

A Ruling Passion – Chapter 0221

The man remained silent.

Tiffany cursed inwardly. Why was he acting aloof when he came to this kind of place to have fun? She was still new to this industry. Now that the atmosphere had turned awkward, she did not know how she should proceed.

She recalled the teachings of the madam of this place and guessed that the man in front of her must prefer the more passionate and playful type. At the thought of her empty wallet and the 1,200 dollars that Lillian had just spent this morning, she gritted her teeth and latched herself onto the man's arm. "Why are you so quiet, sir? I'm sorry. I just started working here, and I'm not good at pleasing the guests yet. Would you like to call a few more girls in here to have fun together?"

However, Tiffany panicked when the man grabbed the hand she had placed on his chest. Did she encounter a pervert? However, in just a blink of an eye, the man released her hand and said, "Are you really this short of money?"

Tiffany started. She did not expect the man to turn out to be Jackson West. Did he follow her here? Or did he coincidentally come here to have fun? She really wanted to turn on the lights, but it would only make things more awkward so she decided to just leave it. After she recovered from her shock, she replied calmly, "Yes, I'm short of money. Don't tell me you followed me here. If you're here to have fun, then I'll take it as making money from an acquaintance and play along without feeling awkward. If you followed me here, then you should leave now."

Jackson fell silent for a moment before he said, "You don't need to pay back the \$6,600. I won't deduct it from your salary. That way you don't need to continue working here, right? As far as I know, your father has passed away and Mark didn't force the debts on you. Although the living standards of you and your mother have declined, I don't think you need to force yourself to this extent."

Tiffany laughed. "You're my boss. Why are you poking your nose into my private life? Is your girlfriend aware that you are this nosy? I don't want to cause a fight between both of you. I, naturally, have my own reason for doing this. I don't need to tell you everything."

In the darkness, Jackson clenched his hands into fists before he loosened them again. "I finally understand why people say it's hard to become frugal after becoming accustomed to luxury. I can understand that you can't immediately accept reality after being accustomed to a luxurious life in the past. However, it's not good for you to do this. There is plenty of honest work you can do out there!"

Tiffany had lost her patience by now. "Jackson West! Are you here to lecture me? I borrowed the money from you and told you to deduct it from my salary. I don't need your pity. I'm only your employee, and you're my employer. Why are you butting into my business? You don't even understand my situation so you don't have the right to judge me!"

Mark tried to suppress his anger and said, "What kind of situation can possibly force a person to degrade themselves? My company is paying enough for you and your mother to live! You'd have enough to live if you stop going to the high-end restaurants until your financial situation improves! Are you doing this for vanity? I admit that I have no right to butt into your business, I'm... only telling you these because you are Arianne's close friend."

Tiffany's chest felt tight and the feeling was suffocating her. She did not want to show her worst side to people or talk about those depressing things. However, she could not stand being told she was vain. "Vain? Me? How am I vain? You're only judging me because I spent \$6,600 on the meal previously, right? You're right. I don't deserve to have a meal like that in my current situation, and I have no plans on dining in a high-end restaurant again! I was scammed because my mom set me up on a blind date with a weirdo! If I were really vain, I would have run off with that stupid baldy!"

She continued on her tirade, "You're the son of the West family. Of course, you wouldn't understand the sufferings of people like me, and I have no interest in talking to you about it either! How am I degrading myself by working here? Are you any better for seeking entertainment in this kind of place? It's not like I'm offering sexual services and sleeping around! I only have to drink until two in the morning every day. If I'm lucky enough, I can get more than \$150 in cash. Those can be used to cover my living expenses and utility bills, do you get it? I'm not being vain!"

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Tiffany's voice choked a little at the end. In order to hold back her tears, she poured herself a glass of wine and drank it all in one go. Fortunately, she was no stranger to wine and had drunk her fair share of alcohol in the past. Being able to hold her liquor at least allowed her to work in this kind of place.

Jackson also felt that he was getting a little emotional tonight. He took a deep breath and softened his voice. "You can treat me as a stranger and just tell me whatever you want."

