Ruling 921

Chapter 921

As they drew closer and closer together, Arianne completely surrendered. Her son would grow up someday, and the family of three wouldn't be able to share a bed for too long. She didn't want to lose this chance to stay close to Aristotle so soon. If she refused, Mark would really take him back to the baby's room.

The next morning.

Arianne was woken by Mark and Aristotle. One was reminding her that it was time to leave, and the other stared hungrily at her, asking for milk.

She was still very drowsy when she fed her son. Mary carried him away after his morning feed, and she finally felt energized enough to get showered.

She wasn't the drunkard last night, nor was she the one to exert herself, so why was she more exhausted than Mark? She grumbled under her breath when she saw how energized Mark looked, as if he was perfectly fine.

She put on some light makeup to avoid looking too tired. She had gotten her figure back after giving birth, and she could wear her old clothes again. She stared at her reflection in the mirror, feeling pleased. At least she, a full-time mother, did not look too sloppy. She wouldn't be criticized if she stood next to Mark.

By the time she arrived downstairs, Mark was holding Aristotle and had been waiting for quite a while. She usually wore comfortable house clothes, which were easier for breastfeeding. Naturally, she

wouldn't need to put on makeup in the house. Mark's eyes lit up when she arrived, all dressed up. "Why are you all dressed up?"

She felt mildly pleased. At least, she received his approval after putting in such hard work. "Why? Can't I dress up? I'm ten years younger than you. I don't want people thinking that we're the same age. Let's go. We can leave now."

The corners of Mark's lips twitched. His handsome face was filled with a mix of complicated expressions. "What are you implying? Snubbing my age? Life was so much better back when you were afraid of me. At least, you wouldn't annoy me at every turn. Why aren't you scared of me anymore?"

She took the little baby and smiled. "Because you're a lot nicer now. If you keep putting on that icy, cold expression from the past, maybe I'd still be afraid of you… Maybe."

The complacency in her brows filled him with an urge to shower her with affection. "So, you're taking advantage now? Inching your way every time I let you? I'm going to be much fiercer to you from now on, or you're going to undermine me one day. I find that quiet little girl from days gone by much more adorable."

Arianne lowered her voice and said, "Oh? Would you like me to call you my 'big brother' again?"

"Call me 'honey'," Mark replied with a change in his expression.

She snorted with laughter. "As if!"

Arianne hesitated from getting down from the car when they arrived at the hotel. She was wondering what she would find out from Mr. and Mrs. Harris. Would it change their peaceful lives?

Mark noticed her concern and held her hand. “It’ll be fine, don’t worry. Henry’s men are upstairs. Just focus on asking important questions.”

Arianne nodded then carried the baby down from the car.

Chapter 922

Morning light shone into the hotel walls, which made everything seem brighter. Temperatures were slowly rising from the summer weather, but the light was dimmed when they stepped into the hotel lobby, the heat diminished as well.

Aristotle sneezed when they walked into the elevator, and Arianne held him closer against her body. “The temperature in this hotel is too low. It’s a little cold.

Mark reacted instantly. “This hotel belongs to us. I’ll tell them to fix the temperature.”

‘This belongs to us?’ Arianne was shocked. The hotel exterior alone seemed rather prestigious when she arrived. It was obviously a five star hotel… Mm, the Tremonts really did have a lot of business ventures and generally covered every industry. She had to get used to this.

She paused in her footsteps when they stepped out of the elevator. “Is it really possible that Ethan has returned? You tried to kill him, so he’d never leave us alone. When will this end? It’s different now that we have a baby. I don’t want our lives to be at risk…”

Mark frowned as if he, too, was worried. “Don’t worry. You have me. We’re not sure yet, so don’t worry. We’ll discuss this once we have confirmation. Let’s talk to your aunt and uncle first.”

They walked past the long corridors and turned a corner. Then, Arianne noticed two bodyguards standing in front of a door and knew that that was the room. The bodyguards spotted Mark from afar. “Sir.”

Mark quickly strode in front. “Any updates?”

“All normal,” one bodyguard replied as he opened the door.

Arianne steadied her emotions and quickened her pace to follow Mark. She could smell a thick fragrance of instant noodles from the moment she walked into the doors. It looked like Zoey and Mr. Harris hadn’t been eating well.

Henry, who was sitting on a couch, rose to his feet and sent the bodyguards in the room away. Zoey’s family looked extremely nervous when they saw Mark and Arianne. They fell on their knees. “Spare us. We were forced to do it. They kidnapped our son; we had no choice but to send Arianne that letter… It’s the truth!”

