

A Ruling Passion – Chapter 6

There was a fleeting moment when Arianne saw Will's shadow behind Tiffany. The three of them knew each other so well that Tiffany Lane had his tone and expression down impeccably.

Arianne's heart skipped a beat. Her lips parted open, not sure of how to reply.

Tiffany waved at her with a grin.

"Alright, my mission is done. Whatever you have to say, tell Will yourself! Take care on your way home, see you tomorrow!"

She got into her car and left afterward, leaving Arianne stunned on the spot for a long time, what Tiffany had said just now kept replaying in her mind...

When Arianne arrived at the Tremont Estate, it had already past eight o'clock at night. She carefully opened the gift box to see that Tiffany had bought her a necklace, while Will had given her a bracelet. In Will's gift box there was a note which wrote 'Hand in hand, with you I shall grow old'.

Blushing, Arianne hid the gifts in a cardboard box under her bed. Mark Tremont would never agree to the presence of such things, so she dared not wear them out.

All of a sudden, Mary's voice came from behind.

"Ari, you're back? Let me make you a birthday meal."

Arienne picked herself up immediately.

"Mama Mary, there's no need to. I've eaten already. Please rest early tonight."

Mary was hesitant to speak as she rubbed her cool hands together.

"Ari, sir has rushed back during the middle of his business trip to celebrate your birthday, most likely that is. I saw that he even brought home a present but he didn't look happy when he saw that you weren't home. Why are you back at this time? Sir hasn't even had dinner..."

Arienne's breath was stuck in her throat, a wave of panic flashed across her pale face. Mark Tremont forbade her from spending free time outside. She had accepted Tiffany's invitation because she thought that he would not return so suddenly.

What triggered her warning siren was Mary's interpretation. How was it possible that Mark Tremont had come back specifically to celebrate her birthday? A present was basically impossible!

Seeing that she was frightened, Mary held her hand.

“Don’t be afraid, sir won’t bite you. I’ll prepare his meal, you send it up to him. It’s your birthday today. Be sweet with your words, he won’t make things difficult for you.”

Arianne nodded. When Mary was done with the meal preparation, she carefully carried it upstairs, freeing a hand to knock at the room door.

“Are you there?”

There was no reply. Arianne had long grown accustomed to this. Mark Tremont was a man of few words, so it was not uncommon for him to ignore people when he was not in a good mood. Gritting her teeth, Arianne pushed the door open only to be shocked. Mark Tremont was smoking, seated in front of the French window. The room was blanketed in a thin layer of smoke, making one wonder how much he had puffed. She recalled that he rarely smoke. Surrounded by the smoke, he did not look real. He had not even changed, still clad in his tailor suit, while his hair was neat without a single strand out of place.

Containing herself to stay calm, Arianne put down the dinner and made her way to open the window on the side for better ventilation.

“Where have you been?” Mark Tremont asked without warning.

Frozen, the icy wind that came rushing straight through Arianne's heart.

"My... friend asked me to hang out. I didn't know that you came back." Her voice was soft, drowned by the chilly wind that gushed in through the window. Arianne was not sure if he heard her clearly.

Apparently, his sense of hearing was excellent.

"Didn't know that I came back? So you mean you can do whatever you want if I'm not here?"

Arianne Wynn felt ice cold, so piercing cold that she closed the window.

"No... I've made a mistake. I won't do it again."

She did not explain any further, nor did she wish to mention that it was her eighteenth birthday today. No matter the situation, she would just apologize for her fault as long as he was unhappy.

Mark Tremont let out a light scoff, wearing a smirk as he stubbed out his cigarette and poured himself a glass of liquor. He had just taken a sip when Arianne timidly reminded him, "Drink after you eat..."

Mark Tremont looked at the glass in his hand and walked up to her.

“It’s your birthday today.”

Looking at the liquor he extended, Arianne dared not take it. She did not know how to drink, and it was his glass. He was a clean freak. She would be outrageously bold to touch it, not to mention drink from it.

“I... don’t know how to drink.”

With an upset frown, Mark Tremont pinched Arianne’s chin abruptly and poured a good flow of liquor into her mouth. Arianne’s throat burned at once, making her cough incessantly.

Before she could recover from the harsh cough, she was suddenly pulled into Mark’s embrace.

A Ruling Passion – Chapter 7

Arianne Wynn’s eyes widened in trepidation. It was only then that she realized that before she came, he had consumed a fair amount of liquor. The small sip just now could not sum up to the scent of alcohol wading from him right now.

Mark Tremont's kiss was commanding and predatory, swallowing Arianne's breath bit by bit. When she was about to struggle for air, he finally pulled away.

"The dinner is getting cold!" Arianne cried out in panic.

Mark Tremont was a different person when he was drunk, compared to when he was sober. When he drank, he gradually let his true self out, but while sober he was everyone's gentleman.

