

A Ruling Passion – Chapter 0191

In the afternoon, Mark came back with Nina. Not only that, but they also came back earlier than usual. It wasn't even the time for Mark to get off from work. Mark had always been meticulous at work; he would never come home early unless it was under special circumstances.

Nina was carrying big and small bags of ingredients. Mark's hands were full too. As soon Nina entered the door, she shouted for help. "Mary, come help take these things!"

Mary slowly came out of the kitchen. When she saw the ingredients, she said, "We don't lack these at home. Why did you buy so much?"

Nina grinned at her. "I don't wanna be a freeloader! I wouldn't feel good doing that if I'm staying here long. These are all the things that Mark and I love, so just use the stuff I bought for dinner tonight."

Seeing that Mark didn't say anything, Mary had no choice but to take all the stuff into the kitchen.

Despite hearing the commotion downstairs, Arianne didn't try to participate. She just continued reading her book on the bed. When she heard Mark coming upstairs, she moved Rice Ball, who was under the blanket, to the rug.

“Are you feeling better today?” Mark asked as soon as he came in.

“Pretty good. I’ve been feeling fine since I got discharged from the hospital, and was just thinking of going back to work. How would I be able to support myself otherwise?” she replied casually.

Mark went into the closet with a frown and took out a set of pajamas. “Let’s talk about it again when you’ve rested at home for a full month. Take care of your body for now. There’s a black card in my wallet. Just take it for whenever you need money.”

Arianne looked at the wallet on the bed indifferently. “I don’t need your money. I am capable of supporting myself now. When I fully recover, I will do the servant work after my full time job. In any case, whatever I owe you...”

Mark took a deep breath with a rather unpleasant look on his face. “It was my fault last time, I shouldn’t have said those things. All you need to be is Mrs. Tremont. I don’t want to repeat myself again. Once you are healed, you can do whatever you please. I don’t care. But shut up about it for now.”

Arianne tossed the book in her hand aside, then quietly laid down.

Mark went into the bathroom with a displeased expression. When he came out of the shower, he caught a glimpse of Rice Ball, who was sleeping soundly on the rug at the foot of the bed. He sighed and walked past it then went downstairs.

In the evening, Mary came upstairs and called Arianne for dinner, muttering under breath, “My gosh, that Nina... This is the Tremont Estate, but she went into the kitchen and asked the chef to make specific dishes that she wants to eat as if this place is a restaurant. Since it’s all spicy dishes, I had the kitchen prepare two lightly seasoned dishes for you. Otherwise, you wouldn’t even have anything to eat for dinner.”

Arianne pursed her lips and said glumly, “I’m not going down to eat. Mary, please send my food up here.”

Thinking about how Arianne wouldn’t be able to eat most of the dishes anyway, Mary agreed to her request.

At the dining table, Nina teased, “Isn’t Arianne coming down to eat? Mark, I thought you took etiquettes seriously. But I guess that doesn’t apply to everyone...”

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Mark smiled faintly. “She isn’t in good health. Don’t worry about her, and let’s just eat by ourselves.”

Nina scooped some food into Mark's bowl. "Here, try this. You used to love eating this. I specifically requested your chef to make it. By the way, why is Arianne in poor health? She looks sickly, and I heard that she just got discharged from the hospital. What happened?"

A conflicted look flashed across Mark's face. "She was bleeding excessively after her miscarriage. It was negligence on my part. Fortunately, she's fine now."

Nina stuck her tongue out. "Seems like I asked about something I shouldn't have. I'm sorry. By the way, if I may ask, how did you end up marrying her? I heard from my dad that she's the orphan you took in back then. It was her father's mistake that led to a plane crash that killed your family. I'm just a bit curious... Why would you choose to be with her? I know that you're a kind person, so there's nothing wrong with taking her in. However, given your different social standings, I just can't help but wonder how both of you ended up together..."

Mark's hand stiffened and he lost a bit of friendliness on his face. "Let's eat. The food is getting cold. I've been very busy lately, so I don't have time to show you around. You go ahead and enjoy your time here."

Noticing the change in his expression, Nina deemed that she had pushed the conversation as far as she could and shut her mouth sensibly.

