

TMBA 1241

## CHAPTER 1241 CAUSING DRAMA

At Leonard family residence

Knowing there was no way out, Erica slowly entered the dwelling. Several bodyguards stood at the door and greeted her in unison, "Mrs. Hilton!"

She forced a smile. "Hello!"

In the living room

Blair and Matthew were the only ones there.

Matthew sat there in his usual calm and domineering manner, while Blair paced back and forth in the living room.

As soon as Erica came in, Blair rushed up to her and roared, "Erica, why are you causing drama again? You think things were going too well?"

For the last several years, Blair had been an elegant, noble lady of the Leonard family. But around someone like Erica, she lost all her elegance. At this moment, she was just an old mom, worried about her youngest daughter and all the trouble she could cause.

Erica quietly stole a glance at the man on the sofa. He just stared at the painting hung on the wall, as if he hadn't seen her.

Erica put a finger in her ear, as if she could clear the ringing that way. "Mom..." she said. 'I know I was wrong, okay?'

After rolling his eyes at his daughter, Wesley pulled Blair aside and whispered in her ear.

The angry mother's eyes widened in shock.

Erica was uneasy about the way her mother glared at her. Turned out she was right. Blair reached up and grabbed her ear. "You know this means I need to teach you a lesson, right?" Erica had been married to Matthew for a while now, but they never consummated their marriage. And it was probably Erica's fault. It was so ridiculous! Blair just couldn't believe it.

"Cut it out, Mom. That hurts..." Erica covered her throbbing red ear with a whine, feeling resentful.

It was not that she didn't want to sleep with Matthew. She was afraid. What was she supposed to do?

The man sitting on the sofa finally spoke up. He walked up to the mother and daughter and said

carefully, "I'm just happy Erica's back here safe and sound. Everything else is my problem. I'll have a talk with her."

Blair wasn't about to let her off the hook. "Quit defending her, Matthew. It's my fault she turned out like this. I should be the one to teach her a lesson!" She had let it slide too long. Erica had gotten away with a lot when she was still living at home. But she was all grown up and married. Her daughter never lost that stubborn streak.

The girl's eyes started tearing up. Matthew came over and held her hand. "Mom, let me handle this, okay? I need to talk to my wife!"

Since he asked her, Blair had to relent. It was his business. She sighed heavily and said, "Matthew, I have something to say to Rika alone. Can you and Wesley wait downstairs for a bit?"

"Okay." Matthew nodded.

Erica immediately hid behind him, covered her burning ear with one hand, and pouted, "This is not cool. Mom will twist my ear off."

Blair glared at her. "Oh come on. You know I don't like violence. As long as you follow me upstairs, I won't hurt you."

Matthew patted the girl's hand to comfort her and said, "Just go upstairs, honey. I'll wait for you here."

Since he thought it would be okay, Erica reluctantly followed her mother upstairs.

Inside Erica's bedroom

Blair closed the door and asked, "Rika, how long have you been married to Matthew?"

'Where did that come from?' Erica wondered. "About three months."

"Why haven't you slept with him yet?" Blair asked straightforwardly. She was hoping for a grandchild soon.

The young girl bit her lower lip and said angrily, "How did you know? Did Matthew complain to you about this?"

"Do you think Matthew would say anything?" It was Wesley who had just told her.

'That's right. Matthew's not like that,' Erica thought. The anger in the girl's eyes was replaced by confusion. "Then how did you know?"

Blair rolled her eyes at her. "That's not the point. Tell me, why don't you want to make love to

Matthew? I'm pretty sure he wants to."

It was the twenty-first century now. Blair had thought her daughter would know what to do even if she didn't give her "the talk." Besides, back when Erica got married to Matthew, Blair thought she'd already had sex. But surprise, surprise! Erica was still a virgin! She didn't know anything about sex.

'Wow! My silly daughter!'

"He does..." Sitting on the sofa, Erica held her chin gloomily.

"Okay, so what's the problem?"

Erica fell silent. She had planned to discuss this with Rhea. But since Blair had already asked, she knew that her mother wouldn't stop until she had an answer. She explained simply, "Well...it's just that I'm a little scared."

