Ruling 971

Chapter 971

Jackson blinked a few times before he helplessly rose to his feet. “For the love of God, can’t the two of you just stop? Or must I be out of here to make y’all shush? Let me be clear. You two better not run around like monkeys after dinner so as to not bring me any trouble, you hear?”

Watching him relent made Summer and Tiffany exchange smiles. In that split moment, it felt like they were family again.

Tiffany was downright voracious. She appeared to have developed particular cravings. She loved every dish Jackson made but rejected anything that was made by the West family’s hired cook. It was moments like these that helped her growing awareness on the evolution of her taste buds and food cravings. Thankfully, it seemed that she was spared from other less pleasant changes pregnancies typically brought.

Jackson seized the chance to jab at her. “Well, well, well! Have you been trapped in a closet under the stairs without food for ages?”

Tiffany scowled at him. “Excuuuuse me, mistah! What I’m doing right here is to show you how much I’m lovin’ your cookin’, and this is how you say thanks? Oh my God, yes! This the exact flavor I’m craving!”

“If you like it so much, you can have it every day.”

His voice had turned quieter. Tentativeness undergirded his words, though it was also notably steeped in forlorn wistfulness.

His remark hushed the air over the dining table. Tiffany felt her heart race half a beat faster. All eyes were on her, all ears waiting for her answer. Even Atticus, who rarely involved himself in conversations, stared at her. She could feel a hill-sized pressure weigh down on her shoulders.

Yes, Tiffany wanted to get back together with Jackson. But must her admission come out after this awkward setup? Why could he not make himself more explicit, huh? Just like how it was back at that restaurant—

Tiffany could feel their attention crawling all over her being. Finally, she mustered enough courage and answered, “S-Sure…?”

Summer’s lips immediately blossomed into a wide, beaming grin before grabbing a juicy drumstick and leaving it on Tiffany’s plate. “From now on, if there’s anything you feel like eating, dear, let Jackson make it for you!”

Tiffany suddenly felt her chest burst with the mood to breakdown and sob. Why was a happily-ever-after between her and Jackson always such an uphill battle?

After their meal, Summer retired to her room. Since her injury had yet to recover, the doctor instructed her multiple times to limit the number of physical activities she might do in a day to prevent long-term damage after recovery. Naturally, Atticus followed closely to care for his wife, leaving only Jackson and Tiffany downstairs in the living room.

The two of them sat wordlessly together without talking for a long while before Summer texted him: ‘Can my son be a mite bit more proactive? You heard what Tiffie said back there, didn’t you? Make her

stay for the night, my boy! Don't let her escape home! Her mom's an ally in our scheme too. I already talked to her. She said her daughter has no keys, so even if she goes home, Mommy won't open the door and let her in.'

His mother's gameplan left Jackson a little speechless. He might have agreed to have his mother's aid, but this level of hyper-managing was a tad bit extreme, was it not?

He did not reply to Summer. Instead, he casually asked Tiffany, "So… You going home tonight?"

Tiffany's eyes were glued to her phone when she replied in a tone indicating that she was slightly baffled by his question, "Of frickin' course, I'm going home. Where else would I go?"

She only realized the deeper meaning behind his not-at-all-innocent question after she finished talking, and suddenly, the air was filled with a strange charge. Promptly, she pivoted to another subject. "Uh, I think I had a little too much just now so… care to, uh, accompany me on a walk outside? Just outside would do. The night isn't that hot."

Jackson nodded and rose before starting toward the door.

Even as they walked along the road, there was about a three-feet gap between the two. The nightly breeze was plenty and did a wonderful job escorting away much of the heat during the day, but it also left a solemn air of still silence in its wake.

The less Tiffany talked, the less confident Jackson became. What he said during their dinner and back in the living room were to test her willingness, yet her answers remained irritatingly ambiguous. Naturally, he began to wonder if the answer she gave back at the dining table was less a genuine response and

more of a rescue from awkwardness. After all, Tiffany did quickly change the subject after his question back in the living room…

Jackson's frustration peaked at that thought. Abruptly, he spoke out in irritation. "I get it, okay? You only said what you said back there during dinner so that no one would feel awkward. It's okay. I won't overthink it."

Unlike him, the cogs in Tiffany's head were very slow to turn. Hence, her response was, "H-Huh? What'd you say?"

Chapter 972

Jackson was in such a downer mood that he ignored Tiffany's question. Instead, he hastened his pace, leaving the baffled woman behind.

Something finally clicked in Tiffany's mind, prompting her to quicken her steps and catch up. "You're referring to what I said at the dinner table, aren't you?" she called out. "The answer is no. I didn't say it because I didn't want dinner to be awkward. I said it because I meant it."

Jackson halted, his steps falling into place as a gust zipped past him and billowed his hair, disrupting both of their hearts.

