

A Ruling Passion – Chapter 16

Mark Tremont pinched her chin. His tone was apathetic and it commanded obedience. "Go back to school only when your body has properly recovered and nourished. Stop seeking pity with how frail you look!"

Arianne Wynn lost her cool and pushed herself up. "No way..."

Not saying a word, Mark Tremont looked down at her forbiddingly.

Arianne bit her lips. Tensed, her voice quivered as well. "I'll study hard and return all that I owe you when I make money in the future. I'm thankful that you've kept me around for ten years. I'll move out as soon as possible when I'm on my internship."

The truth was revealed. She had never believed upon depending on him her whole life. She had owed him too much, and she did not wish to remain indebted.

Mark Tremont laughed all of a sudden. His smile looked like the distant moon, unattainable and unreachable, and unwelcoming as well. "Let me spell it out for you now then. Don't you even think about leaving in your lifetime!"

Arianne's heart sank. For the first time, she looked at him straight in the eyes without shying away.

“Don’t I remind you of your late parents when you see me? Why are you keeping someone like me by your side? I’ll repay all that I owe you, with all that I have, I’ll give back everything with this life of mine, in my own way!”

Mark Tremont’s breathing halted for a beat as his gaze darkened a little more.

Arianne Wynn had always been well behaved for as long as he could remember, not daring to defy any of his wishes. He had overlooked the fact that she would grow up, the fact that she may change. Her strong will would one day become the fortress that defended herself against him, perhaps even the sword that pointed toward him.

They confronted each other with deep stares. After a moment lapsed, Mark Tremont’s long fingers went to pull at his tie before he took off his suit jacket and tossed it carelessly on the carpet.

“What you owe me, you won’t be able to repay in this lifetime. I’ve been too kind to you.”

Realizing what he was going to do, Arianne’s immediate reaction was to escape.

Just as she picked herself up from the bed, Mark Tremont’s large hand pressed her back onto the bed. She was then engaged by his robust build.

Enveloped in Mark Tremont's scent, Arianne's thoughts were scattered all over the place. She pushed her hands against his chest, pleading in a quivering voice, "Don't..."

Unaffected, Mark Tremont locked both her arms above her head and swiftly tethered them with his tie. Once he was reminded about how willfully she wanted to draw a line between everything, a dark cloud loomed over Mark Tremont's expression before he ducked his head to seal her lips.

His kiss was aggressive, devouring bit after bit of Arianne's headstrongness, and fully subduing her. Feeling the chilling sense and goosebumps on her body, Arianne Wynn twisted and turned in a panic. Wherever Mark Tremont's palm touched, it felt like her skin was burning. When she realized that she was unable to run away, she ceased her struggle. Her gaze turned blank as she let him do whatever he wanted.

Mark Tremont stopped his actions. He looked at Arianne when he noticed the sudden release in resistance from the person under him, as if wanting to see through her. Taking in the vacant look of her eyes, he moved away and shouted, "Get out!"

Arianne Wynn's lifeless eyes slowly regained their focus as tightly hugged her clothes and fled the bedroom before she could evaluate his sudden change of mind.

Once the door was closed behind her, the sound of things crashing came from the inside. Trembling, Arianne returned to her room.

For the entire afternoon, there was not a sound from the room next to hers. It was past seven at night when Mark Tremont's car left the Tremont Estate.

Although Mark Tremont did not ground her explicitly, Butler Henry told Arianne she must rest for several days at home.

No matter how reluctant Arianne was, she could only obey as she was not brave enough to challenge him at this time.

After a few days, she finally went back to school after regaining her freedom. Tiffany Lane talked nonstop with an arm hooked over hers. "You don't know how bad you scared me that day! Are you okay now? Do you know that a lot of people were dying of envy when they saw Mark Tremont carry you to the hospital then? He's super nice and super gentle. I finally understand why so many people are infatuated by him."

"Honestly, he's so handsome! If I could get it on with him, I'd be happy to, even if it would cause me to die right after! Also, our tutor was sacked due to the incident! We can see Mark Tremont again today for the campus function! I'm so excited!"

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It was only now when Arianne Wynn remembered today was the campus function event and he would be here as well... He had not returned home since he left that day. What would it be like to see him again today? For an instant, she felt a flurry of emotions.

"Did he... say anything that day?"

Tiffany Lane did not notice her inattentive manner.

"Nope. But I complained about your brother to him. That brother of yours is a real jerk!"

Arianne was speechless. Now she was no longer surprised why her singular reply that day triggered his fury, like an eruption of a volcano no, more like the eruption of an iceberg... He must have felt horrible to be condemned like that and right in his face too.

