Ruling 881

Chapter 881

With that, Tiffany rose to her feet and started toward the door. And then she stopped, her feet falling into place.

“Do you know why I came here?” she said. “I didn’t come here because I thought Jackson was sticking his d**k into another woman’s coochie or whatever. I came here… because my best friend had not returned home despite the time, and I feared for her safety. I came here seeking help from Jackson. And in return for my kindness, you gave me this surprise... Heh.”

Tanya’s pupils quivered before she willed them to stay still. Everything she had done up to this point would not brook a sliver of sympathy and guilt. Never again would she put herself in a spot to be gibed and mocked by others; she, too, wanted to be as radiant as all the cool girls in the city — the it-girl worthy of attention!

Tiffany left, but Tanya chose to stay, busying herself with cleaning Jackson’s house till it was spotless. Then, when her chores were done, she laid down next to the slumbering man, exhausted.

It was true that Tanya was once infatuated with Eric, but she was really just in love with how comfortable his material life was. Jackson was different, though. He was the brightest star in her night sky, the one who had truly touched her heart.

Tiffany returned to her apartment, sleep utterly eluding her. Just remembering what Tanya had done deprived her of any strength and made her nauseous.

She wasted no time removing her things from the apartment before sending Eric a resignation letter. The only reason why she did not kick Tanya out of the house was that she knew Jackson too well — he would not start any form of relationship just because sex had taken place. And so, if she were to be kicked out of the only home she had left, Tanya would have nowhere else to go.

It would be the last shred of kindness Tiffany allowed her. No more.

Jackson woke up the next morning with a head-splitting headache. Memories about last night gradually returned to him until it stopped at the moment the alcohol compromised his sobriety. What happened after he lost his grip? Jackson had no clue.

He had thought he would wake up alone, yet one side of him was unnaturally heavy when he tried to hoist himself up. He turned to face it… and froze.

Why was Tanya lying next to him on his bed? Why were there clothes scattering about on his bedroom floor? All he remembered was her coming over and asking if he would like to drink with her. He had not told her to go home because he was at his glummest.

Just when Jackson was at a loss of how to respond, the woman slowly roused. “Mm, you’re awake…?”

Jackson’s expression darkened. He left his bed and took a quick shower. When he presented himself once more before Tanya, he was already all suited up. “What the hell just happened here, Tanya? I need explanations! Did you just… spend a night at my house? On m-my bed? — How!”

Tanya wrapped herself tightly with the sheet, wearing the look of someone being wronged. “You… You drank too much last night and then… I-I-I couldn’t s-stop you… Don’t you remember? If you don’t, I could… I could pretend that nothing happened.”

Drank too much? Could not stop him? Did that not mean that Jackson forced himself on her?

Jackson’s hand went to his forehead as he tried to massage away the assaulting headache. “Of f**king course, I’m gonna pretend that nothing happened! You’re Tiffany’s goddamned friend! This sh*t shouldn’t have happened!” he cried, his voice slightly shaky. “Okay, okay. Let’s not give a sh*t about whatever the f**k happened last night for now and just… get out of my bed. Right now, please!”

Tanya’s eyes were red when she moved out from beneath the sheet. When she pulled it away, however, a big splat of dried scarlet, on the bed and sheet, scarred Jackson’s line of sight.

The color was so bright, blinding him—he was far from an upright boy boasting zero experience with women, so naturally, he knew what that red meant. And it was precisely that knowledge that weighed on his chest. He wished he could punch himself in the face. “C-Clean yourself up and head downstairs, now. We’ll talk there.”

The two of them took their seats opposite one another in the living room. Jackson’s eyes were quick to catch a trail of blood on the floor. “What the heck is that now?”

There were some on the couch, too. The shape the blood took did not seem to be a product of that nightmare of a night, but rather, from a cut.

“It’s all my fault,” Tanya began quietly, biting on her lips with her head low. “I shouldn’t have come looking for you. My phone went dead last night, and I didn’t go home nor tell Tiffany about this. She became worried about my safety and thought of looking for help from you, and… Well, that was, um, how she learned about all of this. I… I don’t blame her for hitting me, Jackson. Anyone would have been consumed by visceral shock and anger and lost themselves to the rage. I get it.”

As she recounted her story, Tanya flicked her wrist in affected absent-mindedness and displayed a wound on the back of her hand.

She had inflicted it onto herself with the same ashtray after Tiffany left.

Chapter 882

Jackson expelled a breath from his lungs while his expression changed. “What… What did you just say? Tiffany knows about this? She came over here last night?”

Tanya was a little taken aback by his reaction. The wound on the back of her hand was glaring—gory, even—yet all he cared about was Tiffany...?

