

A Ruling Passion – Chapter 0231

Jackson clicked his tongue. “Your face is ruined. He’s too harsh.”

Not used to a table full of men and not being able to chat along as the only woman, Arianne took a few bites and stood up. “I’m full. You guys enjoy the meal.”

Mark nodded. She went to sit down on the couch at the living room while Rice Ball snuggled into her embrace naturally.

Jackson was slightly surprised by the scene. “That cat is pretty fat...”

Mark sighed without saying anything, but Jackson caught the oddity. “Tsk, tsk, I didn’t expect this. You were the most afraid of furry animals in the past and now you have one at home. Looks like someone’s influence on you is quite strong, eh?”

Still not saying anything, Mark glared at him but with upturned lips. His gaze involuntarily fled to the living room.

When they were done with the meal, it was nearly ten at night. Jackson and Eric were tipsy when they left, and Mark was in a no better state. This was Arianne’s first time feeling that the huge Tremont Estate felt somewhat alive. It used to be dead silent. In her impression, this was the first time Jackson and Eric came to the estate as well.

Mark called out to the living room when he headed upstairs. "Ari, come up!"

Arianne jolted. How much did he drink? Why was he suddenly using her nickname? It was making her anxious...

Mary, who was cleaning up the dining table, went to the living room and kept giving her looks. "Go, go. Sir is asking for you."

Arianne dragged her movements, reluctant to go up. "Mary, stop it."

Mary softly said, "It's rare that sir's in a good mood after drinking. Just go when he asks for you. Why are you dilly-dallying?"

Steeling herself, Arianne went up and was pulled into Mark's embrace once she entered the room. "Is there still anything you want to eat?"

He knew her appetite and was clear that she was not full from the meal just now.

"I'll make something simple later," Arianne softly said. "You've drunk a lot. Rest earlier, it's late. You can wake up later tomorrow since you don't have to go to the office on Saturdays."

Bleary-eyed from being tipsy, Mark hugged her tight and leaned at least half of his weight on her. Arianne began to lose her balance and nudged him toward the bed using all of her strength. Overdoing it, Mark pulled her along when he collapsed on the bed. Arianne now laid right on top of him.

Before she collected herself, Mark suddenly flipped them around and caged her below him, kissing her lips swiftly. Perhaps he was really drunk, for his kisses were less than gentle and they pained her lips. Fear instinctively crept up in Arianne. If Mark were sober, she would only be slightly more nervous. She had always been more afraid of his drunken side.

As Mark's kisses traveled to her fair neck, Arianne finally pushed his chest with both other hands. "You're drunk... Let me ask Mary to make you some tea."

He pinned both of Arianne's hands above her head. "No need. Don't be afraid, I know what I'm doing..."

Listening to his words, Arianne felt parched for no reason. Like a fish out of water, she subconsciously stuck the tip of her tongue out to lick her lips, not expecting the action to trigger another onslaught of kisses from Mark... She felt like she was swept away by a tidal wave without any ability to counter.

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Arianne's phone rang out of the blue. Escaping his grip, she picked up the device on the bed and saw that Tiffany's name was blinking as the caller ID. It was necessary to pick

up the call, and Arianne, without a doubt, thought that Mark would stop until she was done with the call.

Without worrying, she connected the call. The moment Tiffany's voice was heard, Mark gave her neck a soft bite. Arianne froze before turning to jelly and could only talk through a tough front, "Tiffie... It's not a good time to talk now. I'll call you later."

Perplexed, Tiffany asked, "What's wrong, Ari? Why would it be inconvenient right now? I have something serious to tell you. It's Mr.—" Arianne hung up directly before Tiffany could finish her words.

Her heartbeat pumped incredibly fast. Tiffany had nearly said "Mr. Sloane". Before she found out the truth, she must not let Mark know about it. He was so close to her right now, he could hear Tiffany...

Fortunately, Mark was drunk and did not question it. His full concentration was on Arianne. He grabbed her phone and tossed it away, uncaring of where he had flung the gadget to.