He did not dare to look back, as though he was unsure of the statement's veracity. "What did you say?"

"I said, I didn't say anything because I was afraid of some awkwardness around the table. I said what I said because I meant it. You and your cooking are alike. They're both delicious and exactly my type."

Tiffany had always fancied herself a relatively thick-skinned person, but when those words left her lips, she could feel her cheeks warm up and burn.

Jackson finally turned around slowly. He leveled a complicated, nigh-unreadable look at her and warned, “Don’t do that. Don’t joke with me. I’m not in the mood for jokes… Plus, that joke sucks.”

Tiffany was a little startled by his reaction. The Jackson West she remembered was a self-assured guy who would hype himself as much as he could. Since when did he become so uncharacteristically cautious?

Tucking a strand of her billowing hair behind her ear, she replied, “Regardless, I think… I think we should try again.”

Time seemed to have stopped at this moment. Jackson’s eyes were glued to hers, unmoving and unblinking, for two minutes.

Then he lurched. He wrapped his arm around Tiffany and yanked her into his chest. He squeezed as tightly as he could, as though he wanted to press Tiffany into merging with his being.

A tear trickled down Tiffany’s eye. She hooked her arms around his muscular waist and inhaled the scent effusing from his body—the smell that only Jackson had that still managed to intoxicate her.

It was at this moment that she realized that this hug was what she had been waiting for since they broke up.

A few moments passed before Tiffany sucked the tears back into her eyes. Jackson's hug was becoming a bit too tight and too long, and her stomach was beginning to feel a little too crushed while her abdomen felt suffocated. "A-Alright, Jackson, enough. I'm… kinda squeezed out of air now…"

Jackson let her go, his hand tilting her chin upward. "Don't go tonight, please?"

Tiffany slapped that hand away in feigned anger. "No! Can you stop thinking about sex for once?"

His lips quivered into a shifty smile. "It's not like anyone's gonna open that door for you at home. If I'm not mistaken, you don't even have your house keys. Go on, try and prove me wrong."

Tiffany was skeptical, so she called Lilian. Before she could say anything, however, Lilian immediately recited, "Not at home, sweetie. If you're back in the city now, you better get yourself some other place to stay!" and terminated the call.

Mind-boggled, Tiffany muttered, "Wait a minute, are all of you in on this conspiracy?!"

Jackson neither affirmed nor declined. "Since you don't have any place to stay, you'll have to stay at mine now. Don't worry, without your consent, I won't touch you at all."

Tiffany's heart thumped, but outwardly, she affected reluctance. "Urgh, guess I have no choice but to trust you this time…"

After a half-hour walk, Jackson began to complain about wanting to go home. Since he had begun their walk with one or two proclamations of how exhausted he was, Tiffany felt that he was genuinely tired, so she did not insist on continuing her walk.

It was only eight o'clock by the time the two of them took their baths. Not one to sleep early, Tiffany sat on the bed with her back leaning on the headboard while she occupied herself with her phone. Jackson, meanwhile, laid down next to her.

"Hey, maybe you should sleep in a different room?" she suggested hesitantly. "Just sayin', your parents don't know that we've gone back together, so it's probably not a good look to sleep together now, right? It would seem a little, er, imprudent?"

He grabbed her by her fair, supple thighs and pulled, causing the woman to yelp in surprise as she fell onto the bed. He then pulled her into his embrace and breathed in. "You really think my parents would care about this? Honey, they are way more gung-ho about getting us together than I am. Oh, you smell so good…"

Warm puffs of air escaped him and blew against her beck, causing her to shrink her neck into her collar as his breaths tickled it. "H-Hey, stop that! I-I-It tickles! Okay, okay! You go to sleep and stop playing with me. I'll be having fun with my phone for a bit. Go on. Aren't you, like, super-exhausted? Go to sleep then!"

Chapter 973

Jackson did not release his grip. Instead, he held her more tightly, as though Tiffany was a treasure he had taken too much time to recover. "I can't sleep, babe. And who says you have to sleep just because you're tired, huh? Don't move. I wanna hold onto you a little longer."

Tiffany may say no outwardly, but her body was already submitting to his demand. It changed into a more comfortable position in his embrace for maximum comfort while she continued watching her drama. It was then that he suddenly clapped on her bouncy stomach and remarked, “You’ve gone a little bigger.”

Tiffany froze before kicking him away in a sheer act of reflex. “Are you crazy?” she cried.

Her reaction startled him. “W-What’d I do?”

His action shocked her too much. His force might not have been a lot, but it was not at all light, either, especially when he hit too close to where the baby was. After calming herself, she finally said, “Can you please not hit my stomach like that anymore?”

