

A Ruling Passion – Chapter 11

Arianne Wynn froze.

“I’m fine sleeping in the storeroom!”

Mark Tremont glanced at her, a wave of disapproval swept in his cold eyes.

“I’m not asking you to sleep in my room upstairs. Mary will help you prepare the guest room next to me.”

Having been exposed of her wrong assumption, Arianne felt rather awkward.

Thereafter, one of the maids had served their dinner in the dining room.

“Sir, miss, it’s mealtime.”

Mark Tremont closed the magazine he was holding and stood up.

“Eat.”

He had asked her to eat together. How long has it been since she ate with him at the same table? She did not remember.

Arianne Wynn, with her head lowered at the dining table, ate without making a single sound. She helped herself only to dishes that were closest to her. Mark Tremont ate slowly, making close to no sound as well. Their manner only served to emphasize the silence of the wide dining room.

Butler Henry who stood beside the table sighed and picked up some dishes for Arianne with the serving spoon.

“Don’t only eat vegetables. You’re growing.”

“Thank you,” Arianne replied softly.

As they had their meal, Arianne ate however much Butler Henry served her. Not used to eating so much in one sitting, her stomach ached slightly.

Mary has finished cleaning up the room when they finished their meal.

“Ari, take a look at the storeroom, see if there’s anything that I haven’t tidied up. I’ve moved most of your things upstairs.”

Arianne caught a glimpse of Mark Tremont, who just seated in the living room, then acknowledged Mary with a guilty conscience.

When he returned to his room, she stealthily sneaked to the storeroom and retrieved her gifts in the cardboard box under the bed. As she went upstairs, careful not to make any sound, the door next to her room opened right as she arrived. Meeting eyes, Arianne looked like a deer caught in the headlights as her eyes widened and her lashes trembling. She subconsciously hid what she held in her hands behind her back.

“What’s that? Hand it over.” Mark Tremont looked down at her and commanded.

Like a mischievous child who had done wrong, her resistance had only lasted for two seconds under his hot gaze before she extended her arm.

“Go to sleep,” Mark Tremont said immediately after opening one of the gift boxes and glimpsing.

She knew that he would not return them to her and she dared not fight back for them. She had expected this since receiving the gifts. This outcome was not a surprise. Entering her room and closing the door, Arianne huffed a long sigh. However, remembering Will Sivan’s note in the gift box, she slowly squatted down. She was doomed.

Like most parents, Mark Tremont prohibited her from dating at an early age, despite this fact she was past the legal age and he was not her parent-guardian if you must...

Mark Tremont thought of throwing the gifts away immediately. He had done so the past ten years however this time, he did not act upon it instantly. He tossed them on the coffee table. The more he looked at them, the more he felt annoyed at the sight. Swiftly, he opened the gift box. His face fell immediately at the note inside.

Hand in hand, with you I shall grow old, huh...

At the same time, Arianne Wynn who was laying in the big soft bed found herself unable to fall asleep. Used to the tiny stiff bed in the storeroom, it felt foreign. Her heart was burdened with anxiety as well, pondering when Mark Tremont would be after her.

Her mobile phone beeped the moment when that thought crossed her mind. It was the phone given by Mark Tremont, so it only had his number.

Arianne wanted to feign negligent, but she took a look at the mobile phone and his dark face popped into her mind. It was a text message, short and simple with only two words.

“Come over.”

Feeling her heart sink, Arianne draped her only jacket over herself and trudged to his room, knocking only after a long hesitation.

His void tone sounded from the inside, "Come in."

Mark Tremont was habitually seated on the chair in front of the French window when Arianne entered. He had a cigarette perched between his fingers. Usually, this meant that he was not in a jolly mood.

Arianne dared not approach close to him, opting to stand some distance away.

"Come over," he spoke again, his tone colder. The words were a repetition of his text message but when they came from him verbally, it frightened her more than the text.

Arianne Wynn braced herself as she walked to stand beside him, still too timid to make a sound.

Suddenly, he pulled her to himself, causing Arianne to drop and sit on his legs!

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This occurred frequently when Arianne was younger, yet she did not remember since when she began to feel awkward about it.

Being so close to Mark Tremont, she caught a whiff of the faint tobacco emanating off him and the smell of alcohol, he drank again!

"Will Sivan is gone, who is it this time? Hand in hand, with you I shall grow old... Tell me, who is it?" Mark Tremont's voice was chillingly bewitching.

Arianne Wynn was too scared to answer. He had already 'ushered' Will Sivan overseas, if she were to admit that the gift came from him, what sort of fate would befall upon him? She dared not think about it.

"I... I don't know..."

"Don't know? Why were you hiding it so carefully if you didn't know? Ari... you're misbehaving..." Mark Tremont's hand seemed to be casually resting on Arianne's waist, which he then subtly pressed into her when he spoke.

