Ruling 841

Chapter 841

Arianne paused for a beat before saying, “Listen, Tiffie. You and I are different from Tan. We go way back and have gone through so much together that we can talk about all kinds of things. But she didn’t go through all of that with you. So, you need to be mindful of her feelings, okay? Especially since you two are living together right now. You gotta be less unfiltered, Tiffie.”

Tiffany felt that it was a little unfair. “But she’s as much my best friend as you are. We could live with each other precisely because we’re best friends, right? No need to impose so many boundaries between one another and all that, right? Or, have I been overstating our relationship…?”

Arianne said nothing. She knew that was the truth — Tanya could never act the way Arianne would. That much was evident in their interaction just now.

Just then, the door to her ward was pushed open, revealing Mark’s towering, straight frame. “What were you two talking about?”

As always, he was donning yet another business suit, but he still managed to look fresh every time he appeared.

Tiffany chuckled. “Well, well, well. Since when do you care about the things women talk about, hmm?” she quipped.

Mark stood still before Arianne’s bed. “I don’t. I was just saying.”

Tiffany deadpanned. “Christ, it’s a challenge to talk to you. Oh, well. If you’re here, then I’ll be going! It’s time for lunch!” she declared. “My stomach is protesting from the lack of food, man. I gotta find myself a place to fill it up!”

“Drive carefully! Don’t get careless,” Arianne piped up.

When Mark and Arianne were left alone in the ward, the former suddenly reached forward and brushed the front of her shirt. “Did you spill water on yourself while drinking? It’s a little wet. Want to change it?”

Arianne froze for a second or two before slapping his hand away. “N-no, it’s… um, not that. Uh, let’s just wait for Mary to help me with this…”

The realization hit him. “Oh. That's quite a lot — it’s practically overflowing. Mary has gone to prepare your meal, right? She’s going to take a while, I bet. How about you tell me how to do it? Let me help.”

Arianne took a look at his fair, slender hands. She could not imagine hands like these helping her with her condition. “Er, how about no? I’m fairly sure the image of you helping me would turn into a weird trauma of some kind. We should wait till Mary comes; she’ll know what to do and store the milk for the baby, too…”

The swiftness of her rejection convinced Mark not to insist on his offer. “Agreed. We’ll wait. By the way, have you come up with a name yet? Or would you like to defer to me?”

Arianne collected her thoughts for a bit and replied, “I’m not really good at coming up with names, so maybe you should do it. Oh, Mark, have you seen our baby? How is he? When can we bring him home?”

Mark lifted one of Arianne’s stray locks and pushed it behind her ear. “Once you’re out of postpartum confinement, he will be good to return home as well,” he replied softly. “No need to worry, our baby is wonderful. I’ve visited him; he might have been a little too eager to see the world, but he suffers no conditions at all… And he won’t.”

Arianne visibly sighed with relief. “That is what’s best. Oh, that reminds me. How about my auntie and uncle? Couldn’t you locate them even with your extensive connections?”

Chapter 842

Marks’ eyebrows furrowed a little. “No, we still haven’t managed to track them yet, which lends credibility to the suspicion that someone is pulling strings behind this. But don’t you worry, I’ll make sure it’s handled well.”

Arianne hesitated for a moment before casting a tentative question. “Then… what will we do if they’re found?”

Her trepidation was palpable enough that Mark thinned his lips before answering, “Doing what they did, despite knowing that their niece, who’s in the late stages of pregnancy and, therefore, in high risks of complications, is a travesty. Worse still, they are your uncle and aunt; it’s unforgivable even if they did it under threat. Of course, I will not forgive that elusive puppet master behind the scene, either. Now, I understand your concerns, Ari. Judging from the series of events, it seems more likely that your aunt’s role was passive, forced. There are reasons to believe that, given a chance, she would choose against it. Your uncle is a different story, however — he did it without batting an eyelash. I’ll punish them accordingly and proportionately.”

Even after hearing his explanation, Arianne was none the wiser about Mark's plan. The man she saw now was what he wanted her to see, but there was another side, lurking, refusing to let her peek. She knew nothing about this side of him, so all she could do right now was to cross a bridge when she saw one.

Besides, whether those two could be found or not remained to be seen.

Being bedridden in the hospital was tough. Postpartum confinement was tough. And Mark had forced her into a confinement period of forty-two days.

The number was decided by Mary, who had looked the information up. Most women, especially in the West, did not observe confinements, but Mark was rather particular about it and trusted Mary for it.

As a result, the celebration of the baby’s first full-month had to be postponed until Arianne returned to the estate. As an event hosted by the Tremonts, its grandeur was to be expected.

