

TMBA 1291

CHAPTER 1291 FIRST TIME BEING A GRANDFATHER

"What are you talking about? Why would I beat and curse you? Chantel, tell me. Is someone bullying you?" Concern laced Blair's tone as she searched the young girl's face for any hint that would help her understand.

However, Chantel closed her eyes and shook her head. Tears that had earlier threatened to fall, now flowed freely down her cheeks. "No," she whispered between sobs. She glanced sideways and saw the patient in the next bed, staring at them intently. Aware that there was no privacy in this small ward, the young girl hesitated.

At once, Blair understood why Chantel had not continued. She patted the girl's hand and reassured her, "We'll talk about it later. Take it easy."

"Okay," the young girl managed to say between hiccups and sobs.

Wesley returned in less than ten minutes, accompanied by two nurses. They walked up to Chantel and helped her stand. A nurse cooed, "Come with us, Chantel. Step carefully."

Chantel stared at the nurses in bewilderment. "Where are you taking me?"

Wesley, who stood at a distance, remained silent. But, Blair explained, "Your uncle has arranged for a better ward for you. Can you walk?"

'Changed my ward...'. The Leonard couple's kindness moved Chantel deeply. They had already done so much for her. And now this. How would she ever repay their generosity and kindness? "I'm okay. I can walk."

The intravenous injection the nurse had administered a few moments ago had taken effect by now. Chantel felt some relief.

In the VIP ward

As soon as the nurses left, Chantel, who had already sat on the bed, stood and walked straight to the Leonard couple. To their astonishment and utter confusion, she fell to her knees before them.

Wide-eyed, Blair glanced at Wesley, who frowned and asked, "What are you doing? Get up!"

"Chantel, the stress of not knowing is too much. Please, just tell us what happened." Blair wanted to help the girl stand, but she vigorously shook her head and refused.

Mustering all her courage, Chantel finally raised her head and met Blair's gaze. "Uncle Wesley, Aunt Blair, it was all my idea. Gifford is not at fault. He doesn't even know that I'm pregnant. Please don't

blame him. This is all my fault!"

"Gifford?" Blair exclaimed. She was so stunned that she was rendered speechless. 'Gifford? My son...and Chantel? Perhaps I misunderstood. Could it be?'

Realizing that the situation was complicated, Wesley frowned and asked, "Gifford got you pregnant, and he doesn't know?"

Tears streamed down Chantel's face. She hung her head and explained, "No, he doesn't know because I didn't tell him. We slept together...but it was because of me. He was the victim." At this moment, she was filled with regret over her impulsive action. She shouldn't have conceived Gifford's child without the Leonard family's consent. But it was too late. She only hoped that Wesley and Blair wouldn't be too angry with her.

"What do you mean? Why was he the victim?" Blair was confused. Was her son that weak? "Don't tell me... you seduced and forced Gifford?"

"It's not like that..." Chantel felt embarrassed, but on second thought, she realized that Gifford hadn't been a willing participant. So, she corrected herself. "Sort of. You may think of it this way."

It was Wesley's turn to be rendered speechless. He couldn't imagine how a weak girl like Chantel could force a brave and strong colonel.

Blair helped the young girl to stand. "If you have something to say, just say it. You cannot kneel forever," she coaxed as she led the girl to the bedside.

Chantel lowered her head and shook it. "Auntie Blair, although you and Uncle Wesley are not my biological parents, you are better than them, and you have treated me better than they ever did. As I have wronged you and your family, it is only fair that I kneel and ask for forgiveness."

"Well, Wesley and I need some time to discuss this. In your condition, kneeling for extended periods is not advisable. Please, rest. And don't worry. I will speak with Gifford about taking responsibility for this child. So, don't worry too much. The most important thing for you now is to rest well and take good care of yourself." Blair had wanted a grandchild for so long that the news overjoyed her. Why would she blame Chantel? Besides, the first time she saw this girl, she had mistaken her to be Gifford's girlfriend.

There was a moment of silence in the ward. Finally, Chantel added, "Well, Uncle Wesley, Aunt Blair, don't be angry with Gifford. If he likes another girl, he can bring her home even if I have his child. I'll be okay with that arrangement. Really!"

Chantel hoped to convey that it didn't matter if Gifford married her or not. She just wanted to have his child.

But Wesley and Blair didn't understand. They looked at each other in confusion, unsure of what she

meant.

She took the initiative to make a baby with Gifford, but she wouldn't force him to marry her? Was she considerate or did she have hidden motives?

While Blair and Chantel chatted for a while in the ward, Wesley went out and lit a cigarette. He called his son. "Come back when you are free in the next few days."

"Why? Did something happen?" Gifford asked.

"Yes." Mixed emotions coursed through Wesley at the thought that he was going to be a grandfather.

In the next few days, Chantel was cared for and protected by the Leonard family. Blair had always been nice to her, and now, she treated the young girl even better.

She made all kinds of food and drinks for Chantel to replenish her health. She also asked Wesley to inform Chantel's teacher in private that the girl was unwell and needed special care.

Erica was in the middle of a shooting activity when she learned that Chantel had told Wesley and Blair everything.

She immediately called Wesley. "Dad, you have to ask Gifford to be responsible for Chantel! None of the men in our family are irresponsible, right?"

Since she couldn't persuade Gifford, she decided to let her father do it!

"How do you know about this matter?" Wesley felt suspicious.

"Chantel just told me!"

"Well, I have a plan." Just as Erica thought, there were no irresponsible men in the Leonard family.

"Dad, add oil!"

Wesley frowned. "What do you mean by that?"

"Oh, nothing. I was just encouraging you. I know you can do it!"

Wesley was speechless. His youngest daughter was still so naughty.

After ending the call with Wesley, Erica wasn't interested in the activity anymore. She decided to go to the Hilton Group.

Hyatt noticed her leaving and ran to catch up with her. "Erica, where are you going?"

"I'm going to make a baby with my husband!"

Hyatt shook his head helplessly.

Erica did mean what she said. Her brother would have a baby very soon, and she wasn't even pregnant yet.

Matthew was speaking on the phone when she reached the office. After locking the door from inside, Erica ran to him, wrapped her arms around his neck, stood on tiptoe, and kissed him.

Matthew held the phone with one hand, circled her waist with the other, and lowered his head to give her a deep kiss.

After a while, when the person on the other end stopped speaking, Matthew broke the kiss and replied, "Leave it to Paige. If you have any questions, contact her."

Erica didn't stop there. She hurriedly untied his tie. Matthew immediately grabbed her small hand, put the phone on speaker mode, and threw it on the nearby desk.

The man on the other end of the line continued to report to the CEO, oblivious of what was happening in his boss's office. "I haven't replied to their requests yet. According to my observation during this period, the stock price is indeed rising..."

Every so often, Matthew would reply with a single word to show that he was listening.

Meanwhile, he and Erica were busy undressing each other.

A few minutes later, the disheveled man held the passionate woman in his arms and picked up the phone on the desk. "That's it. I'll visit them tomorrow morning."

"Yes, Matthew."

After ending the call, Matthew threw the phone on the desk. He wrapped an arm around Erica's waist, pulled her close to him, entangled his fingers in her hair, and continued to deep kiss her. Step by step, he walked her toward the big French windows. Finally, he spun her around, placed her arms against the windows, and pulled her hips toward him. He couldn't control the passion she had aroused in him a minute longer!

After a long time, Erica was carried into the lounge. Oh! She felt like she was dying. If she didn't get pregnant, she would really die!

CHAPTER 1292 PROTECT THE PORTRAITURE RIGH

At Sun Coffee Shop

A young man in a red coat waved at the man and the woman who just came into the shop. "Erica!" he called out. "I'm here."

At the sight of Watkins, Erica immediately pulled Hyatt's sleeve and walked towards him. "Watkins," she greeted. "Have you waited for a long time?"

He shook his head. "No. Kelvin just arrived. Let's go inside, shall we?"

"Sure."

Watkins took them to an inconspicuous corner on the second floor of the cafe. A man in a black suit and leather shoes was already waiting for their arrival. Upon seeing them, the man in the suit stood up and greeted them with a bow of his head. "Erica, it's nice to meet you all."

Kelvin didn't need an introduction to know that Erica was Matthew's wife. After all, he had already scanned through the case documents.

After the greetings, Watkins asked Erica to sit in the chair near the window. He sat next to her while Kelvin and Hyatt sat opposite them.

