

A Ruling Passion – Chapter 0076

Arianne seemed blissfully unaware that she was being watched. She was surrounded by many gasps and compliments, and she felt as if her ears had developed calluses from the sheer amount of them. The bridal show was during the latter segment of the fashion show. She took twelve minutes to brace herself and waited for her design to appear on the runway. Although she wasn't part of the manufacturing process, she was the "biological mother".

Minutes and seconds passed, and the show was nearly its end. She was beginning to feel skeptical, her design couldn't possibly have been put in the finale, right? After all, she wasn't a member of Mark Tremont's company. However, if it wasn't in the finale, did that mean that Mark was toying with her?

Suddenly, the music changed from a rhythmic tempo to a melodious tune. A tall, slender and fair-skinned model dressed in white slowly strutted onto the runway. Arianne gasped. 'That's my design... It really is the finale piece!'

The bridal gown was long and reached all the way to the model's ankles. It did not have a long train, and the crinoline wasn't too extravagant. She had always had a more modest style, so when it came to designing wedding gowns, she wouldn't make them too revealing. Hence, she designed the neckline with an oriental-styled mandarin collar. In order to balance out the brilliance of a woman's ideal wedding dress, she paired it with white bridal gloves and a veil. It did not have a lot of fancy embedded crystals. The dress mainly featured intricate embroidery, and precious stones were only used on parts of the embroidery that required them.

She had previously thought that she had been too implicit when describing the details in her design. She didn't expect that Mark would know exactly what to do.

The fashion show ended, and people left one after another. Arianne spotted Aery and Mark laughing and chatting together just as she was getting up. Hence, she decided against asking him to leave with her and left the fashion show on her own.

She had been waiting for a car by the street when Mark's car suddenly stopped in front of her. After confirming that Aery was not in the car, she opened the car door and entered the vehicle.

Arianne didn't ask him why Aery wasn't with him. He was more image conscious than anyone else when it came to a public setting. Naturally, he had to arrive and leave with his "legal" wife. He could do whatever he wanted when they were out of the public eye. No one could see or do anything about it anyway.

"Where to, sir?" Brian asked along the way.

Mark did not give an immediate response. He seemed to be thinking about it.

Arianne's stomach hurt. It was past eight now and she hadn't had anything to eat, her stomach was protesting.

After a while, Mark replied, “To White Water Bay Café. ”

“Mm,” Brian replied and accelerated. White Water Bay Café was a common hang out spot for meals among the rich. They specialized in Chinese cuisine, and their dishes were well worth the extravagant prices.

Mark preferred peace and quiet when having his meals, so when they arrived at White Water Bay Café, he walked into the best compartment straightaway. When it was time to order their meals, he handed the menu over to Arianne. “After you, Ari,” he said in a gentle voice, eyes twinkling with a smile. Not even Arianne could detect anything strange about this.

The young waitress’ eyes filled with envy. She eagerly began recommending their latest dishes. “Mrs. Tremont, the newest additions to our menu are on the first page. Would you like to try?”

Arianne was not used to his sudden gentleness and felt even more awkward about it because he was putting on a show. She wasn’t in the mood to order food at all, so she simply chose a few dishes. “That’s it.”

Mark reverted to his usual apathetic front once the waitress left, as if the person who had called her “Ari” was not him at all.

Soon after, the dishes were served one after another. Brian, who was standing guard outside the compartment, suddenly pushed the door open and said, "Sir, Mr. Lane from 'Hoyle-Roy' would like to see you."

"Mmm," Mark replied apathetically. Soon, John Lane and Tiffany walked into the compartment. John held a glass of wine. "Mr. Tremont, I never expected to see you here. I'm honored."

Tiffany stuck her tongue out at Arianne when she saw her, but as she was next to her father, she had to continue playing the part of an obedient daughter.

Arianne smirked and stuck out her tongue as well. Mark had a panoramic view of this, and his gaze lingered on her face...

Tiffany suddenly shot Arianne a look Arianne immediately reacted by picking up their bottle of wine and pouring him a small glass.

Mark raised his glass to John, took a sip, and gave him a small nod. This was considered a greeting.

John didn't stay for too long either. "Then, please continue enjoying your meal, Mr. Tremont. I won't disturb you."