"Scared? Of what? Are you afraid of Matthew?" Matthew could wilt grown men with a look. Other people were afraid of him, but that wasn't Erica.

"No, I'm not afraid of him. Mom...it's just... Okay, fine. I promise we'll start trying to make a kid." Erica stood up from the sofa and walked towards the door. She encouraged herself inwardly, 'Come on, Rika. It's just sex. I won't die from it, right? It's no big deal!'

Blair pulled her back. "Rika, listen to me..."

The girl pouted and gave her mother a look. There was meaning at that look. She was restless and unhappy. "I get it, Mom. You want a grandkid. Well, I'm granting you your wish."

"Okay, but I want to tell you... Although it is really super-awkward the first time... Ahem!" Blair felt a little embarrassed. She coughed and continued, "It'll get better after that. Don't be afraid."

Erica and Blair never talked about sex. It just wasn't something that came up. For a moment, Erica was a little shy too, so she stopped her with, "I know, Mom! I know!"

"I hope you do! Look, this is a win-win situation. Matthew should relax more. That guy is a cold one! Maybe being more loving would loosen him up. A happier husband means a happier wife. And I want grandkids! So just do what comes naturally. Don't bring other people's babies back here, either! I want a grandkid who will stick around a while." Blair didn't want to raise other people's kids anymore. She was so sad when the Watts family took Ethan away.

'Sounds like she wants me to ask Matthew?' Erica nodded absentmindedly, "I'll do my best." But she didn't really know how to tell Matthew she wanted to make love.

Ten minutes later, the mother and daughter went downstairs. Wesley and Matthew were sitting and

chattering in the living room. They seemed to be having a good time.

Seeing that Erica went downstairs, Matthew stood up from his seat and walked towards her. "I'm going back to Alorith. You want to stay here or go with me?"

Erica was going to say she would stay put for a few days. But she looked at her dad's face, and decided to change her answer. It didn't look like Wesley really wanted her around. "I'll go with you," she said finally.

"Why are you in such a hurry?" Blair asked, a bit surprised. "Matthew, how about you leave tomorrow? I'll cook for you tonight." She was hoping to introduce Chantel to Erica. She knew Chantel wouldn't be back till evening. If Erica left now, she couldn't get the two together.

"Sorry Mom," Matthew said. "I'll bring Rika by soon, don't worry. But I have something I need to deal with tonight. So I have to go."

Blair didn't insist. The old couple escorted the young couple to the door.

Wesley told Erica again and again, "If this happens again, I'll punish you within an inch of your life!"

Erica stuck out her tongue and said, "Got it, Dad."

Blair added, "Matthew is a great guy. Other guys would probably not have waited so long and forced the issue. Don't be so ungrateful."

Erica glanced at the man who was walking silently next to her. Why didn't he put in a good word for her this time?

## CHAPTER 1242 WHAT A SMALL WORLD

Matthew went to Erica's parents' place to pick her up in a chartered jet. So they both rode back in the same plane. When they landed, everyone disembarked. There was only him, Erica, and a few stewardesses and bodyguards on the tarmac.

Since they left the Leonard family's house, Matthew hadn't said a word to Erica.

He paid her no mind, because the moment he boarded the flight he opened his briefcase and his laptop and began working. He was still working when they climbed in the car, on the way to the Pearl Villa District.

What depressed Erica even more was that he went straight to work that day, without saying so much as a word. He didn't come back to the villa that night.

Erica looked down at her wine-red nightgown, feeling distressed. Her mother wanted her to be intimate

with Matthew, to make the first move. Blair wanted grandchildren. But if Matthew wouldn't come home, how could she do that?

Erica waited and waited. She donned the same nightgown four nights in a row, but Matthew never came home. He used to be home every night, barring the occasional business trip. Now, he was nowhere to be found.

Blair called her to make sure she was getting busy, to make certain she hadn't chickened out. It was important to her mom that she did this, and it became important to her. Maybe she'd stop being scared if they finally did the deed.

