

TMBA 1251

CHAPTER 1251 READ HER THE RIOT AC

Because she was completely blown away, Erica didn't hear all of what Gifford said. She asked, "You two know each other?"

Chantel thought for a while and asked Erica in surprise, "Isn't your surname Lewis?" 'Could she be the Erica I've heard so much about?' she wondered.

Erica was confused by her question. "No. Remember? It's Leonard!"

"What? So you're Rika!" Chantel said with certainty. So at last, she had met the infamous Erica.

"Yeah. So how do you know my brother?" Erica shifted her gaze between Gifford and Chantel in suspicion.

'Why is my brother here looking for Chantel? Did she break the law?'

Ignoring the confusion and astonishment of the two girls, Gifford looked at Chantel and asked, "Why did you turn your phone off?"

"I lost it. It was stolen on the bus. I wanted to send a message to Uncle Wesley with Rika's phone, but her battery was dead," she replied honestly to Gifford.

The man was speechless. He patted his forehead helplessly. "So why are you two staying at this hotel?"

Chantel shot Erica a meaningful glance, and Erica replied instead, "We met outside the gate of the villa, went to dinner, and started talking. We became fast friends, and it was late, so we got a room so we could get some sleep."

'Met outside the gate? Became fast friends?' Gifford didn't believe her at all. He stared at his sister with a fake smile and said, "That's a strange coincidence."

Erica chuckled and nodded, "Yes, that's all it is—coincidence. So, again, how do you know each other? Is she your girlfriend?"

"Not exactly. Remember that girl I brought home? She's Chantel Rodgers."

Erica was shocked. She had heard from Blair that Gifford had rescued a girl and brought her back home. "What? You're that Chantel? I never knew! Nice to meet you, finally!" She ran to Chantel and looked her up and down.

Chantel chuckled. "So you weren't running away from another man. You were running away from home." 'I knew it! She's not a mistress at all.'

So Chantel wasn't lost. She had found Matthew's villa, and Erica lived there.

When she heard this, Erica smiled sheepishly. "I didn't mean to lie to you. I was afraid of being found out!"

"Oh, I see..." Actually, she didn't see. She had way more questions, but now wasn't the time to ask.

Gifford fished out his phone from his pocket and said, "Looks like you're okay. Mom's worried about you. Here, call her." He handed his phone to Chantel and looked at Erica. "Matthew's on his way here, as well. You might as well stay put!"

Erica pulled a long face and begged Gifford, "Oh come on. Don't you care about me anymore?"

Gifford didn't buy it. He smiled and answered, "You're just lucky you're his responsibility! If it were up to me, I'd tan your hide! But you've got Matthew now. I'm sure he's going to have words with you. I don't need to care anymore!" Since Matthew married Erica, Gifford felt a huge weight lifted from his shoulders. He didn't need to look out for his sister anymore.

Speak of the devil. They could hear several men approaching at a rapid pace, barking orders and stamping boots.

The man leading them was none other than Matthew.

With a cry torn from the depths of her heart, Erica rushed over to him with a smile on her face. "Matthew, you're here!" She held the man's arm fawningly.

Gifford looked at her with disgust. "Wow. That's a 180 degree turn if I've ever seen one." 'Such a capricious woman!' he thought.

Erica took umbrage at her brother's taunt. She raised her head and snorted at him arrogantly. "He's my hubby! Why wouldn't I be happy to see him?"

Matthew rolled his eyes at her. She was pretty convincing, though. If she hadn't climbed over the wall tonight, he would have believed her.

Gifford simply waved his hand at them and said, "Go ahead, Matthew, take her home and read her the riot act."

"Hey Gifford, you really need to relax more. Why not come and live with us for a few days? Chantel, let's get out of here. Don't worry about the hotel. Hey! Let go of me!"

Gifford pulled his sister away from Chantel and threw her into the arms of the silent man again.

When she barreled into him, Matthew nonchalantly draped an arm around her waist.

"I'll take Chantel back to Askor tomorrow," Gifford said. "Have a good night, you two!"

"Wait!"

"Wait!" Two women's voices rang out in unison. Of course, it was Chantel and Erica.

'If Erica takes off now, this would be a wasted trip, ' Chantel thought. She waited a long time to buy the discounted ticket and fly here. She couldn't waste the money or the time.

As for Erica, she wanted to argue some more and see if she could stay here tonight.

The two girls looked into each other's eyes and walked together with a smile. Pointing at the bathroom, Erica told the expressionless Matthew, "Give us a few minutes. Time for some girl talk!"

"Hold up!" Matthew finally spoke.

While Erica stood there confused, the man ordered the bodyguard behind him, "Go and check it out." He had to make sure Erica wouldn't try to escape from the bathroom.

"Yes, Matthew!"

Erica watched the bodyguard enter the bathroom, feeling distressed. Did Matthew think she was superhuman? They were on the thirteenth floor! Was she supposed to sprout wings and fly out the window? She had no tools or anything else.

Two minutes later

Under the confused gazes of the two men, Erica and Chantel walked into the bathroom. Chantel closed the bathroom door.

Inside, Erica held Chantel's hand and whispered, "Tell me the truth, are you my brother's girlfriend or not? How long are you staying here? Can you come to my house?" If someone lived in the villa with them, then she had an excuse not to sleep with Matthew.

Chantel shook her head. "No, I'm not your brother's girlfriend, but... Rika, I'm here for you."

"For me?"

"Yes!" Chantel took a deep breath and said honestly, "Okay, I guess there's no easy way to say this. I want to sleep with your brother and have a baby. Can you help me?"

Erica was shocked by what she was asking. She admired her courage a lot. "But...are you even old

enough?"

"What kind of question is that? I'm in college, remember?"

'Oh, that makes sense. But giving birth to a baby for my brother...' Erica hesitated.

Chantel understood her hesitation. This should not be taken lightly. She continued, "Since Ethan left, Auntie Blair's been sad all the time. I want to give her a grandkid to make her and Uncle Wesley happy. I swear I'm healthy. I've even been to the hospital for a physical. There's nothing wrong with me and I have the papers to prove it. And, if I can do this, the kid won't miss his grandpa and grandma. And they won't miss him. They'll have him all the time, if they want..."

And that was where Erica came in. She was integral to Chantel's plan.

She knew the Leonard family loved their two daughters the most. She couldn't go to Yvette; she'd never agree to a plan like that. But Erica, on the other hand...

Erica was different. As far as Chantel knew, Erica had always been fearless and was up for anything. Even if Gifford found out Erica had taken part in her plan, the brother wouldn't really do anything to his youngest sister.

That was why Chantel came to find Erica. She could discuss it with her. If Erica didn't agree, she would have to give up.

After hearing her explanation, Erica thought, 'She's got a point. Gifford's over 30, and it's high time he got a girlfriend.'

CHAPTER 1252 HATCHING A PLAN

Erica was married, and her elder sister would get married soon too, leaving Wesley and Blair alone in Askor.

Gifford was the one who had brought Chantel home. He must have thoroughly investigated the girl's background before taking her to their family. She was no danger, and didn't seem to have any bad intentions against the Leonard family.

Moreover, Erica had been planning to introduce a girl to Gifford, and now, the perfect girl was in front of her.

Her train of thoughts was interrupted by a knock on the bathroom door. Gifford said, "Rika, Chantel! Come out!"

He was afraid that the two girls were plotting something. The longer they stayed inside, the more suspicious they appeared to be.

In order to make Gifford feel at ease, Erica opened the door and stuck her head out. She glanced at her husband sitting on the sofa with a smile, and then told Gifford, "Give us some time, Brother. I have a lot to talk with Chantel."

Gifford turned around and glanced at the man on the sofa. He whispered to her, "How can you let Matthew wait for you like this? Aren't you afraid that he will be mad at you later?"

It seemed that the rumors about Matthew doting on Erica was not groundless. Otherwise, how could his sister dare to be so presumptuous in front of the cold CEO?

"No, I'm not afraid," she stated boldly. Matthew would punish her sooner or later since she had climbed over the wall and escaped from him. It didn't matter if she made him wait a little longer.

As long as he didn't kill her, everything would work out somehow.

Gifford was speechless. Since she didn't care, he had to return to his seat next to Matthew.

After a while, he murmured, "I have a bad feeling about this."

Matthew said curtly, "You are having a bad feeling now? It's a bit too late for that." The girls had been talking secretly in the bathroom for a while. It was obvious that they were up to something.

But Matthew wasn't worried. His bottom line for Erica was that she wouldn't run away from him again. As long as she stayed by his side, he would allow her to do whatever she wanted.