Tiffany drank the wine that Jackson paid for as she muttered, "Alright, I'll tell you if you want to hear it. It's true that my family no longer needs to pay off any debts now, but I'm still as broke as a church mouse. After my ex-boyfriend broke up with me, he returned all the money I spent on him when we were dating. It was close to \$300,000. That's a lot of money for me. I was hoping to save enough money one day and buy a house in a good location. But my mom spent all that in just the blink of an eye.

"My mother never suffered any hardships in her life and she's used to living a lavish life. I am so tired from work every day and I still have to cook for her, do the laundry, and clean the house. I'm as tired as a dog everyday while she has no qualms about buying luxury goods and gambling away my money. She was even delusional enough to try to marry me off to a slightly wealthy man. Not only that, she could actually bring herself to set me up on a blind date with a divorced man with a lousy character! "Every time I get my salary, my mom cries and asks me for money. If I don't give into her, she starves herself. She could starve herself for three days! How am I going to support her and myself if I don't do this kind of job? Rent is a few hundred dollars a month. I can't see light at the end of the tunnel no matter how hard I work... Might as well die with my dad."

"Don't say such silly things," Jackson frowned at her.

Tiffany rolled her eyes at him. "I'm saying that my mom might as well die with my dad! I'm not the one who deserves to die! My mom had been in my dad's care for all her life. Her bad habits were all my dad's fault. Why did he burden me with her instead of taking her away with him?"

Jackson was instantly rendered speechless. He could never figure out how Tiffany's brain worked...

By the end of it, Tiffany was rather tipsy. “Did you spend money just to listen to me griping? Stop sitting there and trying to understand the tough life of the underclass. Go back to your mansion and indulge in your posh life.”

“Umm... you better quit this place. I’ll introduce you to another part-time job that will give you a daily pay that can match this place. Why don’t you consider it? I’m guessing that Arianne definitely doesn’t know you’re here...” Jackson showed both grace and power to Tiffany. He guessed that Arianne wouldn’t know about this because Tiffany wouldn’t want her to know either.

Sure enough, Tiffany was instantly triggered by it. “Don’t tell Ari about this! How can I let her know about this? What kind of job are you talking about? I can only consider if you give me the details...”

Jackson picked up the wine glass and took a sip. “Well... go clean my house and cook for me after work. I happen to need someone like that. You don’t need to live there. Just take care of my dinner and you can leave after cleaning my place. I’ll pay you

according to your average daily income here and it shall be paid on the spot every day. What do you think?”

Tiffany seriously suspected that Jackson was pitying her. “Cut it out. Do I have ‘pitiful’ written all over my face? We’re not really friends. You don’t need to do that. I don’t think being an escort is something to be ashamed of. Some people are content by just being able to live. So what if I need to offer some services when the situation forces me to? It’s just sleeping with all sorts of men and...”

Tiffany didn't get to finish her sentence because Jackson couldn't stand listening to it anymore. "Shut up! I'm giving you two options here. You can either stay here as an escort and I'll call Arianne immediately, or I'll send you home now and you'll come to my place after work to do an hourly job. Decide for yourself!"

Tiffany was terrified as soon as Jackson said that he was going to tell Arianne. "Can you do something decent? You only know how to threaten me. I'm more annoyed at serving you than sleeping with different men. Besides, I can't really cook! If you can accept having instant noodles every day, then it's a deal."

Jackson gritted his teeth and accepted. "It's settled then. I still have something else to do today. Come with me now, immediately!"

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Tiffany kept thinking that something was wrong. Why was this guy helping her? She stood up and suddenly felt the world around her spin. She must have drunk too much just now and got dizzy. Jackson managed to catch her in time. Tiffany felt his soft palms and involuntarily leaned against him. Jackson felt something soft pressed up against his chest before a nice scent wafted into his nose.

He took off his coat stiffly and put it around Tiffany. He only now knew what was in the black garment bag that she brought to work every day; it was the dress she was wearing now. It had quite a bold design and was very revealing.

They went outside, and when the cold wind blew, Tiffany staggered to the side of the road and retched. Jackson handed her a tissue. "Are you alright? I saw you finish half a big bottle of pure vodka. You must be feeling really bad now..."