Erica wasn't about to tell her the truth. This was too embarrassing, and her parents would worry about her. She had no choice but to lie, saying they did.

Blair was so happy. She could finally have a grandson.

Erica felt helpless. Why didn't her mom bug Gifford about having a kid? Why did it always come down to Erica?

Oh, right! Gifford didn't even have a girlfriend. How could he have a baby?

When she remembered that, she made a silent vow to herself to introduce Gifford to some of her friends. Maybe they'd hit it off. Maybe he'd get married. Maybe her mom would stop bugging her for a baby. It had to work, right? Yes! What a brilliant idea!

One afternoon, after class, Erica went to Matthew's office with her camera. When she arrived at the company, Paige told her that Matthew had gone out to have tea with the mayor.

Sitting in the empty office, she took out her phone and sent a message to him. "Sorry, Matthew, I was wrong."

Her life was kind of a mess right now. She was scared to sleep alone in the big villa, and no one sat down to watch horror movies with her.

However, her husband didn't reply to her even when she left the office one hour later.

Eventually, seven days went by, and Matthew still had not come home. Erica and Hyatt attended a meeting of the Photography Association. They had formally joined the organization.

When Erica went onstage to introduce herself, she was surprised to see Watkins sitting in the audience.

He was looking at her with a smile. When he figured out she noticed him, Watkins gave her a thumbs up.

On her first day, there was not much to do there. The chairman took her and Hyatt around to tour the place and meet some important people.

Watkins was one of them. That was when Erica figured out he had a very good reason for being there—he was the director of the public relations department for the organization.

Halfway through, Hyatt had to leave. Something urgent came up at the school.

But the meeting hall was a little far from the school. It was inconvenient to call a cab. Erica asked her driver to take him wherever he needed to go.

After the meeting, Erica got in Watkins' car.

In the car, she played with her camera and said to Watkins, "You must be quite good at this."

"Not really. Our department is mainly responsible for promoting the association, and collecting fine examples of photography."

"I see. What's your major?"

However, before Watkins could answer her, he suddenly stepped on the brake.

Accompanied by a harsh screech, Erica was thrust forward abruptly, and her camera fell to the floor.

She looked up at Watkins, who was gasping for breath. He was frightened and his face was pale.

Erica looked out of the car through the windshield. There was a car accident, and they were a part of it. Their car had crashed into someone else's.

But fortunately, it wasn't too serious. She and Watkins were fine.

Soon enough, two people emerged from the other car. Erica took a closer look and found that they were part of the Campbell family—the sisters Camille and Phoebe.

Watkins unfastened his seat belt and left the car first. Erica didn't have time to think about it; she had to follow him.

Judging from how she acted, Erica figured Phoebe was fine. Phoebe stood calmly beside her sister's car and took it all in.

Camille had adopted all of Fanya's nobility and power. She struck an impressive figure just standing there.

At this moment, she was frowning, looking at her damaged brand-new white Emperor. She glanced at

Watkins indifferently and asked coldly, "Look what you did! Can you even drive?"

They were women, and not only that, Phoebe was pregnant. Watkins extended every courtesy to the pair. He bowed and apologized to them. "I'm sorry, are you alright? How's your car? I hope we didn't mess it up too badly."

Camille took a deep breath and said, "Can't you see it yourself? Go and start it for me!"

After saying that, she threw the car keys in her hand to Watkins.

He was forced to catch them and said, "Okay, I'll give it a shot."

Camille followed Watkins to the driver's side door. He sat down and tried to start the car. She climbed into the passenger seat next to him.

Erica's eyes were fixed on him the whole time. She didn't pay much attention to Phoebe. Before she knew it, Phoebe was stood right next to her. The woman said contemptuously, "Erica, I didn't expect to see you here. What a small world."

Erica shifted her gaze and looked at the woman in front of her. The other woman wore a form-hugging long dress today, and you could definitely tell she was quite pregnant.

Looking at her protruding belly, Erica felt annoyed. She couldn't forget that this woman was carrying Matthew's child.