The day brought Arianne her first time looking at her son since her delivery. Just like his mom, the little boy had only just returned from the hospital. All of his days spent in the incubator undergoing constant UV ray exposure had brought out quite a tan. His naturally pleasant features, though, had begun to show, which was a marked improvement from how he first looked after birth. The boy’s temporary tan did not change much of his appearance, but his original skin tone was expected to return a few days later.

It was the first time Arianne had ever touched the life that had been kicking inside of her for months. Tides of indescribable feelings swarmed her; once her embrace closed around the baby, she found herself unable to let go.

In contrast, Mark seemed a tad bit too nonchalant toward his son. Even while his wife cooed and squealed about their son's every little thing, all he did was stand quietly and watch.

When it was around eleven noontimes, Mark urged his wife to get ready to go to the hotel quickly. After all, the baby was the star of the show; his presence was sorely demanded. Right now, poor Henry alone had to entertain the guests in the venue.

The more blasé Mark appeared to be, the more nonplussed Arianne was. Pressed for time, however, she did not come to question the man's thoughts. Instead, she pushed the baby into Mark's arms with a look of longingness and said, "Stay put and take care of the little guy, mmkay? Mommy's gonna change into a new set of clothes and she'll be back in a jiffy! You! Be careful with your grip, please."

She went away, though she tossed quite a lot of glances back at them after every few steps. When she disappeared upstairs, Mark finally looked down and regarded the baby — still too small for his own good — in his arms and muttered, "How could you be so damn lucky, hmm? I've been watching and protecting your mom for more than ten years, yet she has never cared about me as much! What do you have that I don't, huh? Well, then, brat, you better behave yourself in the future, or else you're getting some good old-fashioned whooping, mark my words."

"Pfft!"

A burst of choked laughter suddenly escaped from behind him. It was Mary, who had just finished preparing the maternity tool needed for the event and was now passing by. Accidentally overhearing Mark's fueled-by-jealousy threat, she could not help but be amused.

Mark feigned coughs to dispel his embarrassment. "Mary, please. Have you made sure that everything is in order? Please prepare enough diapers; then, we can make our way to the venue."

Arianne suddenly sprang down flights of stairs, yelling, “Were those coughs I heard from you, Mark Tremont? Are you sick? Don’t spread it to the baby — let Mary carry him! And you’re sitting in the passenger seat later. I’m sitting in the back with her.”

Mark was at a loss for words. The coughs were supposed to relieve him from his embarrassment, yet embarrassingly, it became something else instead!

The trip to the hotel was a nerve-wracking one for poor Brian, who felt a new weight of pressure with his boss now sitting right next to him. On top of that, he was wearing one of his worst glowers, so Brian felt only acute anxiousness.

In comparison to the tension in the front row, the back seat was all sunny spring and happy cackles. The baby appeared to be quite spirited today; rather than sleeping, he moved his big, dewy eyes around and scanned the world around him curiously, occasionally sticking out his tiny pink tongue over his lip to make bubbles out of drool.

Arianne and Mary watched, their hearts swelling with glee.

Chapter 843

The baby had to be left in Mary’s care once the group reached the hotel, as Arianne and Mark were needed to walk around and greet their guests.

Arianne’s recovery from pregnancy was quite stunning. Today, she wore a gorgeous white dress adorned with a few artistic splashes of black; it was body-hugging enough to display every perk and curve of her contour. Were Mary, holding her baby, not been tailing Arianne in every step, no one would have suspected that she had just recently given birth.

Most of the guests were magnates and personnel from various businesses, and none were familiar to Arianne. Either way, she understood the implicative looks nestled in the eyes that followed her.

Mark’s wedding with Arianne had boasted no spectacular pomp. Even though the marriage was publicized, people still could not help but wonder why the wife of the famous Mr.Tremont would have so little attention and pomp. Now that the baby was born, however, suddenly, the family threw a pompous party in the baby’s honor.

Arianne couldn't care less about what they thought. With her arm hooked around Mark’s, they toured the venue, her with a practiced grin plastered on her face. When her duty was done, she was quick to run to her friends.

Tiffany and Tanya had long arrived; Jackson and Eric, as well. Of course, with Eric came his girlfriend, Vicky. But even as the men gathered aside to talk shops while the women formed their group, chatting about the latest fashion trend, Vicky was notable for sticking close to Eric at all times rather than joining the girls.

Tiffany dashed forward as soon as her eyes fell upon Arianne. She swooped the baby into her arms from Mary’s and began to praise him. “See? I told you, if you shower him with a little bit of love, he’ll turn into a smol but handsome boy! He’s unexpectedly darker than his parents, sure, but those facial features — oh, they’re identical to Mark’s! The mold’s been set, Ari! So, what’s little sweetie’s name? Have you picked one yet?”