Emotions roared within her chest. Before she could answer anything, however, Jackson sprung toward his car keys and the door, shouting on his way out, “Leave my house before I come back!”

A few days of frequent drizzles ended with the last retreating patch of the tenebrous clouds above the Capital. The sun had broken out from the east of a sky cleared by its radiant splendor. Showered by its golden light, the city gradually woke as its bustling grew.

However, none of these could shake Jackson out of his trance. All he thought about was Tiffany, as he thought about how they were never getting back together now, not after the disaster that was last night!

He drilled his finger into the doorbell of her apartment like a man possessed; however, no one answered him.

His heart sank in desperation. It was not working, and neither could he call Tiffany, for the woman had switched off her phone.

About half an hour passed before the neighbor opened her door and came out with an explanation. “Looking for the girls living next door, arencha’? One of them moved out last night. Heard some sounds coming from next door, I did. Looked into the spy-hole and saw one of them just dragging a bunch of stuff out of her place in the middle of the night! She was a pretty one, I’ll give you that. Long-haired and fair-skinned and all that typical beauty type.”

She moved out? Then where else could she go?

Jackson’s thanks to the helpful neighbor was a mechanical one. Like a man who had lost his spirit, he descended the stairs with his mind blank and returned to his car, staring ahead silently for a few beats before dialing Lilian’s number.

The call connected soon enough. Lilian’s blithesome voice—indicating ignorance—came through, “Hello, Jackson? That you? What’s the matter?”

The words took strength to come out. “Did Tiffie come home?”

“Oh, she did! Last night, to be exact,” Lilian replied. “Oh my, when she came home, it was about four in the morning! I have no idea what’s going through that skull of hers. But in any case, she’s sleeping right now. Would you like for me to wake her up or something?”

“N-No!” Jackson sounded a little too skittish. “I mean, that won’t be necessary. I just wanted to know if she’s alright. Since she is, I gotta jet now. Bye!”

Jackson hit his head onto the steering wheel, his mien ashen and grim. He was sure that Tiffany was never going to get back together with him after this. It did not matter what the truth about last night was. The whole point was that he had touched a woman he shouldn’t have. He had committed the travesty Tiffany loathed the most.

Perhaps he was avoiding Tanya’s face, but either way, Jackson had no mood to appear in his office nor his home. To bid his time, he steered his car to the perimeter of the city and drove mindlessly for a bit before going home.

To his surprise, Tanya still hadn’t left. He found her cleaning the bloodstain on the couch, and when she noticed him, her eyes darted sideways as though they were deers evading a hunter. “Sorry for still, um, being around. I just thought of cleaning them up for you. I took the bedsheet out and cleaned it, too. I’ll be off very soon!”

Jackson said nothing. He did not even look at her. He ascended the stairs and went straight to his bedroom before closing his door and locking it.

Call him a disgusting pervert. Call him a cretin. No matter the labels, Jackson made no attempt to hide the fact that he did not harbor even a lick of sympathy and guilt for Tanya, the woman whom he had allegedly assaulted. His instincts had nagged him on the uncanniness in Tanya's demeanor, telling him that she might have some crafty schemes hidden up her sleeves. She knew he was at one of his lowest moments, yet she still decided to visit him right at home, even staying around to accompany him as she drank.

She was not wary of him, yes, but Jackson felt that it was more likely that Tanya was just seizing the chance when it presented itself. In this vein, she was no different from those women who used people as a means; if he must make a distinction, then Jackson would say that Tanya was worse because she abused the trust of everyone around her.

Chapter 883

Tanya took Jackson's action as him being too embroiled in a precarious mental conflict to bother with her at the moment. In this state, staying in his place would bear her no development, so she left his house and went back to the apartment.

She requested a half-day leave with Eric on her way home and returned to find Tiffany's possessions gone. The few things that remained were pieces of furniture too large and heavy to be lugged around, such as the double-door fridge Summer had gifted her.

Tanya felt nothing, not even a ripple. She would have moved out herself had Tiffany not done it. There was no way the two of them could continue to live under the same roof after all that had transpired. Honestly, she felt happy that the woman was the one who left, for now Tanya did not have to spare some effort finding a new abode.

She had not gotten enough sleep last night. Today, she was going to remedy that. She was going to slumber with the fulfilling knowledge that she had successfully done the first step of what was previously thought to be an unachievable dream.

Back in Eric's company, the man himself was staring at Tiffany's out-of-the-blue resignation letter sent to him in the wee hours, baffled and somewhat unnerved. What could have provoked the woman into composing a resignation letter in the middle of the night? He could not ask Tiffany herself, as the woman's phone appeared to be switched off, and neither could he turn to Tanya because her request for a half-day leave made him think she must be busy.

