the mattress when he arrived home. He couldn't show this to Arianne just yet, nor could she find out about the old woman's death either.

Luckily, Arianne was still having her afternoon nap at this time, for he simply couldn't bring himself to act as if nothing had happened. He took the will and deed to the office and locked it in his drawer.

Chapter 694

He usually came home early. Today, however, he did not want to go home. He didn't know how to face Arianne. He was afraid of accidentally spilling the beans.

His mind whirred with the words that the old woman had said in the Intensive Care Unit. He pulled out his phone and called Henry, "Henry, bring Zoey Wynn and her husband to my office, now."

They arrived half an hour later. Zoey saw the look on Mark's face and knew that something wasn't right. Her idiotic husband, on the other hand, was admiring the majesty of Tremont Tower.

Zoey was bewildered. "Mark… Why have you called us here?"

Mark smirked, "Do you know how Granny got sick?"

Zoey's husband stiffened, then rubbed his nose guiltily. Zoey was clearly innocent in this particular matter, "It's perfectly normal to catch a cold in this weather. I've just been very busy lately, and my mother never mentioned anything about feeling ill. She had a cough so I gave her medicine. I didn't pay any particular attention. I only knew that it was bad when she suddenly fainted. Now, it would be easy

to deal with things with money. And with you taking care of things, the old woman will certainly recover, so I'm not too worried."

Mark threw the death report in front of them. "How is she supposed to recover if she's already dead?"

Zoey looked as if she had been struck by lightning. She entered a long daze before picking up the death report. "No… She was just fine when you arrived. How could she be… gone? No way… My mother has always been healthy. It's just that she had pneumonia due to her fever. How could she be gone? You're lying to me, aren't you?"

Mark remained silent, his eyes glaring coldly at Zoey's husband. The husband panicked. "What are you looking at me for? I wasn't there when the old woman died. Are you implying that I killed her? Since she's dead, it's time for us to settle some payments. Let's start from the day Zoey and I got married; leave out the remaining numbers. The old woman has been with us for twenty years. Zachary Wynn died early and did not perform his filial duties. Arianne was small, so we won't be calculative over that. She's all grown up now, so if we divided it all equally, she would have to pay for more than ten years. The old woman has been suffering all sorts of illnesses over the past few years. How much money and effort we've spent. She's dead now, so we'll leave the funeral arrangements to you. $15,000 a year shouldn't be too much, right? You might be contributing with money, but you'll never understand how much effort we've spent. Our lives have been disrupted many times over, simply to take care of the old woman. Aside from the $15,000 a year worth of 'support fees', which comes to a total of $150,000, there's also the fees for loss of time and exhaustion. Just give us $200,000, that's already a rate among friends. I'm sure this insignificant amount is nothing to you Tremonts, but it is a lot to people like us."

For the first time ever, Zoey was not on her husband's side. Her mother had just died and he was asking for money. She was completely disappointed. "This is a Wynn family matter. It has nothing to do with you. Stop adding flames to the fire! Can't you have some sense of sympathy aside from money? My mother's just passed away. Are you even human? I want to deal with my mother's funeral. If you don't care, leave!"

Mark glanced at Zoey and calmly said, “The reason why Granny had fallen ill was because your husband had been secretly opening the window in her bedroom every night. When it snowed at night, the winter breeze and snow would be blown into the room. Who could endure that?”

Zoey was utterly transfixed. The old woman had insisted on taking the small room, which had a bed next to the window. How was that any different from sleeping outside in the bitter, icy cold? When she returned to her senses, she grabbed an object on Mark’s office desk and smacked it on her husband, as if seized by madness. “My mother was good to you! You’ve instigated me into sucking my mother dry and caused her death. You b*stard!”

The turmoil before him annoyed him greatly. Mark knocked on the table. “Enough. Go home and quarrel, if you must. I’m going to make myself clear. I have no qualms with your suggestion in splitting the twenty years between our families, but I object to the compensation. Your contributions are not worth that value. Besides, it’s your fault that Granny’s dead. I will give you an appropriate compensation, but you will have to leave the capital. I don’t want Ari to ever see you again. She mustn’t find out about Granny’s death either. Do you understand me?”