Since she didn't get a reply, Phoebe turned her head to take a look at Watkins, who was busy starting the car, and then asked Erica, "Wow. Out alone with another man. In a car. Out in the boonies. Matthew know about this?"

Erica rolled her eyes at her. "What's wrong with you?"

Phoebe didn't get angry. Instead, she took a step forward and deliberately touched her swollen belly. "This is my baby. And Matthew's. It's growing nicely. Want to feel it?"

"No, thanks!" Erica refused decisively. She wasn't interested in the child her husband had with another woman.

She knew that Phoebe was trying to get her goat, and she wasn't in the mood.

To her surprise, Phoebe didn't give up. Instead, Phoebe held her hand and made her touch her developing baby.

And that was when Watkins and Camille got out of the car. Camille took out her phone and began to snap pics of the two cars as evidence, her back to Erica and Phoebe. Watkins went to call the insurance

company.

Upon touching Phoebe's soft belly, Erica reacted strongly and scolded the woman, "What the hell are you doing? I told you I didn't want to feel it! God! Do you speak the same language?"

At the thought that the baby in her belly was Matthew's, Erica wanted to twist Phoebe's head off!

She tried to withdraw her hand, but Phoebe held it so tightly that she couldn't move it.

#### CHAPTER 1243 PHOEBE HAD AN ACCIDENT

Before Erica could see what had happened, the grip on her hand loosened, and Phoebe fell backward. A scream escaped her lips as she landed on the ground.

Eric's hand was still frozen in midair.

It happened so fast that she was dumbfounded.

Camille snapped her phone shut and ran toward Phoebe. She squatted on the ground, gently grabbed her sister by the shoulders, and asked, "Phoebe, what happened? Are you okay?"

"Sister... my belly... hurts..." Phoebe clutched her abdomen and writhed in pain as she spoke.

Incensed, Camille stood from the ground, turned to Erica, and coldly demanded, "What did you do to my sister? Didn't you know that she is pregnant? That is Matthew's child. Can you afford the consequences should anything happen to the baby?"

Erica was shaken from her astonishment at the reminder that Phoebe was carrying Matthew's child. She glanced at the woman on the ground and said, "I didn't do anything. It's her fault. But if I were you, I would be calling an ambulance."

Camille was rendered speechless at the reminder of her thoughtlessness. She grabbed her phone and warned Erica as she dialed the number, "Don't you dare go anywhere. I'm going to tell the police what you did and have you arrested!"

The exchange between the women caught Watkins' attention. He ended his call and jogged to Erica. "What happened?"

Erica didn't respond. Instead, her eyes widened with shock when she saw the rapidly growing bloodstain on Phoebe's clothes. She grasped Watkins' sleeve and yanked hard several times. "Blood... Blood..."

Watkins seized Camille's arm to stop her. "It's too late to call for help. I'll drive her to the hospital," he offered.

Without waiting for a response, he gathered Phoebe in his arms and rushed toward the car. Camille,



who was close behind, opened the car door for him. A brief moment later, Phoebe was placed in the back seat, and Camille settled next to her.

Watkins returned to Erica, who seemed frozen. He patted her on the shoulder and said, "Erica, get in the car. We need to get to the hospital."

Erica took several deep breaths. She still couldn't believe what she had witnessed. Never before had she seen so much blood! Weak-kneed, she followed Watkins to the car and climbed into the passenger seat.

Watkins reversed his damaged car, bypassed Camille's parked vehicle, and pressed hard on the accelerator.

Phoebe screamed the whole way. Erica's hands turned white as her grip on the seat belt became tighter and tighter. She tried to recall what had led to the accident. How did Phoebe fall?

A little over ten minutes later, Watkins rushed into the hospital's outpatient department with the bleeding pregnant woman in his arms. Mindless of the blood covering her, Camille followed closely.

Erica didn't get out of the car. She pulled out her phone and dialed Matthew's number. Her voice trembled as she spoke. "Matthew, Phoebe had an accident... "

Half an hour later, Matthew and Owen arrived at the hospital.