"Seriously?" Gifford said, with an exasperated sigh. "Could you please keep an eye on your wife? I will take care of Chantel."

He didn't think that the two girls would be able to trick him and Matthew.

In the bathroom

The girls reached an agreement. Erica began to daydream about her brother's future. "I'll figure out a way when I get back home. You stay here for a while. I'll contact you as soon as possible!"

"Okay! Rika, don't worry. As long as your brother doesn't hate me, I will do anything. I will never betray him!" Chantel swore.

Erica nodded, "I believe you! But if you dare betray my brother, I will have you sent to the slum!"

The slum was a place where many girls had nightmares about. But Chantel replied indifferently, "The slum? That wouldn't be much of a punishment for me. I grew up poor, in a remote village and I have experienced all kinds of hardships in my life. To me, going to the slum is like returning home. Let's see. If

I betray your brother or do him wrong, you can just..."

Chantel tried her best to find the most vicious punishment for herself.

Erica was amused by her. She put her arm around the girl's shoulder and said, "Never mind! I believe you. And even if you do something to hurt him, I won't need to do anything because my brother won't let you easy!"

Gifford was the second generation of God of Warriors in the military after Wesley's retirement. His title was not for nothing, and he had countless ways to deal with people who betrayed him.

"I understand. But when the truth comes out, you have to help me!" Chantel said. Their trick would definitely be exposed one day. After all, Chantel's goal was to be pregnant with Gifford's child. They couldn't hide that when her belly became big. It would only be a matter of time before Gifford found out.

"No problem. I got your back! Okay then, if I don't leave now, my husband will be mad at me again. Not just mad. He would eat me alive!"

"He came looking for you in the middle of the night. He doesn't have it easy either. Go back now!" Chantel said, giggling. But to be honest, she really admired Erica's courage. The moment she saw Matthew earlier, she was so scared that she couldn't even breathe. She didn't know how Erica lived with a man who seemed as cold as an iceberg.

'He doesn't have it easy?' As Erica walked towards the door, she muttered, "I'm the one who doesn't have it easy. Otherwise, I wouldn't have climbed over the wall and escaped overnight."

Chantel smiled at her complaining. "I'll give you my WeChat account. Please send me a request. And you don't have to worry about your parents. They have helped me so much. I'll take good care of them for you," she promised.

The two girls came out of the bathroom, smiling and friendly with each other.

Under the vigilant eyes of the men, Erica turned on her phone and sent a friend request to Chantel's account.

After that was done, she put away her phone and looked at the two men in the room with a smile. "We're going to change our clothes. You two please wait outside."

Gifford was still worried about what they were plotting and didn't want them to stay alone anymore. He stood up, grabbed Chantel's wrist and took her out of the hotel room. "Erica, you change first. Since Chantel can't leave today, she doesn't have to change her clothes."

He closed the door behind him, leaving the couple in the room staring at each other.

Since her brother and Chantel were right outside the door, Erica didn't have to worry about what Matthew would do to her here. So, she boldly took off the bathrobe in front of the man and began to change her clothes.

In the process, she pointed at the marks and bites on her body and accused Matthew, "See this? This is why I ran away. So, don't be angry with me!"

Matthew was sitting still on the sofa. He glanced at the love bites he had left on her body. He said nothing, but his sexy Adam's apple bobbed silently.

She was becoming bold in front of him. Did she think that he wouldn't touch her because her brother was outside? She was underestimating him. How dare she provoke him like this?

If he wished, he wouldn't hesitate to make love to her even if there was someone else in the room.

In the hallway outside the door, Gifford looked into the girl's erratic eyes. He pretended to be serious and questioned her as if she were a criminal, "Look at me!"

Afraid that she might let slip something, Chantel leaned her back against the wall and looked up and down, avoiding eye contact. "What's wrong?"

"What are you doing in Alorith?" If memory served him right, Chantel didn't have any relatives or friends in Alorith.

That question was easy and she didn't need to lie. So, she finally dared to look into his eyes. "I came to see Erica."

"You and Erica have never seen each other before. Why were you looking for her?" Gifford asked, frowning.

She shifted her eyes away again and lied calmly, "We have never seen each other before; that's why I wanted to meet her. I didn't expect to bump into her as soon as I arrived at the Pearl Villa District!"

As she said this, she remembered the funny moment when she saw Erica. She couldn't help laughing.

No wonder the Leonard family always said that she was much more obedient than Erica ever was. Indeed, Erica was such a troublemaker. At least, Chantel wouldn't climb over a wall to escape from home. Well, even if she wanted to, she didn't have the ability to do so.

Erica deserved to be in the family of the two Gods of Warriors!

CHAPTER 1253 DEAR MATTHEW

"Hey, what are you laughing at? Be serious! Ten-hut!" Gifford commanded. 'Is Chantel not afraid of me either, just like Rika?' he wondered in confusion.

Upon hearing this, Chantel stopped smiling and stood straight with her back against the wall.

"What did you do after you met with Rika?" Gifford continued after a brief pause.

Looking him in the eye, Chantel answered honestly, "Oh, we went to eat wontons. Afterwards we booked a hotel room and went straight to bed."

Gifford remembered that the two girls didn't know each other's identity until he entered the room just now. "Are you telling me that you two strangers went to eat wontons together? And then shared a hotel room?" he asked, raising his eyebrows. 'Is Erica a fool or is Chantel too bold?' he thought to himself.

Chantel immediately shrank back in fear, frightened by the anger in his tone. "Erica is not a bad person."

"I know she is not a bad person. It's just that she has an innate ability to get herself into trouble. I don't want you hanging around with her in the future. She's a bad influence; stay away from her!" As the saying went, "One who has been in the company of wolves will learn to howl." He didn't want Chantel to follow Erica's bad examples.

Chantel, however, felt differently. "Although Erica is a little naughty, she is kind-hearted and generous from the bottom of her heart."

Gifford looked up at her and snorted in laughter. "Wow, you've only known each other for a few hours. I can't believe that you are actually defending her already! What did Rika do to you to make you side with her? Tell me the truth! What did she tell you in the bathroom just now?"

"Well...she told me to take good care of her parents after I go back to Askor. Then we exchanged our contact information. That's all." Chantel decided not to tell Gifford what she was planning on her mind.

If Gifford could be fooled like this, his title of the God of Warriors would be a complete waste. "If you don't tell me, I will..."

Crack! Suddenly, the door burst open.

Chantel's face almost instantly formed a frown when she saw Erica come out. "Rika, please tell your brother what you told me in the bathroom earlier. Tell him that you wanted me to take good care of Wesley and Blair! Your brother doesn't believe me..."

Erica was afraid that Chantel was being bullied by her brother, so she immediately stood in front of her as if to protect her. "Gifford, I'm not blaming you, but there's a reason why you never have a girlfriend. Why do you have to know every little secret between us girls? If you keep acting like this and refuse to be tender to a woman, you won't be able to find a wife in the future."

Gifford was stunned speechless. The people he brought with him couldn't help snickering. Trembling with anger, he roared, "Rika, are you looking for trouble?"

When Erica realized that Gifford was about to explode in anger, she shrank back as well, like a coward. She quickly hid behind Matthew and said, "I have a backer now. Don't ever try to bully me again! Matthew is my backer and I'm Chantel's backer. If you want to get to me, you have to knock Matthew down first."

Matthew looked at Erica with stunned disbelief.

Gifford didn't want to waste time arguing with the two girls, so he pulled out the girl behind Erica.

When the girls saw him approaching, they screamed at the top of their lungs.

All the while, Matthew indifferently watched this scene play out like a movie as he realized how Erica always managed to make everything livelier around her.

Gifford, on the other hand, was on the verge of breaking down. He had simply pulled Chantel away from behind Erica's back. What did they yell in the middle of the night? "Shut up, both of you!"

he demanded in a cold voice. The two girls shut up immediately.

With a livid face, he glared at Erica and shouted, "Why were you yelling? Can't you see that others are resting? Hurry up and leave with Matthew. It's already quite late! Chantel needs to rest here. I'll send her back to Askor tomorrow morning!"

'I thought he was going to beat me and Chantel, ' Erica thought, breathing a sigh of relief. She simply nodded, turned around and held Matthew's arm. "Matthew, let's get out of here for now," she said in a soft voice.

The man glanced at the cheeky woman, nodded at Gifford and said, "Gifford, we're going back!"

Gifford waved his hand at them and said, "Okay, Matthew. I'm sorry Rika caused so much trouble for you. If she carries on like this, please do teach her a lesson!"

No one knew better than Wesley and Gifford how difficult Erica was to deal with.