After dinner, Mark went straight into his study room and Nina slipped into the kitchen out of boredom. "Mary, I have a question for you."

Mary never had a good impression of Nina in the first place, so she kept herself busy. “Just ask what you want to ask.”

Nina pouted. “I’m just curious about how Mark wound up marrying Arianne. Since you’ve served the Tremont family so long, you must know about it.”

Mary cleared her throat and said, “Of course, it’s because of love. What else could it be? Sir had lost his parents. Since he could make his own decisions on marriage, of course he’d pick someone he fancies. The Tremont family runs huge businesses, so there was no need for him to marry for financial benefits. Aren’t you asking a stupid question? Besides, they’ve been living together under the same roof for more than ten years, so naturally, they have a very solid relationship.”

Nina took out a bottle of chilled fruit juice from the refrigerator. “Hmph... Who are you trying to trick? Even if they’d spent more than ten years under the same roof, there’s no way enemies would turn into lovers.”

Mary rolled her eyes at her. “Even if madam’s father did make a mistake, what has that got to do with her? Harping on it won’t bring the dead back to life. Sir isn’t the kind of person who would deliberately make things difficult for a young lady. Why are you asking me all this? They’ve been married for three years now. Don’t tell me you’re planning to do something?”

Nina’s lips curled into a meaningful smile. “I don’t mind that he’s married. I’ll definitely do everything I can to fight for the person I like. Have fun working, Mary. I’m going to do some light exercises to digest my food.”

In the bedroom, Arianne was bored out of her mind. She was either at the hospital or holed up at home these days. There was nothing for her to do. She felt as if mushrooms were about to sprout on her body.

Not only that, but she also couldn't stand the bland food she'd had to eat lately. Whenever she smelled the scent of deliciously seasoned dishes, she found it even harder to swallow the bland food.

Knowing that Mark was in his study room, she suddenly had a bold idea of sneaking into the kitchen to steal some food. Just a bite could at least save her dying taste buds.

With Rice Ball in her arms, she went into the kitchen. However, Mary was still busy there, so she didn't dare to start. "Mary, are you about done?"

Thinking that Arianne was going to offer her help, Mary quickly chased her away. "Shoo, shoo, shoo! Go take a walk if you are bored out of your mind. Are you too free after a heavy dinner? Why are you here?"

Arianne helplessly looked at the leftovers on the counter that were barely touched and couldn't help salivating over them. "That's what I'm doing, taking a walk! Mary, can you help me check if Rice Ball has run out of water? If it has, please help me refill it. I'm worried that it'll get thirsty."

Mary wiped her hands then went out. "Leave the kitchen work alone. If you dare do any of it when I come back later, I'll report it to sir!"

Arianne smiled and reassured her. After making sure that the kitchen was completely empty, she sinfully reached out to the dishes.

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Thinking that Nina had made this for Mark, Arianne got an inexplicable urge to clean the entire plate.

She took the first bite, reviving her taste bud. It was a little spicy...

She took the second bite and couldn't help but draw a sharp breath. It was too spicy! She suspected that Nina was addicted to spiciness. Was this even made for humans? No wonder why it had barely been touched!

“Ari, if you are free, then go prepare a cup of tea for sir...”

Upon hearing Mary coming back, Arianne pretended that nothing had happened and slipped out of the kitchen. “Alright, alright, I’ll go do that!”

Seeing Arianne sprinting away, Mary warned her. “Slow down! What if you fall down?”

How could she dare to slow down? Her tongue was burning right now! She needed water!

When she returned to her room, the heat in her mouth only gradually receded after she drank a full glass of water and a carton of milk.

By the time she recovered, she remembered that she had to make tea for Mark. She quickly prepared a cup of black tea then sent it to the study room. The moment she pushed open the door, she saw Nina latching herself on the back of Mark's chair. Their intimacy kind of offended her eyes.

"Mark, I don't want to go abroad anymore. Is your company short-staffed? Would you consider offering me a position? I'm sure my dad won't have any objections if I'm working for you." The hair behind Mark's head swayed under Nina's breath as she spoke.