“Who was it?” Mark quickly asked.

Zoey and Mr. Harris looked at each other, then shook their heads. “We don’t know. We only received a phone call, telling us that they had our son, and we received a video call too. I was so afraid when we found out that it was real. The kidnappers told us to send a letter to Arianne and gave us money to run away. They threatened to kill our son if we refused to do it! We never saw the kidnappers at all.”

Arianne raised the most important question. “How did you find out about the plane crash? Did granny tell you?”

Zoey shook her head. “The kidnappers told us. They told us exactly what to write in that letter. None of it was from us! We were never aware of the plane crash. Could it… be true? Zoey glanced at Mark as she said this.

Mark’s fingers tensed. He remained silent. He did not want to relive the past again.

Arianne changed the topic. “The truth is none of your business. It’s not important. All of you, on the other hand… Especially you, Zoey. You’re not my biological aunt, but my grandmother raised you. You sucked her dry then allowed your husband to kill her. What were you thinking? You knew my condition, yet you refused to leave me alone. That letter from the hospital caused my premature delivery! Thank goodness everything was alright. Otherwise, would your conscience be clear? It makes sense though; after everything you’ve done, why would your conscience hurt at all? In fact, you don’t have a conscience!”

Chapter 923

‘That’s not important.”

Arianne’s reply allowed Mark’s tensed nerves to relax. He only needed her forgiveness. No one else mattered. He only cared about her opinions. Hearing those words from her was good enough.

“It’s not that we don’t have a conscience,” Zoey objected weakly. “It’s just that... that kidnapper said that… your grandmother died after Mark visited her, that… he was behind it. I was wondering about that myself; it was only pneumonia and shouldn’t have caused her death. Besides, it was such a coincidence… Why? Of all the times for her to die… I’m not trying to imply anything. After all, I’m not sure what exactly happened. I admit that it was my idiot husband who caused your grandmother’s illness. I’ve always wanted to divorce him, but I couldn’t do it… My son was kidnapped this time. I was left with no choice. Wouldn’t you have sent the letter too, if you were in my shoes? What parent would want to watch their child die?”

Arianne was speechless. She stared at Zoey, her husband, and her cousin. She fell silent. He was only a university student, so young…

If Arianne were not a mother now, perhaps she wouldn’t have been able to understand Zoey’s feelings. Now, she could. She would have sent that letter if she were in her shoes. Regardless of how despicable Zoey and her husband were, they were manipulated into it. The most despicable of all was the person behind this!

Suddenly, Mark spoke up. “I didn’t do it. Granny died from her illness. She was old and couldn’t endure it. Why would she have asked the doctor to give me her will instead of you, if I killed her? I was involved in that plane crash, that much, I admit. However, I will not make the same mistake again.”

In her shock, Zoey directed a peculiar gaze towards Arianne, clearly wondering why Arianne would be with the man who had killed her own father, marrying him and having his baby. The judgement in her eyes infuriated Arianne. She did not want to bring up the plane crash. Besides, she wouldn’t be able to explain it to Zoey anyway, so she ignored it. “Your intentions in doing this for your son were correct, but you’ve threatened me. How should we solve this? Let me ask you again, who put you up to it? Do you really not know?”

Before Zoey and Mr. Harris could speak up, their son spoke first. “It’s all my fault. My parents were forced into it because of me. If anyone deserves punishment, it should be me!”

Arianne took a deep breath. “A university student has more principles than you. Don’t worry, I won’t do anything to you. From this day onwards, if you ever set foot in the capital again, I will come for you. This is your last warning!”

Zoey and Mr. Harris heaved a sigh of relief when they heard this. They were no longer afraid now, so they got up from the ground. Suddenly, Zoey asked, “What did your grandmother say in her will?”

Arianne shot Zoey a glare. “No no no, that’s not what I mean,” Zoey hurriedly explained. “I just wanted to know her last wishes. That’s all.”

Arianne did not plan on hiding it. “Granny left me with Wynn Mansion. Nothing else. Do you have any other questions?”

Zoey shook. “N-no… I always thought that it was sold off long ago. I never thought that it’d still be around… Yes, Wynn Mansion should belong to you. You’re the only heir to the Wynn family.”

