

TMBA 1161

CHAPTER 1161 BOILING EGGS

Erica hung up the phone abruptly without another word.

'Humph! Tam, you bastard! Now, you want me to consider your feelings as a father? Why didn't you think of this when Ethan was born? Where were your feelings then? You lying son of bitch!' she cursed at him in her heart.

Tam called her again a few more times, but he never received a response. Having realized that it would be troublesome to contact her in the future if she blocked his number, Tam decided to leave her alone.

Putting her cellphone aside, Erica asked the maid to watch over Ethan for a while because she wanted to make some hard boiled eggs for her son. She wanted to do something special for Ethan to make up for the time she hadn't been at his side.

Yes! She decided to boil eggs herself!

Although boiling eggs was a simple enough task, Erica had no idea where to even begin. After all, the life of comfort and luxury had made her complacent and unambitious.

She found a pot and poured some water in it before putting the eggs. The first two steps went smoothly. Next, was turning on the gas stove.

Just then, the maid curiously walked into the kitchen with Ethan in her arms and asked the busy woman, "Mrs. Erica, what are you doing?"

"Oh, I'm making some hard-boiled eggs for Ethan," Erica answered shyly.

"Please let me do it, Mrs. Erica. You shouldn't be bothering yourself with this!"

"It's fine. Don't worry. Besides, I have nothing better to do. I just feel like making some eggs."

The maid glanced at the pot Erica used and asked again, "But why don't you just use the egg-boiler? Wouldn't that be more convenient?"

Erica shook her head and refused. "I know, but I prefer using the traditional way. It tastes better anyway!"

The maid seemed amused by her answer, but she said, "I think it makes no difference. It tastes just the same to me."

"Fine, I will use the egg-boiler next time," Erica said with a smile.

"Okay."

After turning on the gas, Erica came out of the kitchen and took Ethan from the maid. "Aren't you supposed to buy groceries? You can go now."

The maid hesitated as she worried about the careless girl. "Will you be okay to watch over him while I'm gone, Mrs. Erica?" After all, now that the two other temporary maids had been let off, they were the only two remaining adults in the villa.

"I'll be okay. I will feed him the eggs later. You can go," Erica assured the maid.

"Okay, Mrs. Erica."

After the maid left, Erica went upstairs with the baby in her arms. "My good boy, let's go and get you some water and then we'll come downstairs to eat some eggs!"

In the bedroom on the third floor

Erica put the baby in the middle of the bed and went to get a glass of water for him. Just after she fed him two sips of water, the boy pushed the glass away.

"Behave, my sweet little angel. Have some more water," Erica patiently coaxed him.

However, Ethan sat still with a chubby red face, without making any sound. After a while of staring at the baby in confusion, Erica came to a much dreaded conclusion. "Are you going to poo poo?"

But Erica had never changed a diaper in her life! When Erica was at the Leonard family house, her parents were there to take care of the baby. While here in Matthew's villa, her husband had hired help to take care of her and the baby's needs.

Unfortunately, none of the maids were in the house now. In silent panic, Erica quickly put the glass on the table and lifted Ethan from the bed.

"Oh, my God! What should I do? Should I just let him poo first and then change the diaper?"

'Yes, that's it!' She made up her mind.

Erica begged, "My dear boy, please hold it in for a little longer. Let's sit on the sofa first, okay?"

She rushed to the sofa and sat down, gently sitting him down on her lap. Just as she sat down, the baby began to struggle in her arms uncontrollably.

Erica's eyes shot up in bewilderment. "Have you finished already?"

Her face was stuck in an incredulous expression as she put the boy down on a makeshift bed in the bathroom and started to prepare the diaper and wet tissues.

After she gathered all the things she needed, Erica realized she had missed something!

She still didn't know how to change a baby's diapers.

Her mind went blank for a moment and then a tall figure suddenly appeared in her mind. 'Matthew!' She took out her phone and dialed his number in a hurry.

At the meeting room of Hilton Group

The room was filled with more than twenty senior executives who were engaged in an emergency meeting. Matthew, sitting in the CEO's chair, looked absolutely livid, while the others looked too scared to even breathe.

When his cellphone vibrated, Matthew was about to put it on silent mode when he noticed the caller ID. He reluctantly asked to be excused, before he answered his phone.

Erica's anxious whining greeted his ears. "Matthew, help! I have no idea how to change Ethan's diaper!"

"Change diapers?" There was an incredulous tone in his voice.

However, instead of looking embarrassed in front of a room full of people, Matthew's facial expression softened and he smiled. He stood up from his seat calmly and motioned the senior executives to go on with the meeting, as he walked towards the door. Although he spoke with a low voice, everyone somehow overheard him saying, "Take off his dirty diaper first..."

The senior executives in the conference room looked at each other with a look of disbelief on their faces.

They had heard rumors that their intimidating CEO had become a stepfather, but none of them believed it to be true until they witnessed the apparent change in him today.

Erica did as he had instructed on the phone. As soon as she tore off the diaper, the putrid smell sent her head in a dizzy trance. Somehow she squeezed her nose shut with one hand and threw the smelly diaper into the trash with the other.

Matthew could feel the repugnance in her voice as she screamed, "Why does it smell so bad? Are you sure we've been giving him powdered milk?"

Matthew was speechless. 'What else would we give the baby?' he thought.

It couldn't have taken Erica more than a few seconds to throw away the rubbish, but when she came

back, Ethan had already climbed up the bed and rolled around in the clean bed sheet.

Although Erica was mindful enough to put a waterproof plastic mat on the bed, Ethan somehow managed to smear poo everywhere apart from the mat itself.

Erica cried out immediately, "Oh, no! How did you even get up there?"

Matthew could picture the entire scene in his mind as he giggled and said, "Where is the maid?"

"I sent her to the market for some groceries!" Erica whined endlessly, "What should I do now?"

"Wipe him up with some wet tissues and then wash him clean in the bathtub. Then dry him up with a towel and put some pants on him."

"O-okay... How do you know all of this stuff, Matthew? Have you ever taken care of children before?"

"Yes. I've changed Godwin's and Godfrey's diapers before." Matthew had learned how to take care of babies when he used to babysit Godwin and Godfrey.

'Oh, that makes sense,' Erica thought. With a hint of concern in her voice, she said, "Please carry on with your work. I'll take care of things from here."

"Okay."

After getting off the phone, Erica did exactly as Matthew had instructed her. The little boy couldn't be happier when it was time for his bath. He was completely oblivious to the anxiety he gave Erica when he flapped his hands in the water, giggling happily.

After a while, Erica brought Ethan to the bedroom wrapped up in a towel. When she was about to change him into some clean clothes, a thought popped into her head all of a sudden.

'Oh my God! The... boiling eggs! Damn it! I'm so screwed!'

Erica was practically freaking out now.

She wrapped Ethan up with a towel again and ran downstairs as fast as she could. When she was just outside the kitchen, she heard a loud bang come from inside.

Frightened, Erica leapt in the air as if a firecracker had gone off. She held Ethan close and decided to wait outside the kitchen.

There was another loud bang and this time Erica was on the verge of crying. 'Matthew, please help! Yes! Matthew!'

Meanwhile, it hadn't even been a minute since Matthew came back to the meeting, when he received Erica's call again. "Matthew! Boo...hoo..."

CHAPTER 1162 THE EXPLOSIONS

"What's going on? What's wrong?" Frowning, Matthew stood up once again and walked out of the meeting room.

On the other hand, Erica had no idea what her husband was doing at the moment. According to her, he would always be sitting alone at his desk, reading files or signing papers. Never had she imagined or expected him to be having an urgent meeting with some executives in the conference room.

"Listen to this!" she replied, moving her phone closer towards the kitchen.

More than ten seconds later, BANG! "What are you doing?" Matthew asked in surprise as he heard the loud noise.

"Umm... I am boiling eggs..."

Matthew felt a dull pain in his temples. "How can boiling eggs cause such a powerful explosion?"

Erica was embarrassed at this question. "Well, I don't know. Maybe I left them on the flame for too long. I mean, I even gave Ethan a bath while they were getting boiled."

"Turn off the stove first!" Matthew told her.

"O-Okay," Erica answered, flustered.

She put Ethan in the baby stroller, wrapped him in a bath towel, and made sure that he was safe before she rushed into the kitchen to turn off the stove.

'Nothing could explode anymore, right?' she was thinking. That was logical! She had only put three eggs in the pot, and three bangs had already reached her ears. What more could go wrong!

However, Erica could do nothing but watch as the pot was burnt into smoke; she was too scared to approach the stove and turn it off. Very soon, the kitchen was filled with black smoke.

The smoke alarm in the kitchen began to scream loudly the next moment.

Startled, Erica stepped back immediately. 'What's happening!'

Matthew was just about to call the property management company when they called him first. "Mr. Matthew, the smoke detector in your kitchen is ringing," someone from the property management company reported.

"Send someone there at once!"