Erica stared at her brother with her eyes wide open. "Gifford, are you my brother or not? How can you betray me like this?"

Weren't brothers supposed to be more caring towards their younger sister? Why was it different when it came to her? 'It seems that in Gifford's mind only Yvette is his sister. Oh, my heart aches.' Erica was crestfallen.

This time, Gifford just smiled and said nothing. Erica could see the warning in his smile.

'I must cut off my relationship with the Leonard family!' she thought to herself with determination.

'Dad always calls me crazy. Mom grabs me by the ear whenever she's mad at me. Gifford just asked Matthew to teach me a lesson. Only Yvette is nice to me. I really miss her so much.'

However, looking at the man who was holding her hand, Erica smiled through tears. 'It doesn't matter. I have a husband who is good to me.' She raised her head proudly and said, "Matthew, I have a favor to ask of you."

Unexpectedly, the man refused without hesitation. "No, you don't!"

"But, honey..." For her brother's lifelong happiness, Erica would risk everything!

'See how I treat Gifford and how he treats me? Alas, I really envy him for having such a good sister,' she thought.

Thinking of this, she quickened her pace and held the man's arm intimately. "Honey, could you please do me a favor?"

The man remained silent.

"Honey! Dear Matthew..."

This time, Matthew stopped and gave Erica, who was smiling fawningly, a cold stare. "Erica, every time you have a favor to ask of me, you call me 'honey' and 'dear Matthew,' but you never call me like that when you don't. You're such a hypocrite."

'He figured it out!' The smile on Erica's face froze. "I know I was wrong, but it's not my fault. I just want to have a good sleep. That's all..." In the end, Erica felt very wronged.

Ever since Matthew had sex with her for the first time, she had been living a miserable life.

Night and day, he would have sex with her non-stop. In fact, she was starting to wonder whether she was just a breeding tool for Matthew.

Thinking of the marks on her body she had just shown him, Matthew pinched his eyebrows and said, "I can help you this time, but only this time. Do you want to plead for yourself or something else?"

Erica glanced at the man and finally made a righteous decision—she would do something to help her brother. "Can you find me a certain kind of medicine? It's the kind of medicine that..." She whispered something in Matthew's ear for a while and then solemnly emphasized, "Even if she is pregnant, the

medicine won't affect the baby."

Matthew was stunned. "You want to use it?" Matthew wondered why Erica would have to use that kind of medicine at all.

"Of course not! It's for my brother! He's already over 30 years old, but he doesn't have a girlfriend yet. I need to do something to help before it's too late!" Erica was very distressed. What if Gifford was unable to find a wife in his lifetime? Gifford had always been good to her. Now that his marriage was at stake, as his sister, Erica felt obligated to help him out.

CHAPTER 1254 THE PLAN AGAINST GIFFORD

Matthew knew that Erica was bold, but he hadn't expected her to be this audacious. She had the guts to scheme against Gifford!

His tone was firm as he said, "No." Then he turned and continued to walk toward the hotel room door.

"Hey, didn't you agree to do me a favor? Why are you breaking your promise?" Erica huffed as she stubbornly stood in his way.

Matthew couldn't believe her persistence. Had she not considered all the risks? He frowned as he replied, "Do you know how much Chantel will suffer if anything goes wrong?" 'What if Gifford doesn't like Chantel?'

"Oh! Don't worry. Chantel agreed when I spoke with her." Erica wouldn't do such a terrible thing without Chantel's approval. However, since Chantel had consented, Erica thought she was just a matchmaker.

Matthew was speechless. At this moment, he realized that the two women had discussed the plot against Gifford in the bathroom!

As he had hesitated, Erica decided to take advantage of the situation and continue coaxing him. She pouted and gazed at him with sorrowful eyes, like a spoiled child, and said, "Honey, after this, I will be obedient. I will give you a baby as soon as possible. No, five! Five cute babies! Since we're wealthy enough, we can afford so many children!"

She hoped that all the children would be boys so that she could teach them how to take Matthew's property from him. Then, the man would be homeless and would learn about society's cruelty!

Matthew was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. He had grown to be arrogant and aloof as he hadn't experienced society's unkindness.

Although Erica had not experienced adversities, she wasn't cold and impassive around people.

Matthew scoffed. She had lured him with the same promise so many times that he was no longer

inclined to believe her.

The last time she had asked him to make a baby with her, he had exhausted himself trying. But, she had fled from their home. She tricked the bodyguard, snuck out of the house, climbed the wall, and escaped in the dead of the night!

What worried him now was the thought that Erica might behave similarly when pregnant. As this wasn't the first time she had evaded the guards at the villa, he had to consider and prepare for a repeat incident. Perhaps he needed more people to follow her from now on.

"Honey, decide quickly. My brother is leaving tomorrow! And if you don't help me, I'll tell your father that you hit me and kicked me out of the house in the middle of the night." Erica was so anxious that she started threatening him to get what she wanted.

"I hit you?"

"No, no, no." When she saw the expression on his face, Erica realized her mistake. She quickly corrected herself, "I ran away. Thank you for looking for me in the middle of the night. Hee hee."

Matthew closed his eyes as frustration coursed through him. No matter what he did, she would find a way to get what she wanted. It was easier to give in. At that thought, he pulled out his phone and dialed a number. "Find something and bring it to me. I'm at the Three-Degree Longitude Hotel on Three-Degree Longitude Road."

Erica was thrilled when she heard the remainder of the conversation. He was doing exactly what she wanted. Now that her plan was materializing, she was excited enough to hop around! She knew that he would help her! Matthew had instructed the person on the call to bring him what she wanted!

At this moment, Erica swore to herself that she would live up to her end of the bargain and have a baby for Matthew.

But, when they returned to the villa, Matthew went straight upstairs. He even ignored her when she called his name several times!

Erica pouted as she watched his disappearing figure. Wasn't he in a fine mood a few moments ago?

Even though she knew she was wrong, she felt that he had also partly been at fault. Why wasn't he speaking with her? 'Humph!'

Just as Matthew stepped into the closet to find fresh clothes, Erica appeared at the door. When he turned to leave, she fawned, "Matthew."

The man glanced at her coldly before saying, "Go to sleep, or we will continue to have sex!"

'Continue?' A shudder ran through Erica when she remembered how exhausted she was after their night-time activities. Unwilling to feel that way again, she ran to the bedside, kicked off her slippers, and hopped into bed as fast as she could. She even went so far as to close her eyes and feign being asleep!

Matthew sighed helplessly as he watched her antics. For a moment, he was tempted to ask his parents-in-law whether he could end this marriage.

If he returned Erica to her parents... No, no. He didn't have the heart to part from her. No matter what she did or how she behaved, he loved her. And, he didn't want any other man to have her. He wanted to stay married to her and spoil her himself!

At about four o'clock in the morning, someone knocked on Chantel's hotel room door.

Chantel, who had been asleep, woke with the sound. As it was the middle of the night, she was scared and did not dare to open the door. With bated breath, she listened for any indication of the identity of her visitor.

Just when she was debating over whether it was Gifford, who was next door, silence descended in the hall outside her door.

A split second later, a shrill sound filled her room. Chantel almost jumped out of her skin in fright! It took her a few moments to realize it was the landline phone in her room.

She answered the phone. "Hello."

A woman's voice replied, "Chantel, I work for Erica. Please open the door. I have something to give you."

Chantel sighed with relief when she heard the woman's explanation. "Okay, wait a moment!"

When she opened the door, she saw a woman with short hair standing outside. She appeared quite professional in her black outfit! She glanced around the corridor vigilantly before she entered the room.

After closing the door, she took out something and handed it to Chantel. "This is the spray that Erica asked me to bring to you. Apply some, wait a few minutes, and then you can find the person you want."

Chantel's hands trembled. 'Erica is so efficient.'

She swallowed nervously as she studied the spray bottle. It had no logo. 'Could she be sure of its contents? Would the plan work? What if something went wrong?' Several thoughts raced through her mind all at once. "I...I see."

"Chantel, would it be all right if I spray it on you? I'll even take the bottle away after we're done. All you need to do is go to the person you want."

Chantel couldn't settle her racing heart no matter how hard she tried. Rendered speechless, she nodded at the woman.

The woman opened the bottle and sprayed the contents on Chantel's body. A brief moment later, the air filled with a faint, pleasant fragrance of flowers.

When she was done, the woman placed the lid back on the bottle, covered her mouth and nose, and said, "I'll leave now!"

"Okay, thank you!"

"You're welcome!"

After the woman left, Chantel leaned against the wall and tried to steady her breath. Gifford was next door. Was she really going to do that?