Once they ordered their drinks, everyone went straight to the point. After all, it would make no sense if they beat around the bush. "May I ask you a question, Erica?" he asked. "The lawyers of Hilton Group are the best in the industry, yet you chose to contact me. Why?" Although he had an excellent reputation within the legal community, he wasn't on par with the lawyers in Hilton Group.

When Matthew told her that he wasn't the one who had asked Phoebe to draw a portrait of him, Erica began to regret her decision. If she had known earlier, she would've calmed down and called him to explain first. Maybe then he could've lent her a lawyer from his legal team.

However, out of impulse, she contacted Watkins and asked him to help her find a good lawyer. Now that they had already contacted Kelvin, she had no other choice but to go through with it. She smiled sheepishly. "You know how my husband is busy with his work every day. I don't want to bother him with such a small matter," she stated. "I would rather solve this myself."

Everyone could imagine how busy the CEO of Hilton Group was. Ten million in Matthew's eyes was like a hundred dollars to a commoner. It was normal for Erica not to bother the CEO with such a small amount of money involved.

Kelvin nodded. "It would be my honor to be your lawyer. In all honesty, it would've been easier for Matthew to be personally part of this case, but seeing as you don't want to bother him, I'm guessing you'll be acting as a plaintiff on his side?"

"That's it."

"That's fine. However, there are still some documents that require Matthew's signature. We might need to trouble your husband with this."

Erica tilted her head. "Just his signature?"

"Yes! According to the law of Deplua, if the wife sues the defendant on behalf of her husband, the husband doesn't need to be present, but the wife must be present with a letter of authorization signed by him."

"It's no problem." Erica thought that she might be able to get Matthew to sign without him reading it. However, another thought crossed her mind. "What if I use his personal seal instead?" It would be easier to get his seal.

"That's fine, but you'll need his fingerprint."

"That's fine."

While Kelvin was looking for other information, Watkins leaned closer to her and whispered, "Why do I have a feeling that Matthew knows nothing about this case?"

He knew Matthew well enough to know that it would be impossible for Erica to sit here and discuss the legal process with them. In fact, he might even be here himself.

Erica chuckled sheepishly. "I'll tell him later." She wanted to hide it from Matthew as long as she could. She wouldn't want to tell him because he might have second thoughts in suing the woman.

Watkins was amused. "You may be able to get his seal in secret, but he'll know about it once you get his fingerprints."

"He won't know," she assured. It would be a piece of cake. All she needed to do was take his finger while he was asleep and press it against the document.

'I'm a genius!' she praised herself.

Kelvin sorted out the documents he had prepared in advance and handed them to Erica. "Erica, please take a look at them. These are all the documents that need Matthew's seal and fingerprints. Phoebe will receive the summons in two days."

"Money won't be a problem here, so please handle it ASAP." She really didn't want to waste her time on Phoebe. As much as possible, she wanted to get this done and over with so that she would never need to see her again.

"Got it! Don't worry, Erica. I've already put aside all the other cases I'm working on, so that I can handle yours as efficiently as possible." All the cases under him weren't as important as Erica's. Although the amount of compensation wasn't as high, the case involved Matthew, so Kelvin had to put him first out of everything.

Her eyes widened momentarily. "Thank you." Being Matthew's wife had its perks. She was always on everyone's top priority.

They chatted for a long time before they walked out of the cafe.

Watkins also treated them to a meal before sending Erica and Hyatt back to school.

When they arrived at the school gate, Erica turned to Watkins. "Thank you for what you did today," she said sincerely. "If you need any help in the future, you can tell me."

Glancing at the girl in the back seat, he waved his hand dismissively. "Don't be so polite. Besides, you've saved my life. I'm indebted to you," he stated. "Now, go to school. Don't be late!"

"Got it. We don't have much time now. Bye!" The first class would start in a few minutes, and it would take them more than ten minutes to walk from the school gate to the multimedia classroom.

"Bye!"

As Watkins watched them disappear into the school gate, he started the car and drove away.

Erica and Hyatt arrived at the classroom out of breath. Just as they sat in their seats, the bell rang. It was already time for Professor Faulkner's class.

Professor Faulkner stood on the platform. When the classroom finally quieted down, he started, "First, let me tell you some good news. The Ninth Photography Competition of Alorith has just launched. There is no theme or limit to the content of these photos, but the competition advocates for new visual and innovative methods to present the beauty around us. The first prize winner will win a hundred thousand dollars and an honor certificate. The runner-up will receive fifty thousand dollars and an honor certificate. The second runner up..."

'One hundred thousand dollars!' Immediately, the students were in an uproar. From what they knew, the last competition only offered fifty thousand as their cash prize to the first place. Now that the prize had doubled, it attracted many ears.

The professor continued, "The deadline is at the end of April. The specific details of the competition can be seen on the official website of the Photography Association of Alorith. I hope that all of our students could sign up for it. Winning an honor certificate could be an asset in your resume."

Hyatt nudged Erica. "Are you going to sign up?"

"Of course!" she answered without hesitation. "Didn't you hear him talk about the honor certificate? Plus, imagine the camera lens I could buy with that much money! I'll definitely participate."

"I'll sign up too." He grinned.

Erica snorted. "Of course you would. Why else would you be in the Department of Photography? What kind of lens do you need? I can lend it to you."

Matthew had specifically built a collection room for her in the villa. It held at least a hundred cameras and different lenses that she could use.

CHAPTER 1293 DON'T BULLY MY HUSBAND

Hyatt thought about it and said, "No, thanks. I'll take the pictures with my camera for now. If it doesn't work, I'll borrow your lens." Erica's camera lenses were very expensive. If he broke any one of them, it would cost him a fortune to compensate, which he couldn't afford.

"Okay, then!"

After class, Erica messaged Matthew on WeChat. "Matthew, can I borrow something from you?"

She received his reply in no time. But the message confused her. "I'll give you a chance to ask that again."

She frowned at her phone. 'What? Why does he want me to repeat it? Did he delete the message by accident or something?' Erica wondered. 'Fine, whatever.' She copy-pasted the same text and sent it to him again.

Matthew sighed when he read it. Women could be extremely smart when they wanted to be, and at other times, they were just blatantly stupid. "You don't need to 'borrow' anything from me. Don't say that again."

"Oh!" "That's what he meant!" She texted, "Ha-ha! Matthew, may I use something of yours?"

Matthew replied, "Try again."

'Are you serious? What the heck?' Erica was losing her patience. She didn't use "borrow" this time. What was wrong now? "You just don't want me to use your stuff, right?" she texted.

Matthew exhaled. "Come to the company right now. I'll personally teach you how to talk to me from now on!"

Seeing his message, Erica pouted. 'Why go to all the trouble?'

But she was missing him anyway, so she packed up and headed to Hilton Group.

After texting Erica, Matthew threw a glance at the man who was casually sitting on his office sofa. He growled, "Leave now! My wife is coming to see me."

Sheffield sat up straight and frowned at his brother-in-law. "What? Why should I leave? Is it that embarrassing for you to be seen with me?" he asked with a smirk.

"Yes, it is."

"Ah! I see. You just want to get rid of me so that you can be alone with your wife! Ha-ha!"

Matthew was well aware that Sheffield already knew his true feelings for Erica. There was no reason to hide his intentions anymore. "Yeah, that's right. So, get out of here now!"

"Okay, okay!" Sheffield got up and said, "You are such a weirdo." He straightened his clothes and continued, "You strongly disagreed when Dad suggested that you marry Erica. That was good acting, I must say!"

"Have you forgotten how it feels to kneel on the keyboard lately?" Matthew asked, raising his eyebrows.

Sheffield pulled a long face and said helplessly, "Come on, bro. If I hadn't paved the way for you during the dinner meeting back then, you wouldn't have ever had the chance to marry Erica because of your arrogance. You should be grateful."

Matthew had to admit that at the time, Sheffield's words had definitely helped him ease into the marriage agreement without prompting any doubts from the others. Matthew had naturally followed his words and even warned Carlos not to interfere in his affairs after his marriage. He had successfully achieved his goal without exposing his true feelings.

Matthew stood up from his seat, walked up to Sheffield and told him off. "Even without your help, Rika would have belonged to me sooner or later."

Sheffield laughed. "I like your confidence! Confident and domineering! But I wonder how you would've succeeded without my help. Remember? You and Rika were pretty much strangers before that day. And she was already twenty-one at the time, yet you had not confessed your love to her. I believe that without this 'forced marriage,' she would have gotten married to some other man and had their own children before you could ever express your love."