"No. You are the only child of the Moran family. You should be helping your father and inherit the family business in the future instead of working in my company. Besides, we're never short-staffed. Alright, leave now. I'm busy."

Mark didn't seem to notice anything. He just read a work-related email on his laptop while speaking.

“Fineeeeeee. I won’t bother you anymore, so let me stay here. I’m bored out of my mind! I’ll just watch from here. You can carry on with your work.” Nina moved away slightly and pulled a chair to sit beside Mark.

Arianne came forward with a cup of black tea, then set it down beside Mark’s hand.
“Black tea!”

As soon as her voice fell, she was shocked by herself. Why did she speak so loudly? It wasn’t done on purpose at all...

Mark turned his head and gave her a puzzled look. “What’s wrong?”

She blushed in her embarrassment. “Nothing, I’ll go to bed first. Move lightly when you come back to the room later. I won’t be able to fall asleep after being woken up.”

Mark nodded. He turned back to the email, then reached out for the black tea and took a sip. “A little too strong. Just let Mary prepare it for me next time,” he commented.

Arianne didn’t respond to him. She secretly rolled her eyes at him then turned around to leave. Mark should be grateful for the tea. How dare he pick fault with it!

By the time Arianne returned to the bedroom, she realized that her heart was beating unusually fast. Why had her reaction been so strange in the study room? She never cared before about how many women Mark had around him. Was it because... she was traumatized by Aery?

Some things would turn into sharp knives if she didn't fight them. So... this was the only thing she could do, right? Before Mark agreed to a divorce, she could only defend herself against any women around him who posed a threat to her.

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'Knock, knock...'

Suddenly, there was a knock on the door.

Arianne opened the door, only to find Nina smiling at her. Without waiting for a reaction from Arianne, she entered the room.

"Mark is busy and I'm bored, so I hope you don't mind me coming here to have a chat with you!"

Could Arianne say that she minded?

“No, I don’t mind. Have a seat. I’m not feeling that well, so I’ll lie down first.”

Nina watched Arianne return to the bed, then found a chair to sit down. “How did the miscarriage happen?”

Arianne involuntarily stiffened as she forced a smile. “By accident.”

Nina pursed her lips with what seemed like sympathy. “Accident? How... very careless. It’s a life, after all. The Tremont family lacks for nothing, except for Mark having a child at his age. What a pity to lose that baby.”

Arianne had lost any desire to continue the conversation. “I would like to rest now.”

Nina got up and walked to the door. “Have a good rest then. Take care of yourself. Otherwise, it’ll be boring for me if it’s just me.”

As the door closed, Arianne frowned. Why did she feel that Nina’s last sentence had some hidden meaning in it? Or was she just being too sensitive?

Some time later, Mary came and took Rice Ball away. Around ten at night, Mark returned to the room. Arianne hadn't fallen asleep yet and noticed the exhaustion on Mark's face. She turned away in silence. After all, there shouldn't be any emotions such as heartache between them.

"Mary told me that you secretly tasted the leftovers," Mark suddenly spoke up.

Arianne was instantly flustered. "I-I didn't..."

"Don't deny it if you've done it. It's not like you're not allowed to eat. You can only have bland food for now until you recover. When the time comes, you can eat whatever you want."

His tone was very calm. It was as if they were having an extremely ordinary conversation. She just couldn't get used to the absence of his usual indifference.

"There's no one else here, you don't need to act like this." What she meant was, Mark didn't need to put on any act and make everyone feel uncomfortable.

Mark had figured out Arianne's plan in upsetting him at every turn, so he didn't bother getting angry but smiled at her. "Alright, go to sleep."

After a moment of silence, Arianne said, “Well... can you give me a card? I need to pay for something but don't have any money since I haven't been going to work.. ”

Before she even finished speaking, Mark had tossed his wallet to her. “The cards are all inside. All with the same passwords, six zeroes.”

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She picked up his wallet and opened it. There were at least a dozen cards inside. Since she remembered that he mentioned a black card last time, her eyes fell on one that matched the description with a gold inscription on it.

All of a sudden, she caught a glimpse of a photo in the wallet. Whose photo would Mark keep in his wallet and carry around with him?