"Yes, sir!"

After that short conversation, Matthew hung up the phone, and walked towards the elevator at a rapid pace. Meanwhile, he called Owen. "The meeting is adjourned. Ask the operations department to hand over a solution, and postpone the meeting," he ordered.

"Yes! Mr. Matthew."

By the time Matthew rushed back to his villa, the kitchen had already returned to its usual quiet. Even the burnt pot was about to be taken away by the property management company.

Erica was nowhere to be found. Apart from the company officials, Matthew saw only the maid who had just returned from buying groceries cleaning the kitchen.

Seeing the owner of the house, the manager came towards him and said, "Mr. Matthew, nothing serious. The pot was ruined from burning for too long and that caused smoke."

However, that didn't provide much relief for Matthew. "Where is Erica?" he asked the maid.

"She is upstairs taking care of the young master, sir."

"Is she okay?"

"Yes, sir! Everything's fine!"

Only then did the deep frown disappear from Matthew's forehead and his usual impassive look came back. He looked at the manager and said, "Thank you."

"You're welcome, Mr. Matthew. If there's nothing else, we'll be leaving now."

"Okay."

Matthew nodded and after they had left, went upstairs, climbing the stairs in a few big strides.

Inside the bathroom on the third floor, with her back towards the door, Erica was busy bathing Ethan. "I think you are just like me as a child. My father told me I used a lot of diapers as well. Every time he changed it, I would go ahead and make it dirty again. To make it worse, I never pooped or peed until after he'd changed it! You're just like me in this aspect. I wrapped you with a bath towel for just a little while, and you pooped on it within just a few minutes. You're as naughty as I am!"

Matthew noticed that the previously clean white sheets were now a dirty colored mess. And those stains smelled funny, like a baby's poo.

Getting a bit closer, he became sure that they were.

Erica couldn't even clean the baby properly, let alone clean the bathroom, which was looking more and more like a disaster-zone.

As a germaphobe, Matthew just wanted to tear apart the entire bathroom and rebuild it from scratch right now. If he could, he would have thrown the woman and the baby in the bathroom far far away!

Rubbing his eyebrows, he opened his eyes again and saw a pair of smiling eyes. From inside the bathtub, Ethan was looking up at him, making unintelligible noises.

Erica didn't sense Matthew's presence until she noticed Ethan's gaze.

Fortunately she was not startled by his sudden appearance this time. Maybe she was used to his silent approach. "Why did you come back all of a sudden?" she asked.

Matthew looked at her dirty face. It was black from the stain she had gotten from touching the burnt pot. She had forgotten to wash her hands after that.

This dirty face reminded Matthew of a younger Erica, whose face had been dirtied by mud.

At 13 years old, she had loved playing with mud with other children. That day, she had come home with her face covered in mud and met Matthew, who was visiting her parents.

And to make it worse, when she had passed by him, she had slipped and accidentally pressed her muddy hands onto his white shirt.

And then Blair had asked her to buy a new shirt for him.

Matthew recollected himself from his musings and answered indifferently, "I was worried that you would blow up the villa."

Erica murmured, "Well I can't possibly do that."

"I am sure you can do it! You almost burned down the entire kitchen by just boiling eggs. I'm sure you have the ability to blow up the villa if you try and cook a meal." Saying that, Matthew suddenly remembered that several years ago, Wesley had remarked about Erica's cooking skills in the Hilton family's villa. If he recalled correctly, Wesley had mentioned that Erica had tried to make French fries and nearly blew up the kitchen.

He hadn't believed it at first. He couldn't believe that there would be a person as stupid as that in the world at all. Now it seemed that such people really existed.

Erica felt Matthew sounded unfair, but she didn't dare to fire back. After all, she had just destroyed a very expensive pot, and she had heard from the maid that the pot had been mounted with more than ten diamonds.

Even the Resident Welfare Association for their community had been alarmed. The manager was about to call 119 before rushing into the villa.

And the whole fiasco had started with the fact that she wanted to boil a few eggs.

Matthew took off his jacket and rolled up his sleeves. Then he took a very naked and still dirty Ethan from her arms, and demanded, "Get out of the way!"

"I am not proficient in cooking, but I can still bathe him!"

Matthew cast her a sideways glance. "You need to clean yourself first."

"What?" Erica asked in confusion.

With a deep sigh, Matthew told her, "Your face!" He was annoyed now. 'Carlos is so annoying. Why did he go ahead and find me a wife who's as silly as a donkey? Did he want to test my patience?' he thought.

Erica gave Ethan to Matthew, ran towards the mirror, and finally discovered the black stains on her face. Maybe it was because she had touched the black pot and forgotten to wash her hands.

The funny thing was if Matthew didn't say anything, she wasn't even going to know what he had missed to come back to clean up the mess she had made. Matthew had missed a meeting to clean baby poop!

After taking care of Ethan and making sure things were back to normal, Matthew went back to the company.

In his office, just as Paige was about to leave, he called her back all of a sudden. "Paige."

"Yes, Mr. Matthew?"

"Let me ask you a question. What does 'Xitala' mean? I mean besides being a surname?"

"Mr. Matthew, can you tell me the exact words. I think I'll need a bit of context," Paige asked in surprise.

An awkward look flashed across the man's face, but he finally said, "Matthew Xitala..."

CHAPTER 1163 THE FAVOR

Matthew didn't need to finish his sentence because Paige already knew what he was going to say.

She couldn't control the urge to laugh but Matthew's eyes stopped her, as she cleared her throat and said, "Mr. Matthew, I think... you should let the person who said those words explain it to you."

Paige didn't want to be the one to do the explaining because she knew that Matthew would only respond with anger. Needless to say, she didn't want to deal with her boss's anger.

'Let Erica explain it to me?' Matthew felt a dull pain in his head just at the thought of it. He shook his head, knowing full well that he would never be able to get Erica to explain it to him properly.

Having realized that it would be more fruitful to just ask Paige, he insisted, "Just tell me!"

"Um..." Paige hesitated. She struggled to find the words to give him a response.

Matthew, however, had run out of patience and demanded, "Just spit it out!"

'Fine!' Paige had no choice but to start explaining. "Xitala is a surname. Recently, someone made a historical drama series which became a big hit. A female role's name there is Erqing Xitala. Although her face conveys innocence and harmlessness, she is concisely manipulative and vicious. When the drama series ran on TV for some time, this surname became a household name to every person in the country. The name is infamously popularized by the people who use it to describe those who are vile and detestable. So, 'Xitala, you'd better be kind' is an expression usually said to someone a person despises, telling them not to be so repulsive."

Paige figured "Matthew Xitala" must be the way Erica had addressed Matthew. 'Good luck, Mrs. Erica, ' she thought.

Each word she spoke caused Matthew's face to darken in anger.

Paige added, "To be honest, sir, it's also just a joke. You shouldn't take it too seriously."

"I see. Thank you. You can go now."

Leaning against the back of the chair, Matthew thought about how to punish his bold and troublesome wife.

Meanwhile, completely oblivious to the fact that Matthew had found out the meaning of what she said, Erica gleefully kept herself entertained on Weibo after Ethan fell asleep.

She posted a photo of her and Aaron with the caption—"Finally, I've met my idol! I'm so happy!"

However, her face was pixelated and the netizens were mainly focused on Aaron's handsome face.

Most of Aaron's female fans were unapologetically envious of her and one of them commented, "It must be nice to have all the connections. Mrs. Hilton even has a close-up picture. I wish I were as lucky too!"

The comment section was filled with envious comments. Almost everyone apart from one person, whose user name was "Can't Do Anything," seemed to have a similar opinion. "Don't you know that Aaron was in a relationship with three different people at one time? Besides, he even got a room in a hotel with the boss of a company just to win a bid."

Before Erica could even reply, Can't Do Anything's comment had already caused chaos—ninety-nine out of one hundred comments were accusing him of spreading false rumors.

Needless to say, Erica was infuriated. She couldn't just let some random person slander her idol like that. Spitting furiously, she sent Can't Do Anything a private message. "Why would you spread such ridiculous lies about Aaron? Are you aware of the legal consequences of your actions?"

Can't Do Anything replied, "I'll gladly take responsibility for everything I've said. Besides, the CEO who got a room with Aaron was a man. Do you need me to send you proof?"

Erica stared at her phone, utterly shocked, but also too angry to ask for proof. What proof could this person have? She was afraid of seeing something that would make her unhappy, but she also wanted to prove Aaron's innocence. "How did you come to acquire such proof?"

Can't Do Anything replied, "It doesn't matter how I got it. Would you like to see photos or videos?"

Taken by curiosity, Erica decided to find out if any of the person's claims was true or false. If this all had turned out to be one big lie, she would hunt this person down to the ends of the world. "Videos!" Erica thought videos would be more convincing.

A few minutes later, there was a video in her inbox and she clicked it immediately.

As she watched it, Aaron's inviolable image in her head got shattered into a million pieces.