Jackson thought it meant his gesture had hurt her, so he quickly reached out to rub the spot apologetically. “It hurt, huh? Sorry. Here, let me give you a nice rub. Though I don’t think I hit you that hard…? I mean, you were quite, er, muscular in the past too, weren’t you? We always did something like that in the past!”

“Muscular?!” Who would describe a girl with a word like that? Instantly, Tiffany shoved his massaging fingers away from her and retorted, “Muscular? Are you admitting that you think I’ve grown portly? ‘Cause that ain’t it, honey. I… I’m just… well, I’m pregnant!”

Jackson immediately bounced to his butt and sat up straight, his eyes trained on her. “What the f—what did you say?”

His intense stare was creeping her out. “W-W-Why are you looking at me like that? I really am pregnant, Jackson… And I’ll have you know it happened before Eric’s, uh, problem, so I haven’t gone around to telling everyone. But then your little slap on my belly triggered me…”

A million thoughts raced across Jackson’s head. His woman was pregnant. But the two of them had split for so long and had not had sex for quite a period that he could not help but wonder whose child it was. How long did she have the baby?

Could the father be someone else?

Watching how silent he had become while he continued to scan her with that bizarre look on his face finally clued Tiffany in on what might be running in his head. “Y-You can’t possibly be thinking that this baby is someone else’s, right? Jesus Christ, Jackson West! Do you even keep track of yourself? Fun fact, my baby was actually here first before Tanya’s, you know, but if you can’t bring yourself to accept the baby, then fine. I’m not forcing you to.”

“N-No, I accept the baby!” Jackson replied hastily. Frankly, the child could have been fathered by anyone else in the world, and he would still have to accept it.

Tiffany was a little miffed by his reaction, though, since she had expected a lot more joy and surprise instead of… whatever this was. However, seeing as they had just finally gotten back together, she knew better than to follow their achievement up with a lovers’ spat. She decided to drop the case.

“By the way, can you please keep this a secret from your parents? ‘Cause they’ll definitely force us into marriage immediately, despite… Well, you know, the thing with Eric. I would rather wait until his problem is over before we tell the world. I mean, it would reflect poorly on us as his friends if we were to celebrate with some grand, festive ceremony of some sort while he’s steadily heading to his end,” she explained. “Besides, I would like to focus on my work for now, too. So, let us just keep this a secret.”

Jackson nodded slightly. “Yeah, ditto. But… How about I move you back here, back into my company? South Park is very far away from me, so I can’t always cover you as much as I’d like. That worries me.”

Was he suggesting making her an assistant director in the headquarter itself? Tiffany shook her head hard. “I don’t have the skills to become assistant director in the HQ! I’d rather stay in South Park. It’s not like I can’t request for maternity leave or something when the baby is nearing its terms, right? ‘Sides, I can take care of myself, no problemo. Hell, you’re the one who said I’m spectacularly ‘muscular,’ which means my endurance is pretty damn good, right? All I need is the ‘Get Out of Overtime Working’ card, and I’m good to go!

“Honestly, Jackson? We should fuss about all these things when the time comes, ok?” she added. “I mean, unforeseen circumstances can ruin even the best plans! So, let’s just talk about this when the time comes. For now, you go to sleep.”

Jackson returned to lay down beside her, but this time, he kept his hands to himself while observing a wide gap between them.

His new attitude confounded the woman, who pointed out, “What, no more hugs?”

He shook his head. “No more hugs. Dare not hug.”

She laughed, throwing herself onto his chest. “Aww, what’s the matter? Scared of being kicked away again?”

Chapter 974

He was so anxious that he dared not move. “Can you please not do that? And be gentle with yourself, will you? Take a page out of Arianne’s book from when she was pregnant. She was careful instead of acting like it’s nothing! You know what? I’m sleeping in another room. You’re on your own, so take care. Don’t find yourself rolling off the bed in the morning.”

Tiffany was surprised that Jackson would leave her. “Wait, so you’re serious? Really? Uh, whatever then. If it makes you happy, then go sleep elsewhere. Meanwhile, I’m gonna enjoy this big, wide bed for myself to my heart’s content. Move aside! And turn off the lights on your way out.”

Jackson made his way out of the bedroom, shooting her multiple worried glances every few steps on his way. Then, on his way out, he switched off the lights and closed the door.

Jackson admitted that he might have acted a little too anxiously, but he just could not help becoming more restrained whenever he was reminded of the new life now incubating inside of her. He could not make sure that he would keep his desires in check if they slept together. Indeed, he was worried that he might lose control. Similarly, Jackson was afraid that he might accidentally lay himself over her stomach while he tossed and turned during sleep.

The impact brought by the news of her pregnancy could not be understated. Jackson reckoned that it was akin to being bonked on the head with a baseball bat.

There was new trouble in Tremont Estate. Smore had learned to sleep later than he used to. Right now, the baby’s large, goggly black eyes refused to close despite his parents’ efforts.