The subject of the boy’s naming reminded Arianne of its ridiculous backstory. Right after her delivery, while still resting in the hospital ward, Mark had asked if she would like to name the child. The thing was, the child’s name must immediately be known post-delivery for birth certificate purposes. In other words, the baby’s name was already set, and Arianne never had the chance to choose.

It seemed that Mark was only asking her because he worried that if he did not, she might think ill of a naming process without the mother's input. When Arianne turned out to be too exhausted to brainstorm a name — surprising no one — she had told Mark to do it himself. And thus, only today, her son's name was revealed to her: Aristotle Tremont

Tremont — that was the family name inherited from Mark. Then there was Aristotle, the name of the renowned ancient Greek philosopher and polymath whose laudable achievements made him a shining star unsurpassed by many. But more importantly, Arianne's name was hidden in it, too.

It was the kind of name only someone like Mark Tremont would ever think of giving. Arianne was a little bashful when she replied, "Uh, it's... Aristotle Tremont. Mark's idea."

As expected, Tiffany did not pass up the chance to rib on her friend. "Jesus Christ, your man managed to sneak in his devotion to you in the christening of his own damn son?! It's like he's trying to make the whole world green with envy!"

At that thought, the light in Tiffany's eyes dimmed a little. They darted across the room and landed on Jackson, who was bantering with Eric and Mark.

That Jackson! For some reason, he had utterly ceased contact with Tiffany for almost a month. He used to circle Tiffany so much, yet lately and abruptly, he stopped. Not that Tiffany wanted him to continue shoving his face around her, but to have him gush around her only to suddenly bail was a sucker-punch to her mind.

People could get used to a person's antics pretty easily. A woman could get so used to a man volunteering himself on everything, every time, that when he suddenly stopped doing that, it would feel like she had lost a big part of her life. That was precisely how Tiffany felt.

Even now, Tiffany could not tell what exactly Jackson's intention was. Had he always planned to play her like that since the beginning? Either way, was Jackson's complete retraction from her life not what she wanted in the first place, "parallel lines" and all? So, why…?

Just then, Tanya produced a small red box in her hand. "Ari, t-this is a little gift I've prepared for the boy. I, um, hope you don't think lowly of it — "

Before Arianne could say anything, Tiffany snapped out of her reverie and shoved Aristotle back into Arianne's arms. She quickly fished out her own red box and cried, "I bought something too!"

Her hands full with the baby, Arianne could not receive both of the gifts at once. Instinctively, she extended her free hand toward Tiffany's. "Thank you so much."

Automatically, Tanya's gift was received by Mary.

No one noticed the slight change in Tanya's expression. It might not be something Arianne had done intentionally, but the partiality was enough to carve another mark on Tanya's self-conscious heart.

Chapter 844

Inside Tiffany's little gift box was a pair of delicate golden bracelets while Tanya's featured a golden pendant representing the child's horoscope bound by a red string.

After examining the gifts, Arianne gave a peck on Aristotle's puffy cheeks and cooed, "Thank your two aunties, sweetie. You gotta remember them when you grow up, okay? They'd love you so much!"

Vicky, noticing the hubbub, propped her booty up and sashayed toward them. She had dressed with much splendour today. In stark contrast to her more down-to-earth presentation when she first met Tiffany and Tanya for the first time, she was now dazzling with a veneer of magnificence.

"Oh, you guys are here already?… Ah, this must be Mrs. Tremont! A pleasure to meet you. I'm Eric's girlfriend! Here, this is for the little sweetheart. Ricky and I had bought this little present — aww, look at how adorable he is!"

Arianne had heard all about Vicky Nathaniel from Tiffany, so she responded to her with a courtly smile while Mary received the gift on her behalf.

Vicky sized Tanya up and gibed, "Seriously? What's with that outfit, girl? You didn't think you were out here to buy groceries, right?"

Tanya turned bright red, her fingers digging into the fabric and clutching it tightly. She owned no evening gowns, so she wore the only thing she had: a casual, ordinary dress. To wear something like that among upper-class socialites was to set oneself up as the ugly duckling among the swans — awkward and stuck out like a sore thumb.

Arianne frowned. "We Tremonts are the masters of this hotel, so however classy this event should be is all down to what I say. And right now? I say I don't care about the clothes you wear. Clothes are just something to cover yourself with; it's not a name card. In fact, this isn't even an event for business — it's a party celebrating my son's first month. I've heard much about your penchant to say whatever is in your brain out loud, Vicky, but never did I expect it to be true to the letters!"