The content was very eye-catching to say the least. Aaron was seen being pushed up against an office desk as a man kissed him. While Aaron clearly seemed to have welcomed it as he kissed the man back.

What followed after was R-rated content which Erica couldn't bring herself to watch any further. She turned it off and threw her phone on the bed.

'What did I just see? How?' Erica wanted to burst into tears. Aaron was a symbol of innocence and purity in her heart. She wasn't expecting him to do such a repulsive thing.

However, Erica was unyielding. She immediately wrote back, saying, "Nowadays, anyone can fabricate a video with the use of modern technology and other equipment. How do I know you're not just framing Aaron?"

"Fine! Aaron's still in Alorith. If you're interested, you can go to the hotel at nine o'clock tonight and see

for yourself who he checks into a room with."

The confidence in the way the person responded made Erica want to cry. For some reason, she found this person to be as hateful as Matthew was!

This account name had appeared in her comment section many times. Frustrated, she asked, "I'm sorry, but do I know you?"

Erica's user name on Weibo was "Rika, who lives on the moon." All her friends knew her as Rika.

Can't Do Anything answered, "I know that you're married to Matthew. If you don't believe me, you can go home and ask your husband."

'Ask Matthew?' If Matthew knew that her idol had done such shameful things, he would surely laugh at her. Erica decided to get to the bottom of the matter.

At half past eight in the evening, Erica called Matthew's cellphone. "Hello, Matthew, can you do me a favor?"

"What is it?"

"I have something important to do. I'm worried about leaving Ethan at home. Can you come back early to look after him for a while? If you are busy, just forget it."

Matthew paused to think and then said, "Bring him to me."

"Bring Ethan to your office?"

"Yes!"

"Okay."

At Hilton Group

Matthew hung up the phone and faced Harmon Loftus, who was sitting on the sofa. "My wife will be here soon. You should get going."

"Oh, so my nephew's wife is coming?"

"Yes!"

"Good! I'd like to see her. I heard that she is quite the troublemaker. I couldn't meet her on your wedding day. I must meet her this time!" Harmon was the youngest son of Curtis. He had never met Erica because he was still living abroad when the two got married.

"There will be more chances in the future!" Matthew implied that Harmon would have to wait another day.

Fortunately, Harmon decided not to make his life miserable and stood up, buttoning his blazer. "Fine. I'll be in Alorith for a few days. When you have the time, invite Sheffield and Joshua. Let's have some drinks."

"Sounds like a plan."

"Bye."

Silence befell Matthew's office for about ten minutes before the door was pushed open from the outside.

Erica walked in with baby Ethan wearing a yellow onesie in her arms. "Phew! I am so exhausted! This little fellow is getting heavier and heavier! Matthew, come here and take him," Erica said.

Matthew put down the pen in his hand, walked over and took over Ethan from her arms.

Erica heaved a deep sigh and said, "I've got something important to do and I can't bring him with me. Please take care of him. I'll be back soon!"

Glancing at her, Matthew asked, "Where are you going?"

"Oh, I'm going to..." Erica paused and told him the first excuse she thought up in her mind. "I'm going to see a friend."

Matthew caught the look of guilt in the girl's eyes. Obviously, she was lying!

"I see," he simply said.

"Thank you!" Erica was surprised how easily Matthew had dropped the topic. 'That's it?' Erica was pleasantly surprised.

"You're welcome," Matthew said. He walked to his desk and sat Ethan down on top.

Erica grinned and waved at the baby before she disappeared from Matthew's office.

It was only Matthew and the baby in the office. The two stared at each other in silence for a while, before Ethan leaned forward and prostrated himself on the desk.

CHAPTER 1164 I LIKE CRYING THE MOS

Baby Ethan rolled over and came close to Matthew, smiling and cooing softly; melting his heart with such an innocent face.

Matthew was hopelessly charmed by his smile as he couldn't help squeezing his cheeks softly. "I'll be done soon."

As soon as Erica got in the car, she sent a private message to Can't Do Anything. "What's the hotel's name?"

Fifteen minutes later, Erica, with a mask to hide her face, sneaked into the hotel following a guest who was checking in.

Before long, she found the elevator and pressed the button to Floor 23.

Hiding in a secluded corner, she peeked at the door of Room 2309, but found nothing.

After what seemed like ten minutes, she finally saw a familiar-looking person unlocking the door to Room 2309.

Five minutes later, Erica's mask was in the garbage bin outside the hotel, while she hailed a taxi from the side of the road.

Alas! Just as what Can't Do Anything said, Aaron was, indeed, accompanied by another man inside his room.

Erica felt so distressed! In truth, she wouldn't have a problem with it if Aaron and that man were really in love with each other. Obviously, she wasn't against homosexual relationships. However, the man with Aaron looked to be in his forties and he seemed like the kind of person to have a family of his own.

Well, she could never bring herself to like Aaron again!

When she was about to reach Hilton Group, she received a call from Matthew. He asked her to go home directly since he and Ethan were already back in the villa.

Erica had to persuade the taxi driver to change destination and take her to the villa instead.

In the bedroom on the third floor

Erica pushed the door open and found it to be quiet inside. A baby was sound asleep in the middle of the bed.

Matthew had just stepped out of the bathroom just then. "Don't stay up late."

Erica nodded casually as if she weren't actually panicking inside. Staring at the man in pajamas, she

couldn't help but think of the fight she had with Matthew two days ago because of Aaron.

Matthew had been nothing but nice to her. He gave her money; washed her feet and even cooked noodles for her, but she had an argument with him over an unscrupulous man. Alas! She had been wrong about Matthew all along. A deep sense of guilt arose in her heart.

Noticing her absent-mindedness, Matthew turned around and looked at her. "What's up?"

Erica wanted to say that everything was fine, but her curiosity got the best of her. "What do you know about Aaron?"

"I know that he is a scumbag!"

"Didn't you say you didn't know him before? How come you have such a strong opinion about him now?"

Matthew walked up to her and squinted his eyes suspiciously. "I didn't know him before, but I do know him now. This is the last time the Hilton Group will ever work with him. We won't hire an entertainer who is a scumbag."

Pretending to know nothing, Erica continued, "What did he do?"

A smile flashed across Matthew's eyes. "I always wanted to ask you this question!"

"What is it?"

"Is Aaron a man or a woman?"

Erica was rendered speechless. She knew he was aware of the answer. "Of course a man!" she replied anyway.

"Then why did he suggest Mr. Milo get a room with him in a hotel?"

"Mister? I thought the general manger was a woman."

"He is a man, but Mr. Milo didn't go. It's not wrong for a person to have an idol, but you should keep your eyes open and find a person with good morality to idolize in the future."

Erica felt utterly humiliated for liking Aaron. She wanted nothing more than to dig a hole in the ground and hide from her embarrassment.

Can't Do Anything and Matthew had wiped out the good impression of Aaron on her mind.

That night, Erica deleted the photo of her and Aaron from Weibo. Many people asked her why she had

deleted it, but she was too embarrassed to even talk about Aaron's disgusting deeds. As such, she didn't give anyone a response.

On the noon of the third day, when Wesley came to pick up Ethan, Erica couldn't help but shed a few tears.

She felt disappointed at how easily she fell to sadness at the thought of not seeing the baby. What if, however, Tam took the child away and she couldn't see him ever again? The mere thought of it was enough to devastate her.

'I have to be stronger!' she told herself.

After Wesley left, she kept comforting herself, "I'm not sad. I'm not sad!"

But when Matthew came back in the evening, Erica couldn't help but sob at the first sight of him.

Confused, Matthew asked, "Did I frighten you?" 'She seemed okay just now. What could've happened?'

Erica shook her head, sniffing like a baby.

"Then why are you crying?"

Erica answered, "I miss Ethan."

Matthew heaved a sigh of relief and loosened his tie. "I'll have someone pick him up tomorrow."

"No!"

"Why not?"

Erica immediately changed the topic. "I want to eat noodles."

'What does missing Ethan have anything to do with eating noodles?' Matthew was even more confused. "You haven't had dinner yet, right?"

Erica mumbled, "I have." In truth, ever since Ethan had left, she had lost her appetite and now her stomach had begun to growl.

With a serious look on his face, Matthew said, "Please talk normally!"

Suddenly, Erica, whose eyes were just red, burst into tears. "Waah... Waah..."

Panic flashed across Matthew's eyes. He didn't know how to comfort her, but eventually he chose to frighten her. "Shut up! I hate to see women crying!"

Erica wailed even louder. "Really?"

"Yes!"

"What a coincidence! I love crying!" 'What do I do?' Matthew wondered, massaging his temples.

When Matthew gave her no response, she responded, muffled sobs wracking against her chest, "Since I like crying, you should stop liking me!"

Rolling his eyes at her, Matthew replied fiercely, "You cry all the time. Who will like you?"

"Don't you know that it's not healthy to suppress your feelings? I cry whenever I want to because I don't like to keep things bottled up inside me. Waaaah..." Not only did she cry, she cried like her world had disappeared!