When all their Clothes were discarded, Mark did not dive right into the main play. Instead, he directed Arianne's hand to the lower part of his body. "Be good, help me out..."

There was a gruffness that tinged his voice, making it enchanting. Blushing and trying hard to ignore the sensation in her hand, Arianne felt warmth rippling inside of her as

well. He was resorting to this because of her health. If he had not been drinking, he probably would not even have asked to do this.

When Mark was asleep, Arianne picked herself up softly to head downstairs. She was hungry. Not having much during dinner, she was currently famished.

Knowing that she would be looking for food, Mary was already in the kitchen preparing a meal for her. When she saw the marks on her neck, she could not help chuckling. "You're both getting along better now. Is sir already asleep?"

Arianne nodded embarrassedly without much explanation.

When she was done with supper, Nina came back reeking of alcohol. She must have had a wild time outside. Worried that she would feel nauseous from all the moving around, Arianne helped Nina to her bed and made sure she fell asleep before allowing herself to feel relieved. Sorting out two drunks in one night definitely felt more tiring than working overtime.

In one of the villas in the White Waters Bay, Tiffany tossed the clothes that Jackson had just changed out of into the washing machine. No matter how expensive the shirts were, they could be washed in the washer in Tiffany's opinion. She did not know how to hand wash clothes anyway.

After work, she had gone back home to serve Lillian before coming over to Jackson's. She did not know that he was not around. Waiting for several hours, she finally saw the man coming back, but he was intoxicated. She was still not done cleaning.

"Nance! Pour me a glass of water..."

Hearing Jackson's howl from the bedroom, Tiffany rolled her eyes and brought a glass of water inside, saying in dismay, "I'm not Nance, I'm Tiffany, yours truly!"

Jackson wore a ravishing smile laying on the bed. "That's not what you said when you called me daddy."

Tiffany's face fell. Was this guy drunk or not? Why was he still so sharp-tongued when he jibed?

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Tiffany huffily pushed the glass of water to the man's lips. "Drink up. I still have a bunch of chores to do and no time to chat. You've only asked me to clean your house and prepare your meals. You didn't ask me to serve you. That requires a higher rate!"

Jackson emptied the glass and fished out a stack of banknotes from his wallet. "Sure... As high as you'd like. I have a tiny request. Sleep... with me. You can state the price."

Tiffany was about to explode from this madness. “Jackson West, what did you just say?”

Jackson tugged his shirt button open and exposed his muscular chest. “Sleep with me...”

Unable to hold back, Tiffany pushed herself forward and slapped him. “Screw yourself! I’ll hit you to death if you continue to act like this!”

She did not actually land a harsh blow. Tiffany loved beautiful things. When Jackson tugged his shirt open, she nearly lost her composure. If Jackson weren’t so handsome, she would have beat him up until she incapacitated him! Because he was drunk, she did not mind him.

Jackson, who was slapped, suddenly turned stern and his gaze changed. Tiffany instantly regretted her previous action and cowered immediately. She heard somewhere that one should not hit the face, and especially not slap a man; it would be unlucky. But she could not stop her hand...

After a while of holding his gaze, Tiffany timidly said, “Uh... it wasn’t on purpose. Your loud mouth is to blame... Find yourself a hostess if you want to, don’t treat me like one of them. I’m going to continue cleaning.”

Just as she turned to leave, the back of her collar was suddenly grabbed and pulled backward. Losing her balance, Tiffany fell into Jackson’s embrace. His arms wrapped around her waist as both of them lay together in an intimate position.

“Let go! What are you doing? I’m telling you... Stop acting weird while you’re drunk, we aren’t that close! Let go of me!” Tiffany struggled from her fright.

“Leaving after hitting me? Even my mom hasn’t laid a finger on my face. Say, how should we settle this? We’ve already slept together, so what do you consider being close?” Jackson’s breath puffed next to Tiffany’s ears. He did not sound like he was furious. It seemed to be provocative instead.

