Ruling 851

Chapter 851

She grabbed the bedsheets, losing control. “H-how should I know? He never discussed it with me. How would I know what goes on in his mind?”

Jackson’s eyes held no desire as he stared at her blurry eyes and blushing cheeks. He knew that women never lied during times like this.

He got up and flashed a smile. “At least, you’re honest.”

Tiffany was both embarrassed and frustrated. “Jackson West! You’ve crossed a line! What do you think we are? You toy with me when you want to and discard me when it suits you? Am I no different from other women? Get this right — I am not your toy!”

He was taken aback. He realized that he had really crossed a line. “I did not…”

He did not? Tiffany refused to believe him at this moment. He clearly did. He had pursued her relentlessly and then suddenly ignored her. Now, he was coming at her again for some strange reason. She felt completely insulted!

She gritted her teeth and got off the bed, picking up her clothes and rushing into the bathroom. In order to prevent losing to him over strength, she locked the door before yelling at him, “Don’t play dumb with me. I must have been blind in the past. From now on, we’ll go our separate ways. Neither of us is allowed to disturb the other!”

Jackson rubbed his forehead helplessly. He tried to turn the doorknob a few times, realized that it was locked, then began trying to gently pacify her. “It’s not what you think. Just come out and we can talk about this…”

Tiffany was now caught up in her rage. Why would she listen to him? “I’m not coming out, unless you promise never to disturb me again! Just like you did a month ago, ignoring me completely!”

“Just like I did a month ago?” Jackson suddenly laughed. So that’s why she was angry. She was mad at him for ignoring her for a month. That’s why she felt that she had been played.

“Alright, alright. Don’t be mad. It was my misunderstanding. It was my fault, okay? Aren’t you the one refusing to get back together? That’s why I’m a little erratic, alright? Wouldn’t it solve everything if you had just agreed to be with me? If this goes on, not only will I continue pursuing you, we’ll just continue torturing each other. I have nothing to say if you think that’s best. Tiffany Lane, even if you plan on suffocating yourself to death in there, you will only have two choices — either we continue getting involved with each other, or you come back to me. Think about it very carefully. I’m going to use the shower downstairs.”

Tiffany couldn’t help but open the door and peek out when she heard the bedroom door open and close. Jackson had gone downstairs. What did he mean? Didn’t he ignore her for a month to signal that their relationship was really and truly over? Did he take the wrong medication today? Or was toying with her a fun game to him?

She simply bathed, changed her clothes and grabbed her bag, planning to slip away before he had finished with his shower. When she arrived downstairs, she realized that the door had been locked by a key from the inside. She would have to unlock it with a key. Jackson had previously given her a set of keys, and she had always had them in her handbag. She had forgotten to give them back to him when she came over last night. It was now time to use them.

Unfortunately, she couldn't find the keys at all when she reached into her bag. Just as she was lost in confusion, she heard Jackson's impish voice. "Looking for this?"

Chapter 852

She stiffened, then turned around to find Jackson holding her set of keys. She had bought the keychain herself, so of course, she recognized it at first glance. She did not expect him to resort to this. "You…"

Jackson only had a small towel wrapped around his waist, leaving a clear view of the muscles on the top half of his body. The water droplets on the tips of his damp hair slid down onto his body. He emitted the fragrant smell of body wash and looked like a walking sex god. The sight of it sent Tiffany's blood pumping into her veins.

However, she managed to keep a hold on the situation and did not completely become enthralled by his beauty. She snatched the keys away and stuffed a key into the keyhole.

Jackson didn't stop her. Instead, he quietly watched her open the door. As she stepped out, he reminded her, "The weather's pretty hot today. Are you sure you want to walk out of the neighbourhood and hail a cab? Won't you consider waiting for me? I happen to be going out, so I can drop you off. Or you can take the car."