Arianne looked at the growing frustration in Mark’s eyes and held herself back from helplessly chuckling out loud. Tried as she might, she could not bring herself to leave her adorable little Smore alone just so

she could spend some husband-and-wife time with Mark. Honestly, Smore edged out her husband when it came to their standing in her heart.

Smore had also begun showing rejection of those he deemed strangers, which was why Mary had not been able to carry him lately. Left with no choice, Arianne had been focusing on the baby so much that she inadvertently neglected Mark a little.

On the other hand, Mark wanted peace and quiet to return to him as soon as possible. To that end, he had taken up the role of World's Best Dad Contender and brought Smore for a walk in the yard. He gently soothed the child, hoping that he would fall asleep.

An hour was almost up. He stealthily approached Arianne and said, "Look at him for me. Is he asleep?"

She circled behind him, looked at Smore leaning on Mark's shoulder, and giggled. "His eyes are opening so wide that they're bigger than yours now!"

Mark's shoulders instantly slumped. "God-damn-it! I swear this kid has an agenda against me! Why isn't he sleeping despite it being night, hmm? What could possibly be keeping him awake? Christ, I'm out of ideas!"

Hearing his father badmouthing him, Smore straightened his back and stared into Mark's eyes. "Yaaaaa!" he protested.

Mark chuckled, despite his anger. "Heh. Acting cute isn't going to cut it, you little rascal. Go. To. Sleep!"

Unthinkably, Smore laughed. He laughed so hard, he began to wriggle and move about as though he was dancing. It was the first time Mark had made the baby laugh, so his heart swelled with a sense of achievement.

“Ha! Finally, smiling at me now, hmm? And I thought you were always going to act stoic and icy to me forever!” he remarked. “Now, let’s get back to the subject, shall we? When do you finally want to sleep? At least, give me an expected time so that I can be mentally prepared. Otherwise, you being difficult like this is just pure torment to the mind!”

Of course, Smore could not answer his father’s interrogation. After laughing to himself, he stuffed his hand into his mouth, suckled, and did all of his usual adorable antics.

Watching him grow up every day brought new kinds of fear and worry to Arianne. Ever since she learned that he had congenital heart disease, her mind had been plagued by dreadful possibilities.

She had become incredibly sensitive to the baby’s condition, for she worried that something might happen to him. Smore was just too young to tell his mother that he was feeling discomfort.

The thought of it made Arianne’s heart ache.

It was eleven at night when Mark finally proved himself the winner in their race to tire one another out. After gingerly placing the baby on the bed, Mark eagerly turned around and threw himself over Arianne, the two of them rolling to the farthest edge. “Finally, I can hug you for a change!”

Arianne gestured for him to be a little quieter in his action before unbuttoning all of his clothes…

Chapter 975

With the lights turned off, the room became too dim for Mark to see the alluring contours of her body. Still, his tactile senses became sensitive to the suppleness of her skin.

Perhaps all these nights neglecting the physical aspects of love made today's act noticeably shorter than it usually was. As passion eased, Mark breathed into her ear, "I'm a bit… tired…"

Arianne had not yet recovered from her daze. "Mm, understandable. You've spent your whole evening handling Smore. I would have been just as tired if it were me. Go to sleep."

The lingering yearning in him prompted him to nibble her earlobe. "Fine."

Arianne waited until Mark was soundly asleep before pulling out her phone. She had not had the time to check her notifications just now. Just as she thought, Tiffany's texts were there. Apparently, her best friend had already booked Alejandro's time for Arianne. The two of them were to meet each other in a café by tomorrow noontime.

Arianne had not expected Tiffany to be so efficient in arranging the meeting, but either way, she could not let Mark know about this lest he forbid her from going.

She replied to Tiffany's text with an "ok!" emoji and was surprised when Tiffany appeared online. 'Ari, I'm a bit too excited to go to sleep. Can we video?'

Arianne glanced at the deeply slumbering father and son on the bed before quietly leaving the bedroom, descending the stairs with equally light movements. There, she accepted Tiffany's video call invitation. Judging from her friend's background surrounding, Arianne deduced instantly, "Staying the night in the West Residence, huh? Is Jackson with you?"

Tiffany beamed proudly. "After learning about my pregnancy, my man got so scared about the possibility of accidentally hurting me that he kicked himself to the guest room! I've never seen him act so cautiously, Ari! Oh, he said he wants me back in the HQ, but I don't think I want to go there yet, 'cause my current skill level is only good enough to be the assistant director for this branch. I'll probably die if I hold the same position in HQ. Speaking of which! I told him to shut his mouth about my pregnancy, too, because… well, Eric. We should best wait until Eric's thing is over."