“We didn’t! Nothing happened last night! You can stop bluffing. I’m not close to you!” She tossed and turned to escape his hold but Jackson was strong. After a while of struggling, Tiffany was still unable to leave his arms. Other than being loud to sound fiercer, Tiffany’s efforts were all in vain.

“Stop moving!” Jackson suddenly said sternly.

In what state of mind would Tiffany listen to him? He took advantage of her and was now asking her to stop moving? She jostled around even more violently, her lean and long legs flailing in a frenzy. Jackson’s gaze darkened as he flipped around and caged her underneath him. “I asked you to stop moving...”

Feeling what changed, Tiffany froze, not daring to move half an inch. Not having the real experience did not mean that she knew nothing. Tiffany was embarrassed, and her face felt like it was combusting. “Jackson... no way...?”

To Tiffany, a man would physically react to a woman either because he liked her or because it was purely impulse. Jackson was obviously the latter, and to Tiffany, those who bore the possibility of the latter were jerks!

“Don’t tire yourself. I asked you to sleep with me, purely sleeping. No one asked you to thrash around. I just... just had some wine... I can’t control my body...” Jackson was embarrassed as well.

Tiffany dared not provoke him further and could only relent. “Alright, alright. I won’t move. Get off of me, you’re going to crush me... It’s not really that cold now, no need to find someone to warm your bed. I won’t do it anyway. Find someone else. I think there’s an occupation where people snuggle and sleep with others professionally.”

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Half a minute later, Jackson got off of her. Tiffany got up and straightened her clothes, feeling slightly out of breath. “Umm... It’s getting late. I’ll come back early tomorrow morning and clean. You go to sleep first, I’m leaving!”

Jackson sat on the edge of the bed with his back facing her, so Tiffany couldn’t see the expression on his face. Since he didn’t say anything, she took it as a silent approval and left quickly.

She didn’t expect to encounter this kind of situation in her normal part time job. Nevertheless, it wasn’t hard to understand. A guy like Jackson was probably used to things like this. Maybe another woman would come here as soon as she left.

The next day at the Tremont Estate...

Arianne got up early. Mark and Nina were still asleep. She returned the call she got from Tiffany, who was still muddle-headed from her sleep. Basically, the person they hired found out that Mr. Sloane was taken away by someone from the mailing address and he had fallen sick at the time. That was it for now.

They had known about this since the beginning so the information was of no value. They had gotten happy for nothing.

About ten in the morning, Mark came downstairs. Judging from his attire, it would seem like he was going out. Arianne greeted him, then decided to invite Tiffany out for a chat or to go shopping since she didn't have much to do today. Little did she expect Mark to say, "Follow me to my office. I have a meeting to attend. You can relax there."

She wanted to refuse, but Mark was rarely in such a good mood to invite her to his workplace on his own accord. Since they were finally living in harmony, she didn't want to put herself in a world of suffering again. "Sure, let me change my clothes first."

When they arrived at the Tremont Tower, Mark uncharacteristically grabbed her hand and placed it on his arm. Both of them looked very intimate this way, and it made Arianne feel extremely strange.

It was Saturday, so the normal employees weren't working. The ones that came to the meeting were all the elites and executives in the company. Everyone's curious gazes would linger on Arianne.

When they reached outside of the conference room, Mark spoke to her softly, "There's a lounge over there. You can wait for me there. The meeting won't take too long."

Arianne nodded but was rather confused about his intention in bringing her to his office. Since Mark was going to be busy in a meeting, she could only sit in the lounge and play with her phone. How was this relaxing? It was really boring for her.

All of a sudden, her gaze fell on a figure that came out of the elevator. As expected, there was always an intention behind Mark's every action. Was it because Will was coming to the meeting too?

Will also spotted Arianne. When their eyes met, they were filled with complex emotions. Arianne could only look away because Mark was still next to her.

By the time Will got closer, they inevitably had to interact. "Mr. Tremont."

Mark responded to his greetings faintly. "The meeting is about to begin. Let's go in."

Will's gaze lingered on Arianne briefly before he entered the conference room. Mark ignored the gazes of the others and planted a kiss on her forehead. "Wait patiently for me here."