Chapter 695

Zoey simply wasn’t in the mood to ask for compensation. After everything her husband had done, she didn’t have the nerve to ask for a single cent. “I don’t want a thing. I can’t face my mother. Please take care of the funeral arrangements. I’ll leave the capital tomorrow.”

Her husband, however, was not happy. “Are you an idiot? You can refuse if you want, but I want the money! That’s your mother. I’ve helped to take care of her for twenty years!”

Mark’s eyes flashed with annoyance. “Were you the ones providing support for Granny, or was it the other way around? I’m not in the mood to go into a debate with you. You should be well aware of what you’ve done. Granny told me everything before she died. The crimes you’ve committed fall under the category of elderly abuse; I could sue you! Leave, unless you’d like to go to jail!”

Zoey's husband looked completely unperturbed. "She's dead. Who's to say if what you're saying is true? Do you have proof? What, you think you're all that, just because you have cash? Sue me then, I'm not scared! You'll still have to answer to the law, even with your money. You don't want Arianne to find out, do you? If you don't give me the money, I'll ask Arianne myself!"

Mark's face immediately turned into a glacier once he dragged Arianne in. His eyes flickered villainously. Henry quickly pushed the office room door open. "I'll send them away, Mr. Tremont, and I'll make sure that they leave the capital, personally. Just leave it to me!"

Mark waved his hand, and Henry quickly ordered the bodyguards at the door to drag them away, breaking out into cold sweat at the same time. If he hadn't stepped in, Zoey and her husband might end up in dire straits.

The Tremont Estate.

Arianne stood in front of the French Windows in her bedroom, gazing out at the large tree outside, feeling very worried. She had a nightmare during her afternoon nap and woke up to find that Mark hadn't come home at 3PM, as he usually would. Hence, she grew even more anxious. She thought that perhaps it was her pregnancy mood swings and did not worry too much. At the same time, Tabitha's condition was weighing down on her mind.

Henry and Mark returned together at 5PM.

She heard them from upstairs and hurried downstairs. "How is my grandmother? Henry, you've seen her. Is she alright?"

Mark and Henry shared a look, making a silent pact to relax their facial expressions. “She’s fine,” Mark said, “It’s just a cold and a fever. She’ll be discharged by tomorrow. I went to visit her at the hospital and had a chat with her. The weather is cold, so I’ve asked your aunt and everyone else to take extra care. They’ve really over exaggerated such a small matter and they had to tell you about it too.”

So, he was home late today because he had gone to the hospital. Arianne smiled, “Thank you for checking up on my granny. I feel a lot better now that you’ve seen her. I’ll give her a call later, or she might grumble at me for not showing her any concern.”

Mark frowned. “She’s in the hospital. It won’t be convenient for her to take your call. Besides… she doesn’t want to speak to you. Otherwise, why would she leave? Leave it, she’s old. Old people tend to have a strange way of thinking. Just go along with her. She won’t blame you. Besides, I’ve already visited her in your place.”

That sounded true. The old woman had moved out to sever ties with her. She nodded. “Alright, you’re exhausted too. Go and get showered. It will be time for dinner soon.”

Mark walked towards the staircase, then paused. “Uhm… Your aunt was talking about how difficult it’s been for them to expand their business in the capital, and how your granny doesn’t want to stay in this city. They’ll be moving back to their previous city once she’s discharged.”

Arianne was puzzled. “My aunt and her family want to leave? Didn’t they move all the way here just to be near me? And to gain some profit off me?”

“It’s probably because they’ve realized that they can’t gain anything from us within a short amount of time, and they’ve been squandering their money too,” Mark answered with a deadpan look on his face. “It’s not like they can go on without money, so they’d rather go back. They’re not afraid as long as

Granny's with them, isn't that right? Don't concern yourself over this anymore. Focus on the baby. I will deal with these matters."