The light above the emergency room was still on, and in the corridor, stood the bloodstained Watkins and Camille.

When Matthew searched the room, he found Erica leaning against a wall far from the emergency room. She appeared so distraught and lost in thought that she didn't even notice that Matthew had stepped out of the elevator.

Concern laced his voice as he asked, "Are you all right?"

Her eyes blinked rapidly, as though seeing the man for the first time. It was only then that Erica snapped out of shock. A tear slid down her cheek, and her red lips quivered. "She...the baby... is gone..."

This was what the doctor had said when he asked Camille to sign the surgery risk notice.

Matthew frowned. "What happened?"

Erica shook her head. She was still trying to process the news that Phoebe had miscarried.

Not wanting to pressure her, Matthew approached the other two people in the room. When he saw Watkins, his frown deepened. He asked Camille first, "Tell me what led to this!"

Camille's eyes narrowed as she turned to where Erica was standing. Hatred glimmered in her eyes as she spat out, "It's her fault! She pushed Phoebe to the ground. Her actions caused my sister to lose her child!"

Erica was shocked by her sudden accusation. She hadn't done anything to Phoebe!

Matthew's expression morphed from concern to ominous. His tone was cold as he warned, "Camille, if you can't support your claims, you will be responsible for slandering an innocent person. That is a crime!"

Camille intensified her gaze on Erica and replied in a calm tone, "I am not maligning her. I saw her arguing with Phoebe and pushing her. By the time I tried to stop her, it was too late..."

Erica rushed forward with clenched fists. As soon as she neared the woman, she raised her hand, intending to slap Camille.

However, a firm grip on her wrist stopped her.

It was Watkins!

He persuaded her gently, "Erica, calm down. It's not appropriate to hit someone."

Matthew pried Watkins' fingers loose from Erica's wrist and pulled her into his arms. His glare was so cold that it pierced through Watkins like a knife. "Watkins, if my wife wants to hit someone, she can. What's it to you?"

"I just don't think it's acceptable..." Watkins replied.

Erica ignored the men and stared at Camille. "Camille, I have no enmity with you. Why do you blame me like this?"

'How dare she tell Matthew lies about me? Who the hell does she think she is?'

A scornful smile danced on the corners of Camille's mouth. Erica didn't threaten her. "So, you deny it? We'll know the truth when Phoebe comes out of the operating room!"

Half an hour later, they were in the ward.

Erica listened with a frosty expression as the pale-faced woman on the bed sobbed weakly to the man sitting beside her. "I didn't want her to touch my belly. But she placed her hand on it regardless of my objections. I tried to pull her hand away, but she pushed me down..." Phoebe sobbed.

Erica peered at Matthew only to find that he was listening to Phoebe's accusations expressionlessly.

"Matthew, I know Tessie has wronged her, but the child was innocent! I've been trying to avoid her recently, but I didn't expect that... Boo... Hoo..." Phoebe couldn't contain her emotions anymore and began to wail so much that she seemed out of breath.

As Camille had gone home to change and Watkins was dealing with the car accident, the three were alone in the ward. The woman's weeping grew louder and louder.

After a while, Matthew asked Erica to accompany him outside. He looked at his watch and instructed, "Owen, take Erica home."

Owen, who had been waiting for orders near the ward, hurried forward. "Yes, Matthew."

But Erica stood still stubbornly. "So, you believe her?"

The man was silent for a moment. "I have sent someone to collect the vehicle recorder and the surveillance recordings from the scene of the accident. I'll trust the evidence that I see with my eyes." 'But, I believe you more than anyone or anything, ' he thought.

Erica crossed her arms and questioned, "Why haven't you been coming home these past few days?"

Matthew's eyes searched her face for evidence of emotions as he replied, "Give me a reason to come home."

"You..." Erica bit her lower lip in exasperation. 'No one needs a reason to go home. He's just making things difficult for me!'

Ignoring the anger reflecting on her face, Matthew said indifferently, "I thought that after these three months together, you would know how I feel about you, but..."