Mark gently pursed his lips. It looked like a smile, but only Arianne knew that he wasn't smiling at all.

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Arianne's phone received a flurry of messages ever since Tiffany walked out. Just as the pair plunged into a heated discussion over text, Mark suddenly said, "Focus on your food."

Arianne swiftly sent Tiffany a "Shhh" emoji, then put her phone away. She picked up her cutlery and obediently focused on her meal. Her movements were so smooth that there wasn't a single flaw, very similar to how she reacted whenever he scolded her during meals or whenever she was playing with toys.

He was slightly entranced by the sight of her reaction...

The memories of his past with her seemed to be solely filled with hatred...

Arianne noticed Mark's gaze and grew wary. "What is it ...?"

Mark turned away and poured her a glass of wine.

She was shocked. He never drank wine with her...

After two seconds of hesitation, she clinked her glass with his.

Just as she was sipping on her wine, Mark suddenly asked, "Do you know what day it is?"

Having learned her lesson from the last time she had forgotten his birthday, Arianne quickly racked her brain and soon had an answer. "Our wedding anniversary?"

She still held some suspicion when she gave the answer. Why would Mark be discussing this with her? Topics that were exclusive to loving couples never crossed her mind. She strongly suspected that the reason why he had set aside his sharp edges and treated her so amiably was because they were having a meal in public.

Mark seemed satisfied with her reply and poured her another glass.

Arianne knew that she was a lightweight, so she didn't dare drink too much, she was afraid of getting rip-roaring drunk and spoiling his mood. However, she was also too afraid to refuse. After weighing the pros and cons, she downed her glass.

Her vision grew blurry throughout the meal. Her mind was fuzzy too. Her cheeks were as red as fully ripened fruit, ready for harvest.

Of course, Mark, whose liquor capacity was well-seasoned, was not even tipsy. He called the waitress over to settle the bill.

“Knowing that you’ve come to dine with us, our boss has waived the bill,” the waitress replied politely.

He smiled. “Tell Jackson that I’ll buy him a meal next time.” White Water Bay Café was a business that Jackson West had started up for fun. He had grown used to the cooking style here and was their regular customer.

When he saw Arianne getting up shakily, Mark stepped forward and pulled her into his arms. “Let’s go.”

Her drunkenness granted her drunk courage. Arianne had completely forgotten who the man in front of her was. She raised her hand and slapped him right across the face. “You’d better hold onto me properly. I’ll make you pay if you drop me!”

A look of confusion appeared on Mark’s stern face. Was this her true personality?

He helped her into the car, grinning and bearing it the entire way. It was a chilly winter's night but she insisted on winding down the windows and enjoying the cold air. He had tried to shut the car windows but failed many times.

"I have motion sickness. Did you have any idea?!" She told him in a stern and forceful voice. "I've always had to put up with it... Well, I don't want to anymore!"

After so many years, he really had no idea that she had motion sickness...

Seeing how he was suffering from the cold, Brian softly asked, "Sir... Perhaps we should just shut the windows?"

Mark massaged his temples, which were aching from the cold winds. "Just drive!"

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By the time they finally returned to Tremont Estate, Arianne was pretty much half hanging onto Mark Tremont. Upon seeing this, Mary quickly prepared a hot towel and followed them upstairs. She couldn't bother about so much when her heart ached. "How did this happen? Madam can't hold her liquor..."

Mark Tremont didn't speak. Mary handed him the hot towel. "Sir, I'll leave madam to you. I'll go down now."

He nodded and carefully wiped Arianne's face. She cooperatively lifted her head so that he could wipe it. "Wipe it clean... He doesn't like dirty things... Hurry up!"

Mark Tremont's hands paused then his lips involuntarily curled into a smile.

The moment only lasted for two seconds before Arianne quickly pushed him away. "That won't do... I have to remove my makeup..." Fortunately, she still remembered that she had makeup on her.

The drunk Arianne wouldn't let him help, so he could only follow behind her and watch over her until she was done. The moment her legs gave way beneath her, Mark Tremont was able to quickly catch her. He didn't even realize the gentleness in his own voice. "Be a good girl, it's time for bed..."

She refused to listen to him as she struggled in his arms. "I haven't taken a bath yet... I wanna take a bath You don't even know... that Mark guy is a clean freak He's gonna hate me... if I sleep on his bed... without taking a bath..."