With his hands in the pockets of his trousers, Matthew stared at the cocky man in his office. After a long silence, as Sheffield was losing his patience, Matthew finally said, "Even if she were married to another man and had a child with him, I would've made her mine in the end. I wouldn't have minded raising her child as my own either, as long as she was ready to marry me."

For a moment, Sheffield just stood there and gawked at him. 'What is this man saying?' he thought incredulously. "Are you saying that even if Rika had gotten married to someone else and had a child with that person, you would have separated the couple and married her instead?"

"Yes." That wasn't entirely true. If Erica was happy with the other person, it would be a different story. He probably wouldn't separate the happy couple and hurt her.

"You bastard! What a beast you are!" After cursing the cold CEO, Sheffield immediately scuttled away from his office.

Matthew didn't chase after him. Instead, he called Owen from the internal line. "Stop Sheffield now!" Then, he hung up the phone.

As soon as Sheffield ran out of the office, he saw Owen walking towards him, blocking his way. He knew that something was about to go down. He outdid Owen in a few moves.

By this time, Matthew had come out. He had taken off his suit jacket, and was now rolling the sleeves of his white shirt. He stretched out his arms and grabbed Sheffield's neck, pulling him to the side, in case Sheffield's blood splattered all over the special assistant area later.

"Look, Matthew. Rika is here! You better be your cool, elegant self in front of her. You don't want to frighten her, do you?" Sheffield's neck was now in Matthew's clasp. He couldn't escape.

Matthew replied indifferently, "It doesn't matter. My wife happens to have a tendency for violence." He had lost count on how many times she had hit him.

"You better let go or I'll tell Rika that you spoke ill of her!" Sheffield threatened.

"No worries. I won't give you the chance to speak at all!" Matthew then dragged him to a corner and said, "I haven't been able to practice martial arts in a long time. My hands are itching for a fight!"

It wasn't that Sheffield couldn't defeat Matthew. The two of them were as good as each other in Kung Fu. It was just that Sheffield couldn't dare hurt his brother-in-law. If he hurt Matthew, Evelyn would be mad at him, and Sheffield would have a hard time on the keyboard again.

When Erica arrived, the two men were fighting fiercely. Several people in the special assistant area were pretending to work with their heads down. No one dared to stop them.

Well, they couldn't stop the two even if they wanted to. The two men were both masters of Kung Fu and it was impossible to intervene.

But Erica was different. When she saw Sheffield and Matthew fighting, she threw down her camera and rushed over. "Sheffield, stop!"

Regardless of the fierce punching and kicking going on between them, she rushed over and stood in front of Matthew. "Sheffield, don't bully my husband!" Erica gasped when she saw that Sheffield's fist was about to hit her face. She closed her eyes in horror. "Ah! Don't hit me either!"

Sheffield's fist stopped a few centimeters away from the tip of her nose, while Matthew stood leisurely behind her, enjoying the feeling of being protected by his wife.

Erica slowly opened one of her eyes and saw the fist in front of her. She thought that Sheffield was about to hit her, so she yelled, "Sheffield, show some mercy. That could hurt!"

She was fully aware that she could never beat Sheffield. Otherwise she would have taken a different course of action!

The woman started yelling at the top of her voice.

Sheffield and Matthew were rendered speechless.

Matthew grabbed her and held her in his arms. "Honey, it's all right."

Sheffield withdrew his fist and straightened his clothes. "We fought for a while, but I didn't get any advantage over him! What a waste of time!"

They were evenly matched.

Erica raised her head from inside Matthew's arms and glared at Sheffield with dissatisfaction. "Sheffield, I know you are good at Kung Fu, but you really shouldn't bully your brother-in-law!"

Sheffield was slightly stunned and tried to explain, "No, Rika. I didn't bully him..."

An evil smile appeared on Matthew's face. He touched his chest, looking very hurt. "Rika, it's okay. Let him go."

CHAPTER 1294 A SCHEMING MAN

Erica looked at her husband, her face pale. "Matthew, why are you holding your chest? Are you hurt?" she asked nervously.

Sheffield's eyes widened in disbelief. His fists never made contact with Matthew's chest or anywhere near it! "Rika, don't trust him!" he yelled desperately. 'Matthew! You are such a scheming man!' thought Sheffield.

Erica was pissed. Matthew's face was twisted in pain; he looked very uncomfortable, and yet Sheffield was still trying to sow discord between them. She held Matthew's arm and glared at Sheffield. "Sheffield, don't deny it! You are making me really angry!" she threatened.

Matthew's eyes were filled with mischief.

Erica noticed nothing, but Sheffield saw it clearly. He was, once again, being accused of something he hadn't done, yet he had no way to prove his innocence. "Okay, okay. Take him for a CT scan, Rika, just in case my punch has damaged his rib or something," he mocked.

Erica gasped and held on to Matthew tightly. "So, you admit it! How dare you hit my husband! Sheffield, if I see you bully Matthew again, I will definitely tell Dad about this!" She knew that Sheffield was terrified of Carlos, and used his name to threaten the poor man.

This time, Matthew really did feel a pang in his chest—he tried his best to control his laughter, or his wife would find out that he was lying.

Sheffield sighed and hit his forehead. "Rika, do you really think that I am the kind of person who would bully others casually?" he asked Erica in an attempt to restore his good impression.

Erica was a little stunned. Before she could change her mind or think any further, Matthew distracted her. He said softly, "Rika, I'm not feeling good. Help me to my office."

His words successfully distracted her attention from Sheffield. She held his arm and said, "Come on. Be careful. Slowly!"

"Okay, honey."

Sheffield watched as the scheming man led the innocent woman back to the office, arm in arm.

Matthew was so good at deceiving Erica!

The employees had witnessed everything that had transpired among the three of them. When Sheffield passed by the secretary department, Owen tried his best to hold back his laughter and told the defeated man, "Mr. Sheffield, goodbye!"

Sheffield glanced at him gloomily. He couldn't help asking, "Is he always so scheming?"

Owen almost burst into laughter. "No, no, no! Matthew is a good man."

'Even if he does scheme, he only targets his enemies, not us,' he added inwardly.

Sheffield had nothing to say.

In the CEO's office

Erica carefully sat Matthew down on the sofa. Her heart ached so much for him that her eyebrows were almost knitted together. "Sheffield said that you need a CT scan. How about we go to the hospital right

away?"

Matthew was amused. Sheffield couldn't deal him a punch in the first place, and even if he had, he wouldn't have had to go to the hospital for a CT scan for such a trivial thing. Sheffield had only said that to mock Matthew. "No need, I'm feeling much better now," he said.

"Oh, really? That's great! Aren't you two good friends? Why were you fighting?" Erica asked as she picked up a glass and poured some warm water into it.

When she walked back to him, Matthew's eyes were smiling. 'She is so caring, ' he thought happily. When he was about to reach for the glass, Erica sat next to him and drank the water herself.

Matthew was dumbfounded, not to mention, instantly distressed.

Erica had come to Hilton Group in a hurry after receiving Matthew's message. She was thirsty and tired when she reached, and she had to stop their fight as well. She was parched. She waited for Matthew's reply, but he stayed silent. "What is it? Is it something you can't tell me?"

"No, it's nothing like that," Matthew said, clearing his head. "He deserved it."

"What do you mean?" 'What kind of reason is that?' she wondered. "Anyway, if he ever hits you again, you should fight back. Don't let him off so easy!" Matthew was good at martial arts too. If Sheffield had punched him, it could have only been because he had let him. 'Matthew is just too kind to fight back, ' she thought to herself.

Matthew was in a better mood now. "Yes, ma'am."

Looking at the empty glass in her hand, she suddenly realized. "Do you need some water too?"

'Finally, huh?' Matthew rolled his eyes. "No, thanks." He was already disappointed.

"Okay," Erica said with a shrug. She put down the glass and asked, "So, why did you ask me to come here?"

Matthew sighed and held her in his arms. "Didn't I tell you that everything that belongs to me is yours too?"

Erica smiled awkwardly. "Well, yes. You did say that."

"Then, why do you need to 'borrow' anything from me when it already belongs to you?"

"The thing is," she said sheepishly, "this item that I need is really yours." She lay down on his lap and looked up at him with a slight grin.

"What is it?"

"Your seal." She looked away from his eyes because she felt guilty. She didn't want him to know why she wanted his seal.

Confused, Matthew asked, "Why do you need it?"

Erica had already thought of an excuse. "I need your seal on the letter of commitment. I think it will be safer that way!"

"Haven't I already put my fingerprint on it?"