Rika had already arranged everything for her. If she were to renege at this time, Rika's efforts would be wasted.

At this thought, Chantel took a deep breath and walked out of the room. A faint scent of flowers trailed her as she made her way to the room next door and rang the bell.

She didn't need to wait long for a response.

Gifford, who was vigilant, asked as soon as the bell rang, "Who is it?"

"It's me!" she answered before taking several deep breaths to steady herself.

'Chantel, the Leonard family is your benefactor. All you need to do is seduce him and get pregnant! And the man is Gifford. You can do this!' she persuaded herself.

A few seconds later, Gifford, in the hotel bathrobe, opened the door. Confusion marred his handsome features as he asked, "Why haven't you gone to bed yet?"

Before she could reply, the sweet floral fragrance drifted toward him. He didn't pay much attention to it as he thought it was the scent of her body.

Chantel glanced around as though worried, grabbed his arm, and said in a trembling voice, "I'm a little scared... Your room has two beds. Can I... come inside... and sleep on the other bed?"

Chantel and Erica had booked a room with twin beds. To protect her, Gifford had no choice but to reserve the room next door, which coincidentally had twin beds as well.

CHAPTER 1255 TRICKED BY A GIRL

Gifford looked at the small hand on his arm, confused. "What are you afraid of?"

"I'm afraid of..." Chantel tried to come up with something. "I'm a little nervous. I can't sleep alone in a hotel room. Besides, I just watched a horror movie. Gifford, it's only a few more hours to dawn. Please let me in!" Her face turned pale.

Her frightened expression caught Gifford off-guard and he believed her. He thought that she really was scared of staying alone.

The truth was that she was indeed frightened, but not because she was afraid of sleeping alone or because of the horror movie; she was terrified, thinking about what she was about to do.

Gifford moved aside to let her in. When she passed by him, he felt a rush throughout his body.

He was confused. Why did he feel like that all of a sudden?

Meanwhile, Chantel had already entered his room and obediently sat on the other bed.

She was so tensed and already had difficulty breathing.

After he shut the door, Gifford took two steps forward, feeling an inexplicable hot stream rapidly coursing through his body.

He scanned Chantel's expression. "Have you applied something on your body? What's that fragrance?"

She gripped the hem of her clothes tightly. "Oh! The scent? I used the hotel's body wash. Does it smell good? I thought so too."

God knew how hard it was for her to finish that sentence.

She felt her cheeks burn and her breath become jagged. She knew that the drug was working.

Holding back the strange desire in him, Gifford strode into the room. "Go to sleep!"

Chantel stood up abruptly and asked, "Gifford, where are you going?"

"I have to wash my face." 'Maybe I'm just too sleepy, ' he thought.

Afraid that he might leave, she quickly trotted to block his way despite her weak legs. "Gifford...I don't feel too well... I think I took something bad..."

Gifford's eyes fell on her red lips and he was instantly attracted to them. He had the sudden urge to kiss her.

But he knew that something was wrong with her. He pulled a long face and questioned her harshly, "Chantel! What on earth did you take? Did you apply something on your body?"

Unable to control herself, Chantel wrapped her arms around his waist and said, "I don't know. Please help me..." She really had no idea what Erica had given her!

The drug was too strong.

She leaned into his arms and kissed his chest. Gifford lost complete control of himself. He held her tightly in his arms and kissed her red lips, regardless of the consequences.

The moans from the room did not subside until dawn.

Chantel fell asleep soon after, but Gifford couldn't sleep. He went to the bathroom to take a cold shower.

When he came out, she was still sound asleep.

Now, he knew for sure that he had been tricked—played by the girl whom he had rescued and taken home!

He lowered himself on to the bed, and ran his fingers through a wisp of Chantel's black hair on the pillow. He whispered, "You better pray for yourself and hope that you are innocent in this game. If I find out that you had a part in this..."

If this was really Chantel's idea, he wouldn't let her off easy!

His gaze fell on the marks on her neck. His eyes darkened.

Although Chantel didn't have a fine figure, the sex was very good.

At the Pearl Villa District

Early that morning, Matthew retrieved the surveillance video of the corridor of the hotel and sent it to Erica. She hid herself under the quilt, laughing wildly.

In the video, Chantel entered Gifford's room in the middle of the night and didn't come out the whole night. Obviously, their plan had succeeded!

'Soon, I will have a nephew or niece!' she giggled.

'No, one night is not enough to make Chantel pregnant. But how to trick Gifford into having sex with her again? He may have already noticed that he was fooled.'

It won't be easy to trick him again, ' she pondered.

When she was having her breakfast, she received a call from Gifford.

She quickly swallowed the food in her mouth and cleared her throat before answering. "Hello, Gifford! What's up?"

Gifford was already fully dressed. He looked at the sleeping Chantel in the bed and asked Erica, "Erica, what did you do? Where were you last night?"

"Last night? I slept peacefully in my husband's arms. What else would I do?" She sounded so innocent.

"Why is last night's surveillance video in the corridor missing?"

"The surveillance video? Why is it missing? But what do you want the surveillance video for?"

Gifford was speechless. Either Erica's acting skill was too good, or she really had nothing to do with the incident.

But he still didn't believe that Chantel could set him up without the help of someone else.

If there really was no one behind Chantel and he was tricked so easily by her, then Gifford might as well resign from the military.

"Erica, you better run and hide. If I find a single clue that leads to you, I will pack you off to the South Pole and make sure that you never come back!" Gifford threatened.

If this was Erica and Chantel's planning, he would give them hell.

These girls didn't realize the seriousness of the matter at all. How dare they act so recklessly!

This could destroy Chantel's life.

Putting the phone aside on speaker, Erica continued to have her breakfast leisurely. "I have no idea what you are talking about. Did something happen?"

Gifford gnashed his teeth. His sister was so stubborn! He wished he could go to the villa and interrogate her face to face. "Fine, don't admit it. I'll investigate it myself. If I find out that you are behind all this, I will show you what I can do. Just wait and see, Erica!"

"Okay, okay! I'll wait, my dear brother!" Erica was confident of Matthew's way of doing things. As long as Chantel didn't tell Gifford, it would be impossible for him to find the truth.

Judging from her complacent tone, Gifford could tell that she definitely had something to do with this.

However, he didn't have any evidence yet, so he hung up the phone without taking any more of her nonsense.

Since Erica was tough to break and refused to tell the truth, all he could do was stay and wait for Chantel to wake up. He had to interrogate this girl first.

Erica went off to school happily. Chantel was still asleep while Gifford was busy waiting for her to wake up.

In the afternoon, as soon as she opened her eyes, Chantel heard the familiar voice. "You are finally awake."

Her heart skipped a beat. "Gifford..." Her voice was hoarse, and it sounded sexy to his ears at that moment.

Ignoring her shy expression, he looked at his watch and said, "You've slept for six hours and seven minutes. And I've been waiting for you to wake up for six hours and seven minutes too. Now, tell me!

Chantel shrank back into the quilt. "What are you talking about?" When she turned around, she felt a stabbing pain. 'Ouch, that hurt...'

"Tell the truth and you will receive a lighter punishment! So, I advise you to spill everything!" When he looked at her, Gifford couldn't help but think of what had happened last night. He coughed to cover up his fantasies.

Chantel had planned to leave as soon as she had succeeded in sleeping with him. But she had fallen asleep as soon as they stopped making love. She couldn't have left either way because Gifford hadn't slept all night.

Now that she had to face him, she had no choice but to deny her involvement in the crime. It was time to put her acting skill to good use. She feigned innocence and said, "I'm confused too. Didn't you investigate the matter?"

'The surveillance video has been deleted. How else can I investigate this?' Gifford thought helplessly.

CHAPTER 1256 I WILL BEAR ANY CONSEQUENCES

Gifford sat down on the edge of the bed, and pulled down her quilt a little. Ignoring Chantel's uneasy expression, he threatened, "If you don't tell me the truth, I'll take you back to the military base and interrogate you the way I interrogate spies!"

Chantel shivered. But Erica trusted her to keep quiet, so she gritted her teeth and refused to divulge their secret. "I know nothing, Gifford. How can you do this to me? I am the one who suffered losses here after going through this kind of thing. Yet, you are doubting me. This is too much!"

"This kind of thing? What kind of thing? What happened between us?" he asked coldly.

Chantel's eyes widened. 'He is not going to take responsibility for it?' She couldn't believe it, and was about to say something. But she changed her mind. It didn't matter even if he didn't take responsibility for taking her first time. "Forget it. Please turn around. I need to go and take a shower."