Arianne didn't say anything and kept her pale face bowed. She could tolerate his schemes and not feel awkward about it. However, she minded the fact that his gentle behavior was only an act for the others around them. That was uncalled for.

Forty minutes later, the first half of the meeting was over and some people came out of the conference room, including Will. Mark didn't come out because he needed to stay until the end of the meeting.

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After everyone else left, Will walked toward the lounge. "Ari."

Arianne stood up and smiled at him. "What a coincidence, I didn't know you were coming to the meeting too. I came with Mark here to relieve my boredom... How's your leg?"

Will didn't point out her anxiety but smiled warmly. "It's fine now. It just feels a bit funny when I walk, but it will get better in time. I see that Mark treats you well. I just hope he wasn't putting on an act for others."

Arianne didn't carry on the conversation and instead changed the topic. "Um... Would you like to drink something? I can make coffee."

Will pondered for a moment then said, "Sure, sorry for the trouble."

Arianne smiled at him then went into Mark's office to make two cups of coffee since his office had more stuff than in the pantry. Two minutes after she came back to the lounge with coffee, the conference room's door opened and Mark came out. "Ari, what are you doing?"

Arianne tried her best to speak calmly. "Just chatting with Will. Aren't you still in the middle of a meeting? What are you doing out here?"

"Toilet break." Mark swept his glance over the both of them then went off to the washroom at the end of the corridor as if nothing had happened.

Will picked up the coffee and took a sip. "He came out to see if both of us are doing something behind his back. Since he's that worried about us meeting, why create the opportunity? What a hypocrite."

Arianne felt a little depressed. "I also think he's a hypocrite. Maybe you should go if you have no other business here. Otherwise, Mark will keep taking toilet breaks and the meeting won't get anywhere."

“Alright. Call me anytime if you need me. You can also text me too. But of course... I know you won't find me under normal circumstances.” Will smiled in resignation, then got up and left.

When the meeting was over, Arianne followed Mark into his office to get some documents. Mark casually asked, “What did you two talk about?”

The dissatisfaction in Arianne's heart overflowed. “That was deliberate, right? You only brought me here because you knew he would be coming.”

He paused in his footsteps but didn't say anything. Arianne went on speaking. “You don't need to do this. I already said this before when I went to see him in the hospital last time, I won't contact him again. Don't.. do this again next time.”

Mark remained silent. After taking the documents from his office, he went to the elevator by himself. Arianne puffed up her cheeks, and when the elevator door closed, she muttered, “You have the audacity to even be mad at me? It was clearly your problem. How can you behave like that...?”

“Are you expressing your dissatisfaction with me?” He turned his face to look at her, but Arianne couldn't tell the emotions in his eyes.

“Yes.” She stood on her toes slightly, in case she couldn't get her point across to him. Even so, she was still a lot shorter than him. She had realized this since the first time both of them stood together. Back then, she was only an eight year old little girl and he

had just turned into an adult. His bones had fully developed and he was so tall that she could only look up at him. She thought the height difference between them would reduce when she grew up. Now she realized that no matter how much she ate, she would never be able to reach his height.

When Mark noticed that Arianne was standing on her toes, a smile crept onto his face. He had the sudden urge to tease her, so he pushed her into a corner. Placing one hand on the wall, he trapped her between his body and the wall. “There’s no use in expressing your dissatisfaction. You cannot put up any resistance against me unless you grow bigger than me one day and can crush me. But judging from the situation, I think you’ll never get the chance in this life.”

Was he mocking her? She glanced at the elevator’s display. The moment the elevator stopped on the ground floor, she stomped on his expensive leather shoe with lightning speed then took advantage of her small frame to run away from beneath his arm.

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Arianne thought she was running as swiftly as the wind, but she unexpectedly got caught by Mark before she even ran out of the lobby on the ground floor. “Oh, seems like you’re getting bolder if you’re now stepping on my foot. Great. I’ll make sure to teach you a lesson later.”