Mr. Harris secretly tugged on the corners of her shirt, obviously still harboring hopes of gaining Wynn Mansion. How could Zoey possibly have the courage to mention this now? Arianne caught his subtle action and found it absolutely laughable. “Do you have something to say, uncle? Speak up. We won’t be seeing each other again after today anyway.”

Chapter 924

Zoey’s husband eyed Mark warily, gathered his courage, then said, “This is just my opinion, but shouldn’t your aunt have a share in the old Wynn Mansion? Doesn’t sound appropriate for you to take it

all for yourself, does it? Besides, you have everything you want now. You could have half of the capital at the flick of your hand. It's different for us, as we're poor. Your aunt carries the Wynn name too. You shouldn't be too cruel."

She knew that this would happen. Arianne carried Aristotle and sat on the couch. She squinted her pretty eyes and stared calmly at the family of three. "You're right, I have everything I need. However, the Wynn Mansion is special. It's priceless to me. It's true that my aunt carries the Wynn name, but granny left the mansion to me. How could I share it with you? Perhaps… you should ask granny yourselves for her approval?"

Zoey's face turned ashen with fright. "No no no, we don't want it! Your grandmother's left it to you. We won't take it from you!"

"You've really amazed me," Arianne said with a scoff. "How can you think of profit in the midst of death? You're really hungry for money, aren't you? Go. If you're going to leave, do it quickly. Don't make me change my mind. From now on, never tell anyone of your relationship with me. Granny was the only connection between us, but now she's dead, so we're not considered relatives anymore. You'd better take care of yourselves."

Zoey and her husband moved timidly towards the door, as if deeply afraid that the tall bodyguards would knock them down. The family looked absolutely wretched after three days' worth of torture. Their clothes were a mess, and they had messy hair and a bad appearance. Only the young man seemed relatively more presentable.

Just as he arrived at the doorway, Zoey's son paused, turned around, and spoke to Arianne. "I'm sorry, sister. Thank goodness you're alright."

Arianne couldn't help looking back at him. There was no sign of fear in his eyes, and he seemed very calm. She thought that she was already cold-blooded and terrifying enough.

After two seconds of silence, she asked, "What's your name?"

"Harvey Wynn."

That made sense. Harvey was given his mother's maiden name. The old woman had taken a live-in son-in-law at the time. Otherwise, she wouldn't have been sucked dry.

Arianne waved her hand. "Go. Continue your studies and find a good job. Don't be like your parents."

Upon entering the elevator, Mr. Harris looked completely upset, probably because his son's given surname was a thorn in his side. "Look, even our son carries your maiden name. What did we get in the end? Nothing! No man would allow his son to take his wife's name, like I did!"

Zoey rolled her eyes at him. "Oh grow up. Do you think you can mess with Arianne? Can you really oppose them? One stomp of her foot is enough to make the entire capital tremble. Who do you think you are? I used to think that she was a good woman, but now it seems that rich people are all ruthless. Mark was only eighteen years old when my brother died. Look at what he's capable of doing, at the age of eighteen! Furthermore, Arianne has willingly married the man who killed her own father and given him a son. Who knows what's going on in that brain of hers!"

Chapter 925

Mr. Harris grew increasingly unsatisfied. "Why? We've always been the old woman's caretakers. But did she give us anything in the end? Did you see the look on Arianne's face? She's disowned us as relatives, just because we're poor. The Tremonts have more than enough money, yet they're still hounding after

the Wynn Mansion. Who knows what she's thinking? She's a woman. She's married. So I guess we'll have to change the Wynn Mansion's name in the future then. That mansion should belong to Harvey. Giving the Wynn mansion to her father's murderer. What a novel idea!"

Harvey felt absolutely disgusted by his parents when he overheard all of this. "Will you stop talking? Everything in the Wynn family should belong to her anyway. Let's set aside the fact that we've been caring for grandma all these years. If I remember correctly, you've been asking my brother-in-law for a lot of money, haven't you, dad? At least a few hundred thousand? Mom and I haven't seen a single cent. They're already being extremely nice. Stop being so greedy."

Zoey was not aware of this. She was shocked. "What did you say? Is this true? How much money has Mark given you?"

Her husband rubbed his nose, feeling guilty. "Weren't we getting a divorce at the time? For that reason, I didn't want to tell you… The money's gone. I've gambled it all off… I was tricked. You can't blame me…"

Zoey was so enraged that she nearly collapsed. "You idiot! You shameless di*k! How much was it? Tell me!"