Gifford didn't move. He smirked, "Do you think it's really necessary for me to turn around? I saw every inch of your body last night."

Her face turned red. To escape from his sharp questioning, she quickly sat up from the bed, and stood up naked in front of him.

But as soon as she was on her feet, her knees gave away weakly and she fell to the floor.

Gifford didn't move. He pretended not to care that she had embarrassed herself in front of him. He didn't even bother to help her up.

Under his burning gaze, she picked up the bathrobe on the floor and put it on.

In the evening, around six o'clock, Erica finished the last photo. She and Hyatt packed up and walked to the school gate.

The green military car at the gate was so eye-catching that she noticed it at once.

The tall man standing beside the car was scanning every student coming out of the school gate. He even had his hands on the driver who had come to pick Erica up.

She knew immediately that the truth had been found, but she didn't think that he would be so quick!

She was going to chicken out of there! Before Gifford could notice her, she hid behind Hyatt and hailed a taxi as fast as she could.

Just when she got into the taxi, Gifford spotted her. "Erica!" He strode towards her.

Erica quickly ordered the driver, "Sir, hurry up! There are bad guys after me!"

The driver was stunned. He immediately stepped on the accelerator and roared away from the place. "Miss, where do you want to go?"

"Uh... go to Hilton Group!" Her brother was such a strong opponent, and she needed an even stronger ally to protect her.

Gifford made note of the license plate number of the taxi. He ran back to his car and followed the taxi as fast as he could.

At Hilton Group

Erica swiftly paid the taxi driver and jumped out of the car. She dashed towards the Hilton Group building.

She quickly came to a halt at the entrance of the company when she realized that she was Mrs. Hilton. She had to heed to her image in front of the staff. Erica looked behind her vigilantly and after making sure that Gifford wasn't around, she slowly entered the elevator as she returned the greetings of the employees.

On the floor of the CEO's office

Erica hurried to Paige's desk and asked in a low voice, "Paige, is Matthew in his office?"

Paige chuckled and stood up. "Yes, Erica. He is inside."

"Is he busy?"

"No." 'But he does have company, ' Paige thought with a smile.

Erica breathed a sigh of relief and looked back; still no sign of Gifford. 'How strange. Gifford's tracking ability is highly questionable. Why hasn't he caught up yet?' she wondered.

Just as she pushed the door to Matthew's office open, a big hand grasped her from behind. "Argh—" she screamed out loud.

When she was about to scream again, another hand covered her loud mouth.

But the hand didn't belong to Matthew, because her husband was leaning against the desk and looking at her indifferently.

'Oh, crap! I knew it!' How could Gifford's tracking ability be any bad? He had been waiting for her in her husband's office. She changed her expression when he let go of her and greeted her brother with a big smile, "Gifford! What are you doing here?"

Gritting his teeth, Gifford said, "Erica, I've bought the ticket for you to the South Pole. Are you ready to leave?"

"The South Pole? Why would I want to go there?" She looked at Matthew for help.

"Stop pretending!" When Gifford tried to grab her again, Erica reacted quickly and dived under his hands, avoiding his clutches. She rushed towards Matthew.

Before Gifford could catch her, she hid behind Matthew, only revealing her little head.

"Matthew, get out of the way. I am going to teach this girl a lesson today!"

"Why do you have to teach me a lesson? What did I do to you?"

Gifford was so pissed off. Even now, she refused to admit her mistake. A sly flash appeared in his eyes. "Chantel already told me that you two conspired to set me up. Do you still want to deny it?"

"What? Gifford, how did you force her to tell you this? I'm the one to blame! Chantel had nothing to do with—" The rest of her words faded away when she saw the complacent look on Gifford's face. "You lied to me! Chantel didn't say anything, did she?"

"No, she didn't," Gifford said angrily. Chantel knew that he wouldn't do anything to her, so no matter how much he forced her, she insisted that it had nothing to do with her or Erica.

He had no choice but to deceive this other suspect—Erica. And he succeeded. This troublemaker was the brain behind the trick.

Feeling like a fool, Erica glared at Gifford and complained, "You've been single for a long time. You should thank me for setting you up with a woman; instead, this is what I get! You are so ungrateful!"

"You! Do you know what you have done?" Gifford moved towards her. "Matthew, get out of my way. Let me deal with this devil!"

Matthew, who had been silent all the while, stretched out his hand to stop the angry man. All said and done, he had to stand up for this woman hiding behind him. "Gifford, you chose to take Chantel to your home; why don't you be responsible for her to the very end?"

It was so obvious that the CEO was trying to defend his wife.

Erica looked at her husband with admiration. "Matthew, you're absolutely right!"

Gifford was so mad that he spun around in circles with his hands on his hips. Finally, he glared at the hateful culprit and said, "I did bring her home, but I never intended to marry her!" And now that they had sex, he might not be able to escape from his responsibility.

Besides, Gifford was sure that Matthew was also involved in the matter. That was probably why he couldn't find a single clue regarding what had really happened. He only found out because Erica was so easily deceived.

"Then, you can marry her now!"

"Matthew, you are spoiling this girl to no end! She is going to get you into a lot of trouble if she

continues to play around like this!" Gifford wasn't exaggerating. He absolutely believed in his sister's ability to create trouble.

An unnoticeable smile flashed across Matthew's eyes. "It doesn't matter. I'm ready to bear any consequences for her." He was also well aware of what his wife was capable of, but he had been prepared to solve all those difficulties for her the day he had married her.

"Aren't you angry with her for running away last night?" Gifford asked, frowning.

Before Matthew could answer, Erica protested loudly, "Gifford, are you trying to sow discord between us?" "Gifford is so annoying! Why does he have to mention that now?" she cursed inwardly.

CHAPTER 1257 WHAT DOES MATTHEW LIKE

Gifford snorted mockingly at his sister. "What, now you're afraid? You had the courage to climb over the wall to escape. I thought you were brave enough to do anything!"

Erica endured his words with gritted teeth. She was much more concerned about what her husband might do or say to her.

Matthew cut straight through the siblings' bickering. "Of course I'm angry," he snapped. "I'll teach her a lesson when we get back. But what happened between you and Chantel is another matter. You put your own guard down in front of her and fell easily into her trap! It's your responsibility, and you can't blame Erica for it."

"Oh, fine! Trying to fight both of you will be like banging my head against the wall. I won't forget what's happened today." Not waiting for either to reply, Gifford stormed out. He could see that he was getting nowhere, since Erica's husband was there to stick up for her.

Only the couple was left in the office. Wordlessly, Matthew extracted his arm from his wife's grip, turned away, and sat down in his chair.

Looking at her empty hands, Erica remembered what he had said just now.

Possessed of a girlish joy, she went up to his back and started to massage his shoulders. "Oh, Matthew, thank you so much!" she cried. "You're awesome! You're my super idol now!"

Ignoring her flattery, Matthew simply lowered his head and started reading a document that was on his desk.

His face was blank, as it so often was, and the air was thick with embarrassment.

Erica kept working on his shoulders, trying to butter him up, but could see it was not working. What else could she do to make him happy?

'Oh! I got it!' Not giving up, she went around to her husband's side, wrapped her arms around his neck, and kissed him on the cheek. 'No, that's not enough! He prefers more passionate kisses!' Thinking of this, she planted a few on his mouth.

But Matthew returned none of the kisses. Cold as ice, he just glanced at her, then went back to his work.

'Oh, fine!' thought Erica; even she knew when to give up sometimes.

She left the office in a huff, much as her brother had moments before.

When she was gone, Matthew found it no easier to concentrate on the document before him. For a long time he sulked, his eyes wandering the room.

'She is really heartless. She kicked me away after using me. How ruthless she could be!'

Later, in the Hilton family's manor

It was after dinner. Erica handed a flower seedling to Debbie, then watched her plant it in the soil. "Will the plant be able to survive in this way?" she asked curiously.

Her mother-in-law gave her a smile and said, "Yes. The weather now is suitable for planting this kind of flower. They'll bloom around this time next year."

"Oh! I've seen this kind of flower before. It's pink and beautiful!"

"Yes. A client of our company brought it back from abroad. I liked it, so I kept it." Saying this, Debbie buried the roots of the flower seedling with soil, then watered it for a bit with a watering can.

For a moment both were silent. Inclining her head, Erica decided then to get past the small talk. "Mom, can you tell me what Matthew likes? For example, what sort of food does he enjoy? Or anything else!"

Debbie couldn't help but burst into laughter. "Oh, my! Your relationship must have improved a lot!" Erica had come to the manor just to inquire about Matthew's preferences. It was obvious that she cared about him now.