Although Tiffany was dizzy, she wasn't deaf. "Why didn't you tell me earlier? I've never drank that kind of pure manly alcohol!"

Jackson felt that he was wrongly accused. At the time, he was rushing to find her so he just ordered some random alcohol. Who knew Tiffany would drink so much? By the time they got into the car, she was like a puddle of mud. When he asked her for the address, she kept mumbling "I don't wanna go back."

Jackson hesitated. He took out his phone, wanting to call Arianne, but could only perish the thought and told the driver, "Go back to the White Water Bay Villa."

At Tremont Estate, Mark was seated on the sofa while busily working on his laptop. Nina paced around him. "Your precious baby isn't home yet. Are you not worried? Look at her sweet and naive face. Someone might have abducted her."

"Sweet and naive? I don't think so." Mark lifted his arm and glanced at his watch.

Nina curled her lip. "I've asked for you, she's getting off work at half past nine. It's up to you if you want to pick her up. It's getting cold these days, especially at night..."

Mark shut his laptop, went upstairs, then came down after changing his clothes. "You're going to pick her up right? I knew you were a softie inside," Nina teased him.

"Go entertain yourself and don't make trouble now. By the way, leave Rice Ball alone. You're the only one it scratches." Mark went out after saying that.

He drove to Glide Design and parked downstairs. People were starting to come out. After about five minutes, Arianne came out with Eric. The two walked side by side and seemed to be discussing something. Arianne had a smile on her face. The sight somehow hurt Mark's eyes.

Eric was the first to notice Mark's car. "Seems like Mark is here to pick you up, so I won't be sending you back today."

"See you tomorrow then!" Arianne lowered her head shyly, then went off in the direction of Mark's car with a smile.

Getting into the car, she noticed that Mark looked rather gloomy. Arianne didn't know why he was upset again, so she didn't say anything. Just then, Eric's car just happened to fly past them and he even playfully sounded his horn at them a few times. Mark slammed on the gas pedal as though he was possessed and tailed Eric's car. Arianne was nearly shocked out of her wits. "Hey, slow down!"

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Eric was intrigued when he noticed that Mark was catching up to him. Both of them started racing against each other until they parted ways at an intersection. Even then, Mark didn't slow down. Arianne's heart beat crazily as she clung to her seatbelt for dear life. "What are you doing? I'm scared...! The road is pretty dark and slippery, can you slow down?"

Mark slammed on the brakes just as the car reached the luxury residential area. There weren't many cars on this road at this hour and no cops would issue any tickets here. Arianne patted her chest for a long while to calm herself down. "Why did you decide to come pick me up? I can come back by myself..."

"Come back by yourself? Do you mean getting Eric to send you home, instead?" There was jealousy in his tone.

"I usually take a cab home by myself. Eric only gives me a ride on the days I work overtime. What's wrong with that? You can just tell me directly if I've upset you in any way. Don't use such an extreme method to frighten me. It was really dangerous..." Arianne was feeling rather resentful of his behavior right now.

"You're not allowed to smile at other men." When Mark said this, his face was turned toward the car window.

Arianne, unable to see his expression, was baffled. "... can't smile at even Eric? Isn't that your friend? Not only that, he's my boss. Am I supposed to give him a sour face?"

Mark didn't respond, but she could tell that he was trying to hold himself back from the way his chest undulated. She knew his every action. It was late at night, and the surrounding area was dark and quiet. She couldn't help but feel a little scared. "Okay, okay. I'll keep that in mind. Let's go back, why did you stop your car here?"

Mark suddenly turned his face to look at her. Since it was dim, Arianne couldn't see the expression on his face clearly. All she could sense was his burning gaze. In just a few seconds, her heartbeat accelerated again. Even if he didn't say anything, her face started burning and she subconsciously lowered her head.

In just a short while, the car returned to the Tremont Estate.

After getting out of the car, Mark grabbed Arianne's hand and pulled her upstairs, ignoring even Nina's greetings.

Arianne could only feel the heat coming from his hand. She was terrified when they arrived at the door to their bedroom. "I... I want to take a shower first..."