#### CHAPTER 1244 GIVE A CHILD AS COMPENSATION

Matthew looked Erica in the eye. "I realized that I was wrong. I was totally wrong. You never cared about me. Your heart belongs to someone else. Why should I come to the villa and stay under the same roof as you, humiliating myself?"

With every word he said, he paid close attention to the expressions on her face.

Since he thought that she didn't care about him, he had stayed away from her all this while to show her how it felt to be ignored.

It looked like it bugged her that he didn't come home even though he was in Alorith.

Erica's eyes filled with shock and anxiety. "No..."

She wanted to explain. She wanted to tell him that she didn't like any other man.

If there was someone she loved, it was Matthew. The man she loved the most was... Matthew.

But Matthew stopped her. "It doesn't matter. Leave. We'll talk about it when I come home. I have something important to do now." He had to investigate the Campbell sisters to prove Erica's innocence.

But she misunderstood him. She thought that the more important thing to him at that moment was being with Phoebe.

Distress overwhelmed her. She opened her mouth, but said nothing. With a somber face, she left the hospital with Owen.

It was late. Erica tossed and turned in her bed, but couldn't fall asleep. One thought that haunted her was what had happened to Phoebe. And the other was that, once again, Matthew didn't come home.

'He must be in the hospital with Phoebe, ' she thought unhappily. 'They lost their child. It must feel horrible for them and they sympathize with each other.'

She thought more about this over dinner and finally made up her mind. It would be so much better if Matthew trusted her, but if he didn't, then... then she would give him a child!

At Hilton Group

The bodyguard who, under Matthew's orders, was following Erica around in secret, reported, "Matthew, when the accident happened, I was a little behind Erica. I thought that you, Erica and Phoebe are friends, so I didn't get too close to them. The situation escalated very quickly. Phoebe fell to the ground not long after their conversation started."

The bodyguard had stayed away from the scene since Matthew had ordered him to follow Erica in secret.

Matthew asked, "Did you see her push Phoebe?"

"No, sir, but I saw the two of them put their hands on Phoebe's belly for some reason. That was when Phoebe fell down." He was not sure what had really happened.

"Fine. You may leave now."

After the bodyguard left his office, Matthew turned on his computer and carefully watched the car's drive recorder.

It was clear from the video that Watkins didn't slow down when he turned right, causing his car to collide with Camille's car, which was turning left at the same time. There was no significant information in that video.

There were no surveillance cameras at the scene of the accident. The DVR showed Erica standing with her back against Watkins' car, and she also had physical contact with Phoebe. As for who had touched whom first, or if Erica had pushed Phoebe, it was difficult to tell.

There was nothing much in Camille's drive recorder either. Phoebe was standing with her back against the car, blocking everything. But what was clearer in it than Watkins' DVR was that Erica and Phoebe entered a quarrel. Again, it was hard to tell whether Erica had really pushed Phoebe.

Matthew withdrew his gaze from the screen and leaned back against the chair, massaging his tired eyebrows.

He hadn't planned on going home that night, but the thought that Erica might be frightened and alone by herself made him change his mind. He grabbed his jacket and walked out of the office.

It was two o'clock in the morning. There were but a few pedestrians on the streets, and a car or two whistled past once in a while.

Matthew's Emperor ran smoothly on the silent road. He was resting with his eyes shut when his phone buzzed. It was a message alert.

He slowly took out his phone and clicked on the WeChat message from Erica. The content made him smile for the first time in a long while.

"Believe it or not, I won't give up on the status as Mrs. Hilton. Just ask Phoebe to give up! It's useless even if you tell my parents on me. I'll just tell your dad that you're trying to dump me for your mistress. And even if you don't love me, I won't divorce you. Marriage is not a game! And getting divorced is too humiliating! So, you and Phoebe, the homewrecker, can both give up on your ideas now! Neither of you will win this game!"

A little more than ten minutes later, Erica heard the bedroom door creak open.

She immediately got up from her sleep, and sat up on the bed.

Under the dim glow of the bedside lamp, she saw Matthew walk in.

She stared vigilantly at the man.

'Why did he come back at this hour? Is he here to avenge Phoebe?'