Arianne was well aware of this. She was terrified and trembling, while the message Will Sivan entrusted to Tiffany Lane kept looping in her mind – 'I like you. Wait for my return. You've got to wait for me.'

Mark Tremont pushed her down onto the large bed behind her.

"Two more hours. What a waste to spend it on dinner."

He was facing away from the light. Arianne was unable to discern his expression. She dared not look straight into his face, a face that countless women lusted over. She could vaguely feel his rage. She caught his hand.

"Don't be like this..."

Her tone was pleading. Yet little did she know that a damsel in distress was the easiest way to spark a man's desire.

Mark Tremont's hand moved to her face as he caressed her features.

"But your eyes were tempting me, they have always been tempting me. Why do you stare at me if you don't want it?"

His tone was alluring with a slight rasp.

Arianne's reply was tinged with a sob. "Mark Tremont... I... I'm on my period..."

His eyes darkened.

Arianne held her breath. Before she came upstairs, she had prepared herself. This loophole was foolproof as long as he did not check with his own eyes.

However, what killed her hope was that Mark Tremont did not let her go despite her announcement.

Instead, the grazing on her neck that felt slightly raw put her on edge. She dared not resist him anymore, knowing that his patience had always been limited.

“Give me a hand,” he said as if ordering her.

Arianne stiffened up. She wanted to retract her hand but he had caught it in a death grip. The alcohol in her system alleviated much of her psychological discomfort, rendering her mildly inebriated, now not aware of what she was doing. The concept of time had escaped her. Mark Tremont came down from above her and went into the bathroom before he quickly got out of the door.

Waking up in the next morning, Arianne Wynn was dumbstruck to see that she had slept on Mark Tremont’s bed last night! She had entered his room countless times throughout the years in the Tremont Estate but she had never

slept in his room.

Recalling last night’s incident, a blush crept up her cheeks as she was dressing, despite her crushing headache. Other than the very last step, they had done everything last night. Even when she had been expecting this, she still felt a heavy weight on her chest.

The dinner she had carried up yesterday was left untouched on the coffee table. Arianne took it downstairs to see an unusually cheery Mary taking the food tray from her while joyously giving her a toasted sandwich.

“Eat up, I know that you like this. Sir’s been really nice to you. He rushed back to celebrate your birthday even if it was only for a few hours. You have no idea how hasty he was when he left...”

Arianne Wynn gave no reply, but in her mind she grumbled to herself, “Ugh, must have been difficult for Mark Tremont to make time and do that to her when he has such a tight schedule!”

Before she headed out, Mary hung her hand-knitted scarf on her. “In case others see your neck.”

A Ruling Passion – Chapter 8

Arianne’s hand flew up to her neck, wearing a frown. She vaguely remembered that Mark Tremont had kissed her there, he must have left a mark.

Unlike Arianne’s flustered state, Mary was delighted.

“Ari, just be with sir if he really likes you. You’ll have your favorite buttered bread for life and he’s good looking too. I don’t think there’s anything you’d disapprove of, seeming you’ve spent ten years with him after all.”

Arianne shied away from discussing the topic as she cut Mary off. “Mama Mary, I’m gonna be late for class. Bye!”

She fled out of the door as if she was running for her life.

Become Mark Tremont’s other half? If she was bored to death, sure.

When Arianne got to school, Tiffany Lane scooted to her and toyed with her scarf.

“Babe, what unique taste you’ve got there. Why does it feel so 70’s? But Ari always looks the best anyway. You look good, maybe even better if you wore a janitor’s uniform. Especially with your eyes, take a look at them... ah! You’re so captivating...”

Her eyes, Mark Tremont mentioned them last night as well. Arianne shuddered at the thought.

“Stop joking.”

Suddenly, someone’s mobile phone rang. Both Tiffany and Arianne looked at each other.

Tiffany shrugged. "It's not mine. That's not my ringtone."

Arianne perked her ears up, realizing that the ringtone seemed to have come from her bag. Taking off her backpack to check, a newest released model of a certain mobile phone brand was buzzing in a frenzy.

She was quite bewildered. Retrieving the phone, the incoming caller displayed that it was Mark Tremont. When did he put the phone into her bag? He had even saved his number on it.

Arianne took a glance at Tiffany awkwardly and answered the call.

"Hello?"

Mark Tremont's melodious voice, which lacked warmth, came from the other end.

"I've transferred you some money. I don't want to see you looking like you've been maltreated the next time I return, it spoils my appetite."

Spoils his appetite? He didn't really mean his actual appetite by that, did he?

The phone call ended shortly and her mobile phone displayed a money transfer notification.

Arianne frantically turned off the phone and dropped it back into her bag, afraid of revealing what just happened. When she came into contact with the bank card in her bag, her hand shook. Why did it feel like an exchange for what happened last night? It was off-putting.