In the end, Eric texted the last person left who might know something: 'Tiffany quit her job. I dunno why.'

Arianne did not sleep well last night either, but her reason was Mark and his insatiable appetite. She perked up from her pillow blearily when she heard a muffled notification sound from her phone and eyed the message.

It shocked her. Tiffany would never quit Eric's company just because her creation made it into the top-ten shortlist. So, what happened?

'I have no idea either,' went Arianne's reply.

Just then, Mary, along with Smore, came into the room, as per usual, so that the baby could have some milk. Being reminded of her duty, Arianne ruffled her hair apologetically and said, "Oh, I'm so sorry, Smore. Mommy woke up late again."

Mary handed the baby to her. "You used to rise very early, Ari. And now your eyes are so… puffy. Did you fight with Mr. Tremont last night? Master Aristotle woke up a bit too early this morning, and hoo boy, it was a challenge trying to appease him several times! But you were sleeping so soundly just now that I couldn't bring myself to wake you."

Arianne flashed the woman an awkward smile without dispelling the latter's assumption. She remembered Mark's bold promise to "make her scream", or he would disown his family name. By now, Arianne had to concede that he won. She had underestimated him because he was past his twenties, thinking that the age would do a number on his vitality. But now, Arianne knew from actual experiences that he was still bursting with vim, and he was capable of driving her so crazy and exhausted that her recovery sleep lasted till the afternoon of the next day.

All that, while he himself had no problem waking up at the standard time to take up business as usual. It was the same story for the last two days, too. Indeed, Mark even had the energy to work overtime on the weekends.

Arianne spammed Tiffany with calls after breastfeeding her son, yet all of her attempts went to the voice mailbox. Left with no choice, she called Tanya on the basis that she was Tiffany's housemate.

The call connected. Listening to Tanya's muffled voice, Arianne suspected her to be sleeping. "Mmm… He-hello?"

"Do you know where Tiffie is?" Arianne asked. "Or do you know why she quit? I couldn't get to her through the phone. Is she home?"

Her question dissolved every ounce of sleep left in Tanya as irritation took over the vacuum. Why was it that all the world cared about was Tiffany this and Tiffany that? Arianne had forcefully ejected Tanya from her sweet dream, yet the former did not even think of giving her an apology.

Tanya's tone took a sharp turn to tartness. "She moved out of the apartment, and I guess she returned to her mom's. And before you ask, no — she did not tell me about it."

The more Arianne learned about the chain of events, the more confident she was that something really rotten was in the state of Denmark. “Why did she move out all of a sudden? What happened?”

Silence answered Arianne’s concern for a few seconds before Tanya spoke. “Well, why don’t you ask her yourself? It’s not something that should come from me. I still have work to go to in the evening, you know, so… Later.”

The call ended abruptly, lending Arianne the impression that the mystery somehow involved Tanya. Quickly, she brought her son with her and went to Lilian’s.

When the woman opened the door to find Arianne, she murmured to herself, “For Christ’s sake! First Jackson so early in the morning with his call, and now you’re visiting us with your son in tow. What the heck?”

Chapter 884

Arianne’s sense of foreboding increased. Whatever happened also involved Jackson as well now?

She bypassed Lilian’s interrogation with some excuses and flitted straight into Tiffany’s room.

The woman in question was not sleeping at all. Instead, she was lying motionless on her bed, silent and still as a cadaver. Her eyes were puffy and unnaturally jutted out, suggesting that she had just recently bawled. Still, few could match in visual impact as the dried, untreated bloody cut on her forehead.

Arianne took in a deep breath before taking her seat next to the bed. “What’s the matter, Tiffie? What happened to your forehead?” she cooed. “Talk to me, Tiffie. You’re scaring me.”

Tiffany sniffled. Afraid that Arianne might go after Tanya, she fibbed. “It’s… I-It’s nothing. I a-accidentally fell and cut myself, that’s all. B-B-Because I saw Tanya… Tanya had sex with J-Jackson…! Jesus, Ari, it’s so disgusting, it’s horrible, it’s breaking my heart, it’s filthy and wretched and—It happened last night. Do you know, Ari? When Tanya didn’t come home late at night and none of my calls got through her phone, I thought something terrible had happened to her. So what did I do? I ran to Jackson for help, Ari. I ran to him to help me look for her. And then… And then I saw the aftermath. I saw it with my own eyes, and I’ve never felt so nauseated in my life.”

The news was a bolt of lightning that pierced through Arianne’s chest. For a long time, she could only stare ahead in shock.