Before she could see who was in the photo, Mark suddenly snatched the wallet away and took out the black card for her. “Go to sleep.”

Arianne took the card, then asked, “Who is that in the photo? Your first love? I think it was a woman... but I couldn't get a better look.. ” The photo was taken from a distance, so it was hard to tell who it was unless she took a closer look.

He gave her an amused look and raised his eyebrow. “Yes, it’s my first love.”

Arianne dropped the subject but secretly felt a little bothered. His first love was free and could love whoever she wanted, unlike her. Will was the only person she ever liked, but Mark just had to ruin them and cause things to end up this way...

The next morning, Mark and Nina weren’t at home. Arianne received a text from Tiffany: ‘Ari, my mom set a blind date for me. I can’t believe she went and did that despite our current situation at home. I didn’t want to go, but since my mom promised the other person, I don’t want to embarrass her. I’m going to meet him this afternoon during lunch break. Let’s hope he’s not a weird guy. I’ll secretly snap a photo of him when I see him. Give me some input later.’

A blind date was a good thing. If Tiffany could meet the right one, then she could completely forget about the past. Hence, Arianne was very supportive of it. ‘Don’t worry about it, just go and meet him. I’ll help you take a look too when you send me his photo. Who knows, you might meet the right one.’

By noon time, Arianne kept her eyes on the phone but she never received any photos from Tiffany.

At that moment, in a high-end restaurant...

Tiffany was meeting a middle- aged balding man. She never thought that her own mother would introduce such a person to her. He was even old enough to be her dad!

All she could think of was escaping the situation. She didn't even need any input for this!

"You're really young... Did the woman mention that I've been married before? I'm not widowed. We just divorced a little late since we couldn't get along with each other." The balding man scratched his head in embarrassment. His face was even tinted with a suspicious red...

"No... I don't know anything. Umm... Uncle Wait, no... Sir, what's wrong with your hair?" Tiffany's world was crumbling.

"Oh this... Hehe... I only cared about making money in my youth, so I exhausted myself. Otherwise, how would I have my current family business? I own a small company with annual profit of about \$150,000. It's more than enough to give you a good life. Would you consider it?" The balding man seemed rather proud of his own achievements.

"I think I'll pass. I think... umm... our age gap is a little too much. I don't mind you being bald or the fact that you've married once before. I just don't think we're suitable for each other..." Tiffany emptied half a glass of water in her nervousness.

The balding old man was instantly crestfallen. "Alright then... In that case, you'll pay for this meal. I am the kind of man who never spends a single dime on a woman that is not mine. If it wasn't for that woman promising me that my trip wouldn't be in vain, I wouldn't have come either."

Tiffany felt ten thousand horses galloping past her in her mind. She didn't even have to guess to know that 'the woman' was someone who gambled with her mother. They were a bunch of troublesome women!

She just started working, so why would she have any money? The old man was the one who chose this restaurant and ordered the food, yet he had the audacity to make her foot the bill. She was so pissed off right now. "Uncle, I think it's only fair for us to split the bill. How can you make me foot the bill for you too? Since you never spend money on women who have nothing to do with you, I can't possibly spend money on men who have nothing to do with me either, right? Whatever that lady said to you, you can find her yourself. I'll only pay for my share."

The balding man wasn't pleased to hear that. "I only ordered this many dishes because I thought we would be together. These were all for you, so it's only fair that you pay for them! Are you trying to take my kindness for granted? I've seen too many young ladies like you who are always thinking of finding a meal ticket instead of doing honest work. You would even spread your legs if I offered money, right? Why don't you give me a price? I have plenty of money. If you spend the night with me, you don't have to pay for this meal."

Tiffany didn't expect this balding boss of a small company with an annual income of about \$150,000 who had been married once, was stingy, and was as ugly as a toad to be rotten enough to make such a request to a lady he just met.

Tiffany was stunned. The balding man's self-conceived advantage of having an annual income of about \$150,000 amounted to nothing in her eyes. Yet, he had the audacity to spout such a ridiculous request.