Shouting and cheering came from the downstairs abruptly. Fueled by adrenaline, Tiffany tugged Arianne and bolted down the staircase. "Mark Tremont's here! Let's go see him!"

Arianne was rather nervous for she had not yet figured out how to confront him.

"Tiff, let go... You can go ahead, I'm not going..."

"Ari, he's been such a great help to you. You gotta thank him in person!"

Tiffany was unimpressed as she pulled Arianne down the stairs while she spoke.

Arianne Wynn, who was still preparing how to avoid the man, stopped dead in her tracks upon seeing who was in front of her. Mark Tremont walked over and was followed by a company of a crowd of teachers and students. His tailored suit fitted him like a glove, the inky black shade contrasted his skin, making him look fairer, while he wore a gentle smile. Wherever he was, he was always in the limelight.

Tiffany dragged forward Arianne who was still dazed. "Mr. Tremont, it's all thanks to you the other day. Ari here isn't good with words. I'll thank you on her behalf."

Arianne Wynn dared not look up to see the man's expression. She clutched the hem of her clothes to suppress her nervous state.

Mark Tremont walked to her, bowing slightly to take a closer look at her.

"You look much better. It seems that your recovery is going well."

Seeing that Arianne made no response, Tiffany anxiously nudged her with an elbow. "Our senior's talking to you..."

"Thank you..."

Failing to avoid the interaction, Arianne's line of vision caught the tenderness in Mark Tremont's eyes. Unaware her heartbeat sped up during that brief moment.

"No problem, see you." He patted her shoulder softly, an action that was unquestionably ordinary. However, his "see you" ruffled Arianne. She could almost foresee the impending scene for when she arrives home.

In a flash, a strange man in a cap rushed to Mark Tremont's back. From Arianne's angle, she coincidentally spotted the knife in his hand. Her eyes widened as she subconsciously pushed Mark Tremont away, causing the knife to stab straight into her shoulder.

Following Tiffany Lane's scream, blood splattered on Mark Tremont's face. He was stunned for a second before he hurled his fist at the man and pulled Arianne to him.

"Ari!"

The culprit was promptly restrained by the campus security while Mark Tremont sprinted out the gate carrying Arianne.

When Arianna saw the bloodstain on Mark Tremont's face, her subconscious prompted her to wipe it. He was a clean freak, it must have felt disgusting, he was even frowning...

Before her hand could reach his face, however, she blacked out.

Mark Tremont looked murderous standing in the corridor outside the hospital emergency ward. The glacial aura he exuded prevented anyone from coming close.

Beside him, the dean was anxiously shaking. Never in his dream would he have imagined that there would be an accident for all of Mark Tremont's visits to the campus.

"Mr. Tremont... it's really an accident. I'm asking for the culprit to be investigated. We'll make certain of it to pass all necessary judgment!"

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Mark Tremont's reply was nothing but a cold scoff, his response made the dean shudder and kept his mouth shut.

After some time, a few bodyguards in black suits and sunglasses hurried over.

"Sir, we've looked into it. The offender is a fool who's mentally challenged. Twenty one years old, son of the Southline University's cafeteria lady. He's usually the handyman of the cafeteria. His actions today were completely unfounded as he was unable to answer anything we asked. Due to his condition, it's highly unlikely to send him to jail."

“Then send him to the mental institution! Is an aggressive lunatic supposed to be kept on the campus to continue harming others?” Mark Tremont’s reply came close to a low growl, his deadly frosty tone echoing in the corridor.

”Yes, sir!” The bodyguards left in a hurry once again.

The dean was hesitant to speak, wearing a troubled look on his face. Mark Tremont cast his gaze at him and sneered. ”What is it? Are you unhappy with my decision?”

”No, no... It’s just that... The fool’s quite foolish, yes, but he’s not psychologically ill at all... He’s usually very polite and well mannered. I don’t know what went wrong today. A sane person will go crazy in a mental institution, let alone a mentally challenged one...” the dean spoke quickly.

Mark Tremont snorted, “You can go instead!”

Cold sweat dotted the dean’s forehead. ”No, no, no, you’re right. We’ll do it your way...”

It had never occurred to him that Mark Tremont, who was always amiable and gentle, actually possessed a terrorizing side too. If one must point fingers, the blame could only be placed on the fool’s misfortune, what had him acting so crazy out of the blue?

No one knew how long it had been until the doors of the emergency ward finally opened. The doctor who came out was the same one who treated Arianne Wynn when she fainted the last time. He walked straight to Mark Tremont and said, "I mentioned the patient's poor health last time. Her anemia has positively worsened, now that she has suffered from severe blood loss. Make sure she's properly nourished after this. The patient's wound is quite deep. Closure of the wound is now completed but scarring is inevitable. The patient is no longer in a critical condition now and can be admitted to a normal ward. She can be discharged after a few days of supervision."