Matthew was on the verge of having a nervous breakdown! He never thought that Erica would be a lot harder to deal with than a one-billion-dollar cooperation deal. After a while, he was forced to raise his hands, gesturing her to stop. "I promise I'll make noodles for you if you stop!"

Erica's crying stopped at once. She quickly wiped her tears and said, "With a sausage!"

"Got it!" Astounded at how strange the girl was, Matthew glared at her coldly as he took off his suit jacket and hurled it at her. "Put it away!"

With tears in her eyes, Erica grinned, "Okay, Matthew!"

After hanging his jacket on the rack, Erica followed Matthew into the pantry.

With a can of coke and some crispy dates in her hands, she walked into the kitchen and put a crispy date into Matthew's mouth. "There is still something missing in the fridge. Do you know what it is?"

Matthew responded, while chewing the date in his mouth. "What?"

"You have such a big pantry. Why don't you put some sweets and desserts in it? Perhaps some macarons? Tiramisu...Souffle. Oh, can I just live in the pantry from now on?"

"You want some macarons?"

Erica nodded. "Yes!" Although, Erica had a sweet tooth, she was also too self-conscious of putting on extra weight.

Matthew smiled at her and said, "What a coincidence! I know how to make macarons!"

"Really?" Erica was so surprised her eyes widened with anticipation.

"Yes!"

"Then can you make some for me?"

"It depends on my mood!"

Erica smirked and said, "Well, should I try to please you?"

"I'm glad that you're smart enough to know what to do!"

After eating a large bowl of noodles, Erica finally felt calmer. Her pain of missing Ethan was reduced by Matthew's bowl of seafood noodles.

CHAPTER 1165 BEG ME

Rubbing her stuffed belly, Erica began making new trouble for Matthew. She watched him washing the dishes and asked, "Do you have work later?"

Matthew glanced at her and said, "Why? What do you have in mind?"

"I'm full. Let's watch a movie!"

"No, I'll pass. Also, aren't you too afraid to be watching horror movies? Go watch a cartoon or something."

'A cartoon?' How could he humiliate her like that?

When Erica walked to him, her eyes accidentally caught the bite mark on his hand. Dumbstruck, her eyes were wide in shock. "What happened to your hand?" If she didn't know any better, those looked like tooth imprints.

Following her gaze, Matthew sneered, "Are you suffering from amnesia?"

Erica suddenly remembered that she bit him in his office the other day when the couple fell into a heated argument. She actually had no idea how hard she had bitten him until today.

Smiling awkwardly, she said, "Hey, Matthew, you're a forgiving man. Don't hold any grudges against me. It was just a bite."

"Just a bite? Come here and let me show you what it was!"

Erica immediately took two steps back and hid her hands. "Don't be so petty. My father thinks that you're a very patient and tolerant man. You shouldn't treat a girl like this!"

Matthew put the pot back. "You? A girl? I think you are—" Matthew meant to say, "—a child."

However, Erica was annoyed at this comment because she thought that he was going to call her a woman. After all, she was already a mother to a child. "Why are you so hard to please? I gave you my first kiss!" Even Aaron didn't have the honor of getting her first kiss.

Two of her words caught Matthew's attention. Confused, he looked at her and asked, "Your first kiss?"

As soon as Erica realized her folly, she changed her stance and tried to cover it up with a lie. "Well, even though I gave birth to Ethan, it doesn't mean I gave my first kiss away. Isn't that normal?"

Matthew wiped his hands with a wet tissue and threw it into the trash can. He walked up to Erica, staring at her with deep eyes and said, "No, it's not!"

"Why?" she asked.

Suddenly, Matthew stepped closer and backed her up against the marble table, his hands on either side of her body, trapping her. "Why... Let me tell you why."

Before she knew it, he lowered his head and kissed her slightly opened lips.

After a while, he let go of her and spoke with a hoarse voice. "Do you know why now?"

The girl shook her head to say that she still did not understand what he was trying to say.

"If you don't have any desire for someone, how could you love him?" Erica told Matthew that Ethan was her son, but now she was telling him that she had given him her first kiss. Her words failed to make any sense to him. After all, how could a woman with a child still save her first kiss?

Matthew couldn't figure out which part of her words was the truth and which was the lie.

Erica, who had little experience in relationships and even less in love, became more and more confused. She feigned anger to mask her nervousness. "Forget it! I don't want to get into that now. I just want you to watch a horror movie with me! Yes or no? Men usually don't hesitate or take so long to make such simple decisions!"

Matthew felt slightly offended by that. 'So, I'm being hesitant and slow?' This was the first time someone had described Matthew like this.

He lifted the girl in his arms and said, "Fine, it's just a horror movie anyway. But don't get too close to me later on when you get scared!"

Erica didn't struggle. Instead, she smiled, wrapping her arms around his shoulders and said, "Matthew,

don't be so mad."

Matthew put her down and arrogantly said, "Since you need me, try showing me some sincerity!"

This kind of thing had happened too many times in the past. Erica knew exactly what he meant, but she didn't want to compromise, as a cunning smirk appeared on her lips.

She kicked her slippers far away; pulled off her socks and threw them in the same direction. She stepped on the cold floor barefoot and started whining. "Matthew, the floor is so cold!"

Matthew scoffed. "Beg me and I'll carry you in my arms."

Erica still wouldn't compromise, and she turned around to go upstairs. "You beg to me! Then I'll decide if I want you to carry me or not!" He was fortunate enough to be able to hug her. Why should she be the one to beg him?

Matthew caught up with her quickly and picked her up in his arms with a dark face. "Erica, how dare you make me beg? You're getting more arrogant by the day."

Erica giggled and put her arms around his shoulders. "Master, I humble myself to you. Now will you please watch a movie with me? What if something happens and you're not around? If something bad happens, how would you explain it to my father?"

"Shut up! Cut the crap!" Of course, Matthew would watch the movie with her. The man eventually carried her up the stairs all the way to the second floor. Where else could he go with her apart from the home theater room on the fourth floor?

Erica complained, pouting, "The other day when I was just watching TV on the first floor, you forced me to go to the home theater room. Now that I've started watching movies there, you don't even want to keep me company. You can't do this!"

"Aren't you thirsty from talking so much?"

"I am thirsty! I want an apple!" Erica responded immediately.

Matthew shook her, pretending to throw her downstairs, which had Erica behaving properly in an instant. "Hey, hey, Matthew, chill!"

"Do you still want an apple?"

"No." Then she added, "I want a coke!"

Matthew muttered, "Are all women so difficult to deal with?"

"You want to know? You can just compare me to your mysterious muse."

Matthew seemed to be lost in thought. After a while, he said, "Yeah, women are definitely difficult to deal with."

Erica fell silent. But why did she feel a trace of sadness all of a sudden? She was just fine after that scrumptious bowl of seafood noodles just now.

In the home theater room, Erica decided to play smart this time. She asked Matthew where he wanted to sit and then she grabbed the seat first.

When Matthew turned on all the equipment and came back, Erica was waiting for him in his seat with a smile.

Matthew, however, picked a different recliner.

She pulled a long face. "I thought you were going to sit here?"

Matthew opened the program list and asked, "But you've already taken that seat!"

"I just want to sit with you!"

However, the man didn't even give her a look. He crossed his legs arrogantly and sat in an intimidating way. "Beg me!"

"You know what, forget it. Why don't you just play a horror movie to scare me to death?"

Frustrated, Matthew came to the girl with the remote control and angrily gestured at Erica with his eyes. "Move!"

"Okay!" Erica immediately made room for him on the sofa and waited for him to sit down first.

When the movie was ready to play, Matthew suddenly stood up. Erica immediately asked, "Where are you going?"

"The bathroom! Do you want to join me?"

"I'll pass. Come back quickly!"

After leaving the theater room, Matthew took out his phone and called Wesley. "Dad, it's me."

"Matthew? It's late. What can I do for you? Did Rika get into trouble again?"

"No, Rika has been a good girl. Don't worry."

Wesley heaved a sigh of relief. "What did you want to ask? Go ahead."

"Which hospital was Ethan born in?"

"Well... I've never asked Erica about it. She didn't come back home until a month after she gave birth to Ethan." Wesley had also asked about Ethan before, but his questions were always met with strong rejection from Erica. He eventually decided to drop it since he was just glad that the child had returned home safely.

"When Rika told you that she was pregnant, was there any report from the hospital?" Matthew asked.

CHAPTER 1166 JOINT INVESTIGATION

"Yes, there was a report from the hospital. Both your mother-in-law and I saw it ourselves. What's going on, Matthew? Why are you asking about all this stuff right now?" Wesley asked.

Matthew thought it unnecessary to hide anything from him. "Dad, can you do me a favor?"

"Go ahead."

"Can you call Rika now and ask her if she had a Caesarean section or a natural labor when she gave birth to Ethan?" Matthew asked cautiously.