Faced with her mother-in-law's teasing, Erica blushed and explained, "I've made a lot of mistakes recently, and Matthew seems to be very angry. I have to do something to make up for it."

"Oh, really? What sort of mistakes?"

Erica lowered her head, thoroughly embarrassed. She couldn't exactly tell Debbie that she had escaped home because of Matthew's vigor and strength in bed.

So she wasn't going to tell her the exact truth. Holding Debbie's arm, she spoke like a spoiled child. "It's

not important, Mom. Please just answer my question."

Debbie was further amused; she thought her daughter-in-law was cute when she acted petulant. "Rika, it's not that I don't want to tell you. You know Matthew's personality. He's just like his father; whatever he thinks never shows up on his face. In my opinion, it doesn't matter what he likes. What matters is your sincerity. For example, you could make him a meal... Actually, forget about that. You don't know how to cook. Maybe you can buy him a gift or make something for him yourself. It will show your sincerity. What do you think?"

Erica thought it over for a bit and soon saw that Debbie was right. She nodded and said, "Thank you, Mom. I see."

So she had answered her original question, but that only brought her to a new one. Clumsy as Erica was, what could she do for Matthew by herself?

Erica returned to the villa that night. As expected, Matthew hadn't come back from the company yet.

She quickly became bored and got a bottle of red wine out of the cellar. Bringing it back upstairs, she poured it into the decanter, waited a moment, and got out two glasses.

Next, she went and raided the walk-in refrigerator for snacks. As she waited for Matthew, all she could think of to do was eat.

Half an hour passed, and Matthew wasn't back. Feeling a little thirsty, Erica shrugged and poured herself some wine.

An hour later it was eleven o'clock, and Erica was checking Weibo, still alone.

All the snacks she'd gotten from the refrigerator were long gone, along with half of the bottle of red wine.

It was not until midnight that the sound of a door came through the vestibule of the living room.

Hearing it, Erica abruptly stood up from her seat and rushed toward the vestibule. "Matthew!" she called out sweetly.

As if summoned by a spell, Matthew appeared in the living room. As he changed his shoes, he couldn't miss the aroma of the wine. Taking a look at his approaching wife, he noticed that her face was bright red. He frowned slightly, wondering how much she had drunk.

Quite oblivious to his mood, Erica threw herself into his arms and hugged his waist. "Matthew..." she said again, then burped right beside his face.

Stifling a cough, her husband pulled away in disgust. "How much wine did you drink?" "Why did she

drink while alone at home?' he wondered.

"Not much. Just a few sips..." Erica mumbled.

'A few sips?' He didn't believe that for a second. She had probably drunk at least half of a bottle of wine.

Wanting to confirm his guess, he started to head farther into the living room.

However, Erica thought he still didn't want to talk to her. Seeing him walk past, she very suddenly and loudly burst into tears.

Somewhat startled, Matthew stopped and turned around. His frown deepened in confusion. "Why are you crying?" Had he said something to offend her?

Erica didn't answer. Her face glistening with tears, she lurched to the front door and disappeared outside.

Matthew was stunned. What did she mean by rushing out without even a word? After closing his eyes and taking a deep breath, he hurried after her.

Outside there was no sign of Erica, but one of the bodyguards had seen her and pointed Matthew in the direction she had gone.

It turned out that she'd gone to the garden. It was only a few minutes' walk from the gate of the villa, but by the time Matthew got there, Erica had gotten herself into something of a predicament.

To be precise, she had begun to climb one of the larger trees. Two meters off the ground she began to feel dizzy, though, and simply clung to one of the larger branches.

Astonished, Matthew marched over to the tree and yelled, "Erica, what the hell are you doing? Come down at once!"

"I won't come down!" she wailed. "You don't want to see me anymore. I won't live..." After all, she'd noticed the disgust on Matthew's face earlier; it had been plain as day. So he just didn't want her anymore, did he? Then she would die in front of him!

'You won't live?' Staring up at his drunken wife, Matthew felt a terrible headache begin to set in.

CHAPTER 1258 YOU GHOS

'Crying, making a scene and threatening to kill herself...This woman goes nuts when she's drunk, ' Matthew sighed inwardly.

He stood under the tree, hands in his pockets. He warned Erica coldly, "Fine. If you die, you won't be Mrs. Hilton anymore. So go ahead—I'll grab Phoebe and we'll be married in no time!"

That was one reason why he hadn't done anything about Phoebe. The mere mention of her name could irritate Erica.

Erica lowered her head and glared at him. Her big eyes were full of anger. He knew this was going to happen. "You asshole!" she growled. "You want to make someone else your Mrs. Hilton? In your dreams!"

Matthew was patient, his tone even. Now things were going his way. "Then get down from there. That way, you'll still be my wife."

"Get down? What do you think I am? A monkey?"

Matthew replied decisively, "No. Let me guess—you're stuck!"

Erica roared, "If you don't believe me, you'll have to come up here yourself. I can't get down from here!" She felt quite dizzy! She could see three Matthews waiting for her by the tree.

The man's lips twitched. He took two steps forward and stretched out his arms. "Just great," he said in a frustrated tone. "Jump! I'll catch you."

Erica was just too dizzy at this point. So she decided to unwrap one arm from around the tree. She hung by her other arm briefly, then scrunched her eyes tightly and dropped, confident Matthew could catch her.

It went worse than either of them intended. Matthew did catch her in his arms, but was knocked to the ground by the impact. She landed on top of him, and the man grunted, wincing in pain.

When he opened his eyes again, he saw the giggling woman. She was laying on top of him, hugging the poor man. "A little warning, next time?" he said between gritted teeth. "You almost crushed me." Last time she tried this, she jumped from the stone wall on the riverbank. It was about a meter up, and he caught her easily. She was easily twice that high when she climbed the tree.

As stubborn as ever, Erica said, "You said you were going to catch me, so I trusted you!"

Matthew didn't know what to say in return. How could he not catch her? If she slipped through his arms, or he didn't get to her in time, she'd be hurt. And that was something his heart could not bear.

The bodyguards held back their laughter and helped the two up. Matthew carried the woman in his arms and strode into the villa.

He set her down once they got inside. In an angry tone, he ordered her, "Walk by yourself!"

The girl's mouth pouted and she stole a glance at him, shivering. "What the hell? Why are you yelling at

me? You are definitely not Matthew. My Matthew wouldn't be so mean to me. Tell me who you are!"

To emphasize her point, she grabbed the man's collar, and her eyes were wide in that creepy way that Matthew loathed. They looked like they were going to pop out of her head.

"Erica—"

"You're not Erica. I am. Tell me! Who the hell are you?" She raised her fist and shook it at him.

Matthew didn't take her threat seriously. He buried his anger. It wouldn't do to explode at the girl.

"Sounds like you need to know who's boss," he said indifferently.

"Who's boss? God, you are so arrogant! Go to hell—"

Whump! Her fist landed right on his nose, sending stars of pain into his vision for a few moments.

She wasn't that strong, but after the pain had cleared some, warm liquid flowed from his nose.

Silently, Matthew touched the liquid. It was really blood...

He cast a cold glance at the drunken woman. He didn't scream at her, to his credit. Instead, he growled, "Enough!"

"Why you—" Erica didn't know how big a mistake she had made. She was thoroughly pissed off now. She raised her fist again and brought it down on his shoulder. "Now I know you're a ghost. Get out of his body now! I want my Matthew back! I'm going to keep hitting you till you leave his body! Get out!"

Matthew knew she was out of control. But he didn't want to hurt her, so he just stood there and took it. Her fists rained down on his body.

He kicked off his dirty slippers and trudged to the living room to find a tissue to wipe his bloody nose.

Unexpectedly, she caught up with him and punched him in the back. It landed with a hollow thud. "Go away, spirit! Give my handsome husband back! Damn it! Go to hell!"

Matthew found a tissue and wiped his nose, but it didn't do much good. As soon as he thought he was done, a rivulet of fresh blood made its way out of his nostril and onto his upper lip.

And the little woman next to him wasn't slowing down. Fist after fist hit him. He was getting annoyed.

The man sneered, "You're full of energy tonight!" This was getting ridiculous. If he didn't teach her a lesson tonight, he didn't have any right to say he was her husband!

"Yeah I am. I'm gonna keep pounding you till you give Matthew back!" Erica was tired. She sounded out

of breath.

Matthew decided to go wash his nose. He grabbed her wrists, and warned in a deep voice, "Behave yourself!"

"Let go of me! Damn you, ghost! Let go!"

"Your wish is my command." He smiled and released his grip. But he extended his arm and put one of his hands on her head. She could swing all she wanted, but she was too far away from him.

