Ruling 981

Chapter 981

When it was almost noon, Mark could no longer hold back. He changed his clothes and went downstairs. It seemed like he was about to leave the house. “Where’s my black tie?” When he asked about his tie, he did not look at Mary nor Arianne. However, apart from him, there were only two of them present. It was clear he only wanted Arianne’s attention. Alas, Arianne did not have any intention to bother with him.

In order to save Mark from further embarrassment, Mary quickly said, “Why don’t I help you look for it?”

He became angry. “No need!” After that, he grabbed his collar in frustration and left the house directly.

Arianne smirked slightly. “How dare you argue with me! You’ve always dressed up nicely and properly before. How can you just leave the house with your collar wide open now? I want to see how long you’ll hold onto your opinion.”

Mary smiled helplessly and said, “Men are usually prideful and have a high self-esteem. This is especially true for someone like sir. He has always been like this since young. He has his own thoughts and opinions. You secretly met Alejandro without his knowledge, it’s only natural that he’s upset. Anyway, it’s fine. He won’t be able to hold onto his temper for long since he’s a gentleman. What’s important is that the problem is solved.”

Initially, Mark decided to rest since it was a Sunday. However, now that he had left the house, and there was no one in the company, he dragged Eric to a golf course.

Eric said teasingly, “It’s rare for you to have a day off. Why aren’t you at home, accompanying your wife and child? Why did you ask to meet me? Could it be that Jackson asked you to meet me since he canceled on me to send Tiffany off? To be honest, I don’t feel bored being alone.”

Mark sneered. “I don’t have to accompany my wife and kid. They think that I’m unnecessary, and they don’t like to see me there.”

Eric chuckled. “What? Have you been given the cold shoulder? What annoying thing did you do this time?”

Mark did not want to speak about the upsetting incident so he said, “Forget it. I don’t want to talk about it. How’s your condition recently? Have you been going to the hospital regularly?”

Eric paused for a while before he replied, “Yes, I take my medicine every day. If I try hard enough, I can pass for a normal person. I don’t have to spend the rest of my days in bed. I’m quite satisfied with my condition now. The doctor specially prescribed painkillers for me as well. I don’t even need the medicine to treat my illness anymore.”

Mark fell silent when he heard that. He held the golf club, frustrated. Then, he positioned himself well and swung his golf club. Perhaps, he was not in a good mood, that was why he did not perform well. After that, he casually threw the golf club aside and sat down to rest. “Eric, how do I coax a woman, especially one who’s so much younger than me? It’s so easy to make her happy when she was younger. I only had to bring her delicious food or some funny things. Now, it seems like I can’t make her happy no matter what I do.”

Eric shrugged his shoulders slightly. “Like you said, that was when she was younger. Women, nowadays, like luxurious goods like bags and jewelry. Apart from that, you can resolve all kinds of issues with a

bouquet of flowers. As long as you didn't cheat on her, these things should be more than enough to solve your problems."

Mark pursed his lips, clearly disagreeing with Eric's words. "If I told you that Ari doesn't own much jewelry, and she has less than three bags that cost more than $1,000 and $500, do you still think those things will be able to make her happy? She's a woman, but it seems like she doesn't have much interest in those things. She doesn't enjoy spending money as well. She didn't buy expensive clothes for herself, but she's willing to spend money on the kid."

"Then what does she like?" Eric asked.

Mark was tongue-tied. 'What does Arianne like? It seems like she doesn't show much preference for anything. If I really get down to it, it seems like there's just Smore… She doesn't have anything she likes. It's kinda hard to break down her defenses and gain back her affections. This is quite a conundrum.'

Chapter 982

Eric laughed so hard that he could not catch his breath. He could not even hold his golf club properly. "How's it possible that you don't even know what she likes? You've spent more than ten years with her now. As your friend, I don't think you're too arrogant or self-centered. However, you also need to prove to me you're not like that. Loving a person is much more than just holding her dearly in your heart. How could it be? You don't even know what she likes. You've been living with her for more than ten years now. As your friend, I don't think that you're someone who's too arrogant and self-centered. But you need to prove it to me too. Loving a person doesn't mean only holding her dearly in your heart. You need to understand her as well. However, there's something I noticed. Since you raised her, she resembles you in certain aspects. Most people don't understand her as well. However, you're certainly able to understand her since she's like you. Try to think about this from a different perspective."

‘Think about it from a different perspective?’ Mark was soon lost in his thoughts. ‘If I’m Arianne, what would I want? How can I get her to care about me again?’ He did not know how to deal with her. Compared to the matters at work, she was much more difficult to deal with.