Tiffany immediately halted. She looked up at the scorching sun above her, remembered her sore, exhausted body and how big White Water Bay Villa's neighbourhood was, and knew that it would be exhausting to walk out. Furthermore, she would have to stand on the side of the road for at least twenty minutes while waiting for a cab… It would take up to two hours if she was unlucky. She yielded. "If I were not… too tired to argue with you, I would walk for eight kilometers if I had to, let alone all of these obstacles! Lend me your car again!"

She turned around and walked back to the living room, snatching up the car keys before leaving again.

Jackson put the smile on his face away once she had driven off, then turned around and walked upstairs. He pulled out his phone, scrolled to find Tanya's contact details, and deleted them. He had initially kept in touch with her, simply to receive updates on Tiffany and to give himself some reassurance. Now, he realized that it wasn't as convenient as it seemed, and it easily caused misunderstandings too. Hence, there was no longer a need.

At the auction venue.

Mark checked his watch from time to time. His schedule was packed today. This auction alone took up his entire morning and he had meetings in the afternoon. The schedule was tight.

The Tremonts' business wasn't limited to jewelry and fashion. They had other businesses too. Today's auction was to bid for a plot of prime land. Everyone knew the benefits that came with owning this piece of land, which was why they were here. All of the big shots in the industry were here, and he was determined to win. He had set aside a budget long ago, which was far higher than everyone else's. He had made a clear estimate long ago. As long as the final price was not too far above his estimate and no surprises arrived, his victory was pretty much assured.

He stayed quiet during the first few rounds. There was no need to say too much with a pre-determined ending.

The final round soon arrived and many people stopped bidding once the price had gone above their estimates. Only then did he signal to Davy, his secretary, to state his price. This would end in ten minutes, as long as there were no surprises.

Suddenly, a bidding plate was raised from an unremarkable corner of the room. The host was in high spirits. “Would anyone else like to bid?”

Mark frowned. He glanced at his bidding competitor. The man seemed unfamiliar and very young. He did not leave much of an impression, so it was likely that he was following his boss’s orders. He lifted his hand without hesitation, and Davy issued another bid.

Chapter 853

The young man gave another bid before the host could speak up. Davy panicked. He leaned into Mark’s ear and whispered, “Mr. Tremont, should we continue the bid? We’re at the estimate now. We’ll go over the budget if we do…”

Mark narrowed his eyes and nodded. Davy wiped the cold sweat off his brow and shot the troublemaker a glare. This should have been finished very fast. If this continued, they would have to wait the next round and it might end up derailing their afternoon meetings.

Unexpectedly, the opposition issued another bid, looking very calm to boot, as if he was sure to win. Mark’s heart twitched, and he suddenly changed his mind. “Give up.”

“Seriously, where did that guy come from?” Davy grumbled as they left the auction. “We’ve had our eyes on that piece of land for more than half a month, and he bought it at such a high price. Was he trying to make things difficult for us or himself? What does he want that land for anyway? It’ll take a long time before he gets any returns for his investment. What’s with that guy… Doesn’t he know how much a piece of land costs? We could have saved some of our estimated funds if we had gotten it, but he’s spoiled everything. That’s half a month’s work gone down the drain. He kept adding on to the price, as if that piece of land is his family’s graveyard!”

Mark was already in a bad mood, so he shot Davy an icy glare. Davy immediately shut his mouth. “Sorry, Mr. Tremont…”

After getting into his car, Mark spotted the man who had won the final bid getting into a black Bentley. He was sitting in a wheelchair, which meant that their competitor was probably his chauffeur or something. Just who was the man in that car?

“Find out who that is,” he ordered icily.

Davy carefully noted the man’s car plate number. “Sure thing, Mr. Tremont. I’ll give you an answer tomorrow. Shall we go back to the office?”

Mark nodded. Brian, who was in the driver’s seat, had just started the engine when the black Bentley stopped on their left. The window in the back seat winded down, showing Alejandro’s face in full view. “What a coincidence, Mr. Tremont. I never thought that you would have your eye on this piece of land too. It’s inconvenient for me to go into the venue, you see, so my driver had to represent me. I would have let you have it if I knew how much you wanted it…”

“It’s fine. It’s just a piece of land,” Mark replied blankly.