Inside the bathroom, Matthew turned on the tap and looked at himself in the mirror. He used to doubt that his wife was that dangerous. But she had some tricks up her sleeve. How else could she hit him so precisely to cause his nose to bleed like that?

At this moment, the troublemaker leaned against the door of the bathroom, craning her neck from time to time to catch a glimpse of the man washing his face.

A few minutes later, Matthew threw the tissue into the trash can and walked out of the bathroom.

When he was at the door, he bumped into Erica.

Truth be told, he did it on purpose.

Because Erica was bent down, hands on her knees, her head bumped right into his tough abdominal muscles. Her nose went numb. She covered it and yelped in pain.

"Don't do that. It hurts." Matthew smirked. At least her nose wasn't bleeding. But she still held it and groaned.

What about him? She hit him square on the nose and caused it to bleed. 'Forget it. I don't want to talk about it anymore. It's so embarrassing!'

Erica had blown through half of a bottle of wine and had some snacks on top of that. She'd left an awful mess. The trash can was full.

Matthew was surprised at her taste in wine. It wasn't bad at all. She didn't drink wine a whole lot, but this time she picked the most expensive bottle in his cellar.

He'd never let her know how much the bottle was worth. She didn't like to spend money frivolously, and he knew she'd be astonished at the price.

Erica filled an empty glass with red wine and handed it to Matthew. She leaned over him and lifted the glass to his lips. "Have a drink on me, Matthew. Come on, kiss me and show them how much you love me!"

"Them? Who's them?"

"Them! They're watching us!"

"Who's watching us?" Matthew was confused.

Erica looked around and made her voice sound mysterious, talking in a stage whisper. "We can't see them, but they can see us..." Then she lowered her voice, "You scared?"

Matthew was speechless. Who was the coward here? He held her waist tightly and continued, "You're wrong. I can see them."

"What? What do you see?" Her hand trembled, and the red wine spilled out of the glass, spilling on the back of her hand and splattering on his white shirt.

His shirt was already stained with blood and mud, and he was fighting his neat freak tendencies. Now there was red wine on it... "Let's head upstairs!" He had the overwhelming urge to change clothes.

"No! Tell me, what do you see?" She was extremely curious.

Matthew sighed heavily. Erica was trying to annoy him. And she was so good at it. He lowered his head and bit the woman's red lips. Heedless of her pain, he whispered, "I saw the black and white messengers from hell pass by our house, and a lot of female ghosts followed them. And a fierce ghost, its face green, razor-sharp fangs lining its mouth, floated in the air, searching for someone. I can also see baby ghosts crying out for Mommy..."

CHAPTER 1259 THE WITNESS

"Ah! Stop talking!" It was midnight, and what Matthew had said filled Erica's mind with horrible images. She buried her face in his arms and repeatedly snuggled up against him, as if she were trying to get into his body. The wine glass in her hand sloshed and threatened to spill.

Seeing her frightened, Matthew smirked, thinking, 'You're already drunk and still want to make me drink? Now, I think you'll have other things on your mind.' He eyed the drink she was holding and demanded, "Put that down! Just go upstairs and go to sleep!"

Erica stilled and nodded meekly. Peeling herself off of him, she made to put the glass down on the table, then paused. It was red wine of a good vintage, too good to be wasted. She took a deep breath and started in on it again.

"That's enough," Matthew snapped. Leaning forward, he tried to grab the glass out of her hand.

His wife had a good grip, though. Blinking at him, she protested, "I don't want to waste this! It's good stuff."

"Oh, fine—then I'll drink it!" Matthew said. She had had enough to drink, and he wouldn't allow her any more!

"Okay, then," Erica said. But she kept hold of the glass and even jerked it out of his hand.

Before he could react, she took a sip of the red wine but did not swallow it down. Her face drifted close to his. Her expression was pouting, and she moved her lips as though trying to speak. Matthew just stared, unable to comprehend her ridiculous behavior.

After a painfully wrong moment with no response from him, Erica swallowed the wine and explained to him, "Didn't you say you wanted to drink it? I was trying to give you some. Why didn't you take it?" She'd gotten the idea from a few romantic novels she'd read, in which the male protagonists gave their love interests wine, water or medicine in this way.

For his part, Matthew had no clue where she could have gotten this idea. Despite himself, he appreciated the effort. In fact, he knew of a way to up the ante.

Gently, he pinched her chin and made her look up at him. With an evil and attractive smile at the corners of his mouth, he said, "I have a more interesting idea. Do you want to try it?"

"Sure!" There was a sudden light in Erica's eyes.

He took the wine glass from her hand and made her lean against the table behind her. Under her curious gaze, he poured some wine on her collarbone and then slowly lowered his head.

Erica was completely intoxicated by what he was doing.

They made love passionately in the dining room.

And yet when they were done, Matthew was not satisfied. Not knowing what time it was, he took his exhausted wife in his arms, grabbed the red wine bottle in one hand, and somewhat awkwardly headed to the bathroom upstairs.

If she was so sure she wanted to play games, then he was going to oblige.

Many hours later the next morning, Erica's sobbing voice could be heard from the bedroom on the third floor. Tangled up in the covers in bed, her mind fogged, it took her a long time to wake up and get her wits about her.

In fact, she wasn't even sure where her crying fit had come from. As it started to ebb, she tried to piece together what had happened the previous night. She remembered eating snacks—a lot of snacks—and waiting for Matthew to come back from work. She'd wanted to have drinks with him and apologize.

And now it was morning, and she was alone in bed, her mind terribly fogged. In fact, she hurt everywhere.

Why did she feel like she had been run over by a bus? 'Matthew, you bastard!' she cursed.

Once before, while Erica was in the midst of a fit, she had sworn to herself that she would bang him in his office and the dining room a million times as punishment. At this moment, she didn't think she would ever dare say such a thing again.

She lifted the quilt and inspected herself, wincing. She had hickeys all over her body.

She decided then that Matthew had to have been some kind of a bone-sucking monster in a previous life. Or a sex maniac. Well, whatever he was before, he was a monster now.

'Matthew the Monster!' Erica thought, her bitterness intensifying.

What was she supposed to do to prevent her from being tortured like this by that man whenever he wanted?

Idly, she touched her belly, and an idea came into her head.

Her period was coming soon! She'd never been so eager to be on it in her life...

Just then, though, she was distracted by an aching pain in her fist. Favoring the bruised joints with her other hand, she tried to think of what had happened.

Minutes passed, and some fragments of memory seemed to come to the surface.

It was puzzling. Erica was left thinking that she'd hit Matthew. Hard. Did she remember it right?

'Oh, no, ' she thought to herself. 'I was going to apologize to him, but I ended up getting drunk and beating him. Or trying to, at least.

No wonder he left me like this. Maybe I brought this on myself.'

Later, in the canteen on campus

Ignoring the curious gazes of many people, Erica chewed a piece of braised pork and swallowed it. Opposite her, Hyatt was taking his time eating a bowl of fried rice.

Her phone rang. "I rented an apartment on the street where you lived. I wanted to meet you by chance. During the three years in high school..." That was Erica's ringtone. She took out her phone and checked the screen. It was Watkins.

While still eating, she answered. "Hello, Watkins."

His voice came crisply over the line. "Erica, have you eaten yet?"

"I'm eating right now." She didn't want to go home to have lunch today, so she'd gone to the canteen. After lunch, she was going to have a nap in the dormitory and then go to classes.

"What a pity," the man said. "I'm calling to invite you to lunch."

Erica smiled. "Maybe next time."

She imagined him shrugging as he said, "All right. Well, I'm also calling to tell you something. Your husband doesn't believe you about Phoebe's miscarriage, right? I looked at the photo Camille sent to the insurance company and found something that might prove your innocence."

"What is it?" Erica suddenly felt much more awake. Aside from her other ordeals, she'd been greatly troubled by having no evidence on her side in this.

Helpful as ever, Watkins explained, "The photo shows an old man standing on the opposite end of the road. When Camille took the photo, he was looking at us. And that was when Phoebe fell onto the ground, right? It seems to me that this old man must have seen what really happened. What do you think?"

Erica put down her chopsticks and asked eagerly, "Yeah, I think so. Can you find out who this old man is, or where he lives?" With an eyewitness to back her up, she would be able to prove her innocence to Matthew!

"That's the idea," Watkins said. "I only just found this clue and haven't had time to follow up on it. I've been busy dealing with the accident, but don't worry. I'll get somebody on this old man's trail. We'll start from nearby." The old man was about sixty or seventy years old and used a crutch to walk. Watkins figured that he probably lived close to the scene that the photo had been taken at.