When she finally collected herself, Arianne questioned, “B-But how could it come to this? Jackson can’t be that sort of person. I don’t think he is! He could have sex with any woman in this stinking world, but none of them would be Tanya. Something… Some kinda misunderstanding must have happened. It must be! You planned to tell him how you feel, didn’t you? That you want to be with him? How did it come to this? Did you tell him what you wanted to say to him in the end?”

“No. No, no. What else is there left to say, Ari?” Tiffany breathed, shaking her head. “My eyes didn’t deceive me. He was so drunk that he slept like a dead pig after… after that thing. Tanya was there, cleaning up the place for him. I’m not some stupid, unworldly little girl. I know what I saw. For f**k’s sake, Tanya’s f**king bra was on the floor, right in front of his bed!”

Arianne had no idea what to say or do to comfort her. The facts and details escaped her, so she could not say, conclusively, that Tanya indeed took advantage of Jackson and Tiffany’s vulnerability. Still, what she knew so far was enough evidence that this fiasco was nothing but foul.

As though upset that the air had gotten too heavy and grim, Tiffany cracked a mirthless grin and reached out to caress Smore's smooth cheek. "It's nice that you brought along your son to see me, but why are your eyes so puffy, too? Have you gotten into a row with Mark? That annoying jerk still barring you from work?"

Arianne shook her head quietly. Next to Tiffany, whatever conflict she had with Mark was straight out of a kiddy pool.

A long silence hung over the room before Arianne asked, "What do you plan to do now?"

Tiffany drew in a deep breath. She looked frail and utterly devoid of vim. "I'll cross the bridge when I see one, I guess. I'm not some rookie in the fashion designing scene anymore. I've got quite the achievements to show. I can go anywhere in this world and still expect something reasonably well-off. And that is good, because I've had it with all these sh*ts drowning me. I wanna escape from all of it — from Tanya, from Jackson, everything. I wanna burn all of my past into dust and smoke and then rise from the ashes and start anew. I'm fine, Ari. My biggest problem is that I keep befriending trash masquerading as people. Tanya… She deliberated everything. I talked to her last night. Why else do you think I was so disgusted?"

The revelation wounded Arianne profoundly. Tanya used to be such a sweet, innocent girl — when did she warp into this? All that time they had spent together, side-by-side, since the days of their café made Arianne believe that Tanya was one of her best friends. However, it seemed that the bleak adage rang true: 'betrayal is the only truth that sticks.'

Arianne only started her way back into the Tremont Estate when it was almost close to Mark's time to go home from work. After she walked in, however, she realized that her husband was already home.

Mark considered Arianne's features, taking in how her usual brio had left them, and took the baby from her arm. "What's the matter? Wherever did you bring our kid?"

In response, she dragged him to their bedroom upstairs elusively before recounting everything that had transpired between Jackson and Tanya.

"…So, what's your verdict, Mark?" she finished.

Chapter 885

Elusive sentiments flickered in Mark's visage. "Uh, hem, well… You must always remember, Ari. Never paint all men with a single stroke, and everything always has an outlier, and not every man acts like this—"

The corner of Arianne's lips twitched. "That was totally not what I was asking at all! And also, damn, did you just throw your best bro under the bus like that? For shame, Mark. Anyway, I asked you if there was anything, you know, that is more than what meets the eyes in this whole deal. Could there be some kind of misunderstanding? Is it possible for Tiffie and Jackson to get back together after this ordeal?"

"Oh? Oh." Mark sighed out of relief under his breath. "Er, that depends on the circumstances. From what I know, most men won't be able to perform at all when overly drunk. From your telling, Tiffany mentioned that Jackson was so heavily imbibed that he basically passed out, yes? Then how could the allegation have happened? I highly doubt it. If sex did happen, it must be when Jackson still had some lick of senses left in him. But if he were, in any sense, even minutely sober, then he would definitely stop himself from doing it with Tanya. …Look, none of us were there, nor are we the actors themselves. The only way to really know is from the horse's mouth, and that would be Jackson. I can help ask on your behalf, if you'd like."

Arianne sneered. "Help ask on my behalf? News flash, Mark: your no-homo best-bro just experienced a terrible situation. You should be asking him as his best friend! Jackson exhausted so much of his energy

courting Tiffany, trying to make her like him again, then all of a sudden, this happened and jeopardized all that he has done. I'm inclined to believe that he did not mean any of this," she remarked. "You gotta ask him, Mark, but don't tell him it was from me. Just chat like the two of you usually do while I listen from here. Go on. Put it on speaker. I won't make a sound."