Even for his age, Wesley was sharp as a tack and he understood what was going on at once. "Are you suspecting that Ethan isn't Erica's son?"

"Yes."

Matthew's intuitive hunches had rarely failed him before. Wesley took a moment to regain his breath as he started to feel dizzy. "Hold on a minute!"

"Okay!"

Meanwhile, when Erica was waiting for Matthew to come out of the bathroom, she suddenly received a call from Blair. "Hey, Mom!"

"Rika, were you sleeping?"

"No, I'm still watching a movie."

"You're watching a horror movie again!" Blair knew what she was watching without even having to ask.

"Yes. I'm waiting for Matthew to join me in the home theater room. How's Ethan doing?"

"He is playing with his toys. I have something to ask you."

"Go ahead!" Erica said curiously.

The unsuspecting girl had no idea that her mother was actually acting on behalf of her father. Blair portrayed a casual demeanor to Erica and said, "Honey, when you gave birth to Ethan, was it a C-section or a natural labor? I heard that there's a new vaccine on the market. Apparently, you can get two shots."

"What? Vaccine? For a C-section or a natural labor?" Erica panicked.

"Um, for... natural labor."

"Then I can't have it. I had a C-section," Erica said feigning a remorseful tone as she breathed a sigh of relief.

"Well, that's all right. That's all I wanted to know. Don't stay up late, sweetie."

"Okay. I'll talk to you later." After hanging up the phone, Erica patted her chest. Fortunately, she was quick enough to avert her mom's questions.

A few minutes later, Matthew finally returned to the home theater room.

Erica sat up and waved at him. "Come on. The movie is just about to start!"

When he walked in, Erica noticed Matthew holding a plate of peeled apple slices and a can of coke.

Erica was touched to see the peeled apple slices. "No wonder it took you so long. You were peeling apples for me downstairs!"

Erica took a bite when Matthew picked up a slice and brought it to her mouth.

The man snorted with laughter. "I didn't expect you to take it!"

Erica blinked her eyes in confusion. "Why wouldn't I?"

Matthew was rendered speechless, his face resembling a blank canvas.

The two sat together and continued to watch the movie. After Erica ate the last slice of apple, she rubbed her stomach and groaned, "I'm so full!"

Matthew's eyes glistened as soon as the idea popped into his mind. "Let me see how full your stomach is!" As soon as he finished his words, his palms were under her clothes, ready to feel her stomach.

Erica felt shy and she immediately shied away. "Don't! I'm really full..."

To her surprise, however, Matthew softly pressed his fingers on her stomach and gave it a rub, as he said, "Your stomach is quite round. Yeah, I guess you must be really full."

Erica didn't even have the time to react or say anything.

She tried to stop him, but the man was too strong to out-power as he pressed her down with one arm and leaned in close to kiss her red lips, leaving her no chance to resist.

Three minutes later, Matthew slowly let go of the woman under him, with a smug smile on his face. 'Erica, you naughty girl, how dare you lie to me?' he thought.

Erica's shame turned into anger. She raised her voice and complained, "I thought you said you would treat me with respect? Why are you still doing this to me?"

Matthew calmly held her in his arms again and sat down. "But I never said I wouldn't make out with you."

Erica's mouth was agape in shock. The man was blatantly being arrogant.

In the dead of night, Erica fell asleep in the home theater room just as she did the last time, and again Matthew gently carried her back to the bedroom on the third floor.

After he was certain that she had fallen asleep, Matthew came to the study and dialed Wesley's number. "Dad, did Erica just say whether she had a natural labor or a Caesarean section?"

"Yes, she said she had a C-section," Wesley replied.

All the lights in the study were switched off, but the moonlight outside escaped through the curtains and illuminated the smile on Matthew's face. "But I couldn't find a scar on her stomach. I've just checked!"

As Erica had said that it was a C-section, even with all the surgeries, it would be impossible to make a 100% recovery.

Matthew felt Erica's belly with his own hands to make sure that he didn't leave any room for doubts.

Wesley was utterly dumbfounded.

So, Erica had them all fooled? Especially regarding such an important matter! "What caused your suspicion in the first place? Did you two..."

Matthew replied calmly, "No, Rika accidentally blurted out that the kiss on our wedding day was her first kiss."

"So?"

"Dad, you and my mother-in-law have been married for a very long time. You know some things better than I do. Do you really think it's possible for a woman to have a child and not give her first kiss to the father of her child? Also, when Rika was explaining herself to me, her eyes flickered constantly. It is obvious that she was hiding something. I had to be suspicious of her words."

Wesley said decisively, "I'll have someone look into it tomorrow!" At the very least, if Ethan really wasn't Erica's biological son, Wesley wouldn't feel guilty when he'd face Matthew in the future.

"No need for that, Dad. Let me do it! How did Rika prove her pregnancy?"

"She showed us a colored ultrasound report." Wesley immediately realized that there must have been something wrong with the colored ultrasound report!

"Dad, take the colored ultrasound report to the hospital and ask them about her pregnancy. I'll take care of the rest!" Matthew suggested. Matthew mused, thinking that Erica turned out to be far more interesting than he had thought.

"Okay! Go to bed early," Wesley said.

"Okay!"

Erica, who was still asleep, had no clue that her father and husband had started a joint investigation on her.

The next morning, Erica got up early and rushed to school, while Hyatt waited for her at the school gate as usual.

Seeing her struggling to carry the camera around her back, Hyatt immediately grabbed the camera and said, "Let me carry it for you!"

"No, no. I'm fine..." The lens she was using for today was extremely heavy, but she still managed nonetheless.

Hyatt, however, disregarded her completely and took the camera away from her to hang it around his neck.

Erica was deeply moved by his gesture of kindness. She patted him on the shoulder and said, "Thanks, buddy. I owe you a treat for this!"

Hyatt smiled shyly and said with his head lowered, "Thank you, Erica."

The classes that morning went smoothly. At noon, when Erica was resting in the dormitory, she realized

that the cleanser and toothpaste she kept in the bathroom had been used by someone else.

Erica could tell the difference at once because she had bought them just before she started school and she never stayed over at her dormitory long enough to use them.

When her roomie Kaitlyn Dawson, who slept in the bunk below hers, passed by the bathroom door, she found that Erica was staring at the cleanser in a daze. With a hint of guilt in her eyes, the girl came over to her and said, "Oh, Erica, I'm so sorry. I forgot to tell you. I bought a new cleanser two days ago, and it took me two uses to realize that we had bought the same brand. But I haven't used yours again after that. I hope you don't mind?"

The mystery of the missing cleanser had been solved! Since Erica's doubts were solved, she didn't care too much about it really. She just wanted to maintain a good relationship with her roommates, so she smiled back and said, "It doesn't matter. I was just a little confused. That's all."

"Thank you, Erica. You are so generous!"

CHAPTER 1167 A BLACK WIDOW SPIDER

Erica turned on the tap and began to wash her hands. "We are in the same dorm. There's no need to be so formal with me," she told her roommate.

After having a noon break, they went for their afternoon class, which, as per schedule, was theory of photography and styling. Somehow, Erica managed to get through the class without falling asleep.

After that, she walked out of the teaching building with Hyatt. Just as they were passing a corner, they heard a group of girls whispering something among themselves.

Erica was not interested in it at first, but she accidentally heard them mention the names of Phoebe and Matthew. That piqued her interest.

Immediately, she stopped Hyatt who was about to turn the corner and said, "Shush! Wait a moment!"

The two leaned against the other wall and nonchalantly began to eavesdrop on the girls' discussion. From what they could make out, there were three girls in the group.

The first one was saying, "Of course I know. I know Phoebe very well. I know that she is the woman in Matthew's heart."

The second one exclaimed, "Really? Tell us more!"

The first one continued, "Matthew and Phoebe have been in love for several years now. However, Erica, the Miss Troublemaker who gave birth to an illegitimate child, intervened in their relationship. Colonel Wesley then sought out Mr. Carlos and asked permission to engage their children in wedlock. It is already common knowledge that Colonel Wesley and Mr. Carlos have been good friends since before

their children were born. How could the former CEO refuse his best friend's request? So he agreed to the marriage. After finding that out, Phoebe had a big fight with Matthew and then married his best friend instead."

The third girl chimed in, "Wow, I heard rumors but never expected that it would be such a twisted story! I think Phoebe married Matthew's best friend on purpose just to get revenge on him."

The second one agreed, "I think so as well. Is it true that Phoebe is pregnant?"

The first one could then be seen shaking her head. "I don't know. I'll ask her and tell you when I find out."

Then the second one said, "Let's go now. And we should stay away from that Miss Troublemaker in the future. Hey, what's that on your head? Oh god! It's a spider! There is a spider on your head—"

"W-what? Where?" The first girl was so frightened when she heard that she stepped back suddenly and lost her balance in the process. She fell down and judging by her pained groan, also managed to sprain her ankle while doing so.