Mark ignored her words, pulling her into the room a little forcefully. As soon as the bedroom door was shut, he pinned her up against a wall and smashed his lips against hers.

Arianne subconsciously wanted to refuse him but suddenly remembered that she was going to be Mrs. Tremont for the rest of her life. How could she refuse him? She had to get used to things like these sooner or later...

The long kiss left her mind blank and out of oxygen. His bewitching charm made her involuntarily reciprocate his actions. She only snapped back to her senses a little the moment she was pushed onto the bed. The sudden chill she felt on her body made her face burn even hotter.

She kept taking deep breaths to dispel her nervousness. All of a sudden, Mark stopped. "How long has it been?"

"W...What?" She was puzzled.

Mark seemed like he suddenly remembered something as he propped himself up above her in disappointment. "The time since you were discharged from the hospital. The doctor said you can't do this for two months... I don't think it's been two months yet."

She calmed herself down. "It's been a month and twenty five days..."

He didn't speak, but his rapid breathing gradually calmed down. By the time it returned to normal, he got up and went into the bathroom. "Let's take a bath together."

"It's okay... I'll shower downstairs!" Arianne quickly put on her clothes and fled the scene.

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Nina saw her rushing down the stairs with a flushed face and teased her with a smirk, “Seems like Mark was too excited... It hasn’t even been that long since you were discharged...”

Arianne was so embarrassed that she wanted to die. “What are you talking about...? That’s not it... I’m exhausted. I’m just going to take a shower and sleep.”

Mary glared at Nina. “Don’t poke your nose into other people’s business, young lady! Aren’t you ashamed of yourself? Mind your own business!”

Nina disagreed with her. “We’re all adults here, what are you worried about? Given the sexual tension between them earlier, I thought they were going to do something. Seems like I got excited over nothing. Both of them usually just look so ‘sex depraved’. Aren’t you curious too on how their relationship will develop?”

“It’s not like you don’t know that madam is in poor health. Sir is understanding toward her. You’re the only one making wild guesses here. I think you’re too bored out of your mind,” Mary brushed her off.

Arianne listened to the conversation between Mary and Nina in the bathroom. She felt even more embarrassed to see anyone right now. It was all Mark’s fault. Why did he have to drag her upstairs like that as soon as they came back? His unusual behavior made it seem so obvious...

She deliberately spent a longer time than usual in the bathroom. By the time she returned to the bedroom, Mark had fallen asleep and the light was still on. She carefully turned off the light and laid on the bed. However, Mark drew closer to her and put his arm over her waist. Arianne could clearly feel his hot breaths against her neck.

They were usually never this close to each other when they slept. Now that she suddenly found herself in Mark's arms, she couldn't really get used to it. Feeling awkward for a long time, she couldn't fall asleep. Even if her eyes were going to close, her mind kept her awake.

Mark didn't seem to be getting a good night's sleep either. He adjusted his sleeping position from time to time but seemed to stick closer to her every time. Arianne could feel every movement he made.

Neither of them were going to get a good sleep if this went on. Since she wasn't a naive and innocent girl anymore, she mustered up the courage to whisper, "I think... I'm almost fully healed. It... should be alright..."

His body stiffened slightly. "I'm not that Vile. Go to sleep."

She was rather surprised. She felt warm in her heart and even saw a beautiful dream in her sleep.

Early next morning, a piercing scream rang out in one of the villas at White Water Bay.

Tiffany sat up on the bed and pulled the white shirt she was wearing tighter around herself as she looked at Jackson with a horrified expression. "Where is this? What have you done to me!"

Jackson propped himself up on the bed with dark circles under his eyes. "This is my house. What could I possibly have done to you? You've underestimated my taste. No man would be interested in touching a woman who just puked all over herself."

Tiffany seemed unconvinced by his statement. She opened the blanket and carefully looked for clues. She didn't find anything but was still suspicious. "Did you change the sheets?"

Jackson got up and went into the bathroom in the bedroom with half-opened eyes, obviously not fully awake yet. "I did, you puked on the bed."