Alejandro chuckled. “That’s good to hear. Of course, you wouldn’t put too much emphasis on a piece of land, Mr. Tremont. I’ll see you when I see you.”

Mark frowned as Alejandro drove away. This man was clearly picking a fight with him. He had singled him out during the auction!

He had found it strange when Alejandro had generously given a mansion to his son on his one month celebration, so he had been waiting for him!

“Mr. Tremont… Should we still investigate?” Davy asked fearfully.

Mark closed his eyes. “Are you blind? Back to the office!”

At the office, Mark called Tiffany after some thought. He had never had any contact with Alejandro before, so he never saw him as a threat. Now, he realized how formidable the man really was. He had spoiled his two-year plan in branching out by taking that piece of land. Losses were now unavoidable, and Tiffany was the person who’d had the most contact with Alejandro.

Tiffany was very surprised when she received Mark’s call. “Mark Tremont? Is the sun rising from the west today? You’re calling me? What’s going on?”

“What is your relationship with Alejandro Smith?” he asked straight away.

Chapter 854

Tiffany paused. “What the f*ck? You’re asking me this question too? Are you asking because you really want to know, or did Jackson put you up to this? Is something wrong with you people? I’ve already explained, there’s nothing going on between me and Alejandro. We’re just friends at the very most! If you keep this up, I’ll tell Ari. Just you wait!”

Mark rubbed the space between his brows, feeling a massive headache. “Alejandro has snatched a piece of land away from me and singled me out during the auction. Do you really think that I’d have the time to concern myself with your relationship with Jackson? Looks like I won’t find out anything from you. Bye.”

Tiffany stared at her phone when the call had ended, completely speechless. The only thing she had managed to process was that Alejandro had snatched a piece of land away from Mark. If Mark Tremont was personally asking her about it, it meant that the situation was serious. Based on her relationship with Alejandro, she wouldn't be able to ask him anything about this through a simple phone call. She would have to do it during their next meal together.

The thought of a meal reminded her that she had nearly forgotten about her meeting with Alejandro today. At this point, she didn't want to do anything else except for rolling around in bed. At first, she had promised to only have half the day off, but she might as well have taken the entire day off. She fell fast asleep as soon as she closed her eyes.

The sound of her phone ringing woke her up after some time. It was now 5PM and the call was from Alejandro. She got up and answered the call while rubbing her eyes. "Hello?"

"I'm downstairs," Alejandro replied. "Come down. I'll take you to dinner."

His voice didn't sound gentle, but for some unknown reason, she detected a hint of indulgence in his tone. Tiffany felt uncomfortable but didn't mention it. "Alright, I'm coming down."

Half an hour passed before she actually met up with Alejandro. Never trust a woman when she claims to be "on the way". The phrase "on the way" would include a change of clothes and make up. She had put on simple, light makeup too.

Alejandro didn't mind being made to wait for half an hour. "What would you like to eat?" he asked with a smile.

“A light, comforting meal would do. Chinese food sounds like a good idea,” she replied after some thought. “I just woke up, so I don’t have much of an appetite.”

Alejandro ordered Jett to start driving and stopped talking.

Tiffany remembered what Mark had told her and casually said, “I never thought that you’d fight with Mark over a piece of land. It must have cost a lot of money.”

Alejandro turned his head to the side and looked at her. His thoughts were unreadable. “I can ask my secretary to give it to him, if you think I should.”

Surprised at his response, Tiffany grew increasingly uncomfortable with the way he was staring at her. “It’s not that… That’s a business affair between you two. I shouldn’t meddle. I was just asking, as I happened to hear about it. Besides, I don’t have the right to make decisions for you. Pretend I never asked.”

A small smile formed on the corners of Alejandro’s lips. “No, you can ask me to do whatever you want. I’d happily do it if it makes you happy.”