She surrendered and allowed herself to be dragged back to the car dejectedly. Brian noticed both of them panting as though they just finished exercising and couldn't hold himself back from commenting. "What's going on here? Did you two just finish running a hundred meter sprint?"

Mark seemed to be in a great mood and replied to his question. "Something like that, except it was over before we even ran a hundred meters. Let's go to White Water Bay Café."

White Water Bay Café...

Arianne recalled her last visit with Mark to that café, but of course, it couldn't be considered a wonderful memory. She couldn't understand her current state of mind. Rather than saying that they had changed their way of getting along, it was more like she had finally given up and learned how to be sleek

Upon arriving at the restaurant, Mark allowed Arianne to pick their seat. It was nearly lunch time. There weren't many people around yet, so there were still many empty tables. However, most of them were reserved so the place would soon be overcrowded.

Arianne picked a seat near the window. The waiter was startled but said nothing. Even if it was a reserved table, it could still be changed. However, if Mark was offended, there would be no going back from that. Besides, the owner of White Water Bay Café was Jackson West. Everyone knew of the relationship between Mark Tremont and the owner.

The seat was a nice spot that allowed the guests to see the river outside the window, and the café was situated at an excellent location in the White Water Bay. In order to avoid any awkward silence, Arianne started a conversation. “This is a really nice location. Do you own any property at White Water Bay?”

“I do. Why? You like it here? Do you want to move here?” Mark replied very naturally.

Arianne was taken aback by his response. “It was just a casual question. It’s too troublesome to move.”

Mark disagreed with her. “If you really like this place, it won’t be troublesome. I was the one who built the White Water Bay Villa area. Jackson took one of them and I reserved two with the best locations for myself. I didn’t sell them off even when someone offered me a good price. I don’t really need the money anyway.”

Arianne never expected that she would be able to figure out his financial resources from a simple question. She always knew that Mark was rich, but she didn’t know to what extent. It was indeed outrageous for him to be rich enough to own properties with sky-high prices in various good locations and not for investment purposes. However, the reality was indeed this outrageous.

“Umm... let’s not. I’m comfortable living in Tremont Estate. Besides, I’ve stayed there for more than ten years and have grown attached to it. We can’t just move for the sake of moving. By the way, why are you keeping those houses that you aren’t living in? I don’t really get what goes on in the head of all you rich people.” Arianne was starting to become aware that she had struck a gold mine.

“Hehe... as long as you like something, there’s no need to think about anything else. Since you have feelings for a house that you lived in for so long, then what about people?” Mark looked at the scenery outside the window and asked casually.

Arienne didn’t immediately realize the real question he was asking, so she started carefully and seriously answered. “Of course, I do have feelings for people too, especially Mary and Uncle Henry. They both treat me really very well. Mary is like a mother to me.”

Mark pursed his thin lips into displeased frown. “So, I’ve treated you very poorly?”

Arienne finally realized the real question he wanted to ask. Even so, she didn’t want to lie to him or answer him too casually. She thought for a moment before answering. “Pretty good overall, I guess. But you know... there are too many problems between us. If those complicated things never existed, then you would be the dearest and closest person to me.”

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Mark turned his head back and looked at her with complex emotions running through his eyes. “What if I told you that the past didn’t matter? I’m not really...” Before he could finish his sentence, he got interrupted by Aery and her family. Not only was her mother here today, but even her father, Jean Kinsey, was here.

“Mark dear, what a coincidence! I didn’t expect to meet you here. It’s been a long while, how are you?” Aery pretended as if nothing had happened and spoke to Mark in her usual cutesy voice.

Mark was rather unhappy to be interrupted, so naturally, his feelings were reflected on his face. “Yeah,” he replied curtly.

Aery knew how to observe the situation, so she stepped aside and stopped talking but continued giving dirty looks to Arianne. Jean and Helen both acted friendly around Mark. Speaking of schemes, those two were probably on another level. They even directly addressed him as ‘Mark’ instead of ‘Mr. Tremont’ like everyone else. “The weather is nice today, Mark. It’s good that you bought Ari out. She’s never been in good health since young. I’m relieved to see that she’s doing well in the Tremont family all these years.”