Without waiting for her to finish, Mark Tremont suddenly lifted her up and carried her bridal style to the big bed in the room. "I won't."

She continued struggling while insisting, "I wanna take a bath! "

For once, Mark had the patience to turn around and carry her into the bathroom.

Arianne didn't even know what she was doing as she started to undress directly in front of him.

Mark's eyes gradually darkened as he averted his gaze with some difficulty and helped her fill the bathtub with hot water. Before the tub was even completely filled, Arianne stumbled her way in it. She laid in the tub, naked as the day she was born...

Mark had to hold her head up as the water level rose to prevent her from drowning. Being in such close proximity allowed him to clearly see her long, thick, curly eyelashes that cast a shadow on her face. He couldn't help running his thumb along her glossy lips.

Arianne turned her face away from him with a frown, perhaps from the ticklish sensation on her lips. Mark's hand stiffened slightly as the expression on his face involuntarily darkened. As always, he hated her rejection no matter the circumstances...

When the water temperature gradually cooled down, Mark wrapped her in a towel and carried her back to the bed. Looking at her face that had flourished since her youth, Mark thought to himself that no one was going to snatch away what belonged to him!

As Mark pulled a blanket over her, she suddenly grabbed his hand. Her grasp was soft, and her petite hand formed a sharp contrast with his.

She was mumbling something but he couldn't really hear it clearly so he leaned a little closer.

"Will Sivan... Will Sivan... He..."

Mark immediately flung her hand away without hearing the rest, then stormed into the bathroom with a scowl on his face.

She always seemed to be able to irritate him again and again, and wear him out of his patience!

When Arianne woke up the next day, there was no sight of Mark Tremont in the room. She had no memories of last night and only remembered that they had spent their wedding anniversary together for the first time...

When she went downstairs to wash up, Mary stood at the door of the washroom and asked, "Why did you drink so much yesterday? I've never seen you drink, let alone with sir. You were so drunk but he still left in the middle of the night. Sigh..."

Mark left in the middle of the night? She wasn't aware of this. Then she couldn't help thinking about how he had gone out to find Aery Kinsey. A strange feeling welled up in Arianne's heart. "He was in a good mood so he had a few more to drink. I just couldn't hold my liquor well. It's not a big deal, Mary."

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Mark Tremont was still nowhere to be seen in the afternoon, so Arianne went out to buy some painting materials and invited Tiffany out while she was at it.

The girls hadn't hung out with each other ever since the incident at the hotel. Arianne didn't want their friendship to drift apart because of that.

They met each other in a coffee shop. When Tiffany came alone, Arianne was a little curious. "Why didn't you come with Ethan?"

Tiffany sighed. "Why would I still let him come with me to meet you after that incident that threw the internet into an uproar? I've been wanting to meet you for a long time, but my dad told me not to in case things got worse. Hence, I had no choice but to hole myself up at home. In any case, those guys are truly ridiculous. They can just make up any story they want. How wicked!"

Feeling that it was better to explain herself to Tiffany, Arianne told her, "Tiffie, there's really nothing between Ethan and I. He was telling the truth. He invited me out that day to discuss his marriage proposal to you. It was going to be a surprise for you."

"Even if there really was something between you two, I would choose friendship over love. Scumbags can be easily replaced, but you are special and I cherish you the most," Tiffany said in a half joking tone.

“Tiffie...”

Arianne couldn't put her feelings into words. She opened her mouth but fell silent again.

Tiffany blinked at her. “With a man like Mark, why would you even be attracted to someone dirt broke like Ethan? I was just trying to figure out what was going on at the hotel that day rather than suspecting the both of you. I was shocked at Mark's sudden arrival too. What's up with him anyway? He looked like he was trying to catch both of you in the act.”

“I've no idea either.” Arianne shook her head.

Tiffany teased Arianne with a smirk, “It seems like he cares a lot about you. I've never even seen Ethan this serious about me before. He never even says anything when I go out with guys.”

Speaking of this incident, Arianne was more concerned about the marriage proposal than anything. “Did Ethan propose to you? You two didn't fight, did you?”