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“Excuse me, Unc... I mean, you ugly toad. Where do you get your confidence? Back in the day, a guy like you wasn't even worthy enough to help me carry my shoes. Don't go thinking you can do whatever you want here just because you have some stinking money. It probably took you a few years to gather up enough money to fully pay for a house, right? Fine, I'll foot the bill since the food isn't here yet and you haven't taken even a bite. Don't even think about eating anything, just leave. To retain my last shred of manners, I am not going to shout at you here. So would you please roll your round body through the exit over there?”

The balding man stood up and glared at her. “What did you say? Why don't you say that again? I can easily find women like you at those nightclubs I visit. Don't go thinking you are all that! Why should I even put in efforts and empty out my wallet when I can just pay a \$100 for a full package service from a woman of your quality?”

Tiffany unceremoniously rolled her eyes at him. “Then you can just go to the nightclub and find one. A \$100 probably isn't cheap for someone like you. I'd suggest you visit somewhere a bit more luxurious to have a look. You've probably never tried those that cost tens of thousand dollars, right? You need to broaden your horizons instead of making a fool out of yourself here.”

The balding man flushed with anger. He emptied the free glass of lemon infused water on the table then cursed as he walked away. “I even paid that woman \$300, yet she introduced this thing to me!”

It took Tiffany a long time to get over the incident. She finally thought of 'reporting' to Arianne. Since it was going to be a long story, she called her directly on the phone.

“It’s a weirdo who was already married once and looks like a toad! I don’t even want to show you the photo lest it hurts your eyes. He chose a high-end restaurant and ordered a table full of expensive food. After I said that we aren’t a suitable match, he asked me to foot the bill and told me that he had only ordered this much food because he thought we’d be together. He can’t just force me to pay for him because I refuse to be with him, right? Crazy man! I scolded him and I’m so pissed off right now! If my mom dares to set me on a blind date next time, I’ll give her an earful first!”

Arianne was both amused and worried after hearing the story. “It’s better for him to just leave without pestering you. Just skip the blind dates from unreliable people next time.”

Tiffany was depressed at the thought of footing the bill. “Alright, we’ll talk about it later. I have to hang up now since I haven’t started eating yet. Since I spent the money, I have to enjoy it!”

She hung up the phone just as the dishes were served on the table. They really filled up the whole table. Even the desserts alone were enough for at least four people. Tiffany couldn’t even finish a third of the food after stuffing herself full. When she called the waiter to bring her the bill, she was stunned by the price. “Seriously? All this... for \$6,600?”

The waiter smiled very politely at her. “Yes, miss. We will keep the unfinished red wine for you. You may ask for it when you return to dine with us again next time.”

Tiffany was going crazy. She didn’t even have that much money, only \$1,200 on her. She thought the bill wouldn’t be more than \$1,500... She had miscalculated and allowed the bald man to teach her a lesson.

Her brain turned into mush. To buy some time for herself, she blushed and whispered to the waiter, "Please help me pack up the leftovers..."

There were so many dishes left untouched. It would be a pity to waste them. Not only that, this was her first dining experience in a high-end restaurant. Though embarrassing, she had no other way...

The waiter maintained the smile on his face. "Understood, miss. Please wait a moment."

As soon as the waiter walked away, Tiffany quickly called Will on her phone. She prayed vehemently in heart for him to pick up her call so that he could rescue her.

To her disappointment, what she feared happened. Will didn't answer the phone. After three tries, Tiffany could only give up.

By now, the staff had started packing up her food. She wanted to ask Arianne for help but couldn't bring herself to ask because she knew of her financial situation.

In her desperation, she saw Jackson coming down the stairs. Tiffany usually felt unlucky every time she ran into him, but it was different this time. He was like a ray of hope to her. "Mr. West!"

Jackson, following the source of the voice, was a little surprised. A gorgeous woman with a hot body held onto his arm. “Jack, who’s that?”

Tiffany regretted it. If she had known that he was here with a woman, she wouldn’t ask for help.

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“Tiffany Lane, an employee from my company,” Jackson replied very calmly, then looked at Tiffany. “What a coincidence. You came alone?”

Tiffany felt quite awkward. “No... I came with a friend, but she left in advance.”

Jackson smiled at her. “Well then, pay attention to the lunch break hours. I’m leaving first.”