"Okay." She trusted him, without a shred of doubt.

Chapter 696

Tiffany had returned from work earlier by half an hour. To make up for neglecting Jackson, she decided to visit the kitchen and whip up dinner. Yes, she admitted that her cooking skills might be a little suspect, but it's the thought that counts.

Hearing that she had come off work earlier than usual, Jackson, who found her recent furtive activities fishy, tailed her quietly back to White Water Villa. Almost immediately, he heard susurrus escaping from the kitchen, so he stepped into the room whence the sound came.

To no one's surprise, the kitchen had descended into chaos.

Tiffany flashed her teeth. "You see, it was supposed to be for dinner…"

Jackson sighed in resignation, "It's fine, Tiffie, let me take the wheel. I gotta head back to the company for overtime work after dinner, you know. I bet it will be morning when you finally finish your culinary masterpiece."

Before she could deliver her repartee, her newly-bought phone rang, cutting into her sentence. A quick glance at the screen informed her that it was a call from the private investigator. Although she had not labeled the contact as such, she recognized the number by heart.

Mild guilt dripped into her mien. “Er, excuse me, I kinda have to take this.”

Something within Jackson’s gaze stirred. She had never needed to accept a call behind his back.

The P.I. informed Tiffany that Grant had gone on another visit to Lilian’s place. It infuriated the girl, causing her to yank the apron away from her waist, snatch her handbag, and head to the door.

“I gotta go out to tend to some business, and it’s gonna take a while,” she declared. “If you’ve finished making dinner, go ahead without me.”

She left before Jackson could get any word edgewise. Scanning the chaos in the kitchen, he found it a mood killer to make anything at all.

Tiffany reached Lilian’s house and began furiously rummaging for the key before she noticed the new padlock. Mommy dearest had changed the lock for Grant’s sake, just so Tiffany could not barge in and break the couple apart. In other words, her mother chose to lock her own flesh and blood out of the house for him!

Well, if she was denied access into the house, then so be it. She was going to wait outside the neighborhood’s main gate until Grant came out, and then they would “talk”.

Tiffany strutted back into her car and waited as her empty stomach rumbled and groaned, fully accepting the possibility that this might go on until past midnight.

Time trickled. It was soon a little past ten when Grant's silhouette finally materialized near the neighborhood's front gate. Noticing the man ready to take off, she quickly screeched her car to a stop in front of his.

He jerked in shock before leaping out of his car and shouting, "Who the f**k? You blind or what?!"

Tiffany opened her door and got out, answering, "Yo, Uncle Grant! I'm blind, apparently."

The reveal made Grant a little queasy. Prior to this, he had never once broken his façade as a kindly, decorous man in front of Tiffany. "Oh, uh, haha. I didn't know it was you; thought it was some no-good punk trying to give me a hard time. Back here to check on your mother, Tiffany? Kind young lady, go, see her now. Sadly, I won't be joining you, since I still have some things to do."

"Oh, I wanted to see her, but it turns out my mother changed the lock for your sake. So now, I can't even get in," Tiffany gibed stoically. "Now, why don't you set aside whatever errands you have and talk to me?"

Grant pointedly eluded the topic of Lilian's lock-changing decision, which proved he already knew about it. "Go ahead, then. What's on your mind?"

Tiffany did not mince words. "I know what your ulterior motive is, and to that, I say: get the hell away from my mother. All she has is that house she's living in right now and nothing else; the money's all under my name. Besides, that house belongs to the Lane family — even if she marries you, you won't be getting it. My mom might be an airhead who could believe anyone, but I'm nothing like her."

Chapter 697

Grant threw out a meaningful laugh. “Oh, Tiffie, has it ever occurred to you that you might have misunderstood me? Your dad, mom, and I are old friends. Heck, I only met your mother by chance the other day, and then we talked and talked, and here we are. What motive could I possibly have? I’m not strapped for cash. So, could you please spare me these nasty tongue-lashings? I’m still your Uncle Grant, you know.”