"Yes, but I still want to seal it. Will you give it to me or not?" she asked, pouting like a spoiled child. She was afraid that her lie would be exposed if he continued to ask her questions.

Matthew thought for a moment and guessed that she must be planning to use it for something else, but he still chose to give it to her. "Alright. I'll get it for you."

'Wow. That was easy!' Erica's eyes widened in excitement. "I'll give it back to you after I'm done!"

"Okay." He took out his seal from the safe and saw his wife's shining eyes. A smile appeared on his face and he said, "Come here."

Erica ran over to him. She half bent over his desk, one hand supporting her chin. "What?" she asked with a full smile.

Matthew waved the seal in front of her and asked, "Do you really want it?"

"Of course, I do!" She needed the seal on the documents, and then, she would secretly get his fingerprints too while he was asleep. She was going to sue Phoebe for him.

"Come here."

She jumped over to him obediently and kissed him on the cheek. "Honey!"

After hearing her call him like that, he thought that giving the seal to her was worth it even if she was planning to sell him.

Matthew handed over his seal to her willingly. He held her in his arms and lowered his head to plant a deep kiss on her lips.

Having achieved her goal, Erica left the company soon after.

Now, there was only one last step left.

That night, in order to make Matthew fall asleep early, Erica actively pestered him so that he would not go to work in the study.

Thinking that she was hoping to get laid, he did what he thought she wanted.

Erica sighed as Matthew started taking off his clothes. 'No! This is not what I have in mind!' But for her own sake, she played along with him.

After they had sex, Erica fell asleep. She woke up in the middle of the night with a start.

She grabbed the phone beside the bed and looked at the time—3:45 a.m.

She quietly looked at the man sleeping next to her. His breathing was even; he was fast asleep.

She carefully removed his arm from her waist and tip-toed out of bed.

She quickly grabbed a few A4 papers and a lipstick from her bag under the light of her mobile phone and crept to the bedside.

She opened the lipstick cap and rubbed it over the man's thumb. At that moment, he suddenly turned over.

CHAPTER 1295 GET THE MARRIAGE LICENSES

Frightened, Erica quickly squatted down and turned off the cellphone screen light while she hid in the dark.

A couple of minutes later, when she was sure that Matthew was no longer moving, she carefully went down on her knees, crawling to his bedside again, and pressed his lipstick-stained thumb on a sheet of paper.

"Phew!" She successfully got his first fingerprint.

Approaching his face, she took a good look at him and noticed that his eyes were still shut and his breath was even. Fortunately, it didn't seem he was going to wake up anytime soon.

Then she got back to work on getting his fingertip on the second sheet of paper, the third... And finally the sixth! In the end, she got his fingerprint of every sheet.

By the time she put her lipstick away, Matthew's voice reached her ears. "Are you done?"

"Yes, I am," Erica answered absently at first, but then she widened her eyes in fear and fell on her ass.

The man lying in the bed opened his eyes slowly and met her gaze.

'Oh my God! I'm screwed!' she cried inwardly. Regardless of her things spread on the floor, Erica rushed to her husband and asked smilingly, "Why are you awake?"

'Wasn't he fast asleep? Boo...hoo...'

When he was about to sit up in the bed, Erica quickly reached out and pushed him back on the mattress. "Well, well, it's still early. You can sleep a little longer!"

Matthew stretched out his hand and turned on the bedside lamp. Looking at the guilty woman in front of him, he said, "I'm afraid that if I slept a little longer, you would sell me out."

"What? How is that possible? Why the hell would I want to do that to you?" Erica asked with a bright smile on her face. "Honey, you don't have to worry. I'm your dear wife. I would never hurt you!"

He nodded, trying to sit up again. But Erica stopped him immediately. "Wait a minute!"

Conceding, Matthew lay back calmly. "What were you doing in the middle of the night? Why didn't you go to bed? And what's this?" He showed her his thumb covered with lipstick.

"Well, I saw the lipstick on your thumb and was trying to wipe it for you," she explained.

"Huh!" Matthew suddenly grinned as he thanked her gently, "Thank you, honey. Thank you for all your hard work."

It must have been quite a challenge indeed for her to get up in the middle of the night to clean up the lipstick she had applied herself on his thumb.

"You're welcome. Go to sleep now!"

Tired of all that nonsense, Matthew finally sat up and saw some of her tools spread on the floor.

A cellphone, a few A4 sheets of paper, a lipstick...

Realizing that she was about to get exposed, Erica held his waist and blocked his sight with no hesitation. "Honey, just go to sleep, will you?"

"I will after you tell me what is going on!" He had briefly seen his fingerprint pressed on the bottom right corner of each piece of paper.

If someone told him at this moment that his wife had sold him, he would definitely believe it!

"Oh, I swear I never did anything that could harm you. But please don't ask me about this, okay?" With her arms around him, Erica behaved like a spoiled child trying to deceive him.

On those papers, there were all kinds of information that Matthew had entrusted her to sue Phoebe for him. She just couldn't let him see them!

Matthew pushed her away, intending to lean over and reach out for the papers on the floor. However, Erica was quicker to step in and pick the papers and her phone up before he could. Then she rushed into the walk-in closet with those things in her hands.

A loud sound echoed when she shut the door behind her. Soon after, the bedroom became quiet again.

Matthew stared at the lipstick she had left on the floor.

A few minutes later, he stood up and knocked on the door to the walk-in closet. "Come out!"

"Only if you promise me not ask any questions!"

"Okay." He nodded helplessly. "I promise."

As she had classes in the morning, she shouldn't stay up much longer.

Taking this into consideration, she opened the door slightly and revealed her suspicious eyes through the thin breach. "Will you keep your word?"

"Of course." He nodded again.

This time, Erica dared to open the door fully. The papers were already safely locked anyway. She then held his arm and led him back to the bed. "Matthew, I swear I didn't betray you. I'll tell you what this is about when it's over, but not now. So, no more questions, okay?" She feared that Matthew would try to stop her from suing Phoebe if he found out.

"Okay. But if you ever need my signature or fingerprint again, just ask me directly. You don't need to do this behind my back!" he told her. 'What a silly girl!

Since she wasn't betraying me, I would certainly agree on anything she wanted. There was no need for her to go through all this trouble to get my fingerprints.'

"What? Doesn't it bother you to have your fingerprints on documents that you don't know what the content is? Will you simply do as I say?" she asked in disbelief.

"Mm hmm!"

"Why didn't you tell me earlier?" she complained. If she had known it before, she wouldn't have gotten up in the middle of the night to do everything on the sly and risk having a heart attack.

Matthew gaped in shock. 'You didn't tell me you wanted my fingerprints.' But instead, he said, "Well, it's my fault then. Next time, just tell me and I'll do it, okay?"

"Okay, let's go to sleep!" Finally, Erica relaxed and soon yawned.

"Okay."

The two went to bed together. But Erica couldn't help worrying. She feared that Matthew would go after the papers she hid as soon as she fell asleep. Therefore, she didn't dare to close her eyes until she found a position in which the slightest move he made would immediately wake her up.

Matthew didn't know how to respond. 'Why is she so vigilant?'

The next morning, before going to school, Erica met her lawyer and gave him the documents with Matthew's fingerprints. Now, all she needed to do was wait for the court date.

In the next few days, Erica kept going out with Hyatt to find inspiration for the photography competition.

Meanwhile, in Askor, Gifford had just come back.

That same day, Wesley asked Chantel not to go to school. Obediently, she stayed in her bedroom as she waited for the result of the conversation between father and son.

In the study, Wesley looked intently at his son, trying to figure out how Gifford could have been forced to get laid.

He thought it over for a long time but came to the conclusion that Chantel didn't have the means to force Gifford to have sex with her. He must have been willing to go through with it or nothing would have happened.

"Go and get the marriage licenses with Chantel now," Wesley commanded coldly.

After hearing these words, Gifford realized that he had been exposed. In fact, he had always known that this day would come. "Did she tell you?"

"Yes."

"I won't go!" Gifford couldn't let Chantel and Erica succeed with their scheming.

But Wesley didn't take well his son's refusal. Enraged, he roared, "What did you say? You brought her back. You must take responsibility for her!" Moreover, with Chantel's pregnancy, the wedding had become an even more pressing matter at the moment.

If Gifford kept resisting doing as he said, Wesley would have to take him to the Civil Affairs Bureau by force.

"So what if I brought her back? Who said that I have to marry her?" Gifford retorted. If he had known such logic existed among these people, he would never have brought her back in the first place.