Tiffany pretended that she didn't care but there was disappointment in her eyes. “We did, but we're fine now. The marriage proposal... Well, it was never mentioned again since he felt that I didn't trust him. Considering the situation in my family, it's not really the right time for this kind of thing anyway, so it's gonna be put on hold for now.”

Arienne felt a little guilty. If it weren't for Mark's sudden arrival, Ethan and Tiffany would probably have been engaged to each other now. Just when she was about to speak, Aery's cutesy but mean voice suddenly rang out from behind. "If I knew you were here, mom and I wouldn't have come."

Aery put special emphasis on the word 'mom' and Arienne immediately tensed up.

When she came up to them with Helen, Tiffany asked her in an unfriendly tone, "Who are you?"

Arienne grabbed her hand. "Tiffie, let's go."

Sensing that something was wrong, Tiffany left the money for her coffee on the table and stood up without saying another word.

Helen shot Aery a look of blame. "What are you doing? Can't we just have a cup of coffee in peace? I came out shopping with you to relax, not make myself more stressed out."

Aery huffed in annoyance and looked at Arienne haughtily, showing no intention of getting out of her way.

Arianne frowned at her. “Aery, please let me through.”

The girl crossed her arms in front of her chest. Her face was upturned so high that Arianne could clearly see her nostrils. “What if I don’t want to? Can’t I stand where you can walk? I’ll let you through if you beg me.”

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Helen was getting upset but she suppressed her anger. After all, years of self-cultivation as the wife to a rich man wouldn’t allow her to show her anger in public.

Naturally, there was no way Arianne would beg Aery Kinsey. “Why would I beg you? My upbringing didn’t teach me to lower my head to someone who lacks manners. If your mother weren’t standing beside you, I would have thought that you never received any proper parenting.”

Aery picked up the coffee on the table and tried to splash it on Arianne out of rage. Fortunately, Tiffany Lane was able to pull Arianne back in time. Even so, some of the slightly hot coffee still spilled on Tiffany’s clothes.

Aery’s action offended Tiffany so much that she no longer cared that they were in a public place. She gave Aery a hard shove. “Why don’t you try doing that again?”

Helen turned pale with fright and finally snapped. "Cut it out"

Given her competitive nature, there was no way Aery would take Tiffany's treatment lying down. A catfight ensued, and Helena was so angry that she was heaving in anger. She was embarrassed from the attention they were drawing. In a moment of desperation, she slapped Aery across the face. "I told you to cut it out!"

The ringing slap stunned Aery. A few seconds later, she covered her face as tears welled in her eyes. She had a look of disbelief. "Mom... you actually hit me?"

Helen closed her eyes. "Arianne is your older sister! You shouldn't act so unreasonably no matter the circumstances. Are you aware that your behavior is bringing shame to the Kinsey family?"

Aery didn't dare to say anything, knowing that she was in the wrong.

Arianne wiped the coffee stains off Tiffany's clothes, then left without even looking back. Helen tried to chase after them but helplessly came to a stop after two steps. She had lost her mood for coffee. "Let's go back!"

"I'm not going back, you can leave first!" Aery sulked.

Helen didn't care anymore and left Aery behind all alone.

Once they were out of the coffee shop, Arianne felt rather guilty. "I'm sorry, Tiffie."

Tiffany Lane's anger had yet to subside. "That's enough. I just can't get used to watching you get bullied. It's just some spilled coffee, no big deal. Who are those two?"

Arianne didn't really want to talk about it, but she didn't want to hide it from Tiffany anymore either. "My mother and my younger half sister. I'd lost contact with my mother until only recently."

Tiffany patted her head out of pity. "Oh, my poor Ari... You little pitiful thing. My heart aches for you. Your younger sister looks like a bitch right off the bat. Remember to tell me if they bully you again. But I have to go back now and change my clothes. I'm freezing to death!"

After the two parted, Arianne took a cab home directly. With her mood at rock bottom, Tiffany got into her 'lousy' and inexpensive car. She used to ride in expensive cars that cost hundreds of thousands of dollars until the incident at home changed their extravagant life to a frugal one. She usually didn't really feel anything when she drove this lousy car, but everything bothered her when her mood was sour.

As she drove, she suddenly noticed that there was a car following behind her. It followed her closely wherever she turned. She knew without a doubt that as soon as she slowed down, the car behind her would crash into hers without any hesitation.