Arianne couldn’t stand Helen’s hypocritical behavior. She was literally two-faced! Even so, Arianne suppressed herself. If they weren’t in public, she would have really given Helen a piece of her mind.

By right, Helen was considered Mark’s mother-in-law. She wasn’t doing anything wrong, so Mark still had to humor her. “There’s nothing to worry about. She’s doing pretty well.”

Seeing that Mark’s attitude toward Helen wasn’t as cold, Aery seized the opportunity. “Why don’t we connect the tables and eat together? It’s rare for the family to gather. What do you think, big sis?”

As soon as the question came out, everyone directed their gaze at Arianne. If it were in the past, Arianne would have accepted out of politeness and even endured the discomfort of doing so. However, she no longer wanted to force herself. "Family? Who? Do any of you share the same family name as mine? I'm out of your league and prefer quietness. Please find yourselves a table elsewhere."

Aery and her family were instantly put on the spot. After having several encounters with Arianne, Helen pretty much understood her temperament by now. "Then we shall take our leave. Ari, your younger sister has made you upset, but you should be forgiving as an older sister. Don't argue with her. I'll get her to apologize to you next time."

Apologize? More like visiting the Tremont Estate under the guise of forming a closer relationship. It seemed like as mother and daughter, it was impossible for her to cleanly sever their relationship. Helen was pretty clever for selling her daughter out, but Arianne wasn't going to let her have her way. "No need next time. Why not now?"

Aery turned green from anger. "Mom!"

Since Arianne had made it clear, there was no getting out of the situation. Helen gritted her teeth and dragged Aery in front of Arianne. "Speak."

Aery pressed her lips and refused to say a word, so Helen secretly pinched her hard. Her arm hurt, but she remained silent because she didn't want to be embarrassed in front of Mark. Arianne smiled at them. "Never mind then. I'm not worthy of the apology."

Jean couldn't stand seeing his precious daughter suffer so he came forward to mediate the situation. "Forget it. Fights between sisters are very normal. Let's not further disturb their meal but return to our seats."

Aery was the first to turn around and leave. Helen, who had a ball of anger burning in the pit of her stomach, gave Aery a sour face during their entire meal.

Arianne enjoyed her meal and even occasionally chatted with Mark as if nothing had happened. Aery was so angry that smoke was practically coming out of her orifices.

After their meal, Arianne took the initiative to hold onto Mark's arm as both of them headed to the exit together. At the sight of this, Aery finally snapped and went up to them. "Mark dear!"

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Mark stopped and turned to look at her. "What is it?"

Aery didn't know how to make him stay. She grabbed the hem of her clothes tightly out of nervousness. "I... I have something to tell you..."

Mark looked at her calmly. "If you have something to say, then just say it here. I need to accompany Ari back. I don't have all day."

Arianne narrowed her beautiful eyes as she looked at Aery coldly. She trusted that Mark would keep his words, so Aery wouldn't be able to make him stay.

"Not really convenient, can we talk over there? Just give me five minutes..." Aery still tried to fight for it.

When Helen saw this, she didn't go up and stop her. However, she gazed at Arianne with conflicted feelings. Although she was the one who had given birth to her, Helen couldn't see through her as usual...

Mark continued to decline. "If there's nothing important, then we'll be going now."

Aery started to panic. "No, there is! But it isn't convenient to say it in front of others. Believe me for once, Mark dear!"

After thinking for a moment, Mark nodded with a frown. Before Arianne could say anything, Aery quickly dragged him away. Arianne wasn't sure what they were talking about, but Mark had a rather conflicted look on his face. In retrospect, Aery probably didn't have any dirt on her, so there wasn't really anything for her to worry about.

It was then that Helen went up to her. "Ari, it seems like you have a problem with me."

“Indeed, I do have a problem with you. You aren’t a mother in my eyes but a rotten woman who abandoned her husband and daughter. You would do anything to achieve your goals, including using your own biological daughter and even faking cancer. Disgusting! How do you expect me to treat you after all that?” Arianne responded mercilessly.