Harvey couldn't be bothered to argue with them. He stared impatiently at the decreasing numbers on the elevator. When the doors opened, he left without another word. He was ashamed of his parents, but had no choice in the matter. He had his own dreams and ambitions. When he saw Arianne, there was only one thing on his mind — he wanted to be like her and Mark, holding money and power. That way, he could do whatever he wanted. Otherwise, he would only be made to bend and scrape for the rest of his life.

Mark opened the car door for Arianne when they left the hotel. "Are you going home? Shall I have Brian send you home?"

Arianne carried Aristotle to the back of the car and nodded. “Yes, take me home. The weather is too hot. I don’t want to walk around. Besides, the baby is with me.”

The look in Mark’s eyes seemed strange. She felt uneasy. “Why are you looking at me like that?”

He simply smiled, got into the car, and closed the door. Then, he pulled Aristotle into his lap. “I just think that we’re very lucky. No one thought that we’d end up together, but we did anyway.”

“You’ve made more than ten years’ worth of preparation, just so we can be together, and you still have the nerve to point it out?” Arianne boldly said. “How does it feel? It must feel pretty good to have raised your own wife.”

Mark cheekily raised his chin and smiled at her. “Yes, it does feel good.”

Aristotle seemed to have seen something very interesting and went “oh” in Mark’s arms. He was even kicking his little legs excitedly. Arianne giggled. “What do you know? You’re always wide awake. What baby at your age does that? You’d better go to sleep when we get home.”

They had arrived back at the Tremont Estate. Mark sent Arianne and Aristotle back into the house before leaving.

No one had mentioned anything else on the road because they all knew. They knew who had manipulated Zoey and Mr. Harris behind the scenes, and had knowledge of the plane crash. It wasn’t

too hard to guess. Not many people knew about the plane crash, and only Ethan would kick up a fuss over the matter. He was the biggest suspect.

Ethan, the cockroach, refused to stay dead. The heavens had given him another chance at life. How could he possibly let that go? Arianne used to think that Mark had been too cruel, but now she knew that it was necessary. Leaving a man like Ethan alive would only spell trouble for everyone else. Sometimes, it was difficult to find the right solution, or rather, one takes on the color of one's company. Ever since Arianne had entered Mark's world, she gradually accepted his methods.

Chapter 926

Henry was not alone when he entered the house, for following closely behind was Helen. The surprise appearance was not planned, however. She simply met Henry by the gate.

Arianne, with Smore in her arms, stepped forward to greet her. "Sweetie, say hi to your grandma."

The look Helen cast on Smore was absolutely brimming with affection, yet she made no mention of wanting to hug or hold the baby, perhaps wary that Arianne might not like it. "What a beautiful baby! He looks like you but has Mark's expressions."

Arianne smiled. "Take a seat, please. So, finally having some free time, huh?"

Helen made herself comfortable on the living room couch and muttered thanks to Mary when the latter passed her a glass of water. "En route to running an errand. Then I remembered that you might be at home right now, so I thought of visiting."

“En route?” There was no way the Tremont Estate could be “en route” of any trip because its location was not along any freeway or oft-traveled roads. It was such a staple of Helen’s excuses, but Arianne chose to let it slide. “So, is everything going well? How’s your company doing?”

Helen paused for a moment before replying, “It’s fine. My business is a small-fry compared to Tremont Enterprise, so I’m happy just to make enough money for life. Seeing you living comfortably and happily is a great relief.”

The two of them rarely sat down for a good chat, so it did not take a long time before the conversation grounded into an awkward halt, as neither side had any topic to add. Being a businesswoman who had been to many kinds of events, Helen never lacked in gab, yet her skill always seemed to be on a hiatus whenever she talked to Arianne.

Meanwhile, Arianne herself was never that much of a conversationalist. That trait then exacerbated the awkwardness.

The silence went on for a while before Arianne suddenly stood and shoved Smore into Helen’s lap. “I need to use the bathroom. Help me keep an eye on him for a bit.”

Helen seemed a little unsure of what to do and stared at the baby. “Uh…right.”

She had not carried a child this young in her arms for so many years that she was genuinely unsure if her strength might accidentally hurt him. So, she held the baby with bated breaths.

Arianne took such a long time that Helen began to relax more and more by the seconds. It was then that she considered Smore’s features. She found him a fair and tender child, whose eyes were less round and

doe-like but more slender and feline. He also boasted a small but pronounced nose, and despite the fat typical of babies gathering around his chin, she could make out Smore's sharp jawline. He was going to grow up into a fair, charming man, Helen predicted.