While she was lost in her fantasy and conjectures, Matthew had already walked to the bed. He looked down at the woman and asked coldly, "Were you trying to threaten me through that message?"

'He did come back to get even with me!' she thought. She glared at him and replied stubbornly, "Yes,

that was a threat! So what? I will never be defeated by a mere mistress!" People would laugh at her if that happened! She could never give up!

Matthew slowly bent down, with his arms on both sides of her body. Their eyes met. "Why are you still pretending to care? You don't love me, nor do you want me to touch you. Why should I let you be Mrs. Hilton? I'm not a masochist."

On the contrary, he did enjoy being mistreated by her.

Erica looked into his eyes and slowly put her arms around his neck. She stammered, "I... I'm willing to... I'm willing to let you touch me."

Matthew's breath hitched. He clenched his fists, trying his best to control the urge to wrap his hands around her.

"I know you are not in the mood for it right now. After all, you just lost your child. I'll wait until you are ready to... to have sex with me."

'Lost my child? What's she talking about?' Matthew was confused. 'Oh!' he remembered. He had not yet corrected her assumption that Phoebe was carrying his baby.

So, she still thought it was his.

He sighed. "The baby..." '...was not mine, ' he tried to say.

But Erica thought he believed that she was the reason for the loss of his child.

So, she declared before he could finish his sentence, "Although I didn't cause Phoebe's miscarriage, I will give you a child as compensation." 'What nonsense is she spouting now?' Matthew could not figure this woman out. "You didn't cause the miscarriage, but you are still willing to give me a child as compensation? Erica, don't you see the contradiction in your own words?"

"I already told you that I didn't push Phoebe. But you don't believe me. I can't find any evidence to prove my innocence. I watched the drive recorder of Watkins' car, but I couldn't find anything to my advantage." She was accused of something she didn't do, yet she had no way to prove it. "Since I can't prove that I was not the reason for the loss of your baby, I will give you one instead. But I am doing this for you! So, you cannot take this baby away from me and give it to Phoebe!" Erica added frantically. 'The baby will be mine and Matthew's. We'll raise it!' she thought.

Matthew didn't know how to respond. He had never before heard about anyone who would compensate another person with a child.

CHAPTER 1245 DECLARATION OF WAR

'If I tell her now that the baby was not mine, would she still be willing to have sex with me?' Matthew wondered.

Erica's thought processes were different from that of normal people. Just in case she refused to have a baby with him, Matthew chose not to correct her assumptions about Phoebe's baby.

But... He couldn't give himself away either. So, he pulled her arms off his neck and asked calmly, "You thought that I would gladly accept your compensation, didn't you? Get some rest first. I'll think about it."

'Huh? He needs to think about it?' Erica grumbled to herself.

Matthew had always said that she didn't love him, but right now, it was he who didn't love her at all! She was blatantly open about her intentions, almost blurting out, "Please sleep with me!" But he had to think about it?

But she calmed down quickly when she remembered that he had just lost his unborn child. This was not the time to argue or fight with him.

Matthew went into the bathroom. Erica was feeling sleepy and dozed off before he came out.

The next day, instead of going to school, Erica went to the hospital to see Phoebe.

Before she arrived at the hospital, she was mentally prepared to see Matthew and Phoebe together in the ward. However, when she opened the door, she was slightly surprised to see that only Phoebe and her father were inside.

They weren't expecting her visit either, so they were obviously stunned.

Phoebe was visibly upset at the sight of Erica. She glared at the girl and yelled, "What are you doing here? You killed my child! How dare you show your face here?"

Lyman was a little embarrassed by his daughter's resentful attitude. "Erica, I'm sorry. Phoebe hasn't recovered yet. Could you come back later?"

Erica smiled and said politely, "Lyman, I'm sorry. I have to talk privately with Phoebe. Could you please...?"

Lyman understood. He couldn't afford to offend Matthew's wife. So, he took out a cigarette from his pocket and told them, "I'm going out for a smoke. You girls talk."

"Thank you."

He nodded with a smile and left the ward.