Rotten woman. The unbearable vocabulary shocked Helen to her very core. She never expected Arianne to use that to describe her.

When Jean heard their conversation, he chose to act like a turtle instead of sticking up for Helen like a man. He pretended he heard nothing and stood watching from the side. Arianne then sneered in a lower voice. “Look at that, Helen. That is the man you chose. Seems like the Kinsey family needs a woman like you to show your face in public. Whenever my dad had a piece of bread, he would always offer it to you first. If someone humiliated you like I did, he would stick up for you. Even if it was me who had done that, he would have taught me a lesson. But what about this man? He’s enjoying the show. At first, I thought I was the pitiful one. Now I realize that it’s not me, but you. At least, I have become Mrs. Tremont, whom everyone is envious of. But you? You’re just a rotten woman.”

Helen’s face turned pale. “Ari...”

Arianne had lost any desire to continue listening to her. “I said it long before, we owe each other nothing. Don’t say anything about you being the one who gave birth to me. Your kindness in giving birth to me doesn’t match those rotten things you’ve done to me. If I could choose, I would rather not be your daughter. I’m even starting to feel as if the blood flowing in my body reeks of the stench of vanity. This is all thanks to you.”

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Helen was speechless upon being censured. Aery and Mark also got done with their conversation. The latter walked over with a long face and tugged Arianne to leave. Returning to the car, he said coldly, “Go back to the Tremont Estate.”

Brian did not understand how the current atmosphere became like this when they were so friendly while coming to the restaurant. He hummed an acknowledgement and didn't dare say more.

Arianne didn't feel guilty so she asked directly, “What did Aery tell you? You look so gloomy as if it's going to rain.”

Mark did not answer her question but slightly lowered his head as if he was musing. After some time, he spoke, “That day of the accident when you miscarried, what were you doing with Will in the car?”

Reluctant to recall the incident, Arianne was a little heavyhearted. “He wasn't in a good mood that day because you acquired his company, so he called me out for a chat. Of course, he didn't tell me that. We were just chatting. After that, he sent me back to the office. I was getting out of the car when Aery hit me. Why are you mentioning this? Do you want me to recall how you covered for Aery and let her driver become her scapegoat?”

“Tell me the truth. I only need you to answer my question.” Mark's tone was stem.

“I told you, we were just chatting. What else do you want me to say?” Confused, Arianne fumed as well. Realizing that his sudden temper must be related to Aery, she asked, “What did Aery tell you? How am I supposed to know what you’re angry about if you don’t tell me?”

As if finding it hard to speak, Mark turned to face the window; perhaps he did not want to speak about it. Arianne breathed in deeply. “She told you that I was up to no good with Will at that time, didn’t she? Please, we were by the building of my office. There were so many people coming in and out. She may have no shame, but I have my pride. I can’t achieve what she has like seducing the husband of her elder sister. No matter how I’ve misbehaved, I can’t possibly surpass her.”

Mark was quiet for a moment before he said, “She didn’t say what you and Will were doing... Just that you both were hugging emotionally. That’s why you guys didn’t even realize when she crashed into you.”

Arianne began to seethe so much that she wanted to make a U-turn and cuss at Aery. “You believe whatever she says? She’s basically admitting to running into me, isn’t she? If so, please, may I ask, why were you covering for her since you knew that she ran into me? And helping out the Kinseys at that time. How dare you get angry? Everything you did is like stabbing a knife into me!

“I told you, the past is the past, stop bringing it back up! What good does it do? I can’t beat you in an argument or a fight, and you jump right to conclusions every time you’re upset, without telling me the details. I’m done with this!”

Brian dared not even breathe louder in the driver's seat. This was the first time he saw an "aggressive" Arianne. Working for the Tremonts for years, it was also his first time seeing someone bold enough to talk to Mark like this. He thought that Mark would seethe, but the latter did not even have his previous ominous air to him. Instead, he was looking at Arianne with his jaw dropped, obviously not expecting this from her.