No woman could possibly resist such banter from a rich and handsome man. Tiffany wasn’t a fool. She could detect the obvious meaning behind his words. It would seem that Jackson was right; Alejandro had indeed approached her with an ulterior motive in mind. What other motive would a man possibly have towards a woman? It certainly wasn’t as pure as friendship, which had been her initial impression.

She instinctively looked down at Alejandro's crippled legs with pity. He clearly looked like any other man, but he couldn't stand up and walk. It was such a shame. He probably wouldn't have taken notice of her if he weren't suffering from such a flaw, right?

Chapter 855

She didn't want to go through this looking glass. She didn't want to feel awkward, so she had no choice but to play the fool and act as if she didn't understand him at all. "This is between you and Mark Tremont. It's none of my business. However, it would be different if you picked a fight with Arianne. I'd cut you with a knife," she said jokingly.

Alejandro chuckled. "Hehe… I know. I won't."

The Tremont Estate.

Mark finally felt more relaxed once he had arrived back at home. All of his exhaustion at the office melted away when he laid eyes on Arianne and his son.

The little one had just had his milk and was fully energized. He cooed and gurgled, as if he were chatting away. Mark looked at his son and walked upstairs to take a shower, as usual.

"Mary, do you think, perhaps, he doesn't like babies?" Arianne murmured.

Mary disagreed. "Why would you say that? He hasn't been holding little Aristotle too often, but isn't that because he's been too busy with work? Everything Mr. Tremont earns belongs to the both of you. Stop imagining things."

Arianne curled her lips. “Smore has barely been home for two days, yet he doesn’t seem to appreciate it. The first thing he does when he comes home? Goes upstairs for a shower, as usual, instead of holding the baby. Why is he such a germaphobe? There’s bacteria in the air too. He might as well stop breathing.”

Mary giggled. “Only you would have the nerve to say such things about Mr. Tremont. He wouldn’t dare get angry at you. Every man will meet his match. Maybe he’s afraid of carrying germs after running around all day, so he’s taking a shower before he holds Aristotle? I’ve got to tell the kitchen staff to prepare the food. You shouldn’t be so annoyed with Mr. Tremont. He’s actually a lot better than he used to be.”

That was true. Mark was certainly a lot nicer now. Besides, Mary was right. After his shower, Mark took the baby from Arianne’s arms once he arrived downstairs. He even walked around the garden with the baby in his arms. These days, the weather would be hotter in the day time and cooling during the night. Once the temperature was right, the air seemed fresher.

Aristotle did not seem tired at all. He looked left and right while nestled in Mark’s arms. He couldn’t focus his line of sight into a huge distance yet, but he was curious about the world around him. His little face, which was growing smoother and rounder by the day, was simply lovable. Mark couldn’t help but plant a kiss on his tiny face. Unfortunately, he ended up stirring the hornet’s nest. Aristotle’s lips wobbled, then let out a loud wail. He flailed his tiny arms around too.

Mark immediately panicked. He had zero experience in pacifying babies. “What’s with you? Why are you crying? Can’t I kiss you?”

Arianne rushed over when she heard the commotion. “What happened?”

He handed Aristotle back to Arianne with a vexed look on his face. “Don’t know, he won’t even let me kiss him.”

Arianne glanced at the light beard stubble on his face, then smacked him on the chest. “Shave your damned beard properly! If that doesn’t work, get a new shaver. You must have prickled the baby. Otherwise, he’d be a good boy. He never cries after having his milk.”

Mark touched his chin suspiciously and realized that it did seem rather prickly. “Dinner first. We’ll talk about this later tonight. I’m exhausted.”

The exhaustion in his eyes was real enough. Arianne wasn’t really blaming him anyway. “You should hurry up and eat then. Get a good night’s rest once you’re done. Naya has sent the accounts for the dessert shop, so I’ll have to take a look at them. She couldn’t make it to Aristotle’s one month celebration because she was too busy! It’s such a shame... It’s been so long since I’ve last seen her.”

Chapter 856

Mark immediately caught her hint. He pulled a straight face and walked back into the house. “You’d better not think of working in that dessert shop of yours. Stay home and take care of the baby. It’s not like we need the money.”