Meanwhile, Jackson drove a few hours to send Tiffany back to the apartment that she rented in South Park. The apartment was not big, and she had just moved in. Moreover, there were still many things that had not been tidied up yet. Some of her things were still in boxes. It was rather messy.

Although Jackson was not particularly obsessed with cleanliness, he liked to see a clean and tidy place just like White Water Bay Villa where he currently lived. It was spacious and minimalistic with not many things around. For him, that was the definition of a clean and tidy place.

As soon as he entered the apartment, a frown appeared on his face. “Are you always busy? Your living place is too messy. It seems like you don’t even have time to clean up.”

Tiffany rolled her eyes at him. “Yes, I’m always busy. Do you think I have so much free time on my hands? If you dislike it, I won’t even offer you a glass of water, and you can leave now.”

Jackson sat down on the sofa with a look of resignation. He put her clothes that were strewn on the sofa aside. “It’s really hard to imagine you’re able to take care of yourself with how things look around here. I’ll speak to the people in the company. You don’t have to work overtime no matter how busy you are. After all, you’ll be transferred back in less than two years. If you think that you can’t handle the post as an assistant director in the headquarters, I can make some other arrangements for you.”

Tiffany poured a glass of water for him. “Drink some water. What’s for lunch? I don’t have anything here. Let’s order takeout. I’m tired, and it’s hot. I don’t want to go out and eat.”

Jackson's frown deepened. "How can I be rest assured if you eat takeout every day, especially since you're pregnant now? If I have it my way, I don't want you to stay here a second longer. Why don't you go home with me? It doesn't matter if you work or not."

Tiffany had already expected Jackson to nag her. So she said to placate him, "Fine, I'll cook for myself. I'll even take some time to go shopping for groceries. If I don't work overtime, I'll have time to cook. In the morning, I even have working meals in the company. I'm not as weak as you think I am. I'm an adult, you know? Now that my work is taking off, I'm, naturally, unwilling to give up my job now. Ari wants to work as well after she gave birth to the baby. Aren't the Tremonts not lacking in anything. You won't understand how it feels. If it's not Smore's condition that isn't very good, she would've started work by now."

Suddenly, Jackson saw the sunlight being reflected from something near the water dispenser. Upon closer inspection, it seemed to be a brooch. Tiffany did not have the habit of wearing a brooch. He got up and bent down to pick it up. It was a man's brooch, and the shiny thing was a diamond. At this moment, he felt his heart sink. Some other man had come to the apartment first before he did.

When Tiffany saw Jackson standing in front of the water dispenser in a daze, she asked, "What's the matter? What are you doing?"

Chapter 983

"Nothing…" Jackson pocketed the brooch and acted like nothing had happened. "I won't stay for lunch. Just order food for yourself. I have some work to deal with tomorrow morning so I'll go home early to rest."

Upon hearing this, Tiffany was slightly disappointed. People always said that absence made the heart fonder. They had just gotten back together, but they did not seem to be very close or intimate with one

another. “You’re leaving now? You’re leaving so soon after giving me a ride home. Why don’t you want to stay with me a little longer?” She paused for a moment before she finally said, “It’s fine. I know you’re extremely busy. Just leave. I don’t want to make you stay and bother you.”

On the way home, Jackson’s mood was just like the cloudy sky. It was fine when he sent her home. Now the weather had changed. Soon, there would be a thunderstorm. He knew he was not wrong. That was a man’s brooch. He thought to himself, ‘Whose is it? Is it Alejandro’s? Did Alejandro go to her apartment? Did anything happen between them? Is that child his?’

The more he dwelled on that, the more frustrated and annoyed he became. He could not help but tighten his grip on the steering wheel. The speed of the car increased tremendously as well.

He had slightly calmed down when his phone started ringing all of a sudden. He put on his Bluetooth device and answered the phone. “Hello?”

It was Eric at the other end of the phone. “Are you on your way home? Did you give her a ride home? Would you like to have dinner together tonight?”

He said casually, “Yes, I did send her home. I’m on my way back now. See you later.”

At night, the three men met at White Water Bay Café. Mark did not want to go home, and Jackson’s mood was no better than his. Eric was the only one who appeared rather normal.

There were only three of them in the private room. It was rather quiet. While they were waiting for the food to be served, Jackson took the brooch out. “I picked it up at the apartment that Tiffany rented. It’s a man’s brooch, but it’s not mine. She doesn’t know about it… I don’t know what I should do now.”

Eric and Mark looked at each other. They were puzzled. “Are you saying she’s cheating on you? Didn’t you just get back together?”

Jackson looked suitably upset. “Yes. Moreover, she’s pregnant now. I even doubt if the baby is mine. After all, we haven’t been with each other for more than two months… It’s hard to say. Moreover, Alejandro even asked someone to send some health supplements for pregnant women to the West family residence yesterday. What a b*stard! Is he trying to tell me the baby is his? Alejandro even learned about her pregnancy before I did!”