The third girl screamed, "Ah—Miss Troublemaker... Why are you here?"

The first girl was still screaming in horror since the spider had climbed over her head by now. Her screams attracted many people's attention.

Erica was holding a black box in her hand. The box was open. She tilted it slightly to reveal something inside. "Look! I have a black widow spider here. Would you like to have a taste of it? No, no. Scratch that—I wonder if the spider would like a taste of you!"

There was indeed a dark, black, sinister looking spider in the box, and they could see it crawling inside. It looked creepy even from a distance.

"Ah!" The third girl's face turned pale. She turned around and was about to run away, but Erica grabbed her clothes and asked, "Are we running away now?"

The girl trembled and began to apologize profusely, "Look! I'm sorry, I didn't say anything. Please let me go!"

In the confusion, the second one also tried to slip away, but Erica suddenly put the box right in front of her. "Ah!" A louder scream rang out.

Erica let go of the third girl, scratched her own ear carelessly and asked in a helpless manner, "Why are you screaming? I didn't do anything to you."

'You didn't do anything to us?' The girls were all shocked. The first girl was still weak from the shock of

spraining her ankle; she couldn't even stand up from the ground and looked highly embarrassed.

When she had felt that the spider crawling on her head had now climbed onto her face, she had been so frightened that she had closed her eyes and cried loudly, "Help!"

And to make it worse, when Erica had tried to pinch the spider on her face, she had happened to see that her victim seemed to have...wet her pants.

'Is she such a coward?' Erica thought.

Holding back her laughter, she put the spider back into the box leisurely, and then looked at the three girls. As if oblivious of the surrounding onlookers, she warned them, "You dare speak ill of me behind my back again, and I'll show you what fear feels like! And if you don't want to be bitten by this little black widow here, run three laps on the playground. Now!"

Anyone with common sense knew that if someone was bitten by a black widow spider, he would at the very least, be paralyzed if they didn't die!

The two crying girls nodded immediately. "Okay, we'll run!"

Just as everyone thought the matter was going to be resolved easily, Erica suddenly stopped them. "Wait!"

Under their frightened and confused eyes, she added, "You have to shout 'I'm a pig' while you are running."

The two girls were furious now. It was obvious that Erica was bullying them. Things had gone beyond revenge now!

The second girl plucked up her courage and stammered, "Erica, don't... You're going too far!"

"Well, if you don't want to do that, how about I tell you the effects of a black widow spider's bite. It's rather interesting! See first of all, the venom of the spider will spread from the wound to your entire body. You wouldn't notice anything and then your body will begin to tremble; finally, you will go into heart failure, your muscles will die and you will end up in the ICU. Oh also, for the rest of your life, you will have to depend on glucose for nutrition. Best case scenario, you die! Hey, I haven't finished yet. Why are you going so fast?"

Within just a few seconds, the second and third girls had already run off towards the playground, leaving behind only the first poor girl who was still unable to move. She had twisted her ankle and could not run. Even standing still was not an option for her.

Erica didn't want to talk to her anymore, but she had to say something to end this vendetta. "Alright then! You dare talk about me behind my back again, and this little poisonous spider will be on your

face!!"

The girl nodded incessantly, "I...I will never do something like that again."

Satisfied with her revenge, Erica left with Hyatt, who was, by this time, used to such scenes.

While passing by the frightened girl, Hyatt also gave her a sympathetic look, as if saying, 'So many people in the world, and you had to go and provoke Miss Troublemaker?'

Where do you think her title of "Miss Troublemaker" comes from? This is the same person who has been giving Colonel Wesley a headache for more than 20 years now. How ordinary would that person be?'

At Hilton Group

Matthew walked out of his office holding some documents and told Owen, "I am going to the financial department first. Remember to bring the data with you later."

"Yes, Mr. Matthew."

Matthew entered the elevator with two documents in his hands.

When he reached the financial department, he discovered two employees in the secretary division whose heads were lowered and they were doing something under the table.

He took a couple of steps forward and saw that the two women were engaged in origami. They were constantly folding a straw shaped thing back and forth in their hands.

Some of the work had been finished and Matthew saw that they were making colorful stars.

"What are you doing?" He spoke so suddenly that the two employees, who were completely engrossed in their work, got startled severely.

When they turned around and saw that it was the CEO of the company himself, their faces turned pale. The straws in their hands fell to the ground. They quickly stood up from their chairs and said, "Mr.... Mr. Matthew!"

Matthew picked up a long and slender plastic tube from the ground and looked at it for a long time. But he couldn't figure out what it was.

One of the employees apologized, "I'm so sorry, Mr. Matthew. We understand that this was wrong. But we've already finished our work for today... We shouldn't do this at office hours. Mr. Matthew, sorry..."

"What's this?"

Matthew interrupted their apology and his question left them dumbfounded. After a while, the other one told him in a low voice, "This is the plastic tube for folding stars, sir."

"Why are you making plastic stars?"

The employee blushed. "Tomorrow is my boyfriend's birthday. I want to give these to him."

Matthew asked, "How many stars do you want to make?"

"999."

CHAPTER 1168 SLEEP WITH YOU

"What do 999 stars mean?" Matthew asked.

The two female employees looked at each other and one of them explained, "It's like giving someone 999 roses, but 999 hand-made stars mean more. It's a personal gift to the one you love."

Owen, who had come downstairs, happened to overhear Matthew talking to the two women. "Where did you buy these colorful plastic tubes for folding stars?" he asked.

The two employees became more and more confused, but they honestly answered his questions anyway. "I can't remember, exactly. Still, these plastic straws are pretty cheap. You can find them all over the place."

Hearing this, Matthew took out his wallet, pulled out a wad of bills and handed it to the girl on the right. "Buy me a thousand pieces. I want them on my desk by tomorrow, just before your shift starts."

He found the best way to punish the naughty gal who called him "Matthew Xitala."

The girl stared at the stack of crisp hundreds he held in shock. It must be at least a few grand, at least. "No, I—"

"Not enough?"

As he asked, Matthew dipped his hand in his wallet once more. The woman waved her hand and tried to calm herself down. "No, Mr. Matthew. It's not that expensive. I can buy tons of straws for a buck. It's my honor to buy something for you. I'll have it on your desk tomorrow morning."

Matthew took a look at the money in his hand, and then handed a thousand dollars to her. "Better use my cash. I'd never ask you to use your own money on something like this. Take it, and keep the change."

Unable to refuse, the woman took the money and said, "Thank you, Mr. Matthew."

"Thanks for your help." Matthew tucked his wallet in his back pocket and left, leaving the two female employees stunned. It took them a while to process what just happened.

They couldn't help but wonder if Matthew was going to fold stars himself and then give them to someone.

As soon as Matthew arrived at the door to the office of the financial manager, his phone began to vibrate in his pocket. He didn't intend to answer it, because what he was going to do was very important.

But when he saw the caller's ID was the principal from Erica's school, he turned around and slid the answer key at once. "Hello, Mr. Zabulon."

"Hello, Mr. Matthew. I hope I'm not interrupting your work, but Mrs. Erica...caused trouble at school."

Matthew felt a headache coming on as he listened to the other man.

Meanwhile, Erica and Hyatt had bought a box of fish balls from a street vendor near the school. While they were eating, she got a call from Matthew. "Hi, what's up?"

"Come to my office now!"

"Now? That important, huh?" Erica was confused. Did Matthew know that she was already done with class for the day?

"Yes!"

"Okay, on my way."

After bidding Hyatt farewell, she flagged down a taxi and got in. She told the driver to head to the offices of Hilton Group.

Before she left the school, she also bought a cup of hot and sour rice noodles from one of the vending machines. The smell hit Matthew's nostrils before he even stepped in his office. He wrinkled his nose.

He stopped in his tracks and called Paige over. "What's that smell?"

Paige walked into the office and saw the girl sitting in Matthew's chair, eating hot and sour rice noodles.

When she saw Paige come in, Erica greeted her with a smile, "Hello, Ms. Paige."

Paige chuckled. "Mrs. Erica," she said in reply.

Walking out of the office, Paige told Matthew honestly, "Mr. Matthew, your wife is eating something in

your office."

Sighing silently, Matthew nodded and said, "I see." Then he walked into the office.

Sure enough!

Erica was scooping noodles into her mouth using a pair of disposable chopsticks. When she saw him, she waved at him and said, "I'm here!"

Frowning, Matthew wasn't sure he wanted to get any closer to her. "What are you eating?" he asked.

"Funny you should ask..." Really, she bought the noodle cup for him, but after a few minutes of waiting, she got hungry. So she took the lid off and dug in. She felt sheepish with his eyes on her.

In silence, Matthew turned and opened all the windows to let some fresh air in.

Erica picked up some rice noodles with her chopsticks and offered it to him. "Want a taste? It's nom and spicy!"

"No!" he refused decisively. It smelled weird to him.

"Your loss. More for me, I guess. I like it a lot!" She continued to munch on the spicy rice noodles.