Arianne Wynn was high strung, not knowing when she might crumble. "I really don't know..."

Mark Tremont stopped pursuing, as he buried his head at her neck and sniffed the light fragrance on her. "You know the consequences if there's a next time."

He did not let her leave, his thin supple lips softly rubbing against Arianne's neck and shoulder. A million thoughts raced through Arianne's head. To her, intimacy like this could only be conducted with someone you like. He hated her, yet why was he still like this?

Nevertheless, Arianne stayed frozen and submissive to his every action as she did not dare push him away. Just as she thought that Mark Tremont would do something else, he pushed her away out of the blue, panting harshly like he was holding back.

Arianne looked at him in confusion. To be exact, she was cautiously waiting for his next course of action.

However, Mark Tremont only picked up the gift box and passed it to her, announcing icily, "Throw it."

Arianne frowned. Did he want her to throw it out with her own hands?

"Do I have to repeat myself?" Mark Tremont glowered, the dissatisfaction in his eyes near a tipping point.

Without the courage to hesitate, Arianne Wynn hastily took the gift and threw it into the bin. When she looked back and in a flash of stupor, she was caught off guard by the faint smile on the corners of his lips.

Of course, it was thanks to Mark Tremont that Arianne Wynn woke up late the next day, even though he did not particularly do anything to her other than the intimate move that confused her.

Butler Henry was waiting for Arianne by the door.

"Miss, I'll send you to school. Sir has... thrown away your bicycle."

Arianne did not comment on the matter. Her bike was near its end anyway, it had served its time. Reaching a stretch of road that was nearby the campus, Arianne asked Butler Henry to stop the car.

"Uncle Henry here's good enough. It's only a few hundred meters away. I'll walk over."

Butler Henry parked to the side.

"Be careful then. Call me when you're dismissed. I'll pick you up."

Arianne thought for a moment. "Then wait for me here when school dismisses. Don't drive to the campus gate."

She did not want anyone to know about her relationship with Mark Tremont. It would dishonor him.

When she arrived at the gate, Tiffany Lane was waiting for her as usual. "Why are you so late today?"

"Woke up late," Arianne answered simply.

Tiffany hooked her arm around Arianne as she had always done and led the way. "What a rare occasion for you to have woken up late. I'm late too waiting for you."

Just as Arianne Wynn was about to speak, she felt a pang in her stomach.

Seeing that Arianne did not look well, Tiffany pulled close to her and asked, "What's wrong?"

"Nothing." Arianne shook her head.

"You sure? Wanna check it out at the infirmary?"

"Nah, we're already late. Let's hurry up." Arianne waved her hand in dismissal and quickly made their way to the studio pulling Tiffany along.

When they arrived, she was already covered in sweat from the pain. The tutor gave her a side eye. "Late when you know there's class huh. Stand there for now."

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Arianne Wynn kept quiet, turning to lean against the wall of the corridor as she struggled with her stomach ache.

Tiffany Lane was disgruntled but she was not one to make an unreasonable fuss when she was at fault. She stood beside Arianne and gazed afar at the dorm building currently under construction, saying, "Do you know that the dorm over there is sponsored by Mark Tremont? It's quite extravagant. He's really rich. In comparison, our families are basically nothing. Ari, I heard that he's coming to visit the campus today..."

There was no reply from Arianne. Her gastric was giving her hell.

Then, the tutor walked out pompously. “The two of you are really something huh! I’ve penalized you yet you’re in the mood to chat? Take out your drawing boards, complete your drawing in the corridor! See if you can submit the assignment by dismissal!”

With a tipped chin, Tiffany Lane marched into the classroom for her drawing board while Arianne Wynn stood paralyzed, her vision was already blurry.

Anger boiled further when the tutor noticed her sickly state. She gave her a shove. “I’m asking you to take your drawing board. Are you deaf?!”

The shove caused Arianne to fall on the floor without warning. When Tiffany came out and saw the scene, she shouted at once. “What did you push her for!”

Guilty, the tutor fought back weakly. “I only gave her a light push. Who’d know…”

Tiffany bent down to help Arianne up while she continued to yell at the tutor. “You’re doomed, I tell you! This is corporal punishment. You’re not fit to be an educator!”

The tutor felt wronged. “Is she made of paper? Is it even possible for someone to collapse with a light touch? Tiffany Lane, don’t simply make accusations just because you have nothing better to do! Arianne Wynn, you can stop acting too! Who are you putting on a show for?”

The heated dissension in the corridor stood out like a sore thumb. Both the tutor and Tiffany Lane were still caught in an argument when they were seen by the group of people who just turned around the corridor. The dean who led the entourage was deeply dismayed. He had long sent the memo that Mark Tremont was coming today and nothing must go wrong.