Smore did not show any sign of giddiness at being held by a stranger, but nor did he launch into a crying fit, either. He continued to scan his surroundings without a moment to rest until his eyes rested on the pendant Helen was wearing. Quickly, he reached out and grabbed hold of it—and in a flash, the pendant broke away from Helen's neck.

Stunned, she said, "You've got quite a grip there, sweetie. Does your hand hurt?"

The answer was, naturally, no. Had it hurt, Smore would have told the whole world with his ceaseless bawls. Instead, the first thing he did after removing the pendant from its place was to stuff it into his mouth. Anything that he thought could fit into his mouth all had the same fate.

Helen quickly stopped the child. "No, you can't eat that, dear! You're hungry, aren't you? Patience, little one. Wait for your mommy, and she'll feed you."

A while later, Arianne returned to the living room and saw Smore holding onto a chain connected to a delicate jade pendant. Embarrassed, she said, "Oh my god, I'm so sorry! How much does it cost? I'll pay you."

Helen, however, loved Smore enough to say, "Pay? You're making me sound like a business partner rather than family, Ari! It's okay. Doesn't cost much."

Chapter 927

Arianne tried to snatch the pendant back from Smore, but the baby's hand somehow turned into a stubborn lobster's claw and refused to let go, no matter how hard she tried to pry it open. Fearful of accidentally hurting him, Arianne gave up and relented. "Fine. It's not returning to us until he gets bored with it. Oh, that reminds me… Uh, how's, well, Aery?"

Given a choice, Arianne would have rather not mentioned Aery at all, but she was desperately running out of topics. She could not possibly turn the rest of their "chat" into a staring competition, right?

Helen, for her part, did not expect her to mention Aery of her own accord. After the shock passed, she answered, "Well, she's currently studying abroad. To my relief, she appears to have gone back on track. See, I found her a host family whom I've established a close connection with so that I can monitor her every move and situation from here. Honestly, as long as she could put her mind to educating herself and not ruining her own life, a mother would have no reason to give up her daughter, wouldn't you agree? Of course, I will make sure she never disturbs you or Mark again. I may be forever bound to her, but you're not."

With a pang, Arianne realized that she and Helen shared more than just a few passing similarities. For one, both of them seemed to be quite acute in seeing the spirit of a given situation and making the best judgement and decision in a split second.

"That's right. I don't ever wanna cross paths with her in my life ever again. And I count that as my one last display of mercy. Because all those things she did made me wish I could kill her over them. Frankly, I don't give a damn about blood relations that much, especially when she's just my half-sister begotten from another man."

Helen suddenly broke out into a chuckle. "Oh, you're the exact opposite of your father in this regard. Rather, you're more like me. Your father was a warm man who didn't deserve to be hooked up with a cold-hearted woman like myself. How tragic are human beings, to be denied a chance to redo what they'd done wrong, huh? We could accidentally turn ourselves into a soulless zombie wearing a human husk, and reality would still not give us a chance to rectify our regrets."

“You regret what you’ve done,” Arianne pointed out flatly, “but the past doesn’t have do-overs.”

Forlornness crossed into Helen’s eyes. “You’re right. I can’t go back.”

Muted moments in the conversation between the estranged mother and daughter multiplied as it went on. Slowly but surely, both sides grew accustomed to the expanding silence.

A few moments later, Helen finally announced, “I gotta go. If you don’t find my visits annoying, I’d love to come back here and check on the baby from time to time. Of course, if it’s en route to my business, that is.”

Arianne picked Smore up and into her arms. “Oh, cut it out with the ‘en route’ excuse. Just come over whenever you like, but call me before visiting, since I’m not at home sometimes. I may not care much about blood relations, but the only two persons in the world whom my blood-ties are strongest would be you and Smore. Besides, there are very few things in life that cannot be forgiven. Think about how Granny used to treat you. In the end, you forgave her anyway, yes?”

Helen flashed her a relieved smile. “Yes.”

It was only after the woman left that Arianne realized that Smore was still holding onto Helen’s pendant. Helpless, she nipped the baby’s nose and chastised him. “Aren’t you a little too young to not give a damn about the price of things, hmm? Sweetie, this pendant isn’t cheap at all! Next time, we’ll pick an excellent replacement for your Granny Helen, okay? But tell your dad to pay for it! You know what they say: the son does the crime, the father does time!”