Mark remained calm. His mind was filled with thoughts about how to speak to Arianne and to end the fight between them. He casually said, “Why don’t you just ask her whose brooch is it? If she’s not guilty, she’ll tell you who went there before you without any hesitation. This brooch is not cheap. Not anyone can afford it. People can’t lie if you look closely at their expressions. Speak to her.”

Jackson hesitated. “Ask her directly? Then, I shouldn’t have pocketed the brooch without speaking to her about it then, right? If… I’m saying if the kid isn’t mine, and she did sleep with Alejandro, what should I do then? It’s difficult for us to get back together. What if we break up again after everything? This… I’m afraid this is the last time...Then why did I sneak the brooch out without her knowledge? If… I’m talking about the possibility. If that kid is indeed not mine, and she did sleep with Alejandro before, what should I do? It’s hard for me to get back together with her again. How could we break up with each other again just like that? This… I’m afraid that this is the last time… I don’t want to be like this. I need to think about it properly.”

Eric sighed. “If she did sleep with Alejandro when both of you were broken up, so what? You weren’t together. It’s none of your business who she was with. I don’t think anything is wrong with that as long as she doesn’t do it when she’s in a relationship with you. Regarding the baby, well, you need to deal with it yourself. It’s inappropriate for me to say too much about it. What if the baby is indeed yours?”

Even then, Jackson still felt upset and uneasy. He was at a loss about what to do. It was the first time he felt utterly helpless and lost in a relationship. His future seemed bleak to him at the moment, “Both of you only know how to eat for free. You should give me some suggestions. Don’t say things that make me feel uneasy. Regarding the brooch, what should I do?”

Mark and Eric had similar opinions. “Ask her directly. Video call her now and ask her about it. Don’t hesitate. We’ll help you to observe her expressions at the side and give you advice.”

Chapter 984

After being persuaded by Mark and Eric, Jackson no longer hesitated and made the video call.

Tiffany had just gotten out of the shower and was doing yoga on the bed. Fortunately, she was not wearing any risque pajamas. Otherwise, he would not have let the others look at her. She appeared normal as she asked, “What’s wrong? Didn’t you say that you want to go home early to rest? Why are you in the restaurant? Go home early after your meal and don’t drink.”

Jackson took the brooch out and showed it to her. “Do you recognize this?”

Tiffany looked at the screen and scrutinized it for a moment before she said, “I don’t. Is it a brooch? Is it yours? I don’t wear such things. How would I know?”

He continued saying, “I found it at your place near the water dispenser. It’s not mine, but it’s a man’s brooch. I didn’t ask you at that time. Now that I think about it, it’s better if I ask you about it.”

Tiffany appeared shocked. She thought to herself, 'A man's brooch near the water dispenser? Only Alejandro came to my place once. It must be his.' Then, she said to Jackson, "You… Do you want to hear the truth or do you want me to lie? Don't get angry if I tell you about it…"

Jackson's heart sank slightly. "Tell me then… I won't be angry as long as it's the truth."

Tiffany said rather awkwardly. "I think it should be Alejandro's. He came to South Park to have a meal with me. When he gave me a ride home, he came up to my apartment and stayed for a few minutes. He didn't even drink the tea I made for him. He lingered for a while near the water dispenser. It might be his. I'm telling the truth. I honestly don't even remember seeing this brooch. However, apart from you, he's the only one that has been to the apartment…"

As expected, it did belong to Alejandro. Jackson took a deep breath. "Alright… How about this? I'll help you to return it to him later. What do you think?"

Tiffany looked rather uneasy as she said, "Sure… Just return it to its owner… You can deal with it however you want."

After Jackson hung up, he looked at Mark and Eric. "What do you think?"

Eric analyzed the situation and said, "She stammered a little, and she was slightly nervous. However, I don't think it's because she feels guilty. She's probably worried that you might misunderstand her."

Mark said, "I agree with Eric. I have nothing to add. You just try to figure it out when you return it to Alejandro."

Jackson said rather grumpily. “All of you really came just for a free meal. You’re all useless. Hurry up and eat. We’ll leave and go home after we’re done eating. I’ll meet Alejandro tomorrow to sound him out… If the baby is his, I’ll beat him up until I ruin the upper part of his body!” He did not say those vicious words out of anger. He would really do it. No one would have their limbs intact after being beaten up by him.

After the meal, Mark stayed in the car for another twenty minutes after he reached Tremont Estate before entering the house. It was still early, and Arianne was definitely not asleep yet. He was out the entire afternoon, and it was raining cats and dogs when he was on his way home. However, she did not even call him or text him to check on him. Was she not worried about him at all?