Tiffany was not in the mood for an Oscar performance, so she went straight to the point. “I’ve hired people to investigate your background, ‘Uncle’, so how about you spare me this unconvincing act? Hell, I bet that car you’re driving isn’t even yours. The debts you owe are appalling, mister. You just wanna squeeze money out of Mom to cover your a**. After all, soon, you’d be so broke, you won’t even have anything to your name.”

The smile in Grant’s face faded. “You’re crossing the line, Tiffie. Your mom knows everything there is to know about me, but more importantly, this is between her and me. You have no reason, nor right to interfere. Lastly, this car’s mine, and I’m gonna get back inside and get home.”

He did as he claimed, climbing back into the car as though he was planning to leave right there and then.

Tiffany gritted her teeth. “Your car, huh? Okay, ‘Uncle’, this makes things easier.”

She stomped the pedal and whirred the car forward, slamming it into Grant’s so hard that the rental car’s head became deformed while one side of its bumper hung on for its dear life.

An infuriated Grant leaped out of the car and screamed, “What the f**k are you doing?!”

“You own this car, remember? You’re so rich, I bet it’s peanuts for you to fix it, am I right? Besides, you’re aiming to be my stepdad, which means after marrying my mom, I’ll be your stepdaughter. Which rich, self-respecting father would hold a damaged car worth only a mere $100,000 against his daughter, huh?”

Grant was apoplectic. Of course, he did not own the car — it was a rental that he paid by liquidating his old car, his house, and every other asset he could muster, save for the empty shell of his company.

The private eye had told Tiffany that much, which was also why she decided to ram her car into his. A rental car costing hundreds of thousands of dollars was enough to make a broke man mad.

“You— You little—! What the hell are you trying to do?! My feelings for your mother are genuine! You can be angry and throw a hissy fit, but why must you be so extreme and sabotage it, huh? Fine, I’m strapped for cash and my financial status is unsightly, but I have never asked for a penny from your mom, never! Don’t believe me? Ask her!” Grant shrieked between heavy breaths. Since he technically had not asked Lilian for money yet, he felt no sting of conscience to face Tiffany’s accusation.

“Oh please, mister, quit the act, would you? Your acting skill sucks a**. I might know that you’re just some broke schmuck riding around in a rental car, but my softheaded, dopey mom still believes that you, of all people, would be able to provide her with a decent life of abundance. She has no frickin’ idea that you own nothing. Nada! Wait, correction: you do own something — a lifetime of debts!” Tiffany scoffed. “I know every dirty secret you have, man, so how about you kindly piss yourself someplace away from us?”

Backed into a corner, Grant gritted his teeth and finally bared his fangs. “Oh, since you already known everything, then I guess I don’t have to keep this f**king act up anymore. Here’s the problem, princess; you think I’m gonna leave your mom just because you say so? You crashed my car, remember? Something’s gotta be done about it, right? And what makes you think that I’ll listen to your orders?” he snarled. “Your mother’s completely devoted to me. She’s so loyal that she changed her lock to keep you

out! You really think she would believe any sh*t you say? You know she's not gonna buy your crap, so you come to me, hoping that you could stop me instead. Isn't that right?"

Tiffany had never seen anyone this unapologetic and shameless before. To think that this was the same man she once affectionately called "Uncle Grant" since her childhood made her blood boil. "So now you're trying to extort something from me? Over my dead f**king body, pal! I won't let you. You better watch your back, you piece of sh*t!"

"Whatever you say, stupid girl," Grant sneered. "You crashed my car today; I'm gonna ask for compensation from your mom tomorrow. Don't believe me? Watch."

With that, he got back into his car and drove away.

Tiffany slammed her fist onto the driving wheel, putting all of her fury into it. It set off a shrill blare that punctured through the rage surrounding her, alerting her to the real consequences of her deed:

She had just rammed Jackson's $10 million luxury car into Grant's $100,000 rental car.