"Did you also change my clothes?" Tiffany was sure that she wasn't wearing anything other than a man's shirt that didn't belong to her. She wasn't even wearing a bra inside...

"Yes. Didn't I say that you puked everywhere? How could you sleep in those dirty clothes? Don't worry, I changed your clothes with my eyes closed. I didn't see anything... but... it was only inevitable that I would accidentally touch somewhere I shouldn't be touching," Jackson replied to her from the bathroom in his bedroom.

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“You say that nothing happened between us, but why were you sleeping in the same bed as me? Please use your brain even when you’re lying. I’m an adult and I can take responsibility for my own actions, but I just can’t stand looking at guys like you who wouldn’t take responsibility for yours!” Tiffany was extremely vexed. No matter how she looked at these details, it didn’t seem like nothing had happened.

“Excuse me? You were the one who didn’t want to go home or give me your home address. I had no choice but to bring you back here since I couldn’t send you home. I don’t have a bed prepared in the other rooms. This is the only room where we can sleep in this house and I’m not going to sleep on the sofa. Besides, I was dead exhausted from taking care of you the whole night. Where else would I sleep if not on the bed?” Jackson poked his head out of the bathroom while brushing his teeth as he complained to Tiffany about her over the top behavior.

Regardless of whether Jackson was telling the truth or not, Tiffany could only accept it. It was her fault for drinking so much that she couldn’t remember anything. Since she couldn’t argue with him, she had no choice but to put trust in his statement.

Thinking about the woman who was with Jackson previously when she was on a blind date with a balding man, Tiffany couldn’t help but feel ashamed of herself. That was definitely his girlfriend; they were so intimate with each other. She was now the living example of a ‘homewrecker’.

After thinking for a moment, she decided to pretend that nothing had happened. “Where are my clothes? I’ll leave first, you can leave later. Don’t let anyone see us together!”

Jackson was amused by her. "What are you so worried for? I threw your clothes away. You can't wear them anymore. I sent someone to buy you a new set."

Tiffany's face flushed like a tomato. "You can buy the ones I wear outside, but what about the inside? Where's my bra!"

Jackson picked up the 'little garment' from the laundry basket. "You mean this? It's soiled. I had someone go buy a new one for you too. Don't worry, I have a female secretary. You can just send me your measurements, I'll tell her."

Tiffany was speechless and even had the desire to kill herself. She despised homewreckers and didn't expect to become one in the end...

After giving it a thought, she decided to keep this incident to herself since it would be trouble if Arianne knew about it. After all, Jackson and Mark shared a very good relationship with each other. By the time they were ready to go out, it was already around ten in the morning. Jackson didn't think much of it and insisted on taking her to the company. As soon as they reached it, Tiffany rushed off into the office because she didn't want anyone to know that she came with Jackson and stir up gossip.

Before she even reached her office, Lillian came out of nowhere and began scolding her. "You wretched girl! Why didn't you come home last night? You want to starve your mother? You didn't even leave any money with me, how was I supposed to eat?"

Tiffany's face changed slightly. "Mom, can we talk about this later at home? I'll give you money, you go back first. I still have to go to work."

With a sour face, Lillian searched and took every bit of cash in Tiffany's wallet. "I know you hate me and think I'm holding you back. But you can't get rid of me. As long as I'm still alive, you have to support me! I'll let you off the hook this time. If you dare abandon me like this again, I'll come make trouble at your office and ask your colleagues if it is right for you to abandon your biological mother!"

Tiffany patiently assured her. "I got it, it was an accident last night. I'll make sure I never stay out all night again. It's not like I wanted to abandon you. Go back first, mom " Lillian snorted and left without saying anything. Tiffany's shoulders drooped as she let out a long sigh. Why did she have to start her day like this?

She tensed up at the sudden approaching footsteps behind her. She didn't dare turn her head around to see who it was, as it was most likely Jackson. Tiffany didn't want him to see her in this pathetic state, so she quickly strode to her seat in the office.

Her supervisor was about to come over and find trouble with her, but Jackson passed by and told her, "Tiffany Lane came to work with me so she isn't late. Let her slide this time."