When he entered the house, the butler, Henry, whispered something in his ear. “We discovered something about Alejandro.”

Chapter 985

His facial expression turned solemn immediately. “We’ll talk about it in the study.”

When he passed by the living room, Arianne was changing Smore’s diaper. She did not even deign to glance at him. He was quite upset because of that. So much so that he had to take a few deep breaths to suppress his emotions.

After they entered the study, he sat down on the chair. “What did you find out?”

Henry, the butler, reported truthfully. “The Smiths did quite a good job in concealing the incident so it’s rather difficult if we want to get to the bottom of it. According to some of the clues we found recently, it seems like Alejandro had a minor accident around half a year to a year ago. It seems that he was admitted to the hospital because of a gunshot. Moreover, the hospital caught fire, and his face was slightly burned. He underwent corrective surgery recently so the burns could not be clearly seen now. Although his appearance might be different from before, the difference shouldn’t be too vast.

“His legs were paralyzed from a car accident a few years ago. Besides, the Smith family’s background is rather complicated. The brothers and cousins fought among themselves in a dog-eat-dog manner. Initially, Alejandro had more than ten brothers, but he’s the only one left now. Alejandro’s also an illegitimate son, he didn’t grow up with the Smiths. He was picked up to return to the Smiths when he was almost of age. Master Don doesn’t care much about him. If it’s not for the fact that he has no heir now, Alejandro might never get a chance at all.

“There’s no doubt he had been secretly scheming. Otherwise, how did he become the sole heir of the Smiths? He’s the least remarkable of the sons. He seems like a rather dangerous man so we should be careful. Something happened to his last brother… His brother died the year Alejandro got into the accident. There’s no doubt it’s related to him.”

Mark touched his chin lightly and mulled over it for a moment before he asked, “What country was he in when he had an accident?”

Henry was momentarily stunned. “This… I’m not too sure about this. We only know that it’s roughly someplace in Nafaeth.”

The information was not helpful so Mark no longer asked about it. “Alright, I know what to do. Have you been home the entire day? Ari… What did she do today?”

Butler Henry replied, “Madam didn’t do much. She took care of her child, played with her phone for a while, but she didn’t go out. By the way, she asked me about the progress of refurbishing the Wynn Mansion. I was busy looking into Alejandro’s affair recently that I didn’t have the time to take care of that. So I told her that the refurbishing of Wynn Mansion has yet to start. She seemed slightly disappointed so I’ll get on it as soon as possible.”

‘That’s right. The refurbishing of Wynn Mansion! Doesn’t Arianne care about that?’ Mark was suddenly enlightened. “Alright, you don’t have to bother with that now. I’ll take over and take care of it in person. I’ll take time off to supervise the progress in these few days. You just help me get me the best workers.”

Henry Butler responded lightly before he left the study.

An hour later, Mark took the design of the Wynn Mansion and went downstairs. He walked toward Arianne with a cold demeanor. He then threw the design at her. “Some places are too shabby, and we need to design them again. Take a look at it. If you’re dissatisfied with anything, just tell me.”

Arianne peered at him, but she did not look at the design. “Why are you bothering yourself with this? Isn’t Butler Henry taking care of it?”

Mark replied calmly, “I’m dissatisfied with the design so I drew one myself. Besides, Butler Henry is too busy to take care of this.”

Only then she took the design and studied it. “Fine. It’s good no matter what. You can do it however you want. After all, I’ve got no time since I’m taking care of the baby. Otherwise, I would’ve done it by myself.”

Chapter 986

Both sides were at their coldest, least cooperative attitudes, and it was fanning the growing frustration within Mark's chest.

"This restoration project is going to cost at least $100,000 just for the most basic repairs, and this is only the gross estimates! For a house like that, a house worth around $1.5 million, it will demand even more money. It could literally cost millions!" he said.

Arianne understood the reasoning behind mentioning the money. He was trying to make her bend under his will! But she would not yield, so she countered, "Oh, I see. Well, I have a couple of hundred thousand with me, so I'll withdraw all of them for this and borrow the rest of the amount from you. Don't worry, I'll repay you. I may not be working, but I have a side income from my café. One day, I'll return all of my dues."

Mark drew in a deep breath before fuming. "Must you insist on talking to me like this? Who says anything about wanting you to return that money?"

"If that's not the issue, then why mention how much it costs at all?" she retorted flatly.

Mark clenched his jaw. "What do you want, Arianne?"