Vicky seemed a little embarrassed. “C-come on! I was just joking around! I mean, since y’all are Ricky’s friends, I automatically saw you as my friends too. It can’t hurt to make a joke now, can it? Come on, Tan, you’re not that sensitive, are you?”

Tanya forced a smile. “No. It’s alright.”

Tiffany, however, did not attempt to hide the disgust in her eyes as she sniped Vicky a glare. “Urgh, the gown you’re wearing? That’s an old trend from two years back, isn’t it?” she remarked tartly. “It wasn’t even doing so hot when it first came out, and now it’s basically extinct among upper-class socialites. And you still think it’s viable to be worn? Oh, oh no, what’s with that face? Didn’t you know I was joking? A fashion designer always has a keen intuition and knowledge of these things. I can tell which year your gown was bought and who designed it just from a look!”

The first sign of anger and embarrassment swarmed around Vicky’s pate, but she remained nailed to her spot, clearly not intending to leave.

Reluctant to see the party’s mood ruined, Arianne took it upon herself to become the mediator. “Alright, alright. Let’s put that aside. We should all enjoy ourselves as much as we can. Come on, make yourself at home.”

Aristotle picked the wrong time to bawl, prompting Mary to remind Arianne quietly, “The boy’s hungry, Ari. I’ve brought the bottle and milk, so let me handle it. You can stay with your friends.”

She passed the child to Mary in agreement. Had this been at home, she would have fed the child herself. God, it was hard to carry out a mother’s job when one was outside.

When the party ended, Tiffany and Tanya followed Arianne back to the Tremont Estate. Jackson, Eric, and Vicky, too, followed soon afterward.

Mark had wanted to invite all of these close friends to dinner together. However, he soon realized that before the night had fallen, the mood had warped into one of pure uneasiness.

Chapter 845

Having more people occupying the Tremont Estate did not turn the spacious house more vivacious. Instead, it seemed to have sucked out all of the life in the area.

Tiffany, who was firmly on Tanya's side, did not attempt to hide her animosity toward Vicky. Throw Jackosn's presence into the mix, and it was as though dangerous undercurrents were charging through the air.

Vicky was not the least perturbed. Instead, she freely dove into the men's group and chatted away, making herself look like the sun while the others were orbiting planets.

A woman who acted as though she knew everyone, strangers and friends alike, would always draw ire from some people, but Vicky became particularly egregious when she kept ordering Mary, who was taking care of Aristotle, around like she was the mistress of the house. "Excuse me, Mary, but could you please make me a glass of juice or something? I don't like tea."

Mary tolerated her only because she respected Eric. "My hands are tied with the baby, dear. There are people in the kitchen you could ask for help; in fact, you could always make one yourself. The tools are there, and the fruits are in the fridge. You can pick whatever you like."

Vicky's glance quickly snapped toward Eric. "Ricky, boo? Vicky really wanna have some juice-juice right now…"

Tiffany rolled her eyes as a wave of goosebumps spread through her skin. Eric, however, rose to his feet immediately and started toward the kitchen. "Okay, babe. What juice?"

Vicky gave a sweet smile. "Grenadine, pwease?"

Mary deadpanned. Grenadine?! Of all things, she picked something unavailable! "We don't have pomegranates right now."

Eric turned to Vicky and shrugged. "Ain't got any. Pick another."

Vicky pursed her lips. "Hmph, then I'd rather have tea."

Just then, Henry sidled up to Mark and whispered into his ears, causing the latter's eyebrows to furrow before he followed the butler upstairs.

There, Henry produced the party guest-list and said, "Alejandro Smith. He has no business ties with us, and he did not appear at the party in person. Yet, for some reason, he sent us a gift, and a hefty one at that. Indeed, the most lavish gift from all of the guests came from Mr. West and Mr. Smith; they both gifted you a villa."

Mark was bamboozled. “A man like that could not possibly ‘just’ gift anyone a house for nothing. And yet, I don’t recall him being one of my business partners. Did his representative divulge in any request?”

Henry thought for a second before answering, “According to my usher, Mr. Smith’s representative appeared to be a young man whom we could reasonably assume to be his underling. Mr. Smith referred to himself as ‘a friend of Mrs. Tremont’s friend.’ I’ve performed a cursory search on his background and discovered contacts between Mr. Smith and Ms. Lane.”