“Your brother gave this to you? This model costs around fifteen hundred dollars. Looks like he isn’t the worst to you,” Tiffany commented.

Arianne nodded. “Let’s go. Class is about to start.”

Luck was perhaps not on her side today. When they entered the studio, the tutor was not in a good mood as she instructed directly, “Today we are drawing someone who left you with the strongest impression. Feel free! You can refer to photos. There are no restrictions.”

Tiffany Lane was hyped as she stared at Arianne in anticipation. The latter was embarrassed.

“What are you doing? You’ve been asked to draw someone who gave you a deep impression...”

With a chuckle, Tiffany answered, “That’s you. From the moment I saw you, you’ve left a mark in my life. How perfect of a person you are... If you were to pursue the entertainment business, other celebrities will just turn lackluster. Except... you keep too much to yourself and you’re too thin.”

Arianne did not say anything as she mulled over who had left her with the strongest impression. Her parents? Her memory of their faces had long faded with time. Once Mark Tremont popped up in her mind, Butler Henry and Mary’s face vanished. She genuinely opposed the idea of drawing Mark Tremont. She did not have his photo either. In spite of it, his face was clear as day in her mind even without a reference. Each of his actions was etched deep in her memory!

“Arianne Wynn, what are you doing? You’re being sponsored and here you are being lazy. Snap out of it, you’re supposed to be drawing,” the tutor called Arianne out with a rap on the drawing board.

Breaking out of her trance, Arianne forced herself to pick up her pencil. She wanted to draw Mary. After all, Mary treated her the best aside from her parents. As she drew, however, the person on her drawing board had actually transformed into Mark Tremont, unable to leave her mind.

A Ruling Passion – Chapter 9

When they submitted the assignment, the tutor wore a deriding smirk looking at her drawing.

“You drew Mark Tremont huh? You usually act reserved, but now it seems that you’re just like most girls. A few of them drew him as well but yours is the best. You have a photo? Share it.”

The tutor was a woman nearing her thirties. Unmarried, ill-tempered, and infatuated with Mark Tremont, she babbled about him with the other students every day.

Arianne Wynn shook her head. “I don’t have a photo…”

The tutor’s face fell.

“But you drew him so well? All based on imagination? Have you met him in person? Be a good sport, show me the photo. Your drawing… it looks like he’s just sitting around at home? The internet doesn’t have photos like this. Where did you get it from?”

Tiffany Lane could no longer hold herself back.

“What’s the fuss now? She’s said that she’s got no photo, that’s it. Her drawing skills have always been great, don’t you know your own students?”

Faced against students of significant family backgrounds and power like Tiffany Lane, the tutor would always think twice before acting. "Alright, alright. I know she's under your wing. I don't want no photo, okay?"

"How did you do it? You've never met Mark Tremont, have you? I've seen him once, in a banquet. I thought that you were different from the others. I see that you fantasize about the nation's ideal man too, hehe..." Tiffany asked Arianne after class.

Habitually quiet, Arianne had no fantasy for Mark Tremont. What could she be imagining when they stayed under the same roof every day? She could draw him perfectly because that was how deeply rooted he was in her mind. She could probably never escape from the dread that he brought to her entire life.

"Ari, I heard that Mark Tremont is coming to our campus event this year. It's not strange though. He's contributed a lot to the school. It's reasonable that the school invites him," Tiffany spoke having long been accustomed to Arianne's reticence.

The campus event was held every semester before the campus proceeded winter and summer breaks. It was nothing but some boring programs and a talk the school arranged.

There were twenty-one more days until the campus event. Mark Tremont would already be back from his business trip then.

“Ari, we don’t have any classes in the afternoon. Let’s hang out. I’ll take you ice-skating. There’s a new ice-skating rink. The ski field is too far away, I’ll take you there during the holidays,” Tiffany quickly suggested when she saw that Arianne was packing her things, looking like she was about to leave.

There was a frown between Arianne’s brows. She was worried about Mark Tremont coming home out of the blue again. If she was caught not home once more, she did not think that she would be forgiven so easily.

“What do you say? Let’s go huh, let’s go.” Tiffany swung her arm in a cutesy manner.

Arianne shook her head helplessly. “Can’t go, I need to go home.”

Tiffany clung to her arm stubbornly. “Why are you hurrying home every day? Is your family that strict? Is your brother going to bite you?”

“Mm.” Arianne made a hum. Mark Tremont would actually swallow her whole.

Tiffany Lane was speechless, incredibly curious about her brother. Witnessing how serious Arianne was, however, she could only let go of her arm and let her leave, not wanting to put her in a dilemma.

Leaving the campus, Arianne's bicycle chain popped off suddenly before she even made it halfway through her journey. She did not know how to fix it, only able to plod on and push the bicycle. Heavy snow fell again. Her hands, which were not taken care of, were already cracked from the cold, while her cheeks were flushed red from the icy gale.