“Um...” Tiffany couldn’t speak. If Jackson really left, who would be able to help her out?

“Hmm?” Jackson stopped to look at her.

She summoned the courage and dragged him to the side. “Lend me some money and deduct it from my salary... I forgot to bring money,” she whispered.

Jackson was amused and looked at her calmly. “How much?”

“\$6,600...” She forced herself to say the number.

“Waiter, ring up table eight.” Jackson generously called the waiter to swipe his card.

After picking up the bill, Jackson immediately left with the woman. Tiffany carried the packed leftovers and exited the restaurant with drooping shoulders. Today really wasn't her day...

As soon as she returned to the company, Lillian called her.

Since Tiffany already had a ball of fire burning in the pit of her stomach, it was only natural that she would sound pissed. “What?”

“How did it go? You met the person whom Auntie Lydia introduced to you, right?” Lillian asked merrily.

“Hoho, if Auntie Lydia thinks that toad is decent, then she can give him a chance. I’ll pass. If you dare to set me up with another blind date again, you’re dead meat!” Tiffany immediately hung up after saying that.

Lillian kept calling her persistently, so she simply turned off her phone.

When lunch break was over, Jackson returned to the company alone.

When he passed the office area, Tiffany kept her head low. Looking at Jackson reminded her of the incident during lunch. She had never been so embarrassed in her life. Besides, for someone in her current situation to be enjoying a meal that cost \$6,600, Jackson would probably think that she was still living her princess fantasy. He might even be secretly laughing at her behind her back.

When Tiffany returned home in the evening, Lillian showed an attitude to her as expected. She was leaning back against the sofa with a sour face as she flicked through the TV channels.

Tiffany left the packed food on the dining table and went back to her bedroom. She had a tiring day and didn’t feel like dealing with any tantrums from anyone. Lillian was so angry that she slammed Tiffany’s door with her slipper. “You ingrate!”

However, Tiffany ignored her. She laid on her bed and switched on her phone. The news that suddenly popped out shocked her. ‘The third son of the Sivan family, Will Sivan, called off his engagement with the daughter of the Galena family, Wendy Galena,

this morning before getting involved in a car accident at Sunny Lane around five in the afternoon. The exact details of the situation is unknown at the moment.'

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Tiffany didn't find it surprising that Will and Wendy had called off their engagement, but how could he so coincidentally be involved in an accident in the afternoon? Will had always been a steady driver. This led her to suspect that things weren't as simple as they seemed.

Her first reaction was to call Arianne, who was meanwhile grooming Rice Ball. Arianne was stunned upon receiving the news of Will and Wendy's broken engagement, as well as Will's accident. "What? Is that true?" she exclaimed.

Tiffany promptly forwarded the news article to her. "Go see for yourself. It can't be wrong. The accident was reported within two hours after it happened. I suspect the Galena family orchestrated the car accident over shame of the broken engagement. I refuse to believe that Will would get into a car accident due to his own mistake!"

Arianne calmed down for a moment, then said, "Tiffie, find out which hospital Will is in and inquire about his condition. Let's make time to visit him."

When she ended the call, she suddenly received an email on her phone. She opened it and found that the subject was titled 'About Will Sivan' and had a voice clip attached in it. She tapped on it and Mark's voice came out. "I've told you that accepting my requirements is beneficial to everyone. Otherwise, the consequences are yours to bear. You are not in any position to decide about the engagement with the Galena family."

Arianne could hear her head ringing. She replied to the email with 'Who are you? What is the meaning of this?'

The other party didn't reply. She was horrified that someone had sent her a voice clip like this out of the blue just when Will had called off his engagement and got into an accident. Was this a hint that Will's accident was related to Mark?

All of it made sense when she connected the dots. It was Mark who forced Will to get engaged with Wendy in the first place as a condition to allow him to return to the country. Therefore, how could Mark remain unconcerned now that Will called off the engagement...?

She always thought that although Mark often drove her mad, at least he wouldn't act so ruthlessly. Was she wrong to think that way?