Mark Tremont's tensed form relaxed, though it was nearly unnoticeable. He breathed out a long exhale.

"Thank you."

The dean sensed some oddity. Even if Arianne Wynn was wounded trying to save Mark Tremont, it was unnecessary for the latter to be concerned about the particulars. Connecting the dots back to the last incident, he had an inkling that they must share an unusual relationship.

He probed. "Mr. Tremont, I can try contacting Miss Wynn's parents again? It's out of place for us to trouble you. This is the school's duty."

Mark Tremont was quiet, merely tailing after Arianne Wynn and the nurse to the patient's ward when the former was wheeled out.

"Find me the contact information of Miss Arianne Wynn's parents. Freshman, arts... Yes... What? None? Alright, that's all," the dean called the school in the corridor.

"Uh, Mr. Tremont, Miss Wynn doesn't seem to have reported her guardian's contact number to the school. It's said that she's an orphan, so she probably doesn't have any other family. The school will be responsible for her hospitalization fee. Mr. Tremont, we appreciate your help," the dean said carefully standing at the ward entrance.

There were a few seconds of silence before Mark Tremont spoke, "Fill mine in."

"What?" The dean was caught off guard.

"Her guardian's contact. Fill mine in."

When Arianne woke up, the sun had already set. The neon lights and falling snow outside could be seen through the VIP ward's window; the warmth in the ward compared to the cold outside were two different worlds.

Hearing a noise from inside the room that came without warning, she turned slowly to see Mark Tremont working on his laptop while sitting on the couch. The man's hands with striking strong joints tapped the keys softly, the concentration on his face took away some of his usual piercing sharp features, while his lips that were tightly pressed together looked unforgiving.

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"Woken up?" The man closed his laptop and looked up at her.

"Mmm..." Arianne wanted to get up but even the slightest movement brought her a dull pain to her left shoulder. It was then that she recalled what happened.

Mark Tremont went forward to check her wound. "Don't move."

Arianne stayed obediently whilst the pressing urge from her lower abdomen made her incredibly awkward. She wanted to go to the washroom but there was only Mark Tremont here and her mobility was compromised... Any minor movement would cause agony to her injury.

As if noticing her unease, Mark Tremont asked, "Do you want to go to the washroom?"

"Yeah..." Arianne Wynn blushed.

Mark Tremont said nothing as he attentively helped her up, his gentleness was unlike his usual self. Even then, Arianne was still breaking out in a cold sweat from the pain. Crimson stained the bandage around her wound.

Arianne had gone to the washroom half-carried by Mark Tremont. When his hand went towards her pants, she quickly said, "I'll do it myself!"

Stopping his action, Mark Tremont stared at her, putting Arianne on edge.

"Can you... stay away for a bit?"

Mark Tremont's 'stay away' was simply facing away.

Knowing that he would not leave, Arianne had a short-lived mental struggle before she maneuvered herself with her still mobile right arm. In spite of it, each movement, no matter how tiny, exacerbated her wound, especially when she bent down. Even the simplest action turned almost impossible. The blood that seeped from her wound had already dyed her patient gown red.

When he heard no sound from behind, Mark Tremont turned around and frowned seeing Arianne's crimson tainted gown. He pulled her pants down swiftly and turned around again.

Sitting down on the toilet mortified, Arianne was unable to pee in peace despite feeling the urge. If there were a hole on the floor, she would have scrambled into it from feeling extremely flustered...

Ultimately, shame became nothing but a fleeting emotion to Arianne after twenty long minutes. Returning to the bed, she buried herself into the blanket while Mark Tremont called for the doctor to treat her torn wound as if nothing happened.

Two bodyguards came to send their meals around seven at night. Mark Tremont took the porridge to the bed before helping Arianne up. When she was securely propped up, he picked up the porridge to feed her.

Not daring to reject him, Arianne ate carefully. The tonic in the porridge overpowered the food's original mild taste but it was not horrible. She could tell that Mary made it.

Arianne was rather fidgety, not used to Mark Tremont's sudden care.

"I... I can do it myself?"

Mark Tremont looked at her coldly. Arianne looked down without another word, her long lashes casting a shadow on her face.

For each day that Arianne Wynn stayed in the hospital, Mark Tremont stayed for the same amount of time and took care of her without leaving. He was still as stern and offish but somehow, she felt that something had changed...

When Arianne went back to the Tremont Estate, she could now breathe in relief. At least, she did not have to be fed by him or be taken to the washroom under his watch...