This time, not even Blair was at her son's side. "It's not because you've brought her back that you should marry her. You have to take responsibility for sleeping with her."

Gifford sneered, "Mom, Dad. We're in the twenty-first century. This isn't the ancient times anymore. Chantel and Rika should've thought that I wouldn't take responsibility for their wicked plan before they did anything."

'Chantel and Erica didn't care about the consequences when they did this. But now that I don't want to marry Chantel, they involved the elders in it so they could force me! How shameless these two are!'

In fact, Gifford didn't mind being responsible for Chantel, but he was angry at the two girls for tricking him. This episode would certainly be remembered as the biggest mistake of his life!

"Rika? What does she have to do with it?" Wesley asked. He was both confused and in shock.

Gifford immediately shut his mouth. 'Damn it! Did I just spill the beans?'

CHAPTER 1296 SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH ERICA

Gifford couldn't help wondering, 'Did Chantel take all the responsibilities in front of my parents alone?' So, he asked, "What did Chantel tell you?"

Blair was about to answer, but Wesley stopped her. He was the one who spoke. "She didn't say much about it. She said it was her fault, and she just forced you to do it. According to her, you were also a victim."

Gifford's face darkened, but it was indeed the truth. Then he said, "If it weren't for that bottle of toxic spray, she couldn't have taken advantage of me."

Wesley was surprised to hear him mention the toxic spray. He thought of something, so he tried to probe, "Was it Erica who gave the spray to Chantel?" Anyway, Erica and Chantel were unable to deal with Gifford in normal circumstances.

Even a dozen women like Chantel and Erica would never be able to control a man like Gifford.

"Mm," Gifford answered sourly.

His reputation was ruined by that toxic spray, so he tried his best to find its source. Unfortunately, he failed.

"Well, let's not talk about those complicated things. The reason why we asked you to come back this time is for you to marry Chantel. Take her to the Civil Affairs Bureau to get your marriage licenses. We have already prepared your residence booklet," said Blair while taking out the residence booklet.

Gifford was forced to take it and asked, "Mom, how can I get our marriage licenses that easily? It's not that simple. I haven't even applied to my superior yet."

She patted his shoulder and smiled kindly. "Don't worry. Your father has already done it for you."

He was in awe. Disbelief was transparent on his face. "Where is the application form then?" he asked.

"Your father has already asked someone to send it to the Civil Affairs Bureau. All you have to do now is go there with Chantel for a personal appearance." Actually, Wesley was dubious about Gifford's possible decision, so he prepared everything for him in advance.

Looking at the residence booklet in his hand, Gifford was at a loss. He didn't know whether to laugh or to cry. It was obvious that his parents were determined to force him if necessary. "Do I have a choice?" he asked.

"No, you don't. So, go now. Chantel is already waiting for you." Blair was the most excited at the moment. Finally, her son was getting married, and her future daughter-in-law was now pregnant. A grandchild was coming very soon. Two happy events happened at the same time.

On the other hand, Gifford was speechless as he was in deep thoughts.

'Is this for real? Am I really going to fall into the hands of a woman? When I brought her back here, I thought that dealing with a woman like her was just a piece of cake. I have never expected that she would set me up, and I would marry her in the end.'

It was still half a month before Yvette's wedding, but Gifford had ended his almost 33 years of singleness.

But since he had always been a busy man, he had never returned home since he got their marriage licenses that afternoon.

Chantel didn't mind his cold attitude. While watching his car disappear, she touched her protruding belly and said to herself, "It's alright, Gifford. I promise that I will study very hard to match you in the future."

Remus and Yvette's wedding was held as scheduled. Although it wasn't as grand as Erica's, it was still one of the most luxurious weddings in Askor.

A day before the wedding, Matthew rented a private plane and took the Hilton family members to Askor to attend the wedding. But since there were so many guests, they immediately returned to Alorith in the

afternoon in order not to add to the Leonard family's burden.

However, Erica stayed because she wanted to spend more time with her mom. She knew that Blair was a little sad because she and Yvette had already gotten married, and they wouldn't be able to see her more often.

It had been two days since Yvette's wedding was held. Erica and Blair were watching TV in the living room while eating some sunflower seeds and drinking iced fruit juice.

Blair suddenly remembered Chantel, who had been experiencing morning sickness recently, so she couldn't help asking her youngest daughter, "Rika, Chantel is already pregnant. How about you? When are you planning to give me a grandchild?" Erica and Matthew had been married for more than half a year now. Blair thought that it was time for them to have a child.

"Mom, don't worry about us. We are not in a hurry." She wasn't in a hurry because she was rich now! She had thirty billion dollars in her account now after Matthew had transferred her some more money.

She was a rich woman now. With her money, she could buy, eat, and drink anything she liked. Having a child was her last priority for now.

Talking about money, she seemed to have remembered something. She dropped the sunflower seeds in her hand and said, "Mom, wait a minute."

She hurriedly went to her room upstairs and took out a bank card. She then went back downstairs and showed it to Blair while panting. "Mom, there's one hundred million dollars in this account. This is for you and Dad. My sister and I won't always be home to accompany you, and Gifford is always busy too. You and Dad should enjoy yourselves."

"What... did you just say? One hundred million?" exclaimed Blair.

"Yes, you heard it right!" After Erica had lived with Matthew for a long time, one hundred million was just a small amount of money for her now. "Mom, if this is not enough, I can transfer another two hundred million dollars here." She thought for a while before adding in a low voice, "How about five hundred million? Anyway, I have thirty billion right now. Five hundred million is a drop in the bucket for..."

Before she could finish her words, Blair exclaimed again, "Five hundred million?"

Erica blinked and said calmly, "Yes, Mom. I'll transfer the money after I go back to Alorith." Since a large amount of money was involved, she couldn't do the transaction online. She had to go to the bank to deal with it.

"No, no, no!" Blair shook her head vigorously. She didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "Why would you give us such money? Just keep it. We are not in need of money, anyway." "Matthew is really rich. Rika

can even give us five hundred million dollars as if it's just a small amount, ' she thought.

"No, Mom. You have to accept it. Matthew always reminds me to be a filial daughter to you, and he wants me to support you financially. Besides, you have given me all the betrothal gifts from the Hilton family. I have so much money now that I can't even use it up in my lifetime." Erica couldn't help thinking that if one son would use one billion dollars, how many sons did she need to have to spend all her money?

However, Blair put the bank card into Erica's pocket and said, "Keep it for yourself. You always spend money like water. What if you run out of money one day? And remember, Matthew is working hard to earn the money he is giving you. He doesn't just pick money on the street, so don't ask for money from him all the time."

"Mom, I didn't ask for money. He just gave it to me willingly," she replied innocently.

Then all of a sudden, she complained, "Mom... my stomach is aching."

Her face turned as white as a sheet.

At first, Blair thought that she was just kidding. But when she saw her pale face, she got frightened and quickly stood up from the sofa to support her. She asked anxiously, "What's wrong with you? You were fine just now."

"I don't know either," Erica replied weakly. With a painful look on her face, she pressed her belly hard and asked, "Do you think it has something to do with my monthly period?"

But it was strange. For so many years, she had never felt this painful before every time her monthly period came.

With a confused look, Blair asked, "Does this usually happen when your monthly period is coming? Let's try to sit down again."

"I can't sit, Mom. It really hurts a lot." Erica leaned against Blair's chest feebly.

Blair's instinct was telling her that something was wrong with Erica. Obviously, it wasn't just a simple dysmenorrhea. She immediately called Wesley, who was resting upstairs. "Wesley, come here quick! Something's wrong with Rika!"

Wesley hung up the phone and rushed downstairs when he heard her voice. As soon as he saw Erica's pale face, he asked worriedly, "Rika, what's wrong?"

But Erica was already too weak to speak.

"Let's take her to the hospital now!" Blair anxiously said, tears threatening to roll out of her eyes.

CHAPTER 1297 THEIR BABY

Without saying a word, Wesley picked Erica up and rushed out of the house.

It was in the evening that Matthew received Blair's call. He was about to go to a dinner party, and the car had already stopped at the entrance of the restaurant. Seeing that it was his mother-in-law, he answered, "Hello, Mom. What's up?"

What she said from the other end of the line made him straighten his back all of a sudden. Anxiety danced in his eyes. "How is Rika now?" After a while, he answered, "I got it. I'll be there soon. It doesn't matter. Let her stay in the hospital. Please take good care of her!"

Matthew, who was just about to step out of the car, closed the door and ordered, "Contact a private plane. We're setting off for Askor right now."