She turned her attention to Smore and chuckled as she tried to tickle the baby. "Oh, I want nothing. What could I possibly want? Isn't that right, Smore? Mommy's so gentle and kind and hasn't done anything wrong, but some people can be so, so grating, can't they? Going out there and having fun while leaving us alone… Well! Let us ignore such a person and let him sort himself out."

Her flippant attitude peeved Mark, whose patience was nearing its limits. Angered, he snatched Smore away from her. “Fine, I don’t care about what you want. But don’t deprive me of my son!”

Arianne sneered. “Oh, so now I’m the one who’s depriving you of your son, huh? As if you’re not the one who decided to put him aside! Well, then. You want to care for your son so much? Then have him for the night! In fact, have him alone. I’m not going to give a damn. Finally, I can have a good night's sleep tonight! And then tomorrow, I’ll be heading to South Park and go shopping with Tiffie. Don’t bother me unless he’s driven you close to breakdown, Mark. Then maybe I’ll come home and rescue you after I’m content!”

With that, Arianne climbed the stairs and went into their bedroom before shutting the door and bolting its lock. Mark was going to sleep with Smore in the nursery room tonight.

For as long as he refused to yield, Arianne would leave Smore to his care while she would not lift a finger to help. Let’s see if he liked having baby-caretaking as a full-time job! Did he really not realize that taking care of their son was a toilsome job? It did not just wear Arianne out; it also caused her to live in anxiety and worry every day. It restricted her from doing the things that she wanted to do. She could not even scroll through the feed on her phone in peace. And if Smore suddenly acted up while she was on a bathroom break, she had to cut her relieving time down just for him, too! There was no freedom and too many sacrifices—all at her expense.

It was just a small thing, yet Mark talked to her with that tone. And she was just trying to help him!

Arianne did not at all think she had done anything wrong.

Mark looked at Smore in his arms and felt a tidal wave of emotions pouring out of him. Arianne had done it—she had declared war against him. But there was still a silver lining in every cloud, he told

himself, for folk wisdom dictated that women did not have the heart to leave their children behind. Smore might be left to him for now, but Mark would be hard-pressed to believe that Arianne would leave him like this for real. He was sure Arianne would definitely go back to talking to him tomorrow.

Despite spending more than an hour hunched over the blueprint for the restoration project and using it as a chance to communicate with her, she still chose to give him the cold shoulder. That was it! He could not allow her to continue acting out whenever her mood took her without some punishment. Otherwise, this was going to keep happening. Indeed, Mark should try to force her under his thumb like how he used to and remind her why she should be afraid of him!

The next morning, Mark rose from his bed with Smore nearby. It was then that Mary came in with a milk bottle.

“Where’s Arianne?” he asked. “Why isn’t she the one feeding him?”

“Hold on. Didn’t Madam tell you about this?” Mary replied in shock. “She said she’s going to South Park, remember? She left while it was still bright and early out. It has already been at least half an hour since she left. Are you sure you didn’t know that? Anyway, she left plenty of milk in the fridge. It should be enough for a few days… If we’re running low on it, we can even mix breast milk with some formulaic milk, too. Madam prepared those as well—”

However, Mark was taking it very badly. “She… what? She left without my permission? Tell her to come back! Tell—her—to—come—back—now!!”

Mark’s outburst spurred Mary into shoving the milk bottle and Smore into his arms. “Alright, alright! I’m going to, alright? Calm down. Help me feed Master Aristotle while I’m at it, please?”

Chapter 987

A while later, Mary returned with bad news. “I tried calling her, but it didn’t go through! She mentioned that she was looking forward to several days of unfettered revelries, so maybe she’s planning to keep her phone offline throughout so that no one can disturb her…? B-B-But what do we do, then?”

Mark’s lips quivered as raw emotions slowly took control of his features. “Oh, alright… Brava, brava… But two can play that game! Stay out there! Stay out there and don’t come back! I can take care of my son, no problem! I’ll bring him to my company! I don’t, for one, believe that she’s capable of not coming back to see her baby for a month! This time, I’m not going to plead with her to come back!”

Mary had the foresight to duck as far away as possible to save herself. She could see it, as clear as day. The war had begun because both sides refused to concede.

It was eight in the morning. As planned, Jackson West appeared before the main entrance of the Smith Enterprise.

Alejandro’s was a company from Ayashe now trying to carve out a plot for itself in the Capital, and he had only just launched that initiative. Yet, already the office building was dazzling with grandeur. It was a design feat only made possible by a family with deep pockets.

Alejandro’s car had only reached the entrance to the building’s basement parking around eight-twenty, plus in the morning. When Jackson’s car was spotted, Jett asked, “Shall we pull over?”

Alejandro, who was sitting in the backseat, let loose a smirk. “Drive the car next to his. I want to see what he’s up to.”