When Arianne realized that the atmosphere turned odd, she felt a little timorous. She had been too frustrated just now that she could not help lashing out. To cover for herself, she could only continue being aggressive. "You... Speak up, what do you even mean? Why did you cover for Aery? I can't say anything to you about you helping the Kinseys since it's your money, but why? And why at that time? I want an explanation... Don't worry, whatever your answer is, I can accept it. I said that the past is the past, but I have the right to know!"

Looking at her serious front, Mark somehow began to think about the answer. In the end, he reached a conclusion. "Covering for Aery is to upset you. As for helping the Kinseys, it's also to upset you and... for profit."

Was there an answer in this world that was more honest than this? Arianne felt both timorous and furious. "Wow, then should I thank you for doing so and not because you like Aery? It's just to upset me huh, should I be happy then? With profits involved too killing two birds with one stone, beautiful!"

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Arianne's voice quivered as she spoke, but speaking to this point, there was no turning back. She had to win this time, she would not give in first!

“Mm... not bad...” Mark was not being humble but he pondered. Something did not seem right...

Arianne swallowed. “Uh... isn’t Nina leaving one of these days? When is she leaving? Let’s treat her to a meal. She’s a girl, ask someone to help her with the moving.”

Successfully having his attention diverted, Mark replied, “I know. I’ll go to Jackson and Eric later. I won’t be home for dinner. Rest earlier after your meal.”

When the car arrived at the Tremont Estate’s gate, Arianne got off the vehicle shakily, feeling her legs wobbling. Mark did not go in, having Brian drive to Jackson’s at the White Waters Bay. He suddenly asked, “Brian, was she picking a fight with me just now?”

Brian swallowed. “I guess... I guess so... Actually, I agree with her that you’re at fault. It’s not an issue for her to throw a tantrum...”

Mark wore a meaningful smile. “It’s not an issue indeed... I like it, it should have happened a long time ago.”

Yeah, this was how things should be. In the past, she was always quiet and cautious no matter when and what it was, like an unconditionally obedient child. They had nothing to talk about when they met. It had always felt oppressive and boring. Her sudden change felt like seasoning to his otherwise bland life, as if the black and white of his world was finally colored.

When Mark arrived at the White Waters Bay, Eric was already there.

Jackson was in one of his rare good moods today and went to cook personally. Out of the three of them, Jackson was the one with the most hobbies. Putting it simply, he was both intellectual and sporty, looked good on the outside and well-mannered on the inside. Domestically, he could cook, and career-wise, he was also a business powerhouse. In spite of this, it was incredibly rare to be able to get a taste of his homemade meals.

Mark and Eric noticed a strange vibe right when they entered his house. There seemed to be someone else in Jackson's house, as there was a pair of women's shoes in the entryway. It was a pair of white canvas shoes, too, to boot. They knew Jackson well enough to know what type of women he liked. It should be hotties in high heels, so the pair of canvas shoes looked out of place to both men. Since when did Jackson change his taste?

Out of the blue, a woman's voice came from the kitchen. "What? This is wrong, that's also wrong. I told you that I don't know how to cook, yet you asked me to help you anyway. I'll just end up poisoning you!"

The voice... Mark and Eric looked at each other. It was someone they were familiar with. Tiffany!

Eric closed the door in feigned indifference and rubbed his hands together. "I better forget the passcode to his house. It'd be awkward if I come over and encounter something I shouldn't. He didn't used to take women home..."

Mark was uninterested in gossip like this. He was merely a little surprised.

Hearing the noise, Jackson stepped out of the kitchen. "You guys are here? Have a seat first. I'm preparing the ingredients so I can cook them right away later."

Eric clicked his tongue. "Don't go for the ones in our friend group. Why did you specifically pick her?"

Jackson was puzzled. "What are you talking about?"

Eric pointed at the kitchen, hitting Jackson with realization. "What are you talking about? She's my employee and works as a part-time cleaner in my house after work. You guys know this too, but I'm staying alone and I need to prevent this place from becoming messy... Help your own people first rather than outsiders, y'know?"