Mark Tremont looked indifferent when his gaze lingered on Arianne Wynn but his eyes turned dark when his gaze shifted to the tutor.

"Stop fighting... I'm fine. Tiff, help me with the drawing board," Arianne Wynn said feebly.

Tiffany Lane swallowed her wrath and marched back to the classroom again. Still vexed, the tutor gave Arianne another shove. "A delicate frail flower, aren't you? Show me that you'll fall again!"

Her push this time was much stronger than the last.

Arianne could not speak from agonizing pain. Her vision was dimming to black as she struggled to keep herself up.

The next second, however, a strong arm took her embrace. Her stamina fizzled out as the person's familiar scent filled her senses.

"Mark Tremont..." she mumbled. His clenched jaw and furious face appeared in her blurry sight.

Before she could ask why he was here, Arianne's vision turned pitch black before she lost consciousness and fell.

Seeing the man who appeared out of nowhere and intimidated by his chilling aura, the tutor paled.

The man did not speak, leaving after picking up the girl from the floor. His expression was terrifyingly sullen, while the wrath contained in his eyes felt like it would erupt at any time.

The dean who came after him was ashen-faced, glaring at the tutor in exasperation. "All you do is cause me troubles!"

All Tiffany saw when she came out was the man disappearing from the corner of the corridor carrying Arianne Wynn, the dean hurrying along his way, and denounced the tutor.

Realizing what had happened, Tiffany shoved the tutor as well. "Just you wait!"

After that, she quickly chased after them.

Mark Tremont sat on the bench outside of the hospital emergency ward with his head slightly hung. The vibe he exuded felt like an iceberg, it was solitary and incredibly freezing.

The dean and Tiffany Lane were beside him, pacing back and forth anxiously. Suddenly, Mark Tremont spoke up.

"Southline University's tutors are pretty 'unique'."

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The dean shuddered.

"Mr. Tremont... It's just a one... a one off case. That tutor is a temporary worker, a temporary one. I'll ask her to leave!"

Mark Tremont said nothing. There was only the flickering flame in his eyes reflecting his current fury.

Tiffany Lane scoffed. "Temporary worker? Sure."

The dean was speechless. "Miss Lane, don't be a busybody. You students don't know about any school affairs!"

Wearing a frown, Tiffany was about to retort when the doctor came out.

"Patient's family?"

"Me," Tiffany Lane and Mark Tremont replied simultaneously.

Tiffany was quite surprised by Mark Tremont's voice. For this matter, she assumed the family role, since she was unable to contact Arianne Wynn's so-called brother but what was Mark Tremont on to?

It was well-reasoned that the doctor opted for Mark Tremont, who looked more reliable, to explain the situation. "The patient is alright. It's gastritis. She is young but in bad health. Watch what she eats and make sure she consumes more nutritious food. She can leave after the drip is done."

Mark Tremont responded with a soft hum and went into the emergency ward.

Arianne Wynn was still unconscious, laid on the bed with slightly unkempt long hair. The cool fluid was injected into her body through the thin pipe. The veins on the back of her hand were visible as her skin was a sickly shade of white. Mark Tremont had no idea when she started mistreating herself to such a state.

Tiffany Lane stepped forward and spoke with a hushed voice, "Ari has no parents, only a non-biological older brother. That brother of hers doesn't really care about her. She eats cold stale buns with plain cold water in the biting winter. How could she not have gastritis?"

What Tiffany did not notice was Mark Tremont who looked increasingly grim, as his sheeny eyes were coated with a wash of complicated emotions.

She went on saying, "Her brother seems to have returned recently as she's required to go home punctually every day. I can't even take her out for a good meal. Isn't that crazy?"

"That is crazy," Mark Tremont answered with a slightly mocking tone, "What else?"

Chatterbox Tiffany Lane was activated. "I've known her since high school. It's been about three years. All this time, I've never seen her buy new clothes like a normal person. It's as if she comes from the slump! She has worked part-time since junior high, she's done all sorts of odd jobs, distributing flyers everywhere in the hot summer, washing dishes in restaurants during the crisp winter... My heart aches for her when I think about it!"

"Fine if her brother isn't concerned about her, but he forbids others to show her compassion as well! Now that she can't work part-time, her life's surely more miserable! It enrages me whenever I mention it! She cycles to and from school in freezing winter. Her hands, which are supposed to be drawing, are frozen raw!"

Mark Tremont breathed in gently. Something seemed to be flowing vaguely in his eyes.

"Thank you for taking care of her."

Awkward, Tiffany was rather uneasy. "She's my only friend. It's my duty. I only wish for her brother to treat her better. Even if he can't, he shouldn't stop others from being nice to her. Otherwise, he's just a jerk. If I were to meet him, I would give him a hard punch!"