Jackson and Alejandro rolled their car windows down at the same time. Neither disembarked from the car despite how narrow the space between them was, and any uninformed bystanders might take one look at them and think this was a happy interaction between two very close friends.

The truth could not be anymore removed. At this moment, they were both leveling each other with an incredibly charged stare.

Jackson took out a brooch. “This is your sh*t. Remember where you left it, pal?”

Alejandro calmly received the brooch through his rolled-down window. “No wonder why I couldn’t find it! Now, if I’m not mistaken, you must have found this at Tiffie’s?”

Tiffie?! Jackson was enraged. Instantly, a blizzard stirred in Jackson’s eyes. “Who the hell do you think you are, calling her ‘Tiffie’ like that? She’s my fiancée! Now, if there was ever anything between the two of you, I don’t give a f**k. But now—goddamn now? You’re not to ever get into her proximity, you hear me? Otherwise… get ready to die in the most painful way possible, dog!”

Alejandro chuckled. “Heh. Oooooh, scaaaaary! Yes, I know you’re Mr. Tough Guy while I’m just the new, scrawny kid in town. No need to bully me. Well, if Tiffie has gotten back together with you, then I wish you both well. Don’t overthink about us, Jackson, but have some confidence! If I’m not mistaken, she still has about seven months left before the baby pops out.”

Jackson’s eyes were close to spitting flames. He was ready to get out of his car, but when he opened his door, it knocked into Alejandro’s car door, causing a low, muffled snap.

Alejandro extended his hand outside the window and pushed Jackson's door to a close. "Come on, there's no need for reckless actions, do we? Calm down! Didn't you say you don't give a—pardon my French—f**k if Tiffie and I ever had any relationship? Even if the child wasn't yours, it was still something that happened during the time the two of you split. You could always, I don't know, ask her to undergo an abortion before spending the rest of her life with you! Heh.

"Now," Alejandro finished. "If you'll excuse me, I still have things to do. Adios."

Jett understood his boss's meaning and nervously drove the car to the basement parking lot while he thought about how lucky he was to have stopped the car so close to Jackson's that his car door could not open. If the man managed to disembark and started to fight them, Jett knew that both he and Alejandro combined could not save themselves.

Chapter 988

Jett had to admit that Alejandro thought ahead. He might have given up on removing Tiffany's baby himself, but he knew what to say to fool Jackson into doing the dirty for him. That little conversation just now was enough to plant the idea in Jackson's head that the baby wasn't his, therefore playing on the man's insecurities and banes.

Regardless, the scene from before had made Jett very worried. He had always been Don Smith's subject, for starters, and though he now answered to Alejandro, he was still expected to work for Don. What would happen to him when the truth of his work was out? Don could want him dead, or Alejandro could make him die. Either way, the only fate that awaited him was death. That was how much of a nightmare both sides were.

The worst of all was that Don had been contacting him more and more often lately. This would not bode well.

Jett continued to push Alejandro into the building and took notice that the anxiety level within the building seemed to have dialed up to eleven.

Alejandro himself began to take notice of the strange charge in the air, too. But it was only after they pushed open the door to the office that he was slightly taken aback by Don's presence—that old man had come without any prior notice.

Jett's body froze in mid-motion the moment he saw Don. Summoning his courage, he pushed Alejandro forward and greeted, "Sir."

Don was a very old man, every lock of his hair completely turned silver-white. His hand, currently resting on top of the head of his staff, was palpably shriveled. His wrinkles-marred face, however, displayed an air of severeness that could inspire earnest fear and anxiety within any observer. Regardless of his age, one could still see the charisma of his youth through his worn-down visage and marvel at his intimidating stature.

Don did not come alone. As he was wont to do, he brought along a retinue of bodyguards with him wherever he went. Right now, the office was crowded with at least ten of such guards. A casual bystander would have thought Don was here to collect someone's debt forcefully instead of realizing that he was here to see his grandson.

"Hello, Alejandro. You've been very busy buying land after land, haven't you?" Don began. "The money you spent, too, isn't at all a small sum. Do you think the Smiths' money grows on trees, hmm? Let me tell you this, the Smith family does not recognize a money-squandering clown like you! Cough, cough—"

Before he could finish his sentence, a fit of coughing episode seized him, spurring the butler standing beside him to pat on his back and soothe him quickly.

Alejandro was deadpanned. “I have my plans. Isn’t it fine as long as the money I’ve spent is returned to us? Seriously, are you trying to teach me something, old man?”