Arianne sighed. "That's the right thing to do, alright. But take care of yourself, okay? You're expecting now. Don't skip checkups, don't drink, and definitely don't tire yourself out."

Tiffany, however, was not at all worried. "Come on, hon, right now? I have zero problems or discomfort! The most that's changed is that I've become a lil' picky about food, but it's nothing like how your pregnancy played out. Oh, and a side question. I've only been carrying this baby for about two months, so why the hell do I seem to have, well, a little potbelly? It doesn't feel like muscles when I pat it, 'cause it feels a bit tougher. But I remember you only getting this baby bump a few months after conception!"

Arianne had Tiffany face the camera toward her belly to let the former observe it through the video-call. After scanning it for a while, even Arianne became suspicious. "Huh, you're right. It really is a bit… too big. Could it be that you're having twins or triplets or even more? The last time I had a pair of twins, my baby bump came out sooner than expected, too."

Her conjecture rocked Tiffany hard. "N-No way! Oi, don't jinx me like that. I don't want to have twins or triplets or what-have-you! Only one baby is fine, 'cause I can still hop around and all that. But more than one? Just hearing about it makes me weak! So no! No jinxing! It can't be true! I mean, delivering twins through the natural way is not at all an easy job. I've never delivered a child before, man. I don't want to die so early!"

Arianne had Tiffany fish out the report and read it right there and then, since most pregnancy checkups could easily detect the number of children early. Tiffany quickly pulled out the paper and let her friend read it.

Arianne read it for a moment and instantly declared, “You’ve got only one baby, Tiffie. So it’s official—you’ve become fat.”

A smile flitted through Tiffany’s lips. “Would it kill you to sound slightly less derogatory? Hell, lemme tell you, the scales actually told me my numbers have gone down quite a few pounds, okay? So, I don’t know how this potbelly-thingy magically came in! Anyway, I texted Alejandro just now to inform him about your plan to meet him tomorrow. I thought he would ignore me, but he answered me after all! So yeah, go meet him tomorrow.”

Mentioning her secret meet-up with Alejandro made Arianne shoot a guilty look toward the stairs, as though afraid that Mark might overhear her. “I know, I know. Anyway, go and sleep early, you. Please don’t make a loud hoot about this. Unless you want Mark to overhear my plan and choke me to death. Also, stop being so damn giddy! If you really must scream about how happy you are, then go scream at your man! I’ve grown old, Tiffie. I can no longer handle the excitability of you young whippersnappers.”

The video call ended, yet Tiffany still could not fall asleep. She never realized it before, but once one made their first, most courageous leap, the world would suddenly turn into a much more hopeful place. And right now, the one thing Tiffany wanted to do the most was to look at Jackson and feast upon his handsome features while telling herself that, yes, this beautiful man was still hers.

How can she not be thrilled?

Chapter 976

She took advantage of the silence in the night and crept to the door of the guest bedroom. “Jackson… Are you asleep?”

Less than two seconds later, the room door opened. Jackson appeared, barefoot and staring at her. “What?”

She buried herself into his arms. “We’re back together again. Aren’t you happy? Why aren’t you reacting?”

He pursed his lips. “What reaction did you expect from me? What kind of reaction could I possibly have at a time like this? That’s enough, go to bed. Get an early night’s rest. It’s late. Staying up like this would be bad for the baby.”

Tiffany was extremely disappointed. It was as if the fire in her loins had been doused by a block of ice. “Fine, I’m going. I hate you!”

Jackson rubbed his eyes as he watched her go back into her room. In reality, he was wide awake from excitement. He leaped off the bed to open the door and forgot to put on his slippers when he heard her voice. Except… He was too afraid to sleep with her. Only god knew how much she was suffering.

The next morning, Mark headed to the office for work. Arianne snuck out with Aristotle later on. She didn’t dare ask Henry to drive her, afraid that he might inform Mark. Hence, she hailed a cab along the street. She arrived ten minutes earlier than the agreed meeting time at the coffee shop. She had initially thought that Alejandro would arrive later. To her surprise, he had arrived earlier than her.

“Mrs. Tremont, please have a seat. Would you like something to drink?” Alejandro seemed like the perfect gentleman. He even smiled gently at the sight of Aristotle.

“Just a glass of cold water will do. Mr. Smith, I’m sorry for taking up your time today. I think… You might have an idea of why I’ve asked you here today,” Arianne sat down and spoke calmly.

“For land?” Alejandro asked, after some thought.

She nodded. “Right. No one can say much about your attitude in the business world, but I was hoping that you could consider making some allowances. When it comes to land, if one makes a purchase at too high of a price and fails to rake in profits… Well, we’re all intelligent adults, so there’s no need to… give yourselves extra losses for the sake of rivalry, right?”