Seeing that the Chatterbox went on and on, the dean dragged Tiffany out worrying that she might say something inappropriate. "Let's go, Mr. Tremont's still here. We don't have to worry. Mr. Tremont will certainly contact Miss Wynn's family and make an arrangement, being the capable man he is. Let's not disturb Miss Wynn while she rests. I've paid the medical fee on behalf of the school."

Mark Tremont was quiet. When they left, he turned to look at Arianne Wynn. His gaze was somehow powerless as he held her cold hand.

"Why didn't you tell me? Why live your life to such a pathetic extent in front of others? What are you being... stubborn about?"

Arianne did not know how long she had been unconscious, until she dazedly heard those whispered words. Opening her eyes, she was met with a fiery gaze.

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It was a fleeting instant before Mark Tremont's gaze restored to his usual aloofness. Were her eyes playing tricks on her?

"Any discomfort?" His tone was void of emotion as always.

Arianne Wynn shook her head. Noticing that his hand was over hers, warmth crept up her face.

"I'm fine... I didn't know that you're coming to the campus. I've caused you trouble."

Caused him trouble? Mark Tremont frowned. "Don't want to cause me trouble, but it's okay to inconvenience others? Arianne Wynn, no need to look tragic in front of the others. Does it cost your life to ask something from me?!"

Arianne Wynn bit her lips in fear. He was angry again...

After a while, Mark Tremont stood up to see the drip was nearly empty and called for the nurse to remove it. He spared no glance at Arianne when he announced frigidly, "Let's go back."

Arianne hastily flipped the blanket to pick herself up, but the bruise on the back of her hand from the perforation of the IV drip throbbed with her every action.

Mark Tremont took off his coat and threw it on her, his movements were rough before he bent down to swiftly help put on her white canvas shoes. He left without missing a beat.

Staring at the coat in her arms and the shoes on her feet, Arianne was stunned for some time. Was that him? This was the first time he had done something like this for her. Even if it was the least bit gentle, she had still felt as if something was about to break free from her heart.

When she broke out of her trance and exited the ward, Mark Tremont was not far ahead as he stood at the end of the corridor. It was when he heard her approaching footsteps that he continued to walk ahead.

One behind the other, they left the hospital. When Mark Tremont entered the driver's seat of the car, Arianne pulled the door to the rear passenger seat open. As she sat down, Mark Tremont's voice came muffled. "Sit in front."

Not daring to hesitate, Arianne bounced up and moved to the front passenger seat. Once she buckled her seatbelt, Mark Tremont slammed on the accelerator.

The driving speed made her heart lurch. Arianne stared straight ahead of her in terror, feeling like they would crash any second. When they arrived at the Tremont Estate's gate, she rushed out of the car and heaved dryly beside the road.

When she looked up again, Mark Tremont was already in the house. Arianne entered through the back door and was stopped in her tracks by Mary in the kitchen.

"Ari, did you come back with sir? What's up with sir? He's especially angry today, probably would have flipped the door off if he wanted to."

Arianne said nothing. He was always angry for the strangest reasons.

It was already two in the afternoon, lunchtime had long passed. Arianne felt her stomach churning. She snuck into the kitchen to make a quick pasta, while Mary went about her chores elsewhere. Figuring that Mark Tremont had possibly not eaten as well, she thought to make two servings.

Bringing the pasta upstairs, Arianne knocked on his door.

"Pasta?"

No sound came from the room. Arianne breathed in relief and turned to head downstairs when the door behind her opened promptly.

She turned around again to look at the man who stood at the door looking rather cross.

"Do... you want it?"

Mark Tremont was silent, he merely looked at Arianne. Emotions were unidentifiable on his sculpted face.

No reply meant he did not refuse. Arianne Wynn took the pasta in and placed it on the coffee table only to hear the door shutting. Her heart jumped.

"I don't wish to see what occurred today happening a second time. I'll make whoever dares provide you anything in the future disappear from your side entirely. You can only ask for things from me!" The lingering fury raged on, perhaps he was further riled up.

"I understand..." Arianne answered in a soft voice.

Mark Tremont obviously did not believe her promise as he fired back. "Understand? Do you really? I've made myself clear in the past, haven't I? Sneaking out to work part time while I was out of the country, everyone knows that you're piteous!" He was the only one who did not know, hearing of this afterward, he mulishly wanted to see how long she could hold on before she would come begging him.

"Sorry for embarrassing you..." Arianne had passed out, falling to his embrace. So many people on the campus saw them, their relationship might have been exposed for all that she knew. Going along such a train of thought, she assumed that he saw her as a disgrace to him.

In the face of the public, he had an impeccable character. How could he tolerate such a flaw?

Hearing what she had to say, Mark Tremont scowled. He pulled her to the side of the bed abruptly and with enough force, Arianne fell on it.