Don’s eyes widened in lividity. “Do you want me dead so badly? As soon as you realize my body has gotten a little better, you do all you can to trigger my illness, as though you want me to die out of rage! I know you loathe me in your heart, Alejandro. You hated me for abandoning you and your mother. But now, you’re my only surviving grandchild and the Smiths’ only heir, even if you’re disabled. Everything that belongs to the Smiths is yours, child, but so long as I’m still alive, you answer to me! Unless, of course, you want nothing, to which I then suggest you get your behind out of this family! I want to see how well a disabled crud such as yourself could live without my help!”

A look of contempt shadowed Alejandro’s mien. “But I’m never leaving this family. I’ll keep on waiting until you die, and then everything will be mine. It’ll only take a few years! Nothing I can’t wait for. You continue to be displeased by me and display disgust at my disability, yet you could only rely on me to inherit your empire, don’t you? If I die, the Smith line ends here forever.”

Unthinkably, Don smiled. “Heh, you still have a foul mouth with you, I see. Always speaking your mind without giving others face,” he commented, his attitude noticeably softer. “But tell me, why are you buying so many pieces of land? And to buy them at hefty prices… At least give me an explanation.”

Alejandro let loose a sigh of relief in his mind. So that geezer was only trying to test him to see if he was the real Alejandro. Don was a cautious, meticulous man; Alejandro was not surprised that he would suspect him. At this moment, if he did not act as petulant and scathing in his words as the original Alejandro, he would be suspected even harder.

From the way things looked, Alejandro thought that this meant he passed the test. But still, it was no grounds for conceit. “I have my own plan, so don’t ask. If you don’t trust me, then by all means, revoke my preferential treatment and manage this company by yourself! I mean, it would spare me from so much headache.”

Don flipped through the documents on the desk for a bit before admitting, “Everything you did every year has been pretty good, so I trust you for now. Besides, one day you’ll be managing it all, and whether you ruin it or bring it to new heights would be yours to shoulder. I’m old, and I shouldn’t be fussing over any of this.

“Speaking of which,” Don added. “I’m gonna stay in the Capital for a while. If you have the time, come see me and be my companion for a bit.”

Chapter 989

“You never thought of me, your disgusting little bastard grandson, as someone who would one day be by your side as you die, anyway, “ Alejandro said steelily. “What, have you forgotten the crap you’ve done, huh? Now you want to enjoy the life of a grandfather surrounded by his grandchildren? Give me a break. None of your sons are alive, and the only heir you have is a lame grandson who is too busy to be playing balls with Grandpa. Have your bodyguards be your playmate, old man. If you’re done lecturing me, get out of my way. I’ve got business.”

Don turned crimson with rage. “Why you son of a—”

Jett stepped out and stopped him. “Master Don, Mr. Smith is doing fine. The company is well, too. He has made quite an achievement since he arrived at the Capital. You should relax.”

Don stared straight at Jett for a few seconds before replying, “Alright, then. You take good care of him. I’ll be off.”

Jett answered him with a hum and hung his head, afraid that Don might find incriminating signs from his face. “Taking care of Alejandro” was a covert phrase of telling him to monitor Alejandro even more.

Of course, Jett understood that. He was stuck between the Devil and the deep blue sea. Every move he made would be akin to taking a step in an active minefield.

Jett scoured through every corner and cranny in the office after Don left before announcing, “He didn’t leave any wires and such behind. You’re safe.”

Alejandro breathed a sigh of relief. “He suspects me, doesn’t he? Drops by suddenly and didn’t even think of notifying me first.”

Jett shook his head. “I don’t know. Master Don did not tell me anything that could indicate his arrival, either. Though I must say, you covered yourself well. The real Mr. Smith used to speak to him that way, too.”

Alejandro waved in dismissal. “Go. Pay more mind to that old man’s side and see if he’s got any more funny actions. I bet he didn’t plan to leave the Capital empty-handed... Hmph! Who knew some bedridden dotard managed to get rid of his bed and come all the way here? He’s bold…”

Sitting inside the CEO office in Jackson’s headquarter, the boss himself was leaning backward on his chair with his legs criss-crossed and placed on the edge of the table.

Alejandro’s words echoed in his mind, over and over again. The way he mentioned Tiffany's expected delivery date and in no ambiguous terms conjured only one clear meaning.

Alejandro had a relationship with Tiffany before. And it irked Jackson.

However, that relationship would have been something that happened after he and Tiffany broke up. It was something he would have to live with even if he hated it. Unfortunately, his magnanimity could not be extended to the child, and right now, he did not know how to break it to Tiffany.

After a grueling debate with himself, Jackson picked up his phone and texted Tiffany: ‘Let’s give up on this child, alright? Have an abortion. We’ll make a new one next time.’

Tiffany was thrown off by his message. He had not reacted to her pregnancy with the joy she had hoped for, then he went on to doubt if he was the father, and now he was pushing her for an abortion. Was it doubt again, or was it something else?