Mark was not too eager. "Are you sure you want to listen? When men talk among themselves… Er, when it's just us, we tend to use rather colorful word choices. I think maybe you should not listen. I can always tell you what he said after this, right?"

"Nope, I'm staying here and listening! I want to hear the truth, the bona fide, and the genuine. I don't want a secondhand account from you!" she insisted.

Losing the battle, Mark called Jackson in front of her and let the other side's voice come through the loudspeaker. The call connected very soon, and Jackson's palpably weary voice asked, "Hey, Mark. What?"

Mark went straight to the point. "What's with you? How did you end up sticking Little Jackson into Tanya?"

There was a marked pause before Jackson cried out, "Excuse you! What 'sticking Lil' Jackson into Tanya', huh? You think I wanted to wake up to this sh*tstorm?! I basically woke up to some weirda** stranger sleeping right next to me, who then told me that something happened between us last night, and brah, do you know just how f**king confused I was, hearing it? I'm telling you, man. I don't have the foggiest clue of anything she claimed to have happened. Even if… Even if it did happen — bruh, you're the one coming straight to my den. You basically asked for this sh*t to happen!

"Christ, I knew there was something seriously, completely, insanely bizarre about her. She came to see me quite a few times without Tiffany's knowledge already! Multiple times! At night! Honestly, no one's

fooling anyone. I just hadn't gotten no heart to kick her out of my property because she's a friend of, well, her," Jackson continued to repine. "Then, count my dumba** luck, I was at my lowest point last night when she volunteered to drink with me. I was like, hell yea, sure, drinking is fine. What could go wrong? Well, Jackie boy, it went wrong! I swear, I cannot believe that I would have done something like this on my own accord. But I'm not God. I don't have some f**king omniscience to know how the whole thing unfolded. Only Tanya-bloody Anderson knows exactly what happened!"

Mark went for the critical question. "Are you confident that the two of you had sex?"

"I… I don't know! I don't believe it happened, yet… there's blood on my bed! It was her first—f**king—time!" Jackson fumed, his words enunciated through clenched jaws. "I just… I don't know what to believe or think. For Christ's sake, I'm so cowardly I can't even bring myself to see Tiffany. I… I wonder if I should just let this hang like that…"

It was then that Smore suddenly purred. It was loud enough that Jackson immediately shut his mouth for two seconds or so. When he spoke again, it was a question: "Please tell me Arianne isn't standing right next to you. Is she? What was that?"

Mark shot a sidelong glance at Arianne with a helpless expression. "Er, she isn't. My son just so happens to be in my arms right now."

Chapter 886

Jackson let out a sigh. "Alright. I'll handle this myself. If there's nothing else, I've got to go."

Arianne frowned after the phone call. "Tiffie would have gotten back together with Jackson if this hadn't happened in the first place. Her life is far too complicated. Why won't God give her any peace?"

Mark patted her shoulder. “If I were Tiffany, I’d never give Tanya the satisfaction. I’d get together with Jackson anyway. That’ll show her, let her see that her efforts were in vain, absolutely worthless.”

Arianne agreed, but knowing Tiffany’s temper, she’d never be able to do it. This scandal was another traumatic experience. She handed Aristotle over to Mark. “Hold him. I’m calling Tiffie.”

Mark stared at the little thing in his arms and mischievously murmured, “See that? Your mommy doesn’t want you anymore. She’s thrown you to me. Come and shower with daddy, okay?”

Arianne, who hadn’t gone very far, turned around and slapped him on the back. “Who teases a baby like that? Just wait. Wait for me to finish my call, then you can have your shower.”

Arianne’s objective in calling Tiffany was to pass Jackson’s attitude in the matter to her and highlight that Jackson had no initiative in the matter. She wanted to see Tiffany and Jackson take that final step together in the end and not part ways, just like that.

However, after hearing Arianne’s message, Tiffany laughed bitterly and said, “It doesn’t matter what it is. Can I really act as if nothing had happened? If I continue being with him, I’d remember whatever he’s done with Tanya from time to time. It’s uncomfortable. It’s like a thorn between us. I can’t pull it out, and it will always prick us. You may think that I don’t have the right to nitpick over these things since I’ve experienced far greater filth than his mistakes, but that was before I started dating him. It’s different… I’ve never touched any man after our break up, and now that this has happened, right in front of me… It’s too prominent. I can’t overlook it…”

Arianne choked with sobs. “No, that’s not it… Tiffie, you’re not filthy at all. Don’t think of it that way. I just don’t want to see you go through this; it’s so unfair. Things between Jackson and Tanya certainly won’t develop. Won’t she be happy if you end things with Jackson, just like that? She can’t have him, so

she wants you to refuse him too. Isn't that exactly what she wants? Tiffie, you know she's doing this on purpose. Think it over, carefully."