Back in a conference room within the Tremont Tower, Mark's eyes suddenly twitched, causing him to frown.

Immediately, the higher-ups surrounding him held their breaths. Nothing good could come out of Mark Tremont frowning, after all.

Noticing the air suddenly becoming still and silent, Mark curled his slender fingers into a fist and rapped the table with his knuckles. "Back to the discussion, all of you. Who said anything about stopping, hmm? We didn't manage to acquire that plot last time. Anyone have any bright ideas on how to solve this?"

No one answered him. Starting to feel fed up, Mark leaned back onto his chair and straightened his tie. "If any of you got anything to say, loosen that mouth. Otherwise, we might as well as call off this fruitless meeting. I hate it when other people waste my time because their heads are drawing a blank while they pretend otherwise."

One of the youngest members—a junior in the board, in fact—piped up tentatively. "Um, why don't we look for another plot that is more or less similar to the one we didn't get? I mean, it's probably kind of hard to find anything similar to that one, but… no harm in trying, right?"

Chapter 928

The corner of Mark's lips twitched, but his smile did not reach his eyes. It was a smile that acted as a mask.

"You can't be suggesting that I, of all people, go look for this hypothetical plot, right?" he began. "Anyone with a functional brain could dream up a 'solution' as simple as this one! The reason why this meeting is a thing is that I want results and progress. But you cast this… question to me as though you're asking for my permission. Seriously? Don't you even have a modicum of sensibility to determine that for yourself?! Fine, great. I guess I should start counting down on the days till my company folds."

The young executive member immediately packed his document folder as if he was about to bolt out of the room. “Right, right! I’m on it right away, Sir! I’ll make you proud next time, I promise!”

Mark massaged his forehead. “Jesus Christ. Can any of you adults get into work the moment you believe you have a good solution? What if I agree, hmm? Stop waiting for my permission for every little thing, people. Your brains will rot from your disuse. You know what I want to hear? I want to hear, ‘Sir, I found a plot that’s similar to the one we didn’t manage to acquire. Would you like to see this replacement?’ instead of ‘maybe we can, like, find a similar plot—’ Just do it, for Christ’s sake! Everyone got me? Good. Meeting adjourned!”

Meanwhile, back in the apartment, Tanya was meticulously treating Jett’s wounds.

Alejandro’s verdict had virtually tied her together with Jett. Worried that more trouble might come to pass, she had begged the man to allow Jett to return to her place to get those wounds treated.

There were still too many things that eluded her. The only fact she was certain of was that Jett had gone through this torment just to save her.

“Why do you do this? Why help me?” she questioned. “You knew this was gonna happen! So why did you still…?”

Jett’s face was pale as he laid down on the bed and braced through the agony. “P-Please. Y-You weren’t the only reason. A-Alejandro, he… He ain’t gonna let me off the hook no matter what, anyway. He wants my loyalty… and my capabilities. However, I’m Don Smith’s underling, and Master Don is famously distrustful of people. Hell, he placed me here to watch Alejandro closely,” he explained, before halting

himself. “Oh, Christ. The Smith family business is a clusterf**k. You wouldn’t know even if I untangled ‘em for you. Plus, it’s dangerous knowledge; you could get yourself killed. I’m used to it, though.”

“Um, if that’s the case,” Tanya asked tentatively. “Is this pledge of service to Alejandro, well… sincere? Won’t Master Don punish you over it?”

Jett was quiet for a beat before he replied, “Sooner or later, the older generation dies, and the newer one succeeds them. Master Don has been sick for years. I don’t think he’s gonna live long enough.”

The answer was clear — while the answers that were more hidden in the details made Tanya balk at asking. She did not need to know everything to regret involving herself in this mess. Had she not been tempted by desires, she would not have been tangled in this mire.

Now, she had become Alejandro’s pawn. She had become Jett’s wife-on-paper. It was the only way she could live, for then, her life would be under Alejandro’s surveillance at all times, thus making her less threatening and eliminating the need to silence her.

“Are you really gonna bring that child to this godforsaken world?” Jett suddenly asked. “You know you’re sealing your fate with this decision, right? Even if I manage to free you from this arrangement, that kid’s only gonna be a burden.”

Tanya laughed mirthlessly. “Can’t be wrong to call this my just desert, can it? I don’t think Alejandro would permit an abortion, anyway. If this kid’s gone, I’d be too. You can bet on it. But it doesn’t matter now, does it? Whether I’m free or not, it’s all consequences to what I’ve done. I can’t drag you through my sh*tty decisions again, Jett. If I die, you’d have suffered those lashes for nothing. To repay you, I must live.”