Tiffany's scalp went numb. Was Jackson an idiot? The more afraid she was of being seen, the more brazen he was!

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It was almost lunch time when Jackson called the department of design. The supervisor shouted at the top of her lungs, “Tiffany Lane, Mr. West is looking for you! Hurry to his office!”

Tiffany’s brain nearly exploded at the mention of Jackson’s name. “Got it! ”

On her way to the office, she kept thinking about what Jackson would do to her in the office. Could it be that he wanted to continue where they left off from last night? Otherwise, why would he suddenly look for her?

She took her time walking to his office, then lifted her hand to knock on the door. She had already made up her mind. If Jackson was going to ask her for a favor, she would never agree. This wasn’t something a human with conscience could do...

“Come in,” Jackson’s voice came from inside.

Tiffany calmed herself down and pushed open the door. She kept a distance between them and stood at the door. “What’s the matter?”

Jackson picked a document up without even lifting his head. "Send this to Glide. Since Arianne is there too, you girls can go for lunch together. Just don't forget about it again."

Tiffany was taken aback. "Did you call me just for this?"

Jackson looked up at her with a puzzled expression. "Why else would I?"

She visibly relaxed and came forward to accept the document. Just when she was about to turn and leave, Jackson suddenly stopped her. "Wait."

She instantly tensed up again. "Is there anything else...?"

"That... That was your mom looking for you this morning, right? The relationship between you two seems rather poor. My offer from yesterday still stands. Come home with me after work and clean my house. I'll pay you in cash everyday. You made a huge mess last night, so you have to clean it up good today," Jackson said seriously without any impure intentions in his eyes. However, Tiffany remained extremely skeptical about his real intentions.

After Tiffany sent the document to Glide Design Company, she found a restaurant nearby for lunch with Arianne. While they were talking to each other, Arianne noticed that Tiffany seemed to have a load on her mind and couldn't help but say, "What's wrong with you? You're always so carefree and never keep things bottled up in your heart. Since when did you learn to keep things to yourself?"

Tiffany was tempted by her question but was still very embarrassed to confide in her. “Don’t ask... How can you ask me that when you know how bad I am at hiding things, Ari? I can’t tell you that.”

Arianne squinted her beautiful eyes and continued to tempt her. “But I want to know really badly, Tiffie. Tell me pleaseeeee...”

Tiffany finally couldn’t hold it back anymore and confided in her. “Umm... I want to know how you feel after your first time... Tell me about it first...”

Arianne didn’t expect her question to be this, so she was a little embarrassed. However, there shouldn’t be any secrets between best friends and there was nothing to be ashamed of either. After making sure that there was no one else around them, she whispered to her, “Painful. It hurts all over, like your body’s fallen apart. Back then with Will... I really thought I’d done it with him since I knew nothing about it. It was only after doing it with Mark, I realized that it was my first time...”

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Tiffany was a little skeptical. “Really? Then why didn’t I feel anything?”

Arianne was stunned for a good while before coming back to her senses. “You mean... you’re a...? Weren’t you dating Ethan for a long time and even occasionally stayed with him? Why are you asking me this kind of question? Shouldn’t you know this better than I do?”

Tiffany's eyes dimmed a little at the mention of Ethan. "Ethan and I... never got to that stage. He wanted to wait until we got married, but who knew... Hehe... He never even thought of marrying me in the first place. Now that I think about it, he's a decent guy. At least he didn't completely wreck me when he was using me."

From her statement, Arianne picked out a clue. "Since you've never done it with Ethan, then why are you suddenly asking me about it? Tiffie, tell me the truth."

Tiffany got so nervous that she emptied half a glass of water in one breath. "Stop asking me that, Ari. I can't tell you... I'm alright. It was just a random question. Look at me, I look fine, don't I?" After confirming that she didn't feel any discomfort in her body, she significantly relaxed and could even laugh now. That meant nothing really happened between Jackson and her last night. She didn't have to feel guilty anymore. However, it was still better to keep this kind of thing a secret. After all, it was pretty embarrassing.

Arianne pouted but didn't continue pressing and changed the subject instead. "Did you find out anything about Mr. Sloane?"