Tiffany fell silent, then finally said, "I'll think about it. Don't worry about me, I'm fine."

Arianne still felt the remnants of her grievances at the end of the call. She had to see Tanya and ask if anything had really happened, and why she did such a thing! She had always thought that Tiffany had been treating Tanya well enough. She pitied Tanya, so she had wanted to help her. She never thought that this would happen.

She immediately put her notion into action. When Mark heard the sound of a car leaving the Tremont Estate, he held Aristotle in shock. "See that? Your mommy's run away, abandoning you with me again. I'm guessing that she's going to start something again..."

When they arrived downstairs at Tanya's rented condo, Henry, who had driven Arianne over, received a message from Mark. He followed Arianne upstairs. She knocked on the door. When Tanya saw Arianne with Henry in tow as well, her eyes flashed with a hint of fear. "Why are you here?"

Arianne walked in and sat on the couch. "Have a seat. Let's talk."

Chapter 887

Tanya twisted the corners of her shirt anxiously. "I don't know what Tiffany's told you. You're closer, so of course, you'd trust her more. I don't feel like explaining either. It's already happened anyway. What are you going to do about it?"

“Are you implying that you’re hiding something?” Arianne asked. “Tell me then. Don’t worry, I won’t be unfair to you because of Tiffie. I just want to know if you did it on purpose. I know that Jackson certainly didn’t do it on purpose. Besides… Did it really happen? He was extremely drunk. It’s very suspicious…”

Tanya bit her lip and replied, “Yes, it did! It doesn’t matter if I did it on purpose or not. It happened. Jackson and I had too much to drink, so it happened. Is that really all that strange to you? No one can say who did it on purpose under these circumstances. No one can wash themselves clean of it…”

“You knew that things between Tiffie and Jackson were never truly over; they were still involved. You’re her friend, so why did you approach her boyfriend?” Arianne asked, holding her temper. “And at night, when no one was around too. You were planning this all along, weren’t you? Jackson’s social conduct was perfectly fine. You’re Tiffie’s friend, so he couldn’t very well send you away. That’s the only reason why you had the chance to do it in the first place! You’re such a disappointment!”

“Really?” Tanya smirked. “Have I disappointed you? So you hoped that I would stay by your sides like a prop, being a yes-man to you all the time? But I’m sorry, I’m not interested in following your orders anymore. Let me emphasize this — they were still involved, but they were also still exes. I’m single, and so is Jackson. I don’t see anything shameful in what I’ve done. Tiffany was overly self-righteous. She’s the one who refused Jackson West!”

Arianne was beginning to wonder if Tiffany had fallen and hit herself in the head instead. She was close to beating her up now. Knowing Tiffany, how could she have possibly endured this at the time? “Did you hit Tiffie on the head? Did you fight?”

Tanya waved her own bandaged hand around. “She probably never mentioned hitting me either, right? You want to avenge her? Go right ahead.”

Arianne stared at the wound on the back of her hand, which still had traces of blood, and was silenced. She would have nothing to say if it was caused by a scuffle. Tiffany had claimed to have fallen on her head at the time, but Tanya had admitted that they had fought each other. It would seem that Tiffany was hiding this on purpose, probably afraid that Arianne would make Tanya pay for this.

Arianne has never lost in a confrontation. After a while, she got up and said, “Jackson has said it himself, he’s not going to be responsible for you. Your efforts were in vain. You should have set your sights on Eric instead, for he might have had some sense of responsibility. However, you don’t understand Jackson at all. He’s always been like this, even before he met Tiffie. Regardless of whether you did it on purpose or not, you’ve miscalculated. I’m not going to touch you, on account of the fact that we were once friends. Take care of yourself.”

Tanya’s face turned ashen. Her lips trembled. She couldn’t say another word.

After leaving the condo and getting into the car, Arianne remained completely silent. She was holding out on hope that nothing had happened between Jackson and Tanya. Now, it seemed that Tanya had bit the bullet. Perhaps they really had sex, but she stubbornly wanted to change that fact.

She arrived back at the Tremont Estate. Coincidentally, Mark was carrying Aristotle, whom he had been showering with, downstairs. Both were dressed in pajamas and were slightly damp and fragrant from their bath.

Arianne felt more relaxed at the sight of them. “Why did you shower with Aristotle? He showers during the day. In fact, he has already had his bath.”

Mark eyed her strangely. “You abandoned him and left, and he insisted that I carry him around. What choice did I have? It’s not like it’d hurt to give him another bath. Hurry up and eat your dinner. I can tell that it was a wasted effort from the look on your face. Some things shouldn’t be forced. Let the cards fall

on their own. That's just how life works. You're either pleasantly surprised or terribly shocked. We'll just have to get used to it."