Jett breathed out slowly, finding it an effective way to alleviate much of the pain. “Honestly? I figured that guy out the moment he instructed me to impregnate you. Even if I looked away and let you die, he’d still find other ways to make my life a hell. Since I can neither betray my conscience or outrun this inevitable trial, better just bring it on as soon as possible… Hey, don’t fret, okay? I promise you, we’re married on paper only. One day, I’ll return you your freedom.”

Tanya’s hand, still rubbing medicine on his wounds, froze in mid-action before she continued with a smile. “Alright, then. I’ll hold you to it. When your wounds get better, I’ll find a new place to stay. I’m thinking somewhere with cheaper rent. Then I’ll look for a job again. I can’t live without an income, you know. Besides… it’s time to prepare for the baby’s arrival.”

Chapter 929

Jett shook his head. “Bah, don’t bother. This is a pretty nice place to stay, anyway. See? It’s got two bedrooms and sh*ts. One for each of us. I might even crash here whenever it’s convenient,” he said. “And really, there is no need to go to work, you. My work is enough for both of us, at least before that kid comes out. But that’s a question for some other time; we might not have a future, but the kid’s mine, so don’t worry too much and follow what I say. Hey, if we look past the fact that we aren’t staying together, I think we can pull off this husband-wife thing pretty fine.”

A pang shot through Tanya’s chest, as though a wall closing around her heart had crumbled and crashed. For the first time, she considered Jett carefully… and found that her yearning for Jackson diminished.

In a split second, she wished the arrangement between her and Jett were consensual—bona fide, genuine. She wanted a family of her own, but none of this was real. They were just foams atop turbulent waves.

That abrupt, pressing lump in her chest was making it a little harder to breathe. “I… I’m running out of gauze,” she announced. “I’m going to head to the pharmacy downstairs and buy more… and other meds, too. I think these injuries aren’t gonna heal within this short period.”

With that, she scrambled out of the room, only drawing out a long breath when she reached the end of the stairs.

While in the pharmacy, Tanya caught a familiar figure inside the store, causing her to panic. She spun on her heels and was about to move away when the voice called out, “Hey, why are you buying a roll of gauze? Are you hurt?”

She halted her steps and feigned casualness before turning to face Eric. “Oh, no. Prepping for emergencies. You?”

Eric raised his hand before walking toward the cashier. “I accidentally cut my finger with a paper cutter. Here to buy some band-aids.”

Tanya was cognizant that this was as far as the conversation was going to take. Frankly, she was already warmed by the fact that Eric reached out to her out of genuine concern. She should not ask for more. Besides, she could not risk letting Eric know that Jett was currently at her place. That sort of information would cause a landslide of secrets being unraveled.

That was the other reason why Tanya wanted to move out of her current residence: Eric’s company was nearby. She was worried that he might find out about her secrets, but Jett had just shot that idea down, so she had to abandon it, too.

Tanya only approached the counter after Eric left. The medicines combined squared up to about $30, and suddenly, she was reminded of how little her savings were. The money in her wallet was barely enough to cover the expenses.

Once she returned, Tanya was surprised to find Jett already rising from the bed and putting on his clothes as though he was about to go out. She jerked, clearly stunned. “W-what are you doing? You can’t get up in this state!”

Jett smoothed his collars while replying, “No, it’s nothing. This isn’t the first time I’ve been hurt. Besides, I’m not made of glass. Alejandro’s got something he needs to get done, so I’m going.”

At the tail of that announcement, he pulled out a bank card and passed it to Tanya, adding, “Here, take this. Use this card for any purchase you need. Buy whatever you like, really. No need to get hesitant. I wouldn’t claim the same for everything else, but when it comes to money, Alejandro’s a generous boss. Of course, that is… if you don’t mind how dirty my money is.”

Tanya sank into silence with the card in her hand. She could tell that the sort of things Jett did for a living were most probably outside the border of law, but it did not make his money dirty and below her. Instead, she realized that this was the first time a man had ever treated her so kindly.

She used to be jealous of Tiffany and Arianne. Yet, now, she had also obtained the same sort of treatment with the same kind of luck and lack of hard work. It was ironic — laughable, even.