She wondered if she had lost her mind.

Tiffany was not at all worried about Lilian screeching at her about Grant's compensation, because the more difficult problem was explaining the damage to Jackson. Suddenly, she regretted not picking a more ordinary car just now. How on Earth was she going to spin this one to Jackson?

It was close to eleven o'clock when Tiffany returned to White Water Bay Villa. As Jackson had not called her once throughout her trip, she assumed he was busy with work. That presumption flew at her face when she found out that the man had never left the house.

Guilt flared up in her mind. "S-Sweetie! You're not asleep yet?"

Chapter 698

From his spot on the couch, Jackson's eyes were two pillars of ice that nailed into Tiffany. "Where've you been? Who in this world has the power to command Tiffany Lane out of the house with a mere phone call?"

Her tongue rebelled against the thought of recounting that embarrassing impasse. "Er, it's n-nobody. It's a tiny thing that I can handle on my own, no problem. Don't worry about me; get some rest soon."

Apprehension shrouded his eyes. "Am I being cuckolded?"

"Holy sh*t, whaaaaaaat?!" Tiffany's eyes widened. "D-Don't suggest ludicrous things — as if I'm that kind of person! Look, this isn't something I'm comfortable with telling you right now, okay? But I promise I'll tell you all about it when it's settled!"

Jackson was too impatient. "If there's nothing to hide, you wouldn't mind letting me browse through your phone for a bit, would you? It's not like you've never checked mine. Give it to me!"

Tiffany had not saved the P.I.'s number in her new phone, which, coupled with the fact that she had received several unsaved numbers earlier today, meant that Jackson might miss the P.I.'s number among her call history. Hence, after a brief moment of hesitation, she handed the phone over to him. "Fine, enjoy yourself!"

Unexpectedly, Jackson had memorized the time when the P.I. called her; hence, he scrolled through the call history with a goal in mind until he found and dialed it.

At that moment, Tiffany felt her breathing stop. She wanted him to have no part of her business. He must not know!

“I'm sorry, the number you have reached is not in service.”

A formal yet mechanical female voice answered Jackson, and Tiffany let out the breath she was holding. Jackson, meanwhile, bore one of his most amusing expressions yet. “Not in service?”

Tiffany shrugged, clueless — she meant it.

Jackson switched his attention to Tiffany’s text inbox, focusing on the suspect number. It seemed that there was no message — either the two of them had never texted each other, or she had cleared all of the messages.

Nothing had been dredged up, so Jackson tossed the phone to the couch. “Tell me the truth, please. What have you been up to, Tiffie? You know I will find out about it anyway even if you don’t speak,” he said. “The only reason why I hadn’t done so already is that I don’t think we’ve stooped to that level yet. I want to cling to this trust between us.”

Unfortunately, she simply could not fess it up. Instead, she held up her hand in the form of a swear. “I didn’t do anything wrong or guilty behind your back, and neither have I committed any vice!” she proclaimed. “I swear, if I did do something that would cross you, let me be killed by… by a car crash! There, I’ve sworn it. Can you please lay your hands off and give me some personal space now?”

Then, as the very thought of cars caused her eyes to shift sideways, she added, “Er, speaking of… I kinda-probably-might-have-maybe crashed your car today? You know, the big red one…”

Jackson shuddered at the revelation. “You — f — what now?! Are you kidding — oh, of course you’re not kidding. I give up! I should be glad that you aren’t dead! Hell, you’re so damn okay that you’re standing here doing your best to talk back at me! God!” He chided. “That’s it, I’m done talking to you for the day lest I die young. You want me to keep away from your stuff, fine; I’ll allow you the privacy you need. But I don’t want it interfering with our life! I don’t wanna suddenly lose you in the middle of the night while you somehow don’t accept my calls!

“But most importantly, I don’t wanna put all of my spirits into preparing a meal, only to have you skipping it! If you do that again, you’re never gonna taste my cooking ever again! Last warning!”