Chapter 888

Arianne couldn't seem to see it as clearly as Mark, probably because of her youth. "I can't get used to it. This was a huge blow to Tiffie. It gets even more frustrating every time I think of it. I've lost my appetite for dinner. You eat. Give me the baby."

Mark turned to the side, evading her reach towards the baby. "Eat your dinner. What if you deprive little Smore of his milk? You're not alone now, as you have a little one to care for. You have to eat. Have a bowl of soup that Mary made in the kitchen. Hurry up."

She really wasn't in the mood to eat, but she couldn't bear with Mark's nagging, so she forced a bowl of soup down her throat. That was the end of it.

At night, the pair slept together during bedtime. Mark reached out to hug her as usual. She instinctively thought that he was trying to initiate conjugal relations and mumbled, "Not tonight, I'm exhausted…"

He laughed. "What are you thinking? Do you think that I'm made of iron, as if I'm not exhausted too? I just want to hold you. Go to sleep, stop overthinking. I understand how important Tiffany is to you, but this is a path in her life that she has to experience. Let her do it on her own. As her friend, you can only talk to her and console her. Alright. Sleep."

…

The next day, Tanya went to the office and personally handed Eric her resignation.

Surprisingly, Eric did not ask for her reasons. He simply approved it.

Tanya opened her mouth but said nothing in the end. She wanted to ask him why he wasn't concerned about her resignation but then suddenly remembered that Eric had only been nice to her simply because Arianne and Tiffany had entrusted him with that task. Eric was probably aware of what had happened and was very disappointed in her too.

In reality, a large portion of her achievements were attributed to Tiffany and Arianne, even if she refused to admit it. She would still be doing hard labor to get by in that small city if she hadn't met them. Prior to this, she never dreamed that she would be able to sit in a cushy office and enjoy the air-conditioning like other white-collared professionals.

Just as she turned around and walked out the office, Eric suddenly spoke up. "Tanya, I once made a promise to your grandfather, so I'll give you a piece of advice—a wicked person is sure to bring destruction upon himself. Jackson isn't the kind of man who'd fall for such tactics. You've made a grave mistake. I'm very disappointed in you."

Tanya paused in her footsteps. Her eyes brimmed with tears. When Arianne conveyed her disappointment in her, she felt nothing but anger. However, when Eric said it, it cut her like a knife. She had put everything she had on the line in taking this step, including Eric's kindness.

"You… Every one of you, you're pointing your fingers at me," she said in a trembling voice. "What if I'm the victim here? What if it was just a drunken accident? I always end up shouldering the blame, as long as it happened. It doesn't really matter why or how it happened anyway, right? Since you're all in the same damned circle, I have to be the sacrifice, right? I'm the only one to blame?"

Chapter 889

Eric stared back at her with an emotionless look on his face. “If you were a victim, or if it was truly an accident, Jackson will provide you with justification. But the truth is, you’re not. You’re not a child anymore. You know what it means for a girl to go to a man’s house at night alone to drink with him. And the man is your friend’s ex, an ex whom she’s still pining over. How innocent could your intentions possibly be in doing something as inappropriate as that? I’ve known Jackson for many years. Do you really think that I wouldn’t understand him? He’d never mistake a face, even when he’s dead drunk. He would never force himself on you. He would never have that notion at all!”

Tanya turned around and smiled at him. “Heh… You’re right. You’re absolutely right. I did it on purpose. Thank you for once taking care of me. Goodbye.”

Eric pursed his lips and did not say anything more. He felt a weight on his heart as he watched her leave. Was this the very same pure-hearted girl who was like a blank piece of paper, who had called him “Ricky” all day long? Life was like a large vat of colors. Someone was bound to forget their roots and turn into something completely unrecognizable.

More than a month after that scandal, everything was deathly still. No one mentioned the affair between Jackson and Tanya again. Tiffany and Tanya left Eric’s company respectively. Tiffany remained brooding at home. Many companies had sent her offers, but she put them all aside and did not accept them immediately. Of course, Alejandro naturally extended an olive branch too. His company’s industry was not in line with her career, so she dodged the subject. Most important of all, she hadn’t considered her next move just yet.

Alejandro had grown even more affectionate after Tiffany and Jackson’s relationship entered complete destruction. It was as if he knew exactly what had happened. Tiffany had a small inkling of this, but she did not expose him for it. She had always felt as if Alejandro had been watching her closely. He would have found out about it if he wanted to.