Matthew threw the documents in his hands onto the desk and sat down on the sofa, making sure to keep a healthy distance from the pungent smell. He got right down to business. "Did you make trouble at school?"

"What? I don't know that I'd call it trouble. How'd you find out?" The girl took out a sheet of tissue and wiped her nose. Then she threw it into the trash can and continued to eat.

Matthew stared at her. She didn't seem to feel bad about what she did. "Why would you bring poisonous spiders to school?"

Erica was nonplussed for a moment and then smiled. "There are no poisonous spiders. I just caught two ordinary spiders in your garden. I was afraid that they'd scare you if they got inside. I was planning to throw them into a garden far away from your villa..." However, after she came out of the villa, she forgot to throw them away and took the box of spiders to school with her by accident.

She didn't expect those spiders to come in handy. She felt so happy when she scared the girls who had badmouthed her.

"Hold on, slow down. Who did you say was going to be frightened by the spiders?" Matthew thought he must have misheard.

Erica swallowed a mouthful of rice noodles and wiped the oil from her lips. "You. I was afraid the spiders would frighten you. After all, you've mostly lived in the big city. You've never seen bugs like that, have you?"

Matthew's lips twitched. He thought he must be masochistic. Why else did he marry Erica then, if not to piss him off?

In the past, Matthew had gotten trained by Wesley in wilderness survival. This went on for three years, once a month. He replied in a strained voice, because she was trying his patience. "First of all, spiders are not 'bugs,' they're arachnids. Secondly, your dad and I lived in the wilderness for a week. We only had three days worth of food, and had to figure how to find more. Know how old you were then?"

'Well...' No one knew better than Erica how cruel this training was. She had once gone there with her father and brother, but she ate the last of their rations. She woke up hungry the next morning, and was in agony from having to wait for her next meal.

At lunchtime, Gifford placed a spit-roasted snake in front of her as if he were presenting her with a precious treasure. Erica ran away from there as fast as she could.

Wesley couldn't catch up with her.

She figured that going camping like that was ridiculous. Could they just train there on the army base? Why did they have to go into the woods and eat those frogs and snakes, anyway? They even dug up grubs and trapped insects. Ew! She might like looking at them, but she never thought of popping them in her mouth.

She looked suspiciously at the thin man. "So did you get through it?"

Matthew looked into her eyes and said, "Of course. As long as I set my mind to it, there's nothing I can't do."

Erica took another bite of the rice noodles. She found it more and more interesting to chat with Matthew sometimes. "Now that you're among the richest men in the world, what else do you want to do besides earning more money?"

"Sleep with you."

"Ahem, ahem, ahem!" Erica was choked by the soup. She couldn't help but cough a few times as the soup was hot with pepper, and she sucked it down the wrong pipe.

While coughing, she reached out her hand to Matthew. "Water... Help!" she said, hoarsely.

Matthew fetched a glass of warm water for Erica and handed it to her. "That was dumb. What did you do that for?"

Erica felt like she was going to explode. She had no mood to argue with him. She drank a glass of warm water. She felt better, but it still hurt to breathe.

She used the tissues one by one, and the trash can was almost full.

Matthew took another glass of water and set it beside her. He patted her back gently and said, "Sorry, it's my fault."

"What?" She stared at him with her big tearful eyes.

Matthew explained, "I shouldn't have tried to talk to you while you were eating. I'll pay more attention next time."

"That's not the point..." She paused as she coughed again. "The point is that I... Ahem, ahem, ahem... God, I can't catch my breath!" She didn't want to die yet!

Truth was, she often chatted with others at mealtime, but they never discussed sex. That was pretty taboo, and he offered that suggestion out of the blue.

CHAPTER 1169 THEY ARE ALL CRAZY

Erica felt better after she quickly gulped down three glasses of water. She wiped her tears with a tissue listlessly and cried out, "I almost died!"

"Are you alright now?" Matthew asked.

"Yes, much better." Erica grabbed another tissue and blew her nose into it.

Matthew placed an intercom call and ordered, "Ask the cleaner to come to my office."

"Right away, Mr. Matthew."

Hanging up the call, Matthew looked at the cup of hot and sour rice noodles and frowned. "Do you still want to eat this?"

Afraid that he would throw it away, Erica quickly took the cup away from him. "Yes, I'm going to eat it." It was such delicious food; why would she waste it?

When the cleaner came in, Erica had just finished eating the last mouthful of rice noodles.

The cleaning lady emptied the trash bag which was full of used tissues and replaced the bin with a new bag. She also made sure to leave a new box of tissues on the desk.

Once the two of them were left alone in the office again, Erica told Matthew with a serious expression,

"That was not funny at all."

He nodded, "Of course, it wasn't. After all, it was not a joke."

Erica gawked at him. He was straightforward. She didn't know what to say. "Y-you...you said you would respect my wish."

"Yes, I will respect your wish."

His promise relieved her. "Okay, but why did you want me to come here?"

He looked at her sternly. "Ask yourself what you had done at school and why you were reported by three of your schoolmates," Matthew said flatly.

Erica understood at once. Those three girls had reported her to the principal. She scoffed disapprovingly, "They spoke ill of me behind my back and talked trash about you too. I only scared them a little. It was just spiders! You should have seen their faces; they turned pale at the sight of it. Cowards!"

Matthew sighed. 'Is this woman too bold, or are the others just too timid?' he wondered.

"I see. Then, how did one of the girls sprain her ankle?" The principal had told him that the girl had broken bones too.

"That had nothing to do with me! She twisted her ankle when she stepped back in fear. And she got so scared that she ended up wetting her pants!" Erica chuckled under her breath at first. But the more she thought about the scene, the more hilarious it became. She burst into laughter thinking about it.

Looking at the girl guffawing wildly, Matthew said, "You have just begun your studies in that school. Don't quarrel with your schoolmates already."

Erica stopped laughing and squinted at the man. "Are you saying that I should just ignore them and endure their insults silently?" If that was what he wanted from her, then she would most likely let him down. Erica was not the kind of woman who would blindly swallow insults and humiliation!

"No." How could he let anyone bully his women?

"Then what? What do you want me to do? Oh! I see. You just want to make my life hard, don't you?"

Matthew reached out and pulled the girl into his arms as she was about to beat him up. He easily got her into his control and said, "I'm not trying to make things hard for you. If this kind of thing happens again, you don't need to get your hands dirty. I'll have someone deal with it for you."

"What?" Erica asked slowly, staring at him.

"I mean it." He took her hand and played with it. "Mrs. Erice, your hand is so pretty. You don't need to catch any spiders with these soft hands. If you wish, you can always ask my men to shower them with real poisonous spiders."

'Whoa! That's a bit too much. Is he really so cruel?' she wondered in shock.

Seeing the confusion on her face, Matthew kissed her lips gently and said in a deep voice, "I told you. My next goal is to sleep with you. You're my wife, and you'll truly become mine sooner or later." And he wanted her to give herself to him willingly.

He wouldn't force the women to sleep with him. That wasn't his way of doing things.

Erice remained silent. She put her elbow on his shoulder and looked at him closely for a long time before asking, "Matthew, are you the reserved type or do you really care about morality so much that you never fool around with women? You have the goddess; the one you love so much. But your goddess cannot satisfy your needs, so you went to have sex with me."

If not for that, why would he go to sleep with her?

Matthew slowly closed his eyes in resignation. He didn't want to look at this woman anymore.

But Erice continued to prattle on, "I don't have a good figure; I'm not feminine. I don't know how to flatter men. Sleeping with me will only spoil your appetite. I honestly think that men who desire to sleep with me are all crazy!"

Matthew put one hand on his forehead and spat, "Get out!"

"No, don't drive me away yet," she said. "Listen, in my opinion, you should sleep with young models and superstars. I'm sure any of them could make you happier in bed than I could. Don't you agree?"

Matthew loosened his grip on her waist and asked, "Do you really want to push your husband into another woman's bed that much?" 'What did I do wrong in my previous life, that I ended up marrying such a "generous" wife in this life?' he wondered.

"Hmm. Tell me, do you wish to sleep with the goddess you've always loved?"

"Yes," he answered without hesitation.

"See what I meant?" Men are animals; they can only think with the lower part of their body. Even a proud man like Matthew was no exception.

He pinched her chin and tilted it to make her look into his eyes. "I heard that you wanted to marry a foreigner?"

His eyes darkened.

Blinking innocently, Erice denied, "Foreigner? No, it must be some kind of rumor."

"Rumor, is it? Then, what about the foreign boyfriend you had introduced to your parents last time?"
Matthew exposed her lie calmly.

'Does this man know everything?'

Erice marvelled. Maybe it was her father who had told on her! As Matthew's wife, Erice had to explain clearly. "That was just a friend, not a boyfriend. We met at the airport, and he took me home."

Matthew's lips curled upwards. "You think I would believe that?"