Owen could tell from his boss's tone that he was anxious. Guessing the seriousness of this matter, he didn't ask anything more. Instead, he immediately arranged a private plane for the both of them.

It was already nine o' clock in the evening when Matthew arrived at the hospital.

In the ward, Wesley, Blair, and Chantel all stood around her bed. Erica was having an infusion. Her eyes were closed and her face was as white as a sheet. His wife, who used to be so lively and energetic, was now lying there lifelessly like a porcelain doll. Sadness brewed in his heart.

Calming himself down, he greeted the others first. "Dad, Mom, Chantel."

Wesley blinked in surprise. "Why are you here so soon? Didn't Blair tell you to come here tomorrow?" However, the older man was relieved that he arrived so soon. It showed that Erica was his top priority.

"It doesn't matter," Matthew dismissed it. Besides, after knowing that his wife was here, how could he just stand by and do nothing?

He walked straight to her bedside and held her hand. The moment her cold fingertips brushed against his warm skin, his heart ached. A part of him wished that he was here earlier to guard her.

Blair quickly explained the situation. "We didn't know that she is pregnant. Before she felt unwell, she had been drinking iced juice and running up and down the stairs. Rika..."

She trailed off with a sigh. "Rika almost suffered from a miscarriage. But fortunately she was taken here in time, so she was saved."

Erica was pregnant! In fact, even the doctor was shocked to inform them of Erica's situation. The baby

was still so small that it took the doctor a few minutes to figure out the diagnosis.

Blair had been so careless.

If she had known that her daughter was pregnant, she would've put a stop to her from being in such a rush.

Noticing how the older woman was blaming herself, Matthew comforted her, "It doesn't matter, Mom. As long as her condition is stable, we'll be okay."

He placed Erica's hands around his as he smiled over her resting body.

Finally, his wife was pregnant. Even then, he still couldn't help but mull over the fact that he should've been there for her.

"Rika has always been healthy. As long as she becomes more careful in the future, the baby will be fine," Wesley stated, comforting his son-in-law.

Hearing that, Matthew nodded at them. "I see. Thank you, Dad, Mom." He was so excited right now.

Maybe it was because of their loud voices that Erica, who had been sleeping soundly in the bed, slowly opened her eyes.

Matthew's handsome face came into her line of sight. With a faint smile, she whispered, "Is this a dream, Matthew?"

She closed her eyes once more, wanting to continue this said dream.

Snorting, the man pinched her arm softly. 'It hurts, ' she thought. She opened her eyes once again. "It hurts! Am I still dreaming?" She furrowed her eyebrows.

Chantel held Erica's hand and whispered, "Rika, Matthew is here!"

'Huh? Matthew?' She blinked her eyes. Suddenly, the man she had thought resided in her dreams was now standing in front of her. A smile slid onto her lips. "Matthew! You came!" she cheered. "Are you here to pick me up?"

"Yes." He gazed at her flat belly. It was his own fault that this had happened. Since he had stopped using condoms, he should have found a private doctor to examine her every day.

Fortunately, their child was strong enough to have survived such an incident.

Wesley teased, "Rika, you've only been back for a few days, and now you want to leave your parents. You're such an ungrateful daughter." His eyes glinted.

Blair nudged his arm. "Rika has already been living with us for several days, so it's high time she goes back to her place. Matthew, you can take her back after she recovers."

"Okay."

In order to give the young couple some time to talk, the other three people left the ward.

Seeing as they were the only ones in the ward, Erica wrapped her arms around the man's neck and leaned against him, acting like a spoiled child. "Are you angry with me?" she whispered.

'I really am going to be a mother, ' she thought.

Although she had already been preparing for pregnancy, she still didn't expect it to happen so soon.

Kissing the tip of her nose, Matthew shook his head. "Of course not," he said gently. "It's my fault. I should've had a doctor examine you every day after we didn't use any condoms. That way, the accident wouldn't have happened."

"Now that I'm pregnant, do you love me even more?" She smiled cheekily.

Erica really wanted him to love her just as much as she did with him.

The man sighed. What she didn't know was that his love for her was far deeper than she could ever imagine. "Yes." He held her hand tightly. "After you give birth to our baby, I'll give you whatever you want," he promised.

He was willing to trade the entire world for her love.

In fact, a part of him was worried that she would dump him if she was angry with him, so he had to coax her enough for her to stay with him her whole life.

"Really?" She giggled. "You know what I want."

Erica liked money, and she never hid that fact from her husband.

With a smile, Matthew took out a gold key from his pocket and waved it in front of her. "This is the key to my safe in Hilton Group's bank. There are many important things in it, much more valuable than the twelve billion that I've given you."

He had never really cared much about his money.

In fact, he only earned this much for his wife to squander.

But before he was sure whether his wife loved him or not, he might as well give some of his properties out in batches.

Her eyes lit up as her fingers grazed across the golden key. This was definitely much more valuable than the twelve billion. "Is it pure gold?" she whispered, furrowing her eyebrows.

She gazed at the key like a pirate gazing at a treasure chest.

Matthew was amused. In fact, the money in her bank account was enough to buy countless of gold keys. "Yes, it's pure gold and solid. Do you want it?" he asked.

"Of course!" Erica nodded without hesitation.

Matthew choked back a laugh. It was the first time he had seen such an innocent yet shameless woman in his lifetime.

CHAPTER 1298 HAVE SAVED THE UNIVERSE

Matthew liked the way that Erica had never hidden any of her desires. "The key is yours once the baby is born," he stated.

"Really?" Erica gaped at him, and surprise flashed in her eyes. "Aren't you worried about me? Aren't you afraid that I'll run off with all your money?"

"I'm afraid," he answered without hesitation. "But I'll always have a record of wherever you withdraw money from any of your cards. I can find you with a flick of my wrist." And with the letter of commitment she had signed, she'd be stuck with him for the rest of her life.

'Well, he's right. No wonder why he trusts me so much, '

she thought.

Patting his chest, she promised, "Don't worry. You know that I'm not that kind of person. Now that I know you trust me, I'll be sure to be accountable for every cent in your account." Erica enjoyed having so much money under her palm.

Resisting the urge to laugh, Matthew placed his large hand onto her belly. "You should be more careful in the future, okay?"

"Don't worry. I'll take good care of our baby from now on." Erica would be extremely careful in the future. After all, she was going to be a mother. It wouldn't be wise to do something so rash.

The atmosphere in the ward was peaceful and happy that both of them wanted to make it last forever.

After the infusion, Erica could be discharged from the hospital once her condition stabilized.

From the hospital to the second floor of the Leonard family house, Matthew made sure to hold his wife in his arms the entire time. He wouldn't let her go no matter what, and he agreed to all her requests.

Seeing her daughter being spoiled, Blair was quick to remind her son-in-law, "If you keep doting on her like this, she'll be difficult to control in the future." She knew her daughter enough to assume such a thing.

However, Matthew shook his head and answered, "It doesn't matter, Mom. All I want is for Rika to grow even stronger. That way, she wouldn't be bullied by others."

'No one would dare bully her even before you started to spoil her like this, ' the older woman thought. Shaking her head helplessly, she followed them.

Erica must've saved the world in her past life given how amazing her life was now. Before she even met Matthew, her father, brother, and sister made sure to spoil the living life out of her.

Now that she was married, that luck never seemed to run out.

Knowing that Erica was pregnant and had almost suffered from a miscarriage, Carlos and Debbie dropped all the events lined up the next day and traveled to Askor to visit their beloved daughter-in-law.

When the couple entered her room, Matthew was coaxing Erica to take another spoonful of medicine. "This is the last spoonful," he stated.

Her eyes watered. "You also said that the last time!" she protested.

The medicine was a mix of different Chinese herbs to promote a healthy pregnancy cycle. Although Erica knew its importance, it was still very bitter. She almost cried when she had taken the first sip.

"Rika!" Debbie didn't want to break the warm atmosphere, but she couldn't help herself. She walked to her bedside and peered over her frail figure.

"Dad, Mom, why are you here?" Erica's eyes widened. No one told her that her in-laws would visit.

While she was distracted, Matthew took this opportunity to feed her the last mouthful of the medicine. Her attention was trained on her in-laws that she drank it up subconsciously.

The moment she swallowed it, her face quivered as the bitter aftertaste took over. "Mmph." He quickly placed a piece of sweet candy into her mouth. Immediately, she wrapped her tongue around it, trying to dispel the bitterness.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, Debbie pushed her son aside and held Erica's hand. "Are you feeling

better, dear?"