Jett returned to the Smith family manor as though nothing had happened. He sauntered toward Alejandro and lowered his head a little. “Mr. Smith.”

From his wheelchair, Alejandro considered him for a moment. “I didn’t ask them to do their worst. You alright?”

Jett nodded. “I’m fine. Your orders?”

Alejandro handed him a card. “Treat this as your compensation. By the by, Mark Tremont found Zoey Harris and her husband, and they’re about to leave the Capital. Go and pry some news about this, and see if they have found out about anything,” he instructed. “I wonder if Mark and Arianne figured anything out. If you find even the slightest thing going awry, don’t let them live.”

Indeed, Alejandro was the one who ordered Zoey and her husband to pass that letter to Arianne. Harvey Wynn’s kidnappers were his men.

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Jett tucked the card into his pocket hesitantly. “If you make too many moves, it’ll rouse Master Don’s suspicions, you know.”

Alejandro smiled. “Aww, what’s there to be suspicious about? Does he suspect that I’m not actually his darling grandson, Alejandro Smith? Is this Master Don’s suspicion, or yours? What happens if I tell you that I’m not Alejandro?”

Jett’s head hung even lower, his voice so monotonous that it was approaching mechanical when he replied. “To me, Mr. Smith will always be Mr. Smith. There are no other possibilities to entertain, even if you are doing some funny, questionable things.”

Alejandro seemed to be in good spirits. “Ha. This is why I like you and want you to remain by my side. You know… Tanya’s not very bright, but she’s quite the looker. You should consider her more carefully.”

“A man like me will never lead a safe, stable life,” Jett replied placidly. “The last thing I want is to drag another person through it with me. If I could, I’d rather return her freedom.”

Alejandro seemed taken aback by his candidness. “Huh. Just that thought alone marks you as way more humane than most people associated with this family. I like you,” he noted, “And I promise you, once I finish what I set out to do, Tanya’s freedom isn’t the only thing I’ll return. Yours, too, will be granted. Speaking of which, do I look like the Alejandro Smith that you remember?”

Jett quickly scanned him. “Hmm, well… Close enough, but not exactly. Still, you have the excuse of having your face damaged by an accident and its subsequent surgery, so I doubt anyone would suspect a thing. More importantly, very few people in the Smith family had ever seen you, while many others who did had… Too many of them had died. Only Master Don is most familiar with you.”

Don Smith? Alejandro mulled the information over his head.

“Thanks for the tip. I’ll take extra precaution,” he said finally. “Now, go and carry out your duty. You’ve been injured, so take two more of our men with you. I believe in your skills, so don’t fail me.”

It was eight at night when Mark dragged his weary footsteps back to the Tremont Estate.

Arianne had not seen him this tired for a long, long time. Taking advantage of Smore being asleep, she drew a bath for him. “A nice bath will make you feel better. What’s the matter? Your face has the caption ‘I’m frickin’ exhausted’ attached to it.”

Regardless of how tired Mark was, he would never fail to give her a gentle smile. “It’s nothing big, so don’t fret. I’ll be heading to the bath, then. By the way, I might need to work on Saturday, so you should only expect my company on Sunday.”

Arianne suddenly felt herself bursting with the mood. Boldly, she pinched Mark's waist and replied coyly, "Fine then! Go!"

Her intention was not lost on Mark, who reacted with his eyebrows raised in sincere surprise. "Are you trying to feel me up? Unfortunately, I'm 'getting older', so to speak. I'm too tired for that. Your trick isn't going to work."

Arianne blushed. "W-well, at least you're admitting to being old! F-fine, go quickly. Or else the bathwater is going to turn cold."

She watched him enter the bath with a smile shadowing her lips before turning to check on a slumbering Smore. After making sure his son was alright, she relaxed and descended the stairs in preparation of yet another phone call with Tiffany.

Even though Tiffany left this part of the city, the two best friends still frequently chatted.

Arianne had only just pulled out her phone by the time she reached the living room when Zoey's number suddenly leaped onto her screen.

She hesitated for a bit, then pressed the answer button. Before she could say anything, however, Harvey's voice rang out from the other side. "Ari! Something's happened to my parents! We were planning to leave the Capital as soon as tomorrow morning arrived, but then, just when my mom was calling her friend outside, a gang of yahoos suddenly barged into the inn we're currently staying in. I heard one of them talk, and this whole gang sounds exactly like the people who abducted me! I don't know squat about what they're planning to do, but I'm too scared to investigate…! Please, help us!"