Tiffany shook her head. "The person I engaged is quite famous in the industry, but it has been a few days and there's still no news about it. Every time I asked, he would tell me he needs a bit more time. I'm seriously suspecting that he's taking me for a fool. But then again, he has a good reputation. Since we have only paid him the deposit and kept the remaining money in our hands, we have nothing to worry about. At most, we only lose the deposit, which isn't much. Give it two more days."

Arianne nodded. She could only wait for now. If Mr. Sloane was still alive, he would definitely be found. There was no use in rushing things.

After lunch, the girls parted ways at the restaurant's exit and returned to their respective workplaces.

It was still lunch break by the time Arianne returned to her office. There wasn't anyone around. As soon as she sat down at her desk, she heard quite a commotion in Eric's office. It sounded like someone was fighting. Out of curiosity, she got up to check on the situation. She was almost at Eric's office when a figure was slammed heavily against the door. Since it was a translucent glass door, Arianne was shocked and couldn't hold back her loud scream. "AHHH! "

The office door was opened from the inside very quickly. Eric stood at the door, looking at her with a murderous face. "We're fine. Get back to work."

Arianne saw another person lying on the ground beside Eric with a bleeding forehead. She had never seen him before, so he couldn't be an employee. She was so frightened that she wanted to turn around and leave, but what if things got even more serious and Eric wound up in jail? She calmed herself down and advised him. "Eric, you can always talk things out. There's no need for violence. Who is this person?"

Before Eric even had time to speak, the person on the ground suddenly got up and punched him in the face. The two of them fought again and Arianne was extremely alarmed. She couldn't call the cops or Eric would be in trouble too. Feeling that her heart would jump out of her throat, she called Mark in a panic instead.

Fortunately, her call was answered. Without waiting for Mark to speak, she spoke first. "Come to my office quickly, Eric is in trouble! I think he's fighting with someone, but there's no one else in the office..."

Mark said nothing and instantly hung up.

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In a flash, the office turned into a mess, with blood staining the floor. Having never witnessed scenes like this, Arianne's legs shook. She forced herself to pull the fighting men apart when she saw Eric being at a disadvantage. "Stop fighting! You'll only hurt yourself like this! Can't you guys talk about the issue instead?"

Eric restrained himself from making too big a movement when he saw Arianne coming to them, but it gave the other party the chance to beat him up. With a hard punch, Eric fell to the floor. Screaming, Arianne grabbed a small cactus pot on the office table and smashed it on the man's head. "Stop it!"

Her slam knocked the man unconscious. It made her shudder, and she didn't even notice that her palm was pricked by the cactus.

Eric staggered up and guarded her behind him. "Call the police..."

Arianne shook her head. "We can't call the police... We've done this to him. We won't get away if we call the police..."

Eric was speechless. “He’s the one who came to my company looking for trouble. What we did was proper self-defense. Why wouldn’t we be able to get away? Besides... he’s my second elder brother. Do you think my old man would let me go to jail? Calling the police is only to teach him a lesson!”

Eric’s second elder brother?

It had never crossed Arianne’s mind that this man was Eric’s second elder brother. Whether it was his appearance or his build, he was vastly lacking compared to Eric. They did not look like brothers at all. The man who was knocked unconscious looked like a middle-aged old man like her father!

Before she could decide if she wanted to call the police, Mark came. He was calm and collected when he saw the scene. “Eric, call 911. Send him to the hospital first. You need to bandage your wound as well. I don’t suggest alerting the police since it’s a family affair. Settle it personally. What happened? Why is your second elder brother here in your company?”

Still enraged, Eric threw himself on the chair and lit a cigarette. “My father asked me to pass Glide to my second elder brother. On what ground? When Glide was still a small insignificant company, its revenue was so bad that they didn’t even bat an eye at it, tossing it to me after acquiring it, basically to dismiss me. They were waiting to laugh at me. I was the Nathaniel family’s least favorite third son, cast away just like that. I didn’t mind. Give me a horse and I’ll rejuvenate it whether it’s old or dying. Now that Glide is doing well in my hands, they want me to give it to my second elder brother? That’s bullsh*t. And this brazen man dares to come and provoke me. I’ll hit him each time he comes!”