Arianne ended up eating her words before she could say them. She scoffed and did not mention it further. He was right. The place was far and Aristotle was still very young. It was still better for him to stay with his parents. Her and Mark’s childhoods were not considered happy, so she was well aware of the effects of a traumatic childhood. Hence, she did not want history to repeat itself with her baby. This was also her biggest reason for coming back to him. She had a responsibility in bringing the child into this world. This wasn’t a game.

Aristotle did not seem sleepy after dinner, so Arianne had to carry the little guy around the house. Two packages had arrived during the day; one was a present for the baby from Naya, and the other was from Helen. Helen did not attend Aristotle's one month celebration, saying that she was on a business trip. Her gift had arrived late too. The business trip was merely an excuse. In reality, she didn't want Arianne to suffer from criticism.

"Would you like to see Granny?" Arianne teased Aristotle when she thought of Helen. "Let's go and pay Granny a visit over the next few days, okay?"

The sight of this made Mark very jealous. "Mary, take the baby to bed."

Mary understood and took Aristotle from Arianne's arms.

Arianne felt strangely nervous as she walked back to the bedroom with Mark. She definitely wasn't going to be able to escape this time. He was a healthy man, and there was nothing wrong with her body. Conjugal relations between husband and wife were expected.

Suddenly, Mark pulled her into his arms and eagerly slipped his hand into her clothes. Arianne's heart began to pound. "Isn't it… a little too early? Just look at the time…"

His breathing became increasingly heavy. "Who cares what time it is? Yesterday, it was too late; today, it's too early. You're really good at finding excuses…." He lowered his head and caught her red lips as he said this. He had longed for her kiss, day and night. It was just as sweet as he remembered. He had forgotten how long it had been since they last had sex. His heart was trembling with immense excitement.

As things began to heat up, the pair gradually forgot about everything else. They had just tumbled onto the bed when Arianne heard Aristotle's distinct cry from downstairs. Her rationale slowly returned. "The baby is crying. Mary can't pacify him. He needs me…"

Mark buried his head into her breasts and gently nibbled on them punishingly. "He's had his meal while I haven't. Can't you put him aside and think of me for a while? He's taken up enough of your time…"

Arianne felt shockwaves all over her body. That limp sensation made her arch her back upwards. Her cheeks were now flushed. Seeing this, Mark pulled off her clothes and sunk his hips into her. At that very moment, Arianne realized that he wasn't exactly reserved, and he wasn't really easy-going either.

Suddenly, he lifted his chin ever so slightly and stopped.

"What's wrong?" Arianne asked, blushing.

He lay down on top of her, feeling depressed. "A little… too excited."

She burst into giggles and gently pushed him off. She got up and put on her clothes. "Then, I'm going to check on the baby and look at the accounts from Naya while I'm at it. You're probably just tired. Get some rest."

Mark didn't answer. He pulled the covers and shielded his face. He was tired. He didn't have a chance to rest today. He'd even had to skip lunch. The senior executives during his afternoon meeting had seriously irritated him too. Most important of all, he was brooding over that piece of land…

Chapter 857

Meanwhile, Tiffany and Alejandro had just finished a meal at a Chinese restaurant. She had intended on going home straightaway, but unfortunately, Alejandro insisted on going shopping. She felt pity for someone like him, as she believed that he probably didn't have too many chances to walk around outside and enjoy the nightlife in the city like normal people. Hence, she agreed.

She pushed Alejandro through the bustling city with Jett tagging next to them. The trio did not have a lot to say, as if they had entered a quiet little world of their own.

After walking around for a while, Alejandro suddenly said, "May I ask a question? Has any man ever successfully carved himself into your memories? Someone you cannot forget?"

The first person who appeared in Tiffany's mind was Jackson, but he was soon covered by Ethan. Unfortunately, Ethan was the most unforgettable to her. He truly was etched in her memories. Every time she remembered him, she would tremble all over.