Mark paused for a moment before giving his verdict, “Then there’s nothing for us to worry about at all. This proves that he didn’t just show up with a lavish gift from nowhere without any reason. We don’t have to pay this too much mind, I feel. Mr. Smith is a business magnate, so it’s entirely within his capability to present a gift of that value. I predict that he’ll come to us very soon for a business parley. For now, let’s set this aside.”

Downstairs, Mary brought Aristotle upstairs for bed on Arianne’s order, who feared that their chatter might disturb her son. Still, this was the first time that Arianne and Tiffany sat together without chatting. Instead, their attention was trained on Vicky.

The social butterfly was incapable of feeling awkward when injecting herself into other people’s conversations, and now, she skillfully mingled with the men. It did not matter what topics they were discussing; it could be about business or other interests — Vicky would still find a way to butt in with unexpectedly astute opinions. By this point, one had to admit that she had an impressive ability.

Tanya herself seemed a little too on edge. Since stepping into the estate, she had taken about seven or eight trips to the bathroom.

Halfway through the conversation, Vicky suddenly smoothed Jackson's shoulder with the kind of casualness typically reserved for close friends; it was hard to tell if the gesture was deliberate or not. "Oh, your suit is a little creased there. Don't worry, I think it's accidental."

The smile in Jackson's visage remained unwavering, but his eyes darted toward Tiffany intuitively as a lick of discomfort crossed his pupils. "It's nothing…"

Chapter 846

Tiffany turned away as her eyes brimmed with tears. Jackson had been ignoring her from the very beginning, acting very intimate with his best friend's girlfriend instead! A few seconds later, she grabbed her handbag and said to Arianne, "Ari, we've still got some time before dinner. The weather is great today. Shall we go shopping? Mary can take care of the baby. You've prepared breast milk already anyway."

All women enjoyed shopping, and Arianne was no different. She easily agreed. "Good idea; you invite Tan. Let's go together. Didn't you drive today? Let's take your car…"

Before she could finish speaking, Tiffany stiffly corrected her. "That's not my car. It's about time I return it to its actual owner. Let me drive one of your husband's cars."

Jackson's smile faltered. Having dated Tiffany for a long time, he was still keenly aware of whenever Tiffany was angry with him. She had been driving his car for a while and now suddenly insisted on returning it to him. That certainly didn't sound good…

Arianne seemed to have noticed something and nodded. She headed upstairs and asked Mark for the keys to one of his cars. She was also forced to take an ATM card too.

Once they left, Eric turned to Jackson and asked, “Doesn’t Tiffany drive your car? Why is she suddenly returning it to you? That sounds a little fishy to me…”

Jackson lowered his gaze as a bitter smile formed on his face. “Let her be. That’s just how she is…”

“I thought you’d broken up?” Vicky asked, her question coming at an ill time. “Isn’t this normal?”

Eric’s face finally turned cold. “Vicky, some things are better left unsaid. Certain subjects are considered taboo.”

Vicky was shocked. This was the first time Eric had ever been so stern with her. “Wh-what do you mean? What did I do? I’m just pointing out the truth!

Eric didn’t answer, nor did he publicly expose her. They were not blind. Tiffany wouldn’t have flown into a rage if Vicky hadn’t touched Jackson’s shoulder.

Tiffany practically flew across the road in the car. Tanya was so frightened that she turned absolutely white. She grasped the seatbelt in a tight grip, too afraid to let go. Arianne had gotten used to this long ago and wasn’t afraid. “Tiffie, you’re just upset because Vicky touched Jackson’s shoulder, aren’t you? It’s true that Vicky is unlikeable, and she’s overly friendly. It’s only her second time meeting us, and already she’s doing such things to her boyfriend’s best friend. Right in front of his ex-girlfriend too.”

“I had a hand in insulting her when she was putting Tan on the spot, so she’s just trying to get back at me,” Tiffany snarled through gritted teeth. “She’s nothing but a two-faced bit*h. I would never have put up with her if it weren’t for Eric. I want to tear her to pieces! I can’t do this; I’m going to shop until I

drop! I've finally got some savings and I'm pretty sure that I'm going to spend it all. Otherwise, I won't be able to calm down!"

Arianne pulled out Mark's ATM card and waved it around in front of her. "I'll take care of you with my husband's money. Buy whatever you like."

Tiffany finally smiled. "Justice! I knew that I didn't love you for nothing!"

Tanya couldn't hold it in any longer. "Tiffany… S-slow down… I'm going to puke…"

Tiffany quickly slowed the car down. "Why didn't you mention it sooner? I wouldn't know if you hadn't spoken up about it just now. I tend to drive like this when I'm in a bad mood… I'll go slower next time."