Alejandro laughed. “Haha… Rivalry? No, you’re overthinking it. However… Since you’ve asked, I’ll do as you say. Your baby is adorable. Don’t forget to tell him to call me ‘uncle’ once he starts talking.”

He agreed? So easily? Arianne felt slight suspicion. However, on second thought, Alejandro had moved here from Ayashe to expand his business. His opposition against Mark was undoubtedly a way to establish authority. Mark was considered number one in the capital.

Mark certainly wasn’t going to ask for land. Only she, Mrs. Tremont, could handle matters concerning his dignity. To Alejandro, this was all the same. Alejandro probably felt very pleased with himself and felt that the Tremonts had conceded.

She had not noticed the last part of Alejandro’s sentence. She thought that he was teasing the baby.

After some thought, she said, “Could we please keep this from Mark? I did not tell him about my meeting with you today. If not, then let’s pretend that I was never here.”

Chapter 977

Alejandro agreed easily as well. “Sure. I won’t tell him. If there’s nothing else, I’m going to go.”

Arianne nodded. She got up, carrying the baby, and watched him leave.

As Jett pushed his wheelchair out, she stared at Alejandro’s side profile, which felt strangely familiar. However, there was nothing familiar about his appearance. It felt strange. She carefully recalled every detail of her interaction with Alejandro. From his voice to his intonation, or the way he moved and gestured, it all felt foreign to her. But why did it also feel so familiar?

She couldn’t figure it out, so she stopped trying. It was a long trip, the coffee shop had great air-conditioning, and she was tired. It was a great opportunity to rest and relax…

Alejandro’s expression immediately turned cold when he got back into the car. His tightly clasped fingers betrayed his state of nervousness.

“Why did you meet her, if you’re so worried about getting found out?” Jett asked softly. “I could have met her on your behalf.”

Alejandro heaved a sigh of relief. “The more I try to hide, the more suspicious it would seem. Now that I think of it, Tiffany is the one who knows me best, but she’s too insensitive. She would never relate me to

a certain someone. Arianne is different. She's very observant. She notices every tiny detail. One slip up on my end and she would have some sort of clue. Birds of a feather really do flock together. She and Mark are both cautious and intelligent. Luckily, Mark doesn't know much about my past… But this will be the last time. I won't see her again. It's too risky."

Do birds of a feather really flock together? Jett doubted the statement, for Tiffany and Jackson were obviously very different. However, he did not dare mention it. At this point, mentioning Tiffany and Jackson would be equivalent to digging his grave. "Then… are you really going to let Mark have his land?"

Alejandro nodded. "That's right, but I'm not doing it for him."

"Then what's the reason?" Jett asked, curious.

Alejandro closed his eyes and smiled. "The baby is pretty cute."

Jett's mind swam with questions. The baby was cute? What kind of an answer was that? Besides… That smile on the edge of Alejandro's lips was tinged with gentleness. Why did it feel so strange? Based on his impression, Alejandro smiled a lot, but it was usually a cold smile, a smile hidden with ulterior motives, or a hypocritical smile. He had never smiled gently before.

After a while, Alejandro suddenly said, "Get some maternity supplements and send them over to Tiffany. Have them delivered to the West family residence."

Jett's heart skipped half a beat. He was shocked. The woman whom Alejandro had been eyeing for so long had gotten back together with Jackson again. Furthermore, she was staying at the West family

residence, pregnant with Jackson's child. Yet, he was sending her maternity supplements! The more he thought about it, the more terrifying his actions felt to him.

…

Tiffany stayed at the West family residence that weekend, as Lillian said that she would not be at home. She slept very late last night, as she was consumed with excitement. Since no one had tried to wake her, she ended up waking up very late. At 10AM, Jackson brought her breakfast in bed. "Wake up, it's time for breakfast."

She rubbed her eyes and checked the time. "What the f*ck? Why didn't you wake me? Isn't it inappropriate of me to wake up late in your house?"

Chapter 978

Jackson's eyes shone with a smile. He put a helping of nutrient-rich congee to her lips. "It's fine. My mom's eager to feed you and let you sleep to your heart's content. It's like raising a pig. The fatter you are, the happier she'll be. She's already taking care of your lunch, while you're having your breakfast right now. I'm her son, yet even I've never enjoyed such treatment."

Tiffany's heart was overflowing with sweetness. "Why is your mom so nice to me? She's nicer to me than my own mother. I'm just overwhelmed by her favor."

"I think she's more eager to have you as her daughter, more so than her daughter-in-law," he said, half-jokingly. "She's always wished that I was a daughter instead, calling me a wet blanket demon, and apparently, I'm not as considerate as a daughter would be. I think you're more of a killjoy than I am."

Tiffany smiled as she drank the congee, not even using a spoon. Her appetite was great. She finished the entire bowl, which Jackson took downstairs for her too. She was living the life of a queen; it kind of scared her.