The sky had darkened when Arianne arrived home. The nightfall enveloped the Tremont Estate's lavish outline yet was unable to conceal its magnificence. Mark Tremont cherished peace and quiet, so the location was fairly far from the Southline University. However, without a bike to ride, Arianne had suffered.

Entering the door, Mary hauled her into the nanny's room and warmed her up by switching on the heater.

"What's up with you? Why are you back so late and freezing cold too? If you find it hard to talk to sir, I'll go on your behalf. You don't even have any thicker clothes."

Arianne Wynn rubbed her hands that were numb from the cold together and replied faintly, "He's given me money. I didn't spend it."

She would have felt wrongly to have spent that money...

Mary poked her forehead grudgingly. "He's given you money, you refuse to use it. What are you being stubborn about? So many years have passed since that incident. Sir isn't

treating you badly, why are you the one dwelling instead? Sir's back today and you're back so late again. He'll surely be after you!"

Mark Tremont's back?!

A Ruling Passion – Chapter 10

Arianne Wynn had pins and needles at once. Was he no longer on a business trip? Why was he suddenly back?

Fear emerged from within. In hindsight, luckily she did not go ice-skating with Tiffany. She was only unfortunate that her bicycle chain popped off.

Heading to the bathroom, Arianne felt uneasy when she showered, knowing that he would surely look for her. She caught a lean shadow on the couch from the corner of her eyes when she came out of the bathroom and passed by the living room.

He was wearing light grey loungewear, looking more casual than in his usual full suit attire, as it made him look less icy. Except his eyes were still distant when he looked up at Arianne.

"Come over here."

Letting her head hang down, Arianne moved to stand straight beside him.

“You’re back.”

“...Cold?” He had wanted to question why she was home late, but his query became one singular word when he saw the cracked wound on her hand.

Slightly dumbfounded, Arianne dared not look at him. “Um... It’s fine...”

Mark Tremont picked up the steaming black tea on the coffee table and passed it to her without much thought. There was no change in his expression.

“Don’t come home so late next time.”

Arianne did not take the tea. This was the first time Mark Tremont was not unhappy about her coming home late and he did not even ask for an explanation.

Mark Tremont’s eyes shifted up to her again. All it took was his cold gaze for her to accept the tea and gulp it down. The black tea was not scalding hot but the tip of Arianne’s tongue felt tender for chugging the liquid. It was only when she had finished drinking that she belatedly realized that it was his cup she had drunk from.

“Uh... I’ll clean it for you...”

Before he said anything, Arianne scurried off to the kitchen holding the cup that was still warm to the touch.

Mark Tremont’s gaze darkened a little while his appealing thin lips pressed into a displeased line.

Was she really this scared of him?

When the cup was carefully rinsed for the umpteenth time, Mary closed the tap and teased, “Ari, what are you doing? The cup’s gonna peel from your washing!”

Snapping out of her daze, Arianne held the cup with caution.

“Nothing... I’ll send it to him now.”

“Go along, quickly,” Mary urged.

Arianne did not feel brave enough to actually go. Mark Tremont would certainly not use a cup she had used, but he did not say that he did not want it back. She was apprehensive about catching sight of the repulsion in his eyes again...

A slight frown formed between Mark Tremont's brows, when he watched the girl who took her sweet time exiting the kitchen. The fitting white sweater Arianne wore hugged her thin form perfectly – had she never eaten a full meal before?

Presenting herself in front of him, Mark Tremont heard her quivering soft voice ask, "Do... do you want tea? Should I change the cup?"

His strong skeletal hand grabbed the cup from her hands and poured himself a cup of black tea. Their hands formed a stark contrast, one was fair and smooth while another had seen better days.

"In the future, get Henry to send you to school. Don't embarrass the Tremonts."

Arianne was yet to feel warm and fuzzy from the first half of Mark Tremont's words, then a bucket of ice cold water soaked her thoroughly with his final words. She thought she knew him well enough and had already come mentally prepared... Yet he was only worried about her being a disgrace.

"You're blocking the light," Mark Tremont stated abruptly as he looked down at his magazine.

Arianne looked up at the lamp that was above their heads. How could she be blocking the light? Pondering, she thought that he must have meant that she was an offense to his eyes. She turned to leave quietly but was stopped by his words.

“I didn’t ask you to leave.”

She turned around once more and sat down on the couch, placing her as far away as possible from Mark Tremont, as she saw him picking up the cup of tea and taking a sip. There was nothing unnatural about his expression, he was actually fine with the fact that she had just used his cup!

The scene last night in his room replayed itself in Arianne’s mind again and she felt her cheeks heating up.

“Sleep in the upstairs room from tonight onward.”

He had no idea what she was thinking about.