“Yes, yes, yes, right-right-right!” Tiffany answered quickly, nodding so hard she looked like a hen pecking on worms. “I love you the most, Jackson! I’m never making that mistake again!”

Chapter 699

Lilian called after Jackson tuned out for bed.

Even before she answered it, Tiffany could predict the purpose of this call. Taking in a deep breath, she accepted it and went straight to the chase, “What? Grant whined to you about it?”

Lilian was practically bellowing from the other side, “What the hell, Tiffany Lane?! Now you’ve done it; you crossed the damn line when you dared drive your car into Uncle Grant’s! Have you no shame, no control? You said you worry that he’s here to con my money, but now, I have no choice but to sell this house just to pay for the damage you’ve done! Good job, my hero! You forced me into this, you hear me? I’m warning you one last time: never dip your fingers into my affairs ever again, or I’ll bloody disown you!”

Lilian cut the conversation off immediately after screaming her lungs out, leaving Tiffany alone with the growing realization that she had committed a grave oversight in her decision. In a fit of rage, she had crashed the car into Grant’s and inadvertently gave that jerk a righteous reason to extol Lilian for money!

Tiffany would not let him do as he pleased. She would have to stop her mother from selling that house!

She walked into the bedroom and stopped right before the bed, her voice soft and gingerly. “Um, Jackson sweetie? I... I gotta go to my mom’s tonight, ‘cause something came up. I’m not coming home tonight. Um, if you don’t find this safe, well, you can always track me through GPS. Knowing that you feel safe eases my conscience, too.”

Jackson sat up and gave a sigh. “I’ll take you there.”

Tiffany waved hurriedly. “No-no-no! I can totally go there on my own. I mean, it’s late now, and you still need to rise early tomorrow for work, so I don’t want you to get too tired.”

The way he looked at her was like he was looking at a madwoman. “You wish! I’m only worried that you might crash another one of my cars! I’m gonna fetch you for work tomorrow. No buts, and I’m not asking for your permission or reasons why I shouldn’t do this.”

Tiffany kept quiet obediently. Her man might have treated her like a princess, but he was far from a doormat without a temper. She would do best not to challenge him over and over again.

Jackson brought her to the entrance of the residential area. When the car stopped, Tiffany turned to him and planted a soft peck on his cheek, “Here’s my stop; I’m going in. You rest early, okay? You don’t need to fetch me tomorrow—I’ll just drive my mom’s car to the company,” she said, before adding, “It’s getting so late right now that I might go to work late tomorrow. Just thought of tellin’ you first.”

“Sure, be late all you want. I’ll just deduct your pay,” Jackson murmured. “No use telling me in advance — you’re the one who wanted no preferential treatment.”

Tiffany mentally kicked herself. “F-fine! I’ll be going, okay?”

Jackson’s car only left after watching Tiffany enter the elevator. Little did he know that his fiancée had decided to sit right outside the door to her house — in fact, the reason why she thought of driving herself to Lilian’s place was that she wanted to stay the night in the car.

The next morning at seven, Lilian stepped out of the house after a slight bit of preparation — and found Tiffany standing outside, glowering with bloodshot eyes.

Lilian clambered backward with a jerk, almost tripping over her steps. “What are you doing? Did you stand outside the door the entire night?”

Tiffany had exposed herself to an entire night of frosty air without sleeping a wink. By now, all of the bitterness and flames bottled up since then had started stretching her maximum capacity a bit too thin. “Where are you going, Lilian Lane? Out to sell the damned house?” she jeered. “You’re gonna give even the last of your assets to a frickin’ conman, huh? Well, over my dead body, which is too bad, because I’m not dead yet!”

Lilian’s expression darkened. “And the alternative is what, not paying back the car that you — yes, you — crashed? Either you magic out $100,000 for him, or I sell this house.”