Arianne winded the window down, allowing the gentle breeze to brush across her cheeks. It had been so long since she last felt such freedom. Her spirits were greatly lifted too. However, she had just gotten out of the house when she was hit with a common affliction among mothers — she missed her little one at home. "I'm only giving you guys two hours to shop. We're leaving once the time is up. I want to bond with my little Smore. I'm afraid he doesn't know who his mommy is at the moment. He's closer to the nurses in the hospital than he is with me."

Chapter 847

Tiffany gave an "okay" sign. "No problem. Your son's nickname shall be 'Smore'! It's pretty cute."

Smore, Rice Ball. A baby and a cat. Both little ones were Arianne's saviors. The dreamcatcher with Rice Ball's ashes had been protecting her from all nightmares. Smore was probably just as gentle.

The women wasted no time at the mall, buying whatever they liked. Soon after, the trio's hands were full of shopping bags.

Suddenly, Tiffany's phone rang. She strained to answer it with one arm. "Hello?"

"Shopping?" Alejandro's distinctively hoarse voice answered.

"Do you have eyes on me or something?" Tiffany asked in alarm.

Alejandro chuckled, "Hehe… Not exactly. Jett was making some purchases for me and saw you in the shopping mall. I got word that your friend has just had her baby's one-month old celebration, so I sent a gift in your name. You don't mind, do you?"

Tiffany was surprised. "You're giving presents again? But I didn't see you. Were you there?"

"No, I wasn't there," Alejandro replied casually. "The gift from me is certainly not inferior to the one from your ex. Consider it a way of helping you turn the tables. I know you're not free today, so how about a meal tomorrow?"

The thought of Jackson angered her. So in her rage, she rashly agreed. "Sure. We'll talk tomorrow. I don't have time to chat with you now. Bye."

“Who was that?” Arianne asked after she had ended the call.

Tiffany held her breath. “Alejandro. He’s given your son a big present. Apparently, it’s superior to Jackson’s villa. Real generous. Don’t ask me why, ‘cos I don’t know. This guy does everything on a whim.”

Arianne remembered seeing Henry whisper into Mark’s ear; it was probably about that. “Uh… Mark should know how to deal with it. I won’t concern myself with that. Let Mark have dinner with Jackson and the rest tonight. The men will undoubtedly have wine with their dinner, and I can’t drink, so I can’t go along. Let’s stay at home, the three of us. First of all, I can take care of the baby, and secondly, we can avoid the awkwardness and feeling uncomfortable. What do you ladies think?”

“I agree,” Tanya agreed without a second thought.

Tiffany showed no objections either. “Sure. That’s a good idea. Tan and I will go home after dinner. We have work tomorrow. Give me a call if you want to hang out.”

Arianne sent Mark a message once that was settled. By the time they arrived back at the Tremont Estate, Mark, Jackson, and the rest had gone out. The atmosphere was now peaceful again, not as stiff as it was moments ago.

Mary stepped out of the baby’s room and said, “I don’t think it’s going to last between Eric and his new girlfriend. They’re not compatible at all. Don’t believe me? Just wait and see.”

Arianne smiled. “Looks like we are all of one mind, though it’s still very hard to tell. Is the baby asleep? I’m going to check on him. By the way, Mary, tell the kitchen to prepare dinner for tonight. The three of us will be eating at home.”

Mary grunted a reply then went downstairs to the kitchen.

Chapter 848

Upon entering the baby’s room, Arianne spotted a dreamcatcher hanging over Aristotle’s little cot. She was surprised that Mark had put a dream catcher there. The man could be quite a softie sometimes...

The little one was fast asleep, smacking his tiny lips from time to time. It looked so cute. His two little hands were balled into fists, curled on his sides. His arms had grown so chubby that there was a slit in between. It would seem that he did not suffer during his time in the hospital. The milk that she had been sending over to him was just enough. The little guy was pretty good looking.

She carefully slipped out after checking on the baby. She arrived downstairs to find Tiffany opening up her spoils from her shopping trip today. “I wasn’t planning on using Jackson’s car anymore, but it looks like I’ll have to for today. I’ve bought too many things. I’ll give it back to him personally after using it. Consider it an end to everything that’s happened between us. Besides, he personally gave me the keys to the car, so I should give it back to him personally too.”

“You’d better contain yourself if he starts releasing his manly hormones. Who was it that kept telling me how irresistible he was to her?” Arianne teased.

“That was then! I’m not going to fall for it now!” Tiffany objected. “Now that I think about it, he’s a jerk. I’ve never met a bigger jerk than him.”

“Yes, yes, yes. He’s a jerk,” Arianne played along with her. “Feeling better now?”