"Yes," she answered. "Now that I think of it, I wish I'd never met him. Meeting him was the greatest mistake of my life. He destroyed my life, turned my future to darkness, and rendered me incapable of falling in love completely."

"Do you really hate him that much?" Alejandro asked, seemingly mumbling to himself.

"That's right," she replied without hesitation. "My family wouldn't have lost everything if it weren't for him, nor would my father have died from the stress from it all, nor would I have ever experienced everything that happened to me next. I don't ever want to see him again. However, all things considered, the only humane thing he ever did was allow me to find someone who gave me hope in the darkness. Before my father's death, we were in urgent need of money for his surgery. I was in a terrible state when I suddenly received a donation. The man who saved me from my despair was Jackson West.

Now that I think of it, I believe that our fate was set in stone from that day. It's just unfortunate that Jackson and I couldn't end up together."

Alejandro did not follow along with her part in the conversation. Instead, he asked, "What if the man who's clouded your thoughts with despair repented? Would you forgive him?"

Tiffany smiled. "He will never feel remorse. That's just how he is, rotten to the core. Even if he does repent, I'll never, ever forgive him! Some sins are simply set in stone once committed. There's no way of turning back or changing one's opinion of him. He doesn't plague me with despair; I just don't want to see him ever again. The only person I feel sorry for is Jackson. He's the only one who's been filling my mind 'cause there's discontent."

Suddenly, Alejandro reached out and put his hand on the side of the wheelchair. "Enough. Jett will send you home."

"No need," Tiffany refused. "I can get a cab myself. You rarely have the chance to go out, so please continue walking around."

Alejandro didn't answer, so she walked to the side of the road on her own. She was pretty lucky, as an empty cab arrived straight away. She did not need to wait at all.

Jett continued pushing Alejandro along in Tiffany's place. "Sir, you seem upset."

"Can you tell what I'm thinking?" Alejandro replied with a straight face. "Not even I know what I'm thinking… Tell Lynn to use every means possible to break Tiffany away from Jackson permanently."

Jett was confused. “Sir, what is Tiffany Lane to you? Why won’t you let her go? She’s nothing special. You can have your pick of women who are far superior than her… Besides, even if you insist on having her, there’s no need to resort to… bending and scraping.”

“When did you receive the right to question me on my personal affairs?” Alejandro asked icily. “If you are not happy with serving me, you are more than welcome to go back and serve the old man.”

Chapter 858

Jett’s eyes flashed with anxiety. “I’m sorry! I shouldn’t have asked!”

White Water Bay Villa.

Jackson was sitting on the couch, fiddling with his phone. He scrolled towards Tiffany’s number then went back to his homepage, as if he wanted to call but was hesitant.

Suddenly, he received a call. His heart leaped in excitement until he realized that it wasn’t a call from Tiffany at all. It was from Lynn. His expression sank and he rejected the call.

Lynn quickly sent a message: ‘You must be deliberating over calling Tiffany, right? I’m sure you’re unaware that she has just said goodbye to Alejandro after having dinner with him.’

A wave of emotions engulfed Jackson’s heart when he saw those words. He did not want to reply to Lynn, so he called Tiffany straight away. Tiffany had just gotten down from the car. She was still slightly

upset over the things that she had spoken to Alejandro about, so her tone sounded weary. “What is it? Get to the point.”

Jackson was feeling jealous. His tone wasn’t any better. “How was dinner? If you have any intentions towards Alejandro, you should be frank about it. I certainly won’t stand in your way. In fact, I’ll fan the flames for your passionate affair!”

Tiffany’s first reaction was anger, but she soon calmed down. “Are you that open-minded? Why haven’t I seen that side of you? You’re like a kid when you’re jealous. Yes, I had dinner with Alejandro, but I did it to pay him back. If he ever buys dinner for me again, I will refuse. We can’t keep owing each other, or that debt will never be paid. I’m tired. I’m going home to sleep. You should get some rest too.”

“Go ahead, end the call if you dare!” Jackson snapped through gritted teeth.