Erica tried to contain her excitement. "Okay. Thank you so much!" It was true that more friends meant more ways.

She could practically hear Watkins' gentle smile over the phone line. "You're welcome. I'm also responsible for your being set up about Phoebe's miscarriage. Trying to prove your innocence is the least I can do to make things right. I'll have my men look into the old man's whereabouts immediately. As soon as they find out anything useful, I'll let you know."

Erica was so moved that she was about to cry. "You are so kind, Watkins. Thank you. I will treat you to dinner after this!"

"Treat me to dinner? Well, that sounds good! My every attempt to arrange for that has failed up until

now. Maybe once we find that old man, it'll work out after all."

"Well, thanks again," she told him. "I've got to finish lunch now."

"Okay, enjoy. Bye!"

Erica was in a very good mood as she hung up the phone. She couldn't wait to expose Phoebe's true colors. When that was done, there would be no way Matthew could continue to defend that woman.

That afternoon, Erica had a class. Afterward, she went to the fruit base with Hyatt.

She picked some fresh fruits—several kinds, but her favorite was the strawberries. At her suggestion, Hyatt got a few of his own. As for the rest, she took them back to the villa, washed them and put them on the fruit plate so that Matthew could have some when he got back.

In the meantime, she decided to give Gifford a call. "Brother, I have something to ask you," she said, controlling her voice and keeping it as pleasant as she could.

"Don't ask me for anything!" barked an irate voice from the other side of the line. Gifford was still going through a migraine because of the trouble his sister had caused him. Hearing her voice again was about enough to make his head explode.

CHAPTER 1260 WHICH SIDE

Erica was ready for her brother's ire. "Don't be so petty. Where are you now?" she asked.

"I'm in Askor!" Gifford replied impatiently. In fact, he had just brought Chantel back and watched her go into the school.

Erica's guarded tone melted into excitement. "Where is Chantel? Is she with you? Have you two talked? Are you two going to get married or—"

"Shut up!" Gifford wanted to strangle his sister. She had no idea how serious the matter was to him, and it wasn't her business in any case. Her enthusiasm was grating.

"Oh, come on, just tell me. Is Chantel going to be my sister-in-law?" Erica persisted. Idly, she thought of how Chantel was younger than herself. Still, she was old enough to be married.

Gifford suppressed the urge to hang up the phone—or to throw it as far from himself as he could. "I haven't decided yet. Let's talk about it when I have!" he scolded.

Eating a strawberry, Erica pouted and said, "Then think about it carefully. Don't let her down. After all, you brought her to our home."

"You—" With a harsh exhalation, Gifford cut himself off. Seeing no point in talking any further, he ended the call without another word.

He just couldn't understand his sister's side of things. Yes, it was he who brought Chantel back. But did he have to marry her because of that?

This time, though, he'd made up his mind to be a scumbag and to be irresponsible. He would wait and see what the two girls could do about it.

That evening, while Erica was busy with her camera upstairs, her phone beeped. It turned out to be Chantel, who had approved her WeChat friend request.

She also sent Erica a message. "Rika?"

"Yes, it's me," she sent back. "How are things between you and my brother?" She was very anxious to know, but Gifford wouldn't tell her anything.

After a few minutes of silence, she received a reply: "Your brother bought me Levonorgestrel Tablets. But I didn't take it. I spat them out secretly."

A bit confused, Erica thought, 'Levonorgestrel Tablets? What's that? I wonder if it's any good.'

"What's that?" she asked.

Chantel was somewhat taken aback by the question. Erica turned out to be even more naive than herself. She felt a little embarrassed to answer directly, so she found the answer on Google, took a screenshot, and sent it to her.

Erica finally realized that she was talking about birth control pills. How could her brother be such an asshole? "Of course, you can't take those," she responded. "Otherwise, all our efforts will be in vain!"

"I know that."

However, at that moment, the two women both thought of another important problem. They both were doing their best—by their own means—to arrange things so that Chantel could have a child from Gifford. But what if sleeping with him once wasn't enough to get her pregnant? It was a hairy situation. What should they do?

Erica tried to be comforting and sent a message that said, "You focus on your studies. I'll think of a way." She would figure everything out. After all, she had an omnipotent husband.

"Okay, thank you, Rika!"

"You're welcome. We're family!" As far as Erica was concerned, Chantel was like an adopted daughter of

the Leonard family. If she managed to get pregnant with Gifford's child one day, she would become her sister-in-law. Erica was sure they would be real family sooner or later.

Looking at Erica's message, Chantel was so touched her eyes watered.

The day gave way to evening. Erica stayed busy, but kept an ear out for any sign of movement outside.

At the sound of a car pulling in, she rushed downstairs. A moment later she stood in front of Matthew, slightly panting.

He looked her up and down and thought, 'She's not doing so bad! She's regained her energy quickly enough.'

Not saying a word at first, Erica turned around and went to the dining room, where she retrieved a plate of fruits. In a dramatic matter, as that of one presenting a treasure to a king, she put it in front of her husband. "Matthew, this is the fruit I picked myself. Have a taste."

Her unusual sweetness put Matthew on his guard at once. 'There must be something wrong. What's she up to?' Having none of it, he spoke flatly. "What do you want? Just get straight to the point."

Erica giggled and explained awkwardly, "Nothing much. I just want to apologize to you..."

"Well, I won't accept your apology!" he told her. His wife had put him through a lot: climbing over the wall and running away, giving him a bloody nose, punching, kicking... As he saw it, it was clear he'd been too humble and easygoing with Erica.

If he didn't teach her a hard lesson, she would think he was easy to bully.

She shamelessly approached him, still acting sweet and innocent. "Oh, don't be like that. I really picked these fruits myself. Try this chocolate strawberry. It's good! Come on, just open your mouth!"

"You know, Phoebe is still in the hospital," remarked Matthew, glancing at the tray. "Why don't you take the fruit and go pay her a visit?"

"Pay her a visit?" Erica echoed. A surge of fury rose up within her, and she started toward the trash can. "I'd rather throw the fruit out. Forget about it! I'm done apologizing to you. Forgive me or don't—I don't care!"

She was on the verge of dumping the fruit into the trash can, when Matthew spoke again, less harsh than before. "You know, Dad doesn't like wasting food. He'll be mad if he hears about this."

With a deep breath Erica stopped, turned around, and sneered, "Then I'll give it to the dog. If Phoebe wants to eat it, she can find it in the dog bowl!"

Matthew didn't know what to say. Silently he asked himself, 'Why is she so hostile when it comes to Phoebe?' Not to mention, there was no dog in the villa.

Undeterred, Erica found a plastic bag and poured the fruit into it. Emerging from the kitchen, she told Matthew, "You can't have any of this either. I won't ever pick fruits for you again. I'll feed them to the dog!"

Weary of her ridiculous provocations, Matthew's face darkened. "Is this your idea of an apology?"

"Yes!" she declared, trying to stare him down. "Matthew, perhaps I haven't made myself clear. Phoebe and I are as incompatible as fire and water now. She is my worst enemy! Make sure you tell me when she gets out of the hospital, and I'll throw her a party that she'll never forget!" After all, the woman was her husband's crush. How could she not give her "special" treatment?

"So, your next plan is to deal with Phoebe?" Matthew asked.

"You bet it is! I don't know why you feel so sorry for her. But I'd also warn you to choose your side wisely. Whether it's with me or her, that's up to you to decide, not me. I can't force you into anything. But I'll have you know that she isn't going to win. I have the Leonard family and the Hilton family to back me up. I don't want you to get kicked out of the house just because of Phoebe."

With her ultimatum delivered, Erica crossed her arms over her chest and held her head high. It was a rare look for her: supremely confident.

Expressionless, Matthew settled himself into a chair at the dining table. He tapped an index finger against the table slowly, thoughtfully. "What makes you so sure that my father will kick me out of the house for you?" he asked finally.

Erica didn't blink. "Because since the day I married into the Hilton family, I've had the same status as Evelyn and Terilynn in the family; I'm his daughter. He told me that himself. And you are Wesley and Blair's son. No matter what happens, your parents will always be on my side!"

Indeed, Carlos had told Erica this several times. Up to this point she had never mentioned it to Matthew, for fear that it would upset him and lead to trouble. Now that he'd decided to believe Phoebe over her, however, she thought she had no choice.

Now Matthew truly was speechless. Much as he hated to admit it, it did sound like something his father would say.

His family had been hard on him for his whole life, never truly approving of him for a single day since his birth. He'd grown used to it—perhaps too much so.