Arianne was grounded, to allow her to rest. She could not go to school, she even had to apply for a deferred exam as she would miss her mid-term.

Mark Tremont was home early before the new year. Bodyguards held out an umbrella for him to keep the snow away. When he came in through the door, he smelled faintly of the cold breeze and frost, before it was melted away by the heater at home.

Arianne was just coming down the stairs when their eyes met, parting gazes shortly after.

Their meal was already served on the dining table when Mark Tremont came downstairs from his shower. A million thoughts ran through Arianne's head as she was seated at the table. They had been conflict-free recently and she was subconsciously guarding the harmony as well, acting with caution.

Recalling the unpleasant parting at night before the campus function, Arianne was thankful this accident happened. Otherwise, her fate would probably have ended up worse.

The dishes on the dining table were supplemented with an abundant amount of tonic. This had gone on for a long time and Arianne was quite sick of it, but it was undeniable that she did look much better. Her complexion was suppler too, now that she was not

out in the harsh wind or sun. There was even color in her cheeks, her already fair complexion made her look fresh and glowing.

Unknown to Arianne, Mark Tremont kept his eyes on her when she focused on eating. Distinguishing that she had grown more feminine from her previous frail look, a hardly detectable smile tugged at the corners of his lips.

He was the first to finish his meal, standing up to head upstairs.

"Come to my room after you're done."

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Arianne's hand that held her spoon quavered. Looking at the half bowl of soup, she hesitated before saying, "Mary, help me to another serving..."

Mary saw through her little gimmick and answered softly, "Ah, why are you so scared of sir? He won't gobble you up."

After the meal, Arianne trudged up the stairs only after Mary finished cleaning the table. The door to the master bedroom was half open, however she still knocked before entering.

Mark Tremont was going through documents in front of the French window with a cigarette between his fingers. Half a glass of wine stood on the small table beside him.

Naturally, he stubbed out the cigarette when Arianne coughed from the smoke.

"Come over."

She went closer to him. "Is there... anything you need me for?"

Putting down the document in his hands, Mark Tremont took her into his embrace without warning.

"I'm going on an overseas business trip tomorrow. Come with me."

Arianne's ability to think was already affected having been seated on his legs. When she heard that he wished to take her out, her nerves got the better of her.

"You're on a business trip... It's better... it's better if I don't go?"

For all ten years, she was either in school or at home. Arianne rarely interacted with the outside world. She had slight social anxiety, becoming anxious whenever she went to unfamiliar places, and talking to strangers. In addition, she was honestly unable to imagine anything pleasant going out with him.

"Sure you're not going?" Mark Tremont's words were whispered to the side of Arianne's face when he spoke, making the situation more intimate than it was and putting her in a dilemma.

Arianne refused to upset him but she genuinely did not want to go. Subconsciously, she replied in an endearing manner, "Nope, I'll wait for you at home."

Mark Tremont seemed to be content with her tone as his hand went to tip her chin and landed a kiss on her lips. The refreshing sweet taste of her enticed him to go deeper but Arianne turned away abruptly.

"Don't like it? Or... don't like it with me?" Mark Tremont's tone dropped in temperature, raising an involuntary fear within Arianne.

Picturing his anger, Arianne bit her lips. "No..."

Mark Tremont's mobile phone that was on the bed rang out of the blue. As if she was pardoned, Arianne got up to fetch him the gadget.

There was a slight frown between Mark Tremont's brows when he took a look at the incoming call but he did not answer it immediately. Arianne understood the situation, turning to leave him with a smile, whilst also relieved at the same time.

Perhaps he already had someone he liked and would want to get married and have children. By then, he would let her go, right? That was what she hoped.

Returning to her room and lying in bed, Arianne turned her mobile phone on. The festive colors on the screen reflected the jolly mood of the coming holidays but did nothing to ignite her somber heart.

The text message that popped up on the notification bar attracted her attention. It was from Tiffany Lane. Arianne's breath stuck in her throat when she read the text. Will Sivan was back.

Although she knew that he would soon be out of the country again as he was only back to visit his family for the holidays, Arianne still felt different. The young man who was untainted, with eyes that contained all the stars in the galaxy left a deep imprint in her heart.

Will Sivan and Mark Tremont were two opposite men.

Arianne called Tiffany. "Tiff, when's... Will leaving the country again?"

Tiffany's teasing voice sounded from the other end of the line, "What's up? Reluctant to see him leave? I'm not sure actually but there's a gathering tomorrow. Can you come? He's the host. Oh yeah, I want you to meet someone too, it's my boyfriend. Let me know if you can attend."

"I'll go," Arianne unknowingly answered. The second before she answered, she was thinking about Mark Tremont who was going away the next day. She could risk going out once he was not here.