She was not even going to waste time asking for answers through texts. Instead, Tiffany called him right away, “What do you mean? Why are we considering giving up on this kid? Don’t you want a kid of your own?”

Jackson did not plan to tell her the truth. They say a quarrel could sometimes fortify a relationship, but it could also capsize it. Right now, he just could not take that risk.

“No, I don’t think we should have a kid right now. Aren’t you gung-ho about creating new heights in your career? Your career has just started, honey, and now you’re suddenly stuck with a baby. That will definitely botch your success in some ways,” he fibbed. “I gave a good hard thought about this and decided that you should really consider an abortion. You’re still young, Tiffie. You gotta do what you wanna do first. Then maybe… we can have our children after two years.”

Chapter 990

Tiffany’s head was thrown into a knot. She could not fathom whatever was in Jackson’s mind. Sure, she wanted to be successful in her career, but she never thought of giving up her baby for that. When she heard about her pregnancy, the emotion that overwhelmed her was genuine, surprised jubilance. Ever since she saw how adorable Smore was, she had wanted a child of her own.

Tiffany planned to request maternity leave when she was near her delivery date, then resume working after that leave expired. Never had the thought of abortion crossed her mind.

“No. I’m not giving up on the baby. I don’t even think its gonna affect my work in any way, either,” she said.

Jackson was quiet for a beat before replying, “Listen to me. Get an abortion.”

That was when Tiffany understood that her perspective was never included in Jackson’s consideration.

The realization chilled her. “Why? Just, why? Can you at least give me a reason? You can’t—you can’t just tell me to let go of a kid for no frickin’ reason! If you don’t want us to get married, fine, we won’t. I have a job, and I can raise the child myself. I don’t need you for that!”

Jackson massaged his forehead before admitting, “I went to see Alejandro Smith this morning and returned that brooch.”

He did not elaborate further. He had hoped that she understood the implication. Some things were always better left unspoken in direct terms.

Tiffany, however, was utterly baffled. “Oh, so you talked to him. And gave him his brooch. And then what? What’s this got to do with the baby—no. You can’t possibly think me and him got together, and now he’s the father?”

Jackson said nothing. It was the silence of consent.

Tiffany was so infuriated that she laughed. “Oh, I get it. I get it now. Hey, you know, you and me? We never got back together, after all. I’m keeping this baby, Jackson. I’m going to bring it to this world, and I’m going to raise it myself, and I can do it all on my own. Now, if you’ve got nothing else to say, I’ll hang up. I’m working, you know. I don’t have the luxury of idle time like yours.”

With that, she hung up the call.

Her actions stunned Amy, who gawked at her before exclaiming, “Holy crap. That was so cool! Ruthless, unyielding, and defiant to the bitter end! You’re pregnant? Was that your boyfriend? Who’s the guy?”

Tiffany turned around and instantly burst into tears. “What cool? What ruthless?! I am f**king wrecked right now, Amy! I’m falling apart! And who else could have done this to me except Jackson ‘Douchebag’ West? I just wanna… rip him to shreds!! Argghhh!”

Amy immediately shut her mouth. This concerned Jackson, her immediate superior, which meant that this gossip was off-limits. She thought Tiffany’s boyfriend would be anyone else since she mentioned that Jackson was her ex-fiance, but now it turned out he had returned to being her boyfriend—and then fathered a child!

Tiffany spent her entire morning and noontime crying in the office, almost finishing an entire packet of tissue, and did virtually nothing else. Amy had tried her best to comfort her but to no avail.

It was then that Tiffany’s phone buzzed, startling the two of them. They had thought it was Jackson again, but one look at the screen told her it was Arianne.

She was the outlet Tiffany had wanted, so instantly after she received the call, she bawled even harder. “Ari! That douchebag Jackson West thinks the baby isn’t h-h-his and is now trying to f-f-f-orce me to have an a-a-abortion!”

Arianne was shocked. “What the heck? What’s there to be suspicious about? Doesn’t he know what you’re like? If the kid isn’t his, you would have aborted it before he asked! God! Anyway, I’m right downstairs in your company. Which floor are you on? May I come up?”

Tiffany was incredulous. “You’re downstairs? You’re in South Park?”

Arianne did not have the time to explain herself. “That’s right. I just arrived. Now, be quick and tell me which floor. If I can’t be at your company, I’ll wait in my hotel. You come over after work.”

After making sure she was here, Tiffany quickly answered, “No, no! It’s alright! There’s only Amy and me here, and lunch break is coming up. It’s fine, come up here. It’s the eleventh floor! I’ll be waiting for you at the entrance.”