Despite so many things having happened, she was still able to get along with him peacefully. Things never reached the point of no return because she believed that there wasn't just pure conflict and hatred between them. They had lived together for more than ten years. So to her, Mark was the only existence akin to a family member. Now, she began to wonder, just what kind of person was the man who slept beside her every night?

“Mark, the big prawns are really fresh today. Why don’t we stir fry them hot and spicy? Boiled ones are good too!”

Nina’s voice suddenly rang out from downstairs, followed by Mary’s. “Let’s boil them. Madam can’t take spicy food for now.”

Arianne pushed open the bedroom door with Rice Ball in her arms, then went downstairs. She heard Nina’s comment again. “I think spicy is better and more flavorful. Boiling it is going to waste the nice prawns.”

Arianne’s face was a little pale, but the corners of her lips lifted into a smile. “Boiling can retain the original flavor of the prawns. You can only taste the flavor of the condiments if you make them spicy and that’s a real waste. Mary, have them all boiled.”

Nina cast a glance at her and didn’t further comment. Mary hummed in response, then went back to work in the kitchen.

Mark habitually went upstairs to prepare for a shower. “How are you feeling today?” he asked Arianne when he passed by.

“Pretty good. Wait for me in the room after you’ve taken your shower. I need to talk to you.” She had decided to have a showdown

with him.

Tonight was destined to be a restless night.

“Alright,” he promised very readily.

Mark returned to his room and closed the door, while Arianne sat down on the sofa in the living room. Nina was reclining on the sofa across from her, completely treating this place like her home. “Arianne, do you find me to be an eyesore?”

Arianne stroked Rice Ball in her arms and replied to her in a casual tone. “Why do you feel that way? You are Mark’s friend, perhaps even a childhood friend. Why would I find you to be an eyesore?”

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Nina curled her lips and stared at Arianne intently. “A woman’s intuition.”

Arianne smiled and said nothing. It was true that she found Nina to be very irritating. Not because she wanted to fight with Nina over something, but that she had to constantly be

wary of any woman who appeared around Mark and make sure they wouldn't pose a threat to her again.

Not long after that, Mark called her from upstairs. "I'm done showering."

Arianne went upstairs and left Rice Ball behind in the living room.

She closed the door tightly when she returned to the bedroom and didn't bother to beat around the bush. "Will and Wendy have broken off their engagement. Not only that, Will also got into a car accident."

Mark was wrapped in a bathrobe as he dried his dripping hair. A look of annoyance flashed across his eyes. "Is that so? I don't have the time to follow the news. Seems like you found out about it before me. Are you only this proactive because it's Will who had the accident?"

Arianne neither admitted nor denied it. She followed up with a direct question instead. "Is this related to you? Do you have something to do with his car accident?"

He stopped his hands and looked at her with a probing gaze. "Are you implying that I was the one who orchestrated the accident?"

She met his eyes and didn't speak Both of them were speculating about each other's thoughts.

After staring into each other's eyes for a while, Mark's lips curled into a mocking smile. "Well, if you think it is, then it is."

Not satisfied with his attitude, Arianne took out the voice clip she received. As the voice clip replayed, the expression on Mark's face turned ugly. "Where did you get this?"

She put away her phone. "You don't need to know. Were you the one speaking?"

He paused for a moment, then bluntly replied, "Yes, it was me."

Arianne couldn't find even a trace of emotion in his eyes. There was neither guilt nor innocence in them, so it was getting harder to read him. Arianne was rather disappointed because she never thought he would be someone like this.

Since he had said that, she had no desire to continue the conversation but chose to leave.

As soon as she reached the stairs, Nina suddenly shrieked. Arianne hurried to the living room. Rice Ball was curled up under the sofa, and Nina was frightfully holding her hand

up with several bloody scratches. “I... I only wanted to hold it. Why is this cat so aggressive?”

Arianne frowned then knelt down on the floor and bent over to coax her cat. “Come out, Rice Ball. It’s wrong to scratch people, you know? Come out quickly.”

Rice Ball seemed to be terrified. It stared back at Arianne, unwilling to move at all.

“Do animals even understand human language? Are you honestly treating it as a real child? I heard that it’s a very aggressive stray cat. Since it scratched me, it will probably scratch Mark one day and end up getting thrown out of this house!”