Mark looked at Eric's second elder brother on the floor and commented flatly, "If Jackson were here today, this probably... wouldn't stop here..."

Eric suddenly laughed. "Yeah, if Jackson were here, this man would be a goner today. He's the best fighter out of the three of us. But your woman is good too. She's the one who knocked him out just now."

Arianne was a little embarrassed. She was panicking back then.

Mark wore a slight smile and didn't scold Arianne. When the ambulance came and took the man away, he suddenly saw her hand bleeding. Frowning, he wrapped his arm around her shoulders and led her out of the door. "C'mon, let's get your hand checked at the hospital."

Arianne quickly refused. "I was just pricked by the cactus. It's fine. We don't have to fuss about it."

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Mark did not say anything, but seeing the insistence in his eyes, Arianne did not push it.

On the way to the hospital, she could not help asking, "How many brothers are there in Eric's family? Why have they gotten to this stage?"

Mark tugged at his tie. “One elder sister and two elder brothers. He’s a late comer to the family... from his father’s third wife. He has a different mother from his elder siblings. It’s complicated. His old man doesn’t really regard him highly. It’s honestly not Eric’s fault. If it were me, I would have done much worse than he had.”

Arianne also thought that things would not stop here if it were Mark.

Arriving at the hospital, the doctor picked out the pricks in Arianne’s palm. When she saw her bloodied palm, she realized how hard she must have gone just now. After having her palm treated and bandaged, Mark wore a frown while looking at her hand. “Don’t go back to the office later. I’ll send you home. ”

Arianne was reluctant. “I’m fine. I still have unfinished tasks and I need to work overtime tonight. How can I not go back to work? The wound won’t affect my work.”

Mark ignored her opinion and dragged her into the car to send her to the Tremont Estate. She had thought about going back to the office after Mark left but he was not planning to head out. Although he was occupied with work in front of his laptop, Arianne dared not escape under his nose.

It was already three in the afternoon when Nina came out of her bedroom with a yawn. “Why are you guys home so early?”

Arianne looked begrudging with Rice Ball in her arms. “I didn’t want to... Something happened in the office.”

Nina nodded and got changed. "I'm going to see how my house is. I'll probably be moving out in two days. Arianne, come hang out with me when you're free. I plan to stay here for one year; it's pretty boring being alone."

Arianne had not liked her in the beginning, but she now felt a little heavyhearted. "You're leaving so fast? Why don't you stay for a few more days?"

Nina smirked. "Aren't you scared of me fighting over someone with you? It's fine. It's pretty nice to stay alone. I'm heading out."

As Nina left, Arianne felt even more bored at home. Mark was engrossed with work. She had nothing to do other than petting the cat. When she sighed for the umpteenth time, Mark quietly took out earplugs and put them in his ears. She had an impulse to run to him and shout at him, but she lacked the courage to do so.

Around five in the evening, Mark finally shut his laptop and stood up to move around. "Eric and Jackson are coming over tonight. Ask Mary to prepare more dishes."

Looking around and making sure that there was no one else, Arianne realized that he was speaking to her. She strolled to the kitchen to find Mary. "We're having guests tonight. Make extra dishes, Mary."

"Who is it? Sir doesn't usually have guests. We rarely welcome anyone at home," asked Mary.

“Eric and Jackson,” Arianne answered listlessly. Rice Ball, who was in her arms, mirrored her by following with a yawn.

Eric did not work overtime that day; he arrived at the Tremont Estate with Jackson around six in the evening. Nina had informed home that she was not coming back for dinner, so there were only the four of them at the dining table.

Eric had a wound on his head and a bruise on his face. His usual suave tone now looked a little amusing. Jackson had been laughing at him from when they were on the way here and was still laughing when they were seated at the dining table. “I’m really impressed. Your second elder brother is what, ten years or so older than you? And he managed to beat you up to this state?”

Eric looked dead. “Can you stop laughing? I really regret not practicing martial arts from a young age like you. I’ll just take you along when I fight next time.”