Tiffany and Tanya left the estate after dinner. Mary could take care of the baby at night, so Arianne didn’t need to worry. Arianne waited for Mark to come home until it was nearly ten. Then, realizing that he wouldn’t be coming home so soon, she went to sleep.

Tiffany assumed that Jackson and the rest would be finished with dinner soon, so she drove the car back to White Water Bay Villa to give it back to him. At this point, it was time to have a clean break.

By the time she arrived, Jackson was still out. She waited for him in the car for more than twenty minutes. She was beginning to doze off when he finally arrived. He had clearly been drinking, and quite a lot too. He had been driven home by a designated driver.

Jackson saw her when he got down from the car, but he actually ignored her. He pulled out his keys and unlocked the door to enter the house. However, he didn’t lock her out. Instead, he left the door open after going inside.

She followed him in, swallowing her anger and putting the car keys on the living room coffee table. “The car’s outside. I’ve left the car keys with you. Thank you for loaning this car to me for my convenience. I don’t need it anymore.”

Jackson poured himself a glass of water and stumbled onto the couch then sat down. “What are you so mad about?”

She ignored his question, turned around, and left. She just arrived at the door when she felt a strong pressure from behind. Her entire body was pressed up against the door, just as it closed. She felt as if

her chest had been crushed under his weight, probably because he had had too much to drink and couldn't control his strength. She would have knocked her nose into the door if she didn't manage to turn her head to the side on time!

She was annoyed. She flipped her arms around and tried to scratch him. "Let me go!"

He crudely forced her hands behind her back and snaked one arm to the front to cup her chin. "I asked you a question. What are you so mad about? Answer me."

She couldn't escape. His scent enveloped her, followed by the smell of alcohol from his breath. She struggled even more and did not stop, despite the pain in her wrists. "I wouldn't waste my time getting mad at someone like you! I was just mad at the sight of you! Let me go, or else!"

She gradually calmed down when she realized that he had taken a breath from behind her. The pair remained in a deadlock for a short while. Suddenly, he placed his lips on her earlobe, sucking it. That moist, sticky sensation numbed her body, sending shockwaves to her very scalp. By the time she had returned to her senses, his hand had already pulled her black, tight-fitting dress all the way up to her waste, creating a gentle breeze on the lower half of her body. Once she realized what he was doing, she panicked. "You ba*tard! Let go of me!"

He gently placed his large hand around her smooth neck as his fingers roamed her body. Breathing was suffocating to her, so she had no choice but to lift her face for more oxygen. That action allowed her to meet his cool lips, which carried the strong smell of alcohol.

Chapter 849

Jackson finally moved their makeout session to the couch when her legs began to give way. Her hands finally freed, she immediately gave him a slap.

He was taken aback for a second before he pinned her arms above the top of her head and sunk his hips into her, kissing her.

The bloody and sweet fragrance frightened Tiffany into submission. A drunk man should not be trifled with — she was beginning to comprehend this. She shouldn't have come to return the car!

After a certain amount of time, just as she was growing woozy, Jackson growled into her ear with a voice that was both enticing and mixed with rage. "Is he better than me? Have you f*cked him? Answer me!"

The only thing Tiffany felt was that the ceiling was moving. His thrusts were incomparably forceful, rendering her completely incapable of formulating complete sentences. Every time she opened her mouth, she would cry out in a voice that could make anyone blush. Her energy levels paled in comparison to his exuberance, and she soon passed out from his lovemaking…

The Tremont Estate.

Mark had had a lot to drink too. However, he was still capable of walking steadily. The first thing he did when he arrived home was to check on Aristotle in the baby room. Then, he softly went back to his bed and took a shower.

Arianne flipped around drowsily when she heard the sounds from the bathroom. She was now half-asleep and checked the time — it was close to twelve at midnight. What a long dinner that was!

She mustered the energy to wait for Mark to finish in the bathroom and thought that she could finally go back to sleep… when his naughty hand slid itself into her pajamas. “They’ve really grown bigger…”

She tensed. “Stop that… Sleep.

He grabbed her hand and led her towards his heated member. “Stop thinking about the baby all the time. You should think about me from time to time too. I’ve been waiting for so long. Am I not also human?”

Only now did she realize that he hadn’t put on any clothes after his shower. Her palm and cheeks heated up at the same time. She hastily pulled her hand away. “Behave. It’s very late. Be a little earlier next time…”

Her excuse seemed to make sense. It was indeed late. Mark begrudgingly pulled her firmly into his arms. “I’d love to see what excuse you’re going to use on me tomorrow. I’ll do as you say, for now. Good night.”