After realizing that Tiffany had quit her job and moved out of the condo, Summer began to redirect her food supply towards Lillian’s house instead. She was determined to feed her, no matter what. Tiffany silently accepted it, and no one noticed anything amiss. Despite Tiffany cutting ties with Jackson, her

mother, Lillian was still very close to Summer. They would frequently go out shopping together and play mahjong.

“Tiffie, would you like to work at our company?” Summer carefully asked, having observed that Tiffany had been staying home, jobless. “You don’t have to go to the main office. You could always go to one of our subsidiaries. I’ll arrange a position as supervisor of the fashion department for you. That way, you’d be able to relax. The pay is pretty good too.”

Tiffany’s first reaction was to reject the offer. She didn’t want to have anything to do with Jackson anymore, not even in a subsidiary branch. Who’s to say if she wouldn’t run into him?

“Sure, that’s not bad,” Lillian interjected before she could give her response. “Go along with it, Tiffie. Work at the subsidiary branch, okay? You’re going to work anyway, no matter where you go. Isn’t it better to work for people you know? It’ll be easier for you if you work for the family company.”

Tiffany gulped when she saw the looks in Lillian and Summer’s eyes, full of anticipation. “I-I… I’d like to take a break. I don’t want to go back to work just yet.”

Lillian curled her lips. “You’ve been on a break for more than a month. You lock yourself in the house all day. You’d be suffering from clinical depression if Arianne hadn’t been calling you every day. Don’t you youngsters have any energy at all? Try to see things from a new perspective, okay?”

Chapter 890

Tiffany couldn’t bring herself to reject the offer straight away, but she really didn’t want to go. Summer saw right through her troubles and said, “Did you have another fight with Jackson again? This was my idea. It has nothing to do with him. My kindness towards you has nothing to do with him either. You don’t have to feel pressured. How about this, give the subsidiary branch a try? You can always resign if you’re not happy with it. It’s fine.”

Tiffany felt tears in her eyes as she saw the sincerity in Summer's gaze. At this point, rejecting her offer would be too cruel. She paused and said, "N-nothing's happened between us. It's just that I feel it's too much trouble for you. Since that's the case, where's the furthest branch? I'd like to move to the furthest office."

Summer frowned. "The furthest office? If you'd like a place in this city, it'll have to be the branch in the Southern Lake District over at South Park. It would be a six hour journey, to and fro, and without traffic too. It'd take even longer with traffic. You might as well not stay here but rent a place there. I think we have a few places to stay there. Let me arrange a place for you to stay, okay? That would be a good idea too, but it's just that… Will you be alright over there, all on your own?"

Tiffany heaved a sigh of relief when Summer described the long travel time. The further, the better. "It's fine, I can take care of myself. You don't have to go through the trouble of finding a new place to stay for me. I can handle that on my own. It's bad enough that you'd have to go through the trouble of giving me a job. How could I possibly burden you with looking for a place for me to stay? I'd really feel bad if you do that and I'd rather avoid taking the position."

Summer smiled. "Oh, you. You're always so earnest with me. Alright then, you can handle your accommodations on your own. I'll send word to our branch office in advance and settle everything for you. All you need to do is report for duty. Wait for my call; I'll send you the address. You should look for accommodations nearby too, as both ends will have to be settled at the same time. What if you go over there and you have no place to stay? I've got to get going. Don't forget to eat the fruits I've brought. Fruits are good for the complexion!"

Tiffany nodded, got up, and sent Summer to the door. She pulled out Jackson's car keys. "Mrs. West, could you give this back to Jackson for me? The car is in the parking lot downstairs. Please have someone drive it away, as I won't be using it anymore…"

Summer stared at her in silence, thinking. After a few seconds, she took the car keys. “Okay, I’m going home. No need to send me off.”

Once they had shut the door, Lillian pranced around gleefully. “Supervisor! Your salary is definitely going to be higher than everyone else’s. I guess you could say that you’ve made it. Other big companies will certainly want you now, even if you refuse to work with the Wests. You snagged the top ten position out of so many contestants’ hands in a competition that’s only held once every three years. This is wonderful. I’ve raised such an amazing daughter. Make sure to do your best while you’re there, and don’t humiliate me. By the way, you can take my car. You’re a supervisor now. How could you not have a car?”

Tiffany, on the other hand, wasn’t as excited as Lillian. “I didn’t want to go in the first place, but you and Mrs. West were both singing the same tune, so I had no choice but to agree. Who knows? I might leave in less than a few days. Don’t celebrate too early. I’m going to bed. You should get a good night’s rest too.”

Lillian was about to nag her again when she saw her gloomy state. She instead chose to keep quiet.