"I'm feeling much better now." She nodded. The doctor had said that she only needed to stay in bed for a few more days before she could return to her normal schedule.

"That's good. We're here to pick you up. Don't get me wrong. If you want to stay at home for a few more days, then that's fine as well. We can go back later," Debbie said softly. She could understand that Erica would want to spend more time with her parents as much as possible.

When she heard of the news, Debbie had been so anxious that she couldn't stay put in Alorith any longer. She immediately dragged Carlos over to see Erica.

After thinking for a while, Erica glanced at Wesley and Carlos by the doorway and then gazed at Blair and Chantel. "Mom, you haven't seen my mom for a long time. Why don't you stay for two more days?" she suggested.

She did want to spend more time with her parents.

"That's fine with me," Debbie readily agreed. Carlos and Wesley were good friends, so it didn't matter for them if they got to spend time together for a few more days. They had much to talk about.

'Two more days?' Afraid that it might delay Matthew's work, Blair was quick to say, "You can't wait for two more days. Debbie, why don't you take her with you and fly back to Alorith tomorrow? Now that she's pregnant, she's more willful. Sometimes, I couldn't help but want to beat her."

Erica frowned. "What are you talking about, Mom?" Her mother was obviously overreacting. She was still the same as before.

Blair snorted, waving her hand. "Hurry back to Carlos and Debbie. Besides, we still have Chantel to worry over. You know how your father and I can't take care of two pregnant women at the same time."

"I'm your daughter too, you know!" Erica gritted her teeth. Having no idea why her mother was acting like this, she crossed her arms over her chest and grunted.

Debbie was quick to smooth things over. She stood up and placed her hand on Blair's shoulder. "It really doesn't matter," she soothed. "Carlos has plenty of time, so he isn't in a hurry. Plus, Matthew already arranged all his documents before he got here. Carlos and I can stay and take care of Rika and Chantel with you. Hey, you don't want us here, do you?" she said deliberately.

Blair flushed at the implication. She grabbed the woman's hand. "Of course not! I just didn't want to delay Matthew's work since he's usually so busy."

"I'll be fine, Mom. I have my laptop," Matthew explained, motioning to his bag.

That was one of the benefits of the Internet. Now, he could work anywhere in the world as long as he had his gadgets close by.

That night, Carlos and Debbie stayed in the Leonard family's house.

In the evening, Matthew went to the study to continue reading all the documents he had brought with him. Blair was in charge of changing the bed sheets. Erica, in the meantime, was lounging on the sofa and playing with her phone. "Look at Carlos and Debbie," Blair admonished. "They're so good to you. You shouldn't give them any trouble after you get back."

The Hilton family treated Erica as if she were their own daughter. Blair was more than relieved of this. A part of her had been worried that Erica would be careless and irresponsible when it came to taking care of her husband.

"I know, Mom," Erica replied.

"Matthew is always busy with his work, so you better be more considerate. Since you don't know how to cook, the least you can do is massage his shoulders. If you don't have anything to do, then you could prepare a bath for him or even iron his clothes..."

"Okay." That was simple enough.

"When it's time for dinner, you can ask him if he has a dinner he needs to attend to. If he does, let him go. If he doesn't, then ask him what he wants to eat. Then, you can ask the cook to make it."

"Okay." That was not a problem either.

"You shouldn't bully Matthew. Look at how considerate he is to you! He apologizes to you every time you two have a fight. Let me tell you, if you keep being stubborn, he'll hate you sooner or later. Maybe then he'll find another woman to be his wife."

CHAPTER 1299 ART THEF

"Mom, you're dead wrong!" Erica looked up to face her mother. Blair was changing the bed sheets, never missing a beat. Her daughter corrected her earnestly. "Mom, I apologized to Matthew every time it was my fault. What more do you want?"

But Blair didn't see it that way. "I really don't believe you."

Erica felt helpless. "I'm telling the truth, Mom. Just like last time when we were on a business trip to Skiyton, I followed him all the way and apologized endlessly. He finally forgave me because I was sick!"

Blair denied her explanation right off. "Matthew's not an unreasonable man. I'm sure your apology was less than sincere."

'What? Mom, how could you say a thing like that?' Erica rolled her eyes when her mom was looking elsewhere.

Carlos and Debbie stayed in the Leonard family's house for a couple nights. On the last day of their visit, Erica came back to the hospital for a checkup. After making sure that the baby in her belly was safe and sound, the four of them took a private plane back to Alorith.

In Alorith

Debbie had floated the idea of letting Erica live in the Hilton family's manor, but Matthew nixed that idea. He took Erica back to their own villa. He'd hired several maids to take care of her.

He didn't want anyone to disturb him or his wife. Even his parents couldn't promise that. The maids could sleep on the first floor. A skeleton night crew was put in place as well. If anything happened, they could be upstairs at a moment's notice.

Two days after returning from her parent's place, Erica resumed her studies.

Matthew's original plan was to hire tutors for her to learn at home, but she turned him down. What fun would that be, staying home every day? That would be too boring, so she decided to attend classes like a normal student.

The pregnancy didn't change Erica's basic nature, though maybe she was a little less stubborn than she usually was.

Yes, just a little.

She still did many of the same things she always did. She continued to stop by that little snack shop and bought spicy and sour rice noodles. Matthew would never approve, so she wouldn't tell him. She also still got into it with this or that classmate, so she'd spend time humiliating them.

When Matthew finally trusted her enough, she grabbed Hyatt and visited a fellow student.

In the school library

The three sat at a round table, all face to face. The girl opposite Erica and Hyatt was understandably nervous. What did Erica want with her?

This girl was a senior, and was an art major.

Without beating around the bush, Erica showed her some pictures on her phone. "These pics look familiar?"

After a short pause, the girl nodded and answered honestly, "Yeah. I worked on those last year. They

were supposed to be homework and I was going to turn them in, but all of a sudden they were gone. I don't know what happened."

Erica smiled and showed her some more pictures. "And what about these?"

"Those paintings... Hey! I painted those myself. But what's this? That's not my signature! Who signed these? Phoebe? Those are my paintings! The backdrop here is my hometown. What's going on?" She was now visibly upset.

Erica took back her phone and said, "To put it bluntly, she took your paintings and put her name on them. You mad?"

"Of course! Those are mine, not hers! Why in the world wouldn't I be pissed?" Her fair face flushed with anger.

"Then sue her!" Erica suggested.

"Sue her?" The two words stunned her. "It's a major pain in the butt to take someone to court and I don't think I have the cash for a lawyer..." She was just a struggling student. She did have a part-time job, but she might not be able to afford these fees.

With her chin in her hands, Erica smiled innocently and offered, "Don't worry about money or a lawyer. As long as you're willing to sue her, you can just testify in court on the day of the trial. Don't worry about anything else. I got this!"

"Why do I not need to worry about money? Are you fronting me?" The girl really didn't have money, but she still wanted to sue Phoebe for art theft.

"Yeah, sort of. Just consider it a permanent loan. All I need is for you to collect the evidence that can prove they are your paintings. We'll appear in court together!" Erica said.

Her words seemed to give the girl a charge. She grabbed Erica's hand and exclaimed, "Wow, Erica, you're the best!"

Erica smiled sheepishly, "It's not like I'm doing this for nothing. I get something out of this, too!"

In order to put Phoebe at a disadvantage, she had someone investigate the skeletons in her closet.

"Okay, I'll go back home and find everything I can!" The girl let go of her hand, turned and left the library.

As soon as the girl left, Erica's phone rang. It was Matthew. "Where are you?" he asked.

"At school!" she said in a relaxed voice. Obviously, she was in a good mood.

The man chuckled. "Don't strain yourself too much and ask Hyatt to carry your camera. Call me if you need anything."

"Well, there is something you can do..." Erica adjusted her tone to sound sweet and innocent. It did wonders for Matthew's mood.

"Name it," he said, confused.

"Have you heard of the Ninth Photography Competition of Alorith?"

Matthew nodded, "Yeah. You entered, right?" He had noticed it before.

"Of course I did. But the deadline is in two weeks. I've been so busy I haven't had any time to get anything prepared." The girl's voice sounded very pitiful. She had been busy gathering evidence to use against Phoebe, then Yvette was getting married, and then she got pregnant, not to mention her homework. When did she have the time to plan out the perfect piece?

She was so depressed that she couldn't even find any inspiration until now.