The next morning, Arianne was woken up by a very strange feeling all over her body. She even had a weird dream. She wasn’t too inclined towards sex, but she dreamed of it. She finally discovered the reason when she opened her eyes. Mark had begun to have his way with her, first thing in the morning, probably because she refused to indulge him last night.

Realizing that she was awake, he reached his hand out to pull her pajama pants down. Before she could react, Brian’s voice suddenly called out from outside the door. “Sir, the car is ready. You have an important auction today. You can’t be late!”

Mark was like a deflated balloon. “Got it!”

Arianne burst into giggles. “Hurry up and get ready. I’m going to check on Aristotle.”

“It’s always about the baby,” he grumbled as he dragged his feet into the bathroom. “I feel as if I’m not as important to you anymore… How long has that little one known you? Shouldn’t there be an order of priority? You just had to have a boy instead of a girl. He’s always at odds with me…”

That’s right. Daughters were little angels while sons were little devils, the tempestuous kind to boot.

Chapter 850

Just as Mark was about to leave, Arianne smilingly carried little Smore towards him. “Say bye bye to daddy.”

Mark stared at the traces of milk on the corners of his son’s lips, and his jealousy grew. He never would have expected to be defeated by such a small thing in the end. “I’m coming home early for dinner tonight.”

Arianne detected the hidden meaning behind his words and blushed. “Hurry. Brian’s been waiting for a very long time.”

Mark stared challengingly at Aristotle before he left, kissing Arianne on the cheek as if showing off. Almost as if he knew what his father had meant, Aristotle turned around and tried to suckle on his mother’s breast. Mark’s face immediately blackened. He turned around and left, refusing to look back. He would make his son pay for his first-ever attack!

White Water Bay Villa.

Tiffany woke up from the sound of her phone ringing. She opened her eyes and found that it was past ten in the morning. She forced herself to sit up, feeling an intense soreness from head to toe. She sat down, staring into space for a very long time before she recollected herself. Her mind recalled everything that had happened last night. She turned to the side and found Jackson, snoring away as expected. He was fast asleep. If she weren't feeling so weak, she would have given him a good kick!

She answered the call and was greeted by Tanya's worried voice. "Where are you? Why aren't you at work? I thought that you were running late, but it's been two hours and you're still not here. You should have been here by now, even with a traffic jam, right?"

She was flustered. "Tell Eric that I'm taking half the day off. I'll come over in the afternoon. I won't be able to come in this morning. I'm a little dazed right now."

After the call, she stared at Jackson, growing angrier and angrier by the minute. What was that question he asked last night? Who did she sleep with? He was strangely fierce and ruthless. She was still slightly traumatised. She decided to wait until her mind was a little clearer before silently sneaking home, mainly because he had really scared her last night. The thought of it terrified her. She certainly wouldn't be able to fight him, but she should be able to slip away, right?

Her feet had just touched the ground when she heard Jackson's voice from behind. "Go ahead. Just try and leave."

Her body stiffened. "I-I'm leaving. So what? Are you going to eat me up again?"

She immediately regretted her words, as she was dragged back into bed in the very next second. “I was wrong, okay?” she exclaimed in a two-timing manner as she covered her chest. “I really can’t do it anymore… I’ll die on this bed if you insist on having sex with me again. Isn’t that a bad omen? You wouldn’t dare live in this house once it’s haunted, and you won’t be able to sell it off either… What do you want?”

Her antics confused Jackson, who wasn’t sure if he should laugh or cry. “What are you thinking? Must you go that far? You still haven’t answered my question from last night, Tiffany Lane!”

She carefully thought back. “What question? Ask me again. I can’t remember and I’m not too certain.”

“Did you f*ck Alejandro?” he asked, enunciating every syllable.

She suddenly felt extremely annoyed. She had explained it to him so many times, why so wouldn’t he drop the subject? Hadn’t she made it clear?

“Yes, I did. Are you happy now?” She stared at him with a blank and serious face.

The facts proved it. Ever since her trauma from last night, she couldn’t maintain her resilience for more than two seconds. Just as he buried his head into her neck and gently bit on her, she begged for mercy. “We didn’t! We didn’t! We really didn’t! Aren’t you my ex-boyfriend? You should really know your place. This is wrong!”

Jackson ran his fingers across her most sensitive spots. “Oh, really? What is my place, as your ex-boyfriend? Aren’t you on my bed? If there really isn’t anything between you and Alejandro, why did he give an exorbitantly expensive mansion to Mark’s son for his month-old celebration, in your name? That’s even more expensive than my gift, and I’m his Uncle Jackson. That’s a little unjustified, isn’t it?”