Phoebe had no need to pretend anymore since they were left alone now. She stared at Erica indifferently.

Sitting in the chair next to the bed, Erica supported her chin with one hand and asked in a low voice, "Do you think I can't prove my innocence without the surveillance video? Or are you dreaming that I would lose my title as Mrs. Hilton because you lost this child? You are too naive, Phoebe."

"What do you mean?" 'Does she have a witness for the accident?' Phoebe thought grimly.

Erica scoffed. The smile at the corners of her mouth became wider. "Even if I really had pushed you down and caused your miscarriage, Matthew won't leave me. Last night, he told me that the loss of your baby had nothing to do with us. We can just have another baby anytime."

Yes, Erica had deliberately come here to provoke Phoebe.

This wicked woman had been so bold in framing her. Erica would have asked the hospital staff to throw her out of the ward if it weren't for Matthew.

As expected, Phoebe was pissed; her face turned pale. Her lips trembled, but she couldn't say a word.

After a while, she retorted angrily, "I don't believe it! Matthew loved our child very much!" He did value the unborn child. It was the only child of Nathan. Matthew had been very considerate and he always sent someone to accompany her to the regular examinations.

She had assumed that the loss of the baby would make Matthew mad with Erica and that he might even divorce her. It seemed that she had underestimated his love for Erica.

Erica stood up, straightened her clothes and declared arrogantly, "I don't care whether you believe it or not. I'm only here to tell you, Phoebe, that I'm declaring war on you. The position of Mrs. Hilton will forever be mine! I know that you want it so badly, but you will never have it!"

"Erica, you bitch..."

Pak! Erica gave one slap across Phoebe's pale cheek.

Phoebe covered her aching face and stared at the girl blankly. "You!" she screamed amid the shock. "How dare you hit me!"

Erica snorted at the woman's abashed face. "Did you really think that I would just stand here and let you swear at me? Others may not know the truth, but I know that you were the one who killed your own child. You're a monster! How dare you frame me for your heinous crime! You are only still lying in this hospital bed because I wanted you to get some rest after the miscarriage. I hope you recover to your best shape soon, so that I can send you to the slum where you belong!"



Erica had shown no mercy towards Tessie in the end. Phoebe was ten thousand times worse than Tessie. She would do anything in her power to make sure that Matthew sent Phoebe to the slum, even if she had to beg him for it.

She wanted to far more than just slap this woman. She was determined to become Erica Niugulu to teach this vicious woman a hard lesson!

"Damn you, Erica! You just wait and see!" Phoebe snarled. The slap mark on her face was quite obvious. It was the best evidence to present to Matthew.

"Oh, I will wait. You think I'm afraid of you? You can tell on me to Matthew, I don't care. I'm on my way to visit my parents-in-law now to keep them company for a while. Let's see if Matthew would dare mention divorce in front of his parents."

Phoebe was going crazy listening to her every back lash. She was so close to pulling out the needle on her wrist to slap the arrogant girl in front of her.

But Erica had no plans to give her that satisfaction. She turned around and left the room with her head held high. Her straight, unflinching back looked like that of a noble princess.

As soon as she walked out of the in-patient department, the arrogant expression on Erica's face faded. She immediately dialed Matthew's number on her phone. "Hello, are you busy?"

Matthew silently stopped the department manager, who was in the middle of giving his report. He stood up and walked to the window before replying, "No."

"So, here's the thing. I came to the hospital for a visit and ended up slapping Mistress Phoebe. Half her face is swollen like an apple. I'm going to your parents' house now. If you want a divorce, I won't object. But you have to come to the manor and talk to them yourself." Erica had to tell him the truth. She was afraid that Phoebe would complain to him and that she would exaggerate and slander her. So, it was best that Erica informed him first.

'Mistress Phoebe?' Matthew was amused by her words. He adjusted his emotions and asked in a low voice, "Why are you so damn arrogant after slapping her?"

"She deserves it! If she ever got pregnant with your baby again, I would gladly push her and make her have a miscarriage again!" "That bitch accused me of killing