“Yes, I’m ending the call. What are you going to do about it?” she asked. However, she did not actually do it. She walked into the house, and for the first time ever, Tanya wasn’t home. She went back to her room and flopped onto her bed. “What on earth do you want? I won’t hang up. Just tell me what’s on your mind.”

Her calm reaction was a stark contrast to Jackson’s blazing ire. He was afraid of getting a stroke if he continued the conversation, so he mumbled, “Nothing. Bye!” He ended the call right after.

Tiffany threw her phone aside. She did not plan on pacifying him. The fashion show was coming in the next few days. She wasn’t going to harbor any hopes in reaching the top ten, and she certainly did not plan on going to the venue to watch the show. Every time she thought of everything that had happened during the preliminary round, she would feel as if she shouldn’t harbor any hopes of receiving anything better. After all, Jackson had sacrificed himself for her results.

She still felt that he had been silly about it. Sacrificing herself would have been a trivial matter. She could shoulder the consequences on her own. However, he wasn't just sacrificing himself, but fifteen years' worth of his company's prospects.

Jackson depressively opened a bottle of whiskey. It took three cups before he finally soothed his anger. He never thought that he'd end up falling into the palm of Tiffany's hand, not even in his wildest dreams. If you play with fire, you'll eventually get burned — this was true enough. He was bound to face retribution someday, and she was his retribution.

Suddenly, he heard a knock on the door. He actually felt pleasantly surprised. He instinctively thought that it was Tiffany, here to see him. However, logically speaking, it shouldn't be that fast. It would take her a while to arrive, even if she did come. After all, her condominium was quite a distance away from his villa.

Chapter 859

He got up and went to open the door to find Tanya standing on his porch.

It seemed that it had been raining, as the ground was very wet. Tanya was soaked. He was surprised. "What is it?"

Tanya stared at him with an innocent and complicated look in her eyes. "Have I done something wrong?"

He remembered deleting her contact details. Perhaps she was here to ask him about that. He was at a loss for words. After all, this wasn't just one of his paramours, but his woman's friend. After standing on the spot for a while, he let her in the house. "I'll get you a towel. Wipe yourself down; don't catch a cold."

The weather wasn't exactly hot. It was pretty cool after the rain. Tanya shivered from the cold. She was wet, so she did not sit on the couch but chose to remain standing on the spot. She was a pitiful sight.

Jackson tossed her a towel. "You're referring to my deleting your contact details from my phone, aren't you? I just feel that it's inappropriate for us to communicate in secret like that. Isn't it taboo among you women for your man to contact your best friends? I just don't want to play with fire. You wouldn't have come here if it weren't for this, right? I don't mean anything else. Don't overthink it."

"Is Tiffany uncomfortable with us speaking to each other?" Tanya asked.

He sighed helplessly. "No, it was my idea. I don't have clean clothes for you to change into here. Would you like some whiskey to warm yourself up? I can drive you home. It's raining outside. You'll catch a cold in this weather."

Seeing the bottle of whiskey on the table, Tanya took the cup that he had used and poured herself a glass. Then, she downed it. He didn't even have time to stop her. "Uh… I'll… drive you home now?"

Tanya shook her head. "I don't feel like going home. Tiffany's always out, and I'm feeling scared and alone. She still wasn't home when I left the house… You're the only ones I know in this big city. I've always been very careful and tried to get along with everyone, but I've realized that I don't seem to fit in with you. Is it because I'm not from the same background as you?"

Jackson was having a headache. "She's already home; I just spoke to her on the phone. You can go home now. There's no need to be afraid. I've checked, and security in your condo is pretty tight, so don't be

scared. There are surveillance cameras everywhere. Not even a thief would have the nerve to do anything. Don't start overthinking. It's detrimental to your mental state."

Tanya sat down on a chair in front of the table. "I want to talk to you. I just want someone to talk to… Okay?"

Jackson was definitely not used to having someone who wasn't a close friend in his house, but he had no way of sending her out. He had no choice but to sit now. "Alright, I'm listening."