Chapter 700

Tiffany gritted her teeth before forcing the words out of her mouth, “I’ll pay, okay? I’ll ask the amount from Jackson and pay him. You happy now? But! To prevent anything stupid from happening, I want you to transfer the ownership of this house to me! No harm to you if you do that—this house is meant to be your residence, so you have the right to live in it, but no right to sell it!

“Besides, we bought this house with the money we got from selling my grandfather’s land. It belongs to the Lanes,” Tiffany finished. “You have no right to claim it.”

Fortunately, a part of Lilian was disinclined to part with the house, too, so hearing Tiffany offering another solution softened her stance. “Well, well, at least you understand that this was your fault in the first place. Good on you; now go and get the money to pay him back. I’m fine with transferring the house to your name, but after that, you have to promise you’ll never butt into my affairs again.”

Tiffany thought hard and long about her mother’s compromise. Without the house, Lilian would have nothing, and Grant would notice it soon and leave her alone.

“Okay then, I accept this. As long as that house’s mine, I’ll have nothing to fear. If Grant still wants to marry you despite you owning nothing, then I guess he really loves you, and who am I to interfere?”

The pair met Grant by the gate to the neighborhood. Previously, the man had promised Lilian that the two would handle the house-selling business together, going so far as to “kindly” find an interested buyer for her. Strangely, however, he did not seem at all concerned when Lilian told him she changed her mind.

“Hey, Lily? There’s something I must confess to you.”

Tiffany rolled her eyes before putting space between them. What underhanded tricks could he be cooking up now?

“Lily, I… I lied to you. I only looked for you because I need money, so I wanted to make you sell that house for me. I never genuinely wanted to marry you — I’m sorry, but it’s true. We didn’t even meet by happenstance; in truth, I engineered those meetings. I designed them. I mean what I say, really. I now know how much wrong I’ve done, please… Spare me…”

“W-what are you blabbering?” Lilian was taken aback. “Is this Tiffie’s doing? Look, no worries, okay? I’ll transfer ownership of the house to her, and she will never stick her nose into our affairs ever again.”

Grant’s face was turning white. “N-No! I’m t-t-telling the truth. Why can’t you just understand? My ex-wife left me because of my financial fiasco. I’m not just broke — I owe a mountain of debts. If I don’t pay up soon, I’m going to jail! My house? My car? All rented! I have nothing, Lilian, nothing. All I’m asking is that all of you spare my life. I don’t even need compensation for that car, alright? I’ll come up with something, just—spare me!”

Lilian was at a loss of response. “God, Grant, no one’s threatening you, is there? Who are you asking to spare you? Wait… So you were lying to me?! And why do I feel like someone’s threatening you?”

Grant’s terror-filled eyes darted to a corner of the street on his periphery where a jet-black Bently was parked. “N-N-Nothing! J-Just know that I was lying to you this whole time! I’m sorry, please, I gotta go!”

With that, he scrambled into his car and hightailed out of the street, as though someone was pursuing him.

Even Tiffany was baffled by the sudden twist of events, but before she could dwell on it, she heard Lilian sobbing. Even more confused, she asked, “Why the hell are you crying?!”

A crouching Lilian was weeping as hard as a little teenage girl whose heart was broken. “It must have been you and Jackson threatening him! He said he was lying to me… then told us to spare him…”

Tiffany was not sure what spurred the man into coming clean, but she was glad nonetheless. “Please, I didn’t threaten him, and neither did Jackson! Why would I? It’s embarrassing as eff! Even if you’re aching to put on that wedding dress again, you gotta use your head and eyes too! I told you that he’s a goddamned conman, but you never listen, so what about now? Learned anything? Hell, he even admitted as much!”

Lilian was so crestfallen that she rose and bolted back inside, sobbing. Tiffany, meanwhile, eyed the time and knew that she was going to be late for work.

The daughter was about to run after her mother when the black Bentley suddenly stopped in front of her. Coming out of the car was the same young man who offered to send Tiffany home from the bar at that time.

He handed Tiffany a card. “Mr. Smith would see to it that nothing will ever trouble you again.”