She saw Summer's smiling face when she arrived downstairs. Tiffany knew that Jackson must have told her that they had gotten back together. As expected, Summer was more zealous than usual. She waved at her. "Come and have a seat. Would you like something to eat?"

Eat? Tiffany's smile froze in place. "I've just eaten. I'm not hungry. No thank you." Why did it seem like Summer was trying to stuff her with food all the time? Was this how it felt to receive a mother's concern? She heavily suspected that Summer would soon turn her into a 180kg fatty.

Summer stroked her belly. "A healthy body means a healthy baby. You'll have a difficult pregnancy in the future if you don't take care of your health. It wouldn't be easy for you to fix it next time. Now that everything's alright between you and Jackson, would you like to come back to work? South Park is too far away. Taking a trip back every weekend would be very exhausting."

Tiffany nearly thought that Summer had found out about her pregnancy when she touched her belly. She relaxed when she heard the latter part of her sentence. She had long prepared a script. "It's fine, meeting once every weekend will help keep the relationship fresh. What if we get tired of each other when we get married? Women can't prioritise family all the time. I have to work hard and have a career of my own. Just like you when you were my age."

Her sucking up greatly pleased Summer. "You're right. Jackson can always visit you anyway. We'll talk about moving back after the wedding. There's no need to rush. Go and have fun with Jackson. You should go out more often instead of locking yourself in the house all day. It's the weekend; don't waste it at home."

Tiffany smiled and agreed. It was rather stressful to stay at home anyway. She couldn't keep stuffing her face with food, so she might as well go out and have some fun. Suddenly, her phone rang. It was a call from Alejandro. She jumped with fright and quickly stepped aside to answer the call. "Hello? What's up? Did you meet up with Ari yet?"

Alejandro's calm voice answered her through the receiver. "Yes. I've asked Jett to send you some things. You can collect them at the gate."

She walked out apprehensively. She saw Jett's car parked outside the gate. She was just about to ask about the package, but he had already hung up.

She stepped forward. Jett took the items out of the car trunk. They were mostly nutrient-rich supplements. She was stunned. "Why is he giving me these things?"

Jett put all of the things on the ground, as there were simply too many of them. A pregnant lady like her couldn't possibly move them on her own. "It's not my place to question Mr. Smith's orders. These are from Mr. Smith, so just accept them. Aren't gifts normal among friends?"

Tiffany was stunned. Didn't Alejandro leave immediately after he had found out about her pregnancy, without even touching his own food? Wasn't it because he was interested in her? Did he only see her as a friend and nothing more after all? He'd sent her maternity supplements after discovering her pregnancy… Did that mean that she wouldn't have to feel apprehensive toward him anymore?

Jett drove his car away before she could recollect her thoughts.

Then, Jackson walked out and saw the items on the ground. He frowned. "Who sent these?" he asked.

Chapter 979

Tiffany grew nervous. “Uh… Alejandro. I don’t know why.”

Jackson’s expression sunk. “He knew about your pregnancy before I did? And he knows that you’re staying with me and delivered supplements to you? These are all maternity supplements…”

She scratched her head nervously. “It’s not what you think! I told him first because I thought, what if he’s actually interested in me? This was the perfect way to get him to back off. I don’t know how he found out about me staying here though. I didn’t tell him!”

Her explanation did nothing to soothe him. Jackson’s face was just as sullen as ever. “What am I supposed to think? Am I supposed to thank him for taking such good care of my woman and baby, if it is mine?”

Tiffany was upset. “What do you mean ‘if it is mine’? Are you implying that it might not be yours? Fine. This baby is Alejandro’s. Are you happy? I had sex with him long ago. That’s why he’s so nice to me. Why have I gotten back together with you though? He has money and power too. What’s wrong with having the baby with its biological father?”

After a short altercation, the air between them calmed down. Jackson pursed his lips and lowered his head. “Pretend I never said a word. Take these gifts then, since he’s already delivered them. There’s nothing to argue about.”

Tiffany scoffed. “It’s not like these supplements are exclusive to pregnant women. Your mother and my mother are old. Why can’t they enjoy these supplements too? I’m not throwing these away; there’s no need to anyway. He’s treating me like a friend. Why should I kick him away? You’re upset over Alejandro

alone. If I were to dig out your past mistakes, I would have ten thousand heart attacks! Don't worry, I'll do a DNA test for the baby, specifically for your assurance!"

…

That night, Mark dragged his tired body back to the Tremont Estate. He had arrived home late again, and it was a Saturday too. Arianne's heart ached, for he couldn't even enjoy his weekend. That was another one of her reasons for meeting Alejandro.

She worried that Alejandro had broken his promise and told Mark about their meeting. She observed the look on Mark's face before confirming that there was nothing out of the ordinary and finally relaxed. "Have you had dinner?"