The man had a bad feeling about this, and answered quickly, "I'll take you to..." He trailed off. 'The North Pole? No, the best time to shoot the northern lights is in the winter time. But now it's spring. Since I can't control time, there's no way. So that's out...'

Thoughts were buzzing through his brain. Settling on an idea, he offered, "I know a beautiful beach. The sea water there is half pink and half green..." 'I think she'll like that,' he thought.

"No way!" The girl refused decisively.

Rubbing his eyebrows, Matthew said, "Then what do you want to photograph?"

"I want to use you as a model!" This idea had already taken root in her heart.

'I knew it!' He felt helpless. "Honey, I'm not real comfortable with that. Find a different idea, please..."

"Why should I? If Phoebe can sketch you, why can't I get a few choice shots?" She had to take some pictures of Matthew.

"Didn't I tell you she did it behind my back?" Speaking of Phoebe's sketch, Matthew suddenly remembered one thing. The sketch was gone, and Erica hadn't mentioned anything about it recently.

Was it because that Phoebe was afraid of telling on Erica, or was it because that Erica was biding her time until she could truly unleash hell on Phoebe?

"Fine! I won't force you. After all, you're a pretty busy guy," she said. It was rare for Erica to stop pestering him. So what was really going on?

"Thanks, honey."

Erica pretended to be thinking out loud. "There is another option," she murmured. "They're having a showcase of male models at the convention center in a couple days. I thought I might head down there and snap a few pics. They shouldn't mind. They're paid to be comfortable naked..."

"Erica!" The man's cold voice came from the other end of the line.

The girl pretended to be surprised. "Oh, you haven't hung up yet? You've been so quiet!"

'Why would I hang up?' he thought angrily. "Fine. Meet me in my office!"

"No. Like you said, you're busy. I'll just go with the models at the showcase!"

"My office! Now!" The man gritted his teeth and wanted to strangle his wife.

Erica decided to lay it on thick, just to make absolutely sure he wouldn't back out at the last minute. "I really think that's a bad idea. You never let me snap a pic of you, so I won't waste your time!"

"Okay, okay! I'll do it!" The man had to compromise again and again.

"Okay! I'll be there soon! Love you!" Erica was so happy! Her plan worked! Now to gather the equipment she needed.

'My loving husband, your dearest wife is on her way!' she thought happily.

CHAPTER 1300 TAKING PHOTOS OF MATTHEW

In Matthew's office

Erica was leisurely playing with her camera while Matthew was talking with someone on the phone. It had already been more than ten minutes.

But she didn't mind. As long as she could take beautiful pictures of him, she was willing to wait patiently.

Another ten minutes had passed.

Finally, Matthew hung up.

She immediately rushed towards him with the camera in her hand. "Honey..."

Her movement alerted him, so he said in a low voice, "Slow down."

It was only then that she remembered the baby in her belly. She stopped walking for a second, then continued with tiny steps.

Slowly, she made it in front of him. She tiptoed and wrapped her arms around his neck. With a sweet smile, she asked, "Can we start now?"

"Sure." His hand moved to her belly and caressed it gently. This had been his habit since he found out that she was pregnant.

Upon hearing his approval, she let go of him in an instant and raised the camera. She ordered him boldly, "I always like your French window. Go to the French window now, and I'll take the first set of your photos there."

His eyebrow raised upon hearing the words "first set." It seemed that this would be a long photo session with her.

He didn't expect that she would really use this opportunity.

When he was ready, Erica raised her camera and aimed it at him. However, she suddenly changed her mind. "Honey, I like you better in a white shirt. Take off your suit, please."

Matthew sighed inwardly. He swore that no one in this world had a command power over him like Erica. Although his face darkened a little, he still did what she asked him to do silently.

Wearing just a white shirt and a dark blue tie, he casually stood in front of the French window, making the view more beautiful.

Erica pressed the shutter button several times before she checked the photos. With eyes on the screen of the camera, she commented, "It looks a little formal. Honey, how about loosening your tie a little? You look more handsome when you are casual and relaxed."

'More handsome? She's definitely good at flattering people,' he thought. But he remained quiet and just followed her instructions obediently.

Erica made sure that she hadn't missed his every move. From untying his tie with his fair and slender fingers, unbuttoning his shirt, straightening his sleeves, and even his inadvertent glances.

Matthew was giving off a noble and cold aura. But when he looked at her, the dotting look in his eyes was obvious. She didn't know if he did it on purpose, but she couldn't help feeling deeply intoxicated.

In the middle of their photo shoot, his phone suddenly rang. Since it was work-related, she didn't complain. As he sat on his desk to answer the call, she didn't miss the chance to take more photos of him.

Even in candid shots, his regal aura was undeniable. He was like a king on his throne, talking to someone on the phone.

Using her finger, she signaled to him to smile.

But he just stared at her without even raising the corners of his mouth.

Since he wasn't cooperating, she simply walked up to him and pinched his cheek. She then said silently, "Smile!"

Matthew gave her a disgusted look but held her hand gently while still listening to the person on the other end of the line.

She shook his hand off and didn't bother him anymore. After all, this was his first time

to model for her in a photo shoot.

Although he had posed in their pre-wedding photo shoot before, it was different because she wasn't the photographer at that time.

After a few more rounds, Erica felt a little tired, so she put the camera on his desk and sat down.

In her silence, Sheffield's reminder suddenly flashed back in her memory. He told her once that she and Matthew should always show off their love to prevent other women from coveting him.

At the thought of it, she immediately picked up the camera and put it on a tripod. She adjusted the tripod in front of his desk, set the camera into video, and ran to him. Wrapping her arms around his neck, she commanded, "Kiss me!"

Instead of following her order, Matthew put his hand on her belly again and whispered with a snicker, "I don't only want to kiss you. I want to sleep with you."

His mind immediately calculated how long it had been since the last time he slept with her. Although it wasn't that long, he already felt like it had been several months ago.

But he had no choice. Since she was pregnant, he could only keep his desires at bay.

Hearing his low but charming voice, Erica felt her heart melt.

She caught a glimpse of the flickering red dot on the camera, so she quickly kissed his thin lips.

His response satisfied her. He hugged her tightly, and kissed her back passionately, which was what she exactly wanted.

After their intimate moment, she checked the video. She was very happy with the result, so she didn't disturb him anymore. The smile on her face was still there even after Owen sent her back to the Pearl Villa District.

While eating the fruits prepared by the maid, Erica started to check every photo she had taken. She needed to choose the best ones that she would use for the competition.

A few moments later, she had chosen two photos, which she immediately submitted as her entries.

The first photo was a portrait of Matthew. She gave it a very simple caption: Cold CEO.

In the photo, he was standing in front of a bright French window while loosening his tie. His white and slender fingers were also eye-catching. Although his face was expressionless and his eyes were not looking at the camera, anyone who would look at the photo would feel that there was tenderness in his deep-set eyes.

The second photo was their picture together. She actually didn't like being photographed, but for the sake of the competition, she went all out.

She captioned it: $1+1=3$. This was her way of telling the audience that they were having a baby soon.

In the picture, Matthew was sitting in his office chair while she was sitting on his lap. His arms were wrapped around her slender waist, and their foreheads were stuck together, as their eyes met. Both of them had sweet smiles on their faces.

They were surrounded by the warm sunlight that peeped through the window. Looking at the photo, one could feel the happiness and sweetness in the air. It felt so refreshing.

After sending her entries to the organizers, she also sent the photos to Matthew, forcing him to use them as his phone and computer wallpaper.

She also wanted him to post them on Weibo, but he refused. He said that he didn't have a Weibo account.

But she remembered that when she borrowed his phone last time to answer Debbie's phone call, she saw a Weibo app installed on his phone.

'Did he uninstall it?

Never mind.'

She didn't think too much about it.

Meanwhile, Hyatt also submitted a photo for the competition. It was a picture of several children playing Chinese garter game on the street. He named his entry "Childhood."

Now, all they needed to do was wait for the result.

On the second month of Erica's pregnancy, Matthew canceled all his appointments and accompanied her to the hospital for checkup and ultrasound.

Erica was lying on the bed while the doctor was standing next to her. Matthew was watching on the other side of the bed.

He was staring at her slightly bulgy belly.

A few minutes later, the doctor said excitedly, "Matthew, Erica is probably pregnant with... twins!"

"What?!" Erica was the first to react.

Matthew was also surprised. She was already checked in Askor before, but the doctor there didn't say it was a set of twins. Suppressing his excitement, he ordered in a deep voice, "Check it again carefully."

"Yes, Matthew," the doctor answered.