Tanya's eyes brimmed with tears. "I know that I've made a mistake. I shouldn't have shown Tiffany's sketch to Beckett. You ended up having to pay for the consequences. I've always felt very guilty about it, even though I didn't mean to do it. However, ever since that incident happened, it feels like Tiffany and I aren't as close as we used to be. Sometimes, I feel uncomfortable with her going out with Alejandro all the time. I want her to get back together with you, which is why I tried to advise her, but she doesn't like that. So, I stopped. I just want to maintain our friendship, but every time I see her moving closer to the point of no return, I feel so upset. You love her so much; how could she do this to you? I've never been in love, but I know that there's no such thing as pure friendship between men and women. Such frequent interactions definitely aren't pure. I've kept all of these feelings inside for a long time. I don't want to question her, but I'm afraid that she might end up falling into a trap and losing out on someone as wonderful as you."

Chapter 860

Jackson pursed his lips. "I've told you, that plagiarizing scandal doesn't matter. It's settled. You don't have to burden yourself over it. I know that you didn't do it on purpose. As for my relationship with Tiffie… You really don't have to concern yourself over that either. The outcome of it is between the two of us. You don't have to get into such a tangled mess. Let me give you a piece of advice — a good friend will always stand on their friend's side. You have to be on her side, no matter how nasty she's been. Your friendship will certainly crumble if you stand on my side. Do you feel better after letting it all out? I'll take you home then."

Tanya nodded, got up, and said, “But… I don’t want to be on the bad side. I’ve seen how good you are to her, so I know what’s right and what’s wrong. I can’t close my eyes to it. I do feel much better after talking to you. Thank you.”

Jackson smiled nonchalantly. “Let’s go then.”

Tanya carefully peered at Jackson’s side profile in the car. “You won’t fight with Tiffany over what I’ve told you, right? I just panicked, that’s why I came here… Hardly anyone talks to me usually, so I kept my emotions inside. Please don’t say anything to Tiffany, or I’d be in trouble.”

Jackson’s eyes were deathly calm. “I won’t. I know what to do. It makes sense; Eric has a girlfriend, and he was the closest to you. You can’t get any closer to him now, and it would be inconvenient for you to talk to him about this. I understand how you’re feeling. However, Tiffany isn’t petty. You can tell her how you’re feeling. You’re just as close as you used to be. As I’ve said, don’t overthink it.”

He did not intend on following Tanya upstairs after dropping her off at the condo. Instead, he gazed up at the light on Tiffany’s floor.

This rainy night was really depressing. It was so gloomy, as if the night sky were filled with gloomy clouds.

The next morning, the Tremont Estate.

Mark was startled from his sleep, thanks to the sound of two sneezes. He saw Arianne holding Aristotle, standing in front of the bed, both eyes staring right at him.

He could clearly make out the clear-colored snot, dripping down Aristotle's nose. He then pulled a piece of tissue paper out of the tissue box on his bedside table. "What's wrong? Caught a flu?"

Arianne's nose was clearly blocked. Her voice sounded muffled. "Mm… Aristotle and I have caught a cold. It rained last night, so the temperature suddenly dropped. Henry had to go out first thing in the morning today, so we waited for you to wake up and take us to the hospital. A lot of people have been catching the flu during this season. Both of us got infected. Don't let Mary catch it, or you can't escape either."

Mark chuckled weakly. He got up and washed up. He had just changed his clothes when Arianne forced a facial mask on him. "Put this on. It's safer."

He raised a brow. "I'm not the one with the flu here. Why should I put this on? Shouldn't you two be wearing this?"

Arianne blinked. "How can you expect our son to wear this? He's so small. I'm doing this for your own good. I don't want you to catch the flu too. After all, the car is an enclosed area and it's raining, so you can't open the windows. You'll have to endure it. You have to go to the office anyway, so just ask Brian to drop us off at the hospital entrance. You can go to work while Mary and I take care of everything else."