Erice put her arms around his neck and frowned on him with a flirty smile, "Of course, you'll believe me. I'm your wife; you must believe everything I say!"

Matthew smirked. "Haven't you always wanted to divorce me?"

"Of course not! My husband, Matthew, is the most handsome, smart and talented man in the world. Your charm can't be resisted. Could there ever be another perfect man like you?" Erice calmly buttered him up.

The man's eyes filled with disgust. "Do you always flatter people like this?"

Erice wasn't ashamed by his words. She lied to his face again, "I don't give a damn about flattering anyone. I was really just praising you."

Matthew didn't say anything.

Usually, it was men who always lied to women. But in his case, it was the other way round. His wife was full of lies.

But he didn't want to continue this charade anymore. He changed the topic. "What do you want for dinner?"

"What else can you cook?"

"You want me to cook for you again?" He wondered if he was being too good to this woman. It was making her bolder by the day.

Erice grinned, "Okay! Treat me to hot pot!"

He raised his eyebrows. "Why would I treat you?"

'Because I'm stingy!' she laughed cunningly in her mind. "Because it's expensive. If you want me to treat you, I can buy you a bowl of Liuzhou river snails rice noodles."

"What is that?"

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"What is that?"

CHAPTER 1170 A MYSTERY ABOUT A GIRL

Erica was shocked to hear Matthew's question. "What? You've never heard of Liuzhou river snails rice noodles*?"

(*TN: Liuzhou river snails rice noodles is the most famous local delicacy of Liuzhou, Guangxi, China.) Erica held his face in her palms and added, "That's so sad. Let's go. I'll take you out for some smelly, yummy river snails rice noodles. Trust me, the first taste will keep you coming back for more!"

Matthew had already lost his appetite when he heard the word "smelly." He grabbed Erica's hand as she was pulling him up, and stopped her. "Let's just eat at home!"

Erica smiled innocently and said, "I'm too embarrassed to ask you to cook for me."

Matthew hid his gritted teeth behind a cheerful facade and said, "It would be my honor to be Mrs. Erica's cook."

"I'm flattered, Mr. Matthew,"

Erica replied with a grin on her face.

In Askor

The next morning after talking to Matthew on the phone, Wesley had someone look into the files of the Obstetrics and Gynecology department in a private hospital in Askor. Unfortunately, his contact couldn't find any files with Erica's medical record. In fact, much to their surprise, there wasn't even a single trace of Erica in any other department.

While Erica was eating hot and sour rice noodles in Matthew's office, Wesley went to the office of the private hospital's president. He showed the man the original copy of the colored ultrasound report Erica had shown him and Blair when she had announced her pregnancy to them.

The president was an old man, who adjusted his glasses, looked at the colored ultrasound report and asked Wesley curiously, "Wesley, you didn't know about it?"

Wesley found the man's question to be pointless. If Wesley had known about it, why would he be standing there in his office?

After getting no response from Wesley, the old president of the hospital paused to think for a while and then said, "Erica told me that you asked her to come to me for a fake colored ultrasound report. I didn't think to interrogate her because she said it was urgent."

The old president had a good relationship with Baldwin. In fact, he had watched Erica grow up with his own eyes. When Erica mentioned Wesley's name, he acted at once without even thinking about anything else.

There was, however, a doubt in his heart as to why a child would want a fake colored ultrasound report, but it wasn't enough to change his mind.

As he looked at Wesley's livid face, the president soon realized that Wesley must have been deceived by his daughter.

Thinking back to that day, the old president realized that Erica's excuse had many loopholes in it, but he

just didn't think too much of it back then.

Wesley put away the report in silence. "Did she come to you again after that?"

"No, actually I haven't seen her since then."

"Okay, thank you. I should be leaving now!"

The old president pushed his glasses up and asked, "What is going on?"

"Erica needs to be taught a lesson again!" Wesley replied.

The old man waved at him dismissively, "Do you think I don't know you? You would never lay a finger on her. Moreover, she moved to Alorith after her wedding. You wouldn't be able to punish her even if you wanted to."

Wesley remained silent, since the old man was right.

At the Leonard house

As soon as Wesley came back home, Blair walked up to him with Ethan in her arms. "How did it go?"

Wesley said, with a darkened face, "We were all fooled by Erica!"

Knowing what he had meant, Blair looked at the baby in her arms in astonishment. After a long while, she murmured, "No wonder Ethan doesn't look like Rika at all. Now I see why..."

Wesley took Ethan from Blair's arms and sighed in exasperation, 'This little one only knows how to say "Grandma." What about "Grandpa"?'

Blair walked around the living room for a while, her eyes focused on nothing in particular. She seemed to have remembered something as she suddenly said, "That means Erica and Matthew haven't...You know what I mean! Not yet at least."

Wesley had wanted to ask Matthew about this himself the previous night, but Matthew gave him a vague answer. In fact, Wesley couldn't figure out if Matthew had meant that he hadn't slept with Erica yet or if he began to question Ethan's identity while they were trying to have sex. Nodding his head at Blair, Wesley said, "Go on with your analysis."

"At least, now we know that Rika's wild lifestyle has its limits." Blair was now certain that when Erica married Matthew, she was still a virgin. She continued, "Matthew must have figured out her lie solely based on Erica's words. My best guess is that they haven't consummated their marriage yet. But, I still can't figure out why!"

Wesley snorted with laughter. "No need to guess. It must be Erica!" Wesley's assumption was based on the fact that since Matthew was willing to marry Erica, no lack of interest or effort could come from his side.

"If that's the case, then Matthew must have been indulging her all along!"

"You know what? I'm going to call Matthew. If you don't have anything urgent to do, call Rika and tell her that she's the daughter-in-law of the Hilton family now; she should know what she should do and what she shouldn't."

Blair sighed and then nodded as she immediately understood that she was going to have to have a mother-daughter talk with Erica.

While Erica was taking advantage of Matthew's generosity, he received a phone call from Wesley. He put down the knife in his hand and looked into the living room. After he was certain that Erica was watching television, Matthew slid the answer key and whispered, "Hi, Dad!"

Wesley didn't beat around the bush. "I've confirmed that the colored ultrasound report is fake. We were deceived!"

'So, I was right!' Matthew thought. With a smile at the corners of his mouth, Matthew said, "I see! Thanks, Dad!"

"But I haven't found out who the father of the child is yet," Wesley added.

"It doesn't matter. Sooner or later, we will find out. Ethan's biological father has already expressed his intention to take him back." The only thing Matthew cared about was the fact that Ethan wasn't Erica's biological son. The identity of the kid's real father didn't matter to him at all.

Since Erica wanted to keep the father's identity a secret from everyone, she must have had good reasons to do so. That was why Matthew decided not to investigate further into the matter.

He acknowledged and respected the fact that there were some things that Erica didn't want him to know about her. Especially, since it was such a personal issue, if she found out that he was secretly probing into it, he wouldn't be able to face her wrath.

"Well, thank you for everything you've done for her, Matthew." No one knew better than Wesley how troublesome and difficult to handle Erica was.

"No, you misunderstood her, Dad. I think Erica is a good person." '...and interesting.'

Ever since he got married to Erica, his life had become more adventurous and exciting.

Matthew's sincere attitude put Wesley's mind to ease. "Don't spoil her too much. It'll only make her

push you further. The more you spoil her, the more rebellious she will be, okay?"

"It's better to be rebellious. At least then, she won't be bullied by others when we are not at her side."

Wesley was deeply impressed by Matthew's words. Once again, he felt assured that marrying Erica to Matthew was the right choice.

Suffice it to say, he was deeply pleased with his son-in-law!

After hanging up, Matthew put his phone away to wash his hands so he could continue cutting the vegetables. Suddenly, he noticed Erica standing next to the kitchen counter, staring at him with one hand rubbing her chin curiously.

He asked, "What's up?"

"Who were you talking to? Why do you sound so happy?" All Erica heard before Matthew hung up was the man saying goodbye to someone.

Matthew remained silent while he turned on the tap and washed his hands. Then he answered, "I've uncovered a mystery."

"What mystery?" Erica's interest was piqued.

He deliberately pretended to be vague. "A mystery about a girl!"

"A girl? Which girl? Do I know her?"

"Take a guess!"

'Guess?' Erica pouted, quickly becoming disenchanted with this game. Just as she had opened her mouth to say something, her phone rang in her pocket. "Mom?"

It was Blair.

"Rika, what are you doing?"

"I'm waiting for dinner!" Erica sounded bored when she replied.

"I have something to tell you. Listen carefully."

"I'm listening!"

"Have you and Matthew slept together yet?"

'Huh?' Erica blinked her eyes curiously. "Yes, I have. We sleep in the same bed every night."

Meanwhile, Matthew was alerted by Erica's answer.

"That's not what I asked. I mean..." Blair got a little frustrated, sensing her daughter's confusion. Needless to say, she felt embarrassed to talk to her daughter about this topic. "Have you and Matthew done it yet?"