Mark nodded slightly. "Yes. I'm going to take a shower. I'm exhausted today, so I don't think I can spend time with you. I'll take a break tomorrow. I don't have to go to the office, so I'll be home all day."

"Any improvement on the issues with land?" Arianne carefully asked.

Mark paused ever so slight just as he arrived at the stairs, but he did not stop. "Yes, we've managed to get a pretty good piece of land, solving our problems easily."

Deep down, Arianne knew exactly what had happened. She let out a sigh of relief. "That's good. I'm glad it's settled. Get an early night's rest."

Mark slowed his pace. “Alejandro discarded that piece of land. I’ve checked. That’s why he never showed up to fight with me.”

Arianne’s breath caught in her throat. “Uh… Really? It doesn’t matter who has discarded it. Maybe he has too many in store, so he needs some money for turnover…”

He turned around and looked at her. “Did you really think that you could fool me? Don’t forget, I raised you. Why did you meet with him? Why did you surrender to him? I haven’t lost. I simply don’t need to fight with him. You don’t need to meddle in the company’s affairs. Can’t you just stay home and take care of the baby?”

Chapter 980

His tone was a little harsh. Arianne was in shock. “I-I… Why do I have to always stay home and take care of the baby? You’ve been so busy everyday because of the issues at work that we rarely ever get to see you. I was just trying to share your burden. In this house, no one is confined to just one job, just like how you take care of Smore too when you have the time. Why can’t I share the burden? I don’t think I’m surrendering at all, and my dignity certainly hasn’t been swept under the rug. The problem is solved. Isn’t that a good thing?”

Mark’s emotions were slightly unhinged. “Forget it. I don’t want to talk about this anymore. Don’t concern yourself with these issues anymore.”

Arianne did not expect this reaction from him. She had considered the possibility of getting exposed, but it still made her feel uncomfortable. She never intended on being a good little housewife. She had done this for him. Did he have to display such a big reaction? Was ego that important to men? Besides, there was no need to split hairs over this issue.

“Ari, Mr. Tremont tends to have a bad temper sometimes. He’s probably too exhausted,” Mary carefully consoled. “Don’t mind him. He’ll definitely try to cheer you up once he’s in a better mood. Don’t be angry, or you’ll delectate. What if you run out of milk? Aristotle still needs your breast milk, you know.”

Arianne didn’t answer. She was feeling disgruntled. She refused to sleep in their room, as she was still sulking. She took Aristotle and slept in the baby room instead. He could sulk on his own! What’s the worst that could happen? They would simply ignore each other. She could take it!

The next morning.

Jackson volunteered to drive Tiffany back to South Park. He would drive himself home in the afternoon. This was because he was too worried about her driving on her own. Witnessing her skills in reversing her car had been terrifying enough for him.

The pair had had a fight yesterday over Alejandro’s gifts. At first, Tiffany was still a little upset, but when she saw how Jackson was willing to go back and forth the entire day just for her, her heart softened. “Won’t you be tired? I can drive. It’s no problem. I can go back on my own. Or maybe you could stay a while after dropping me off? You’ll lose an entire day. It’s too much trouble.”

Even though Jackson wasn’t smiling, he was in a better mood. “Stop dilly-dallying. The sooner I drop you off, the sooner I can come home. I’ll pick you up every Friday and drive you home for the weekend. We won’t be able to keep this a secret once your stomach grows. You’ll have to move back home by then. However, this will be our arrangement for the time being. Take care of yourself over there. Call me if you need anything.”

Tiffany tip-toed and kissed him on the cheek. “Okay.”

Meanwhile, things between Arianne and Mark were still rocky. Both ignored one another, and they were clearly in the middle of a cold war. Unfortunately, Mark was home the entire day today, so he was forced to face Arianne's sullen face.

Arianne completely ignored his existence. She went to have breakfast on her own after feeding Aristotle. Her expression was so cold that it could turn anyone to ice.

Mark, who was sitting across from her at the dining table, would glance at her from time to time. He made no attempts to start a conversation. He knew that she did not sleep in their room last night, so of course, he knew that she was furious.

After breakfast, Arianne took Aristotle to the garden. The weather in the morning wasn't so hot nowadays, and it was nice enough for a stroll. Mark had nothing else to do, so he buried himself in his study to… stare into space. Yes, he wanted to hold his son, but he couldn't bring himself to snatch him away from her. The look on her face made him feel very uncomfortable, so it was better to hide away. Even though it was very boring… and unbearable…

Mary found it quite hilarious when she saw all of this. She secretly mumbled to Arianne, "I think Mr. Tremont will crack first. He kept sneaking glances at you during breakfast."

Arianne scoffed. "Let him. Let him glance at me as much as he wants. We'll see which he prefers—his pride or a peaceful life."