Arianne knew Rice Ball well. It wouldn’t just casually scratch anyone, let alone Mark. “Rice Ball won’t scratch Mark. It’s very fond of him. Maybe it scratched you because it isn’t familiar with you. Just stay away from it next time since it isn’t fond of strangers. Although Rice Ball has been injected, it’s still better for you to go get an injection too. I don’t want to be held responsible in case anything happens later.”

Nina was appalled. “So I have to give way to your cat as long as I live at Mark’s place? I’m a human being while it’s an animal. I have to bear with it? Can’t you just keep that animal in the yard? Why do you have to bring it inside the house? The bacteria it carries, its fur and its wildness are not good for humans. Putting me aside, you’re currently in poor health yourself. If you become pregnant again in the future, you need to check if you have any toxoplasmosis from the cat. It can lead to fetal abnormalities and even stillbirth!”

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Arianne gritted her teeth and stood up as she looked at Nina. “Well, you can always leave! I am the mistress of this house. I don’t need anyone’s permission to keep a pet, let alone a guest like you. It was my cat’s fault for scratching you, but it would never randomly scratch anyone. I apologize to you on its behalf and will pay for your injection. Fair enough?”

Nina sullenly covered the scratches on her hand and went upstairs. She proceeded to slam the door so hard that it was clearly audible downstairs.

Mark entered Nina’s room, perhaps after hearing the incident. Arianne had no idea what they talked about, but Nina came downstairs not long after with her luggage while talking on her phone.

From her tone, she sounded like she was talking to Charles Moran on the phone.

Mark snatched the phone from her hand. “Uncle Moran, things aren’t that serious. Ari was just in a bad mood from her miscarriage. Nina just got scratched by the cat in my house. I’ll bring her for an injection later. Everything is fine, don’t worry.”

Arianne turned a deaf ear. It was none of her business what they were going to do. At worst, she would just admit that it was all her fault.

It seemed that Nina wasn't really planning on leaving. After the call ended, she complained to Mark tearfully, "Is it my fault that I got scratched by the cat? Why did she have to talk like that? You heard it too from upstairs, right? What did she mean by saying she's the mistress of this house? Was that for me? She made it sound like I was trying to fight with her over that authority! She wasn't even in the picture when I got to know you! If it wasn't for my dad asking me to stay with you temporarily after returning to the country, I wouldn't even come here. The renovation of the house that my dad bought me is barely completed, so I can't move there yet. Otherwise, I wouldn't even need to suffer like this!"

Mark's eyebrows were knitted together out of annoyance, but Arianne wasn't sure at whom.

Without saying anything, he helped Nina carry her luggage back into the room. After that, Arianne wasn't sure what Mark told her, but Nina ended up following him to the dining table.

Rice Ball still wasn't willing to come out under the sofa, so Arianne waited at the side. She had been living while suffering in silence, so she didn't want her cat to live the same way as she did.

"Arianne, come over here and eat," Mark called out to her.

“I’m not eating,” she replied dully.

With forbearance in his eyes, Mark came over and pulled her up from the ground. “Are you a kid? Come eat!”

Arianne, no longer able to stand his hypocrisy in front of others anymore, brushed his hand off. “You can explode if you’re at your limit. Just treat me like you usually do. You don’t have to pretend just because Nina is here. I know you best!”

His face finally turned cold. “I know you’re dissatisfied with me because of Will Sivan’s matter. We’ll talk about it slowly after dinner. For now, I want you to go eat and don’t make me repeat myself a second time!”

Nina, who was feeling upset earlier, became shocked at the sight of Mark’s sudden anger. She had never seen Mark acting this way. His behavior was the polar opposite of his usual gentle appearance.

The corners of Arianne’s lips curled into a smile, but it didn’t reach her eyes. “That’s right, that’s more like it. I’m also going to make myself clear. I have no desire to eat at the same table as you because I don’t want to see your face! If you didn’t hear that clearly, I can repeat it for you again!”

Silence immediately ensued. Mary hurriedly rushed between them to stop them. “Madam, please come and eat. You can talk about it after your meal. Don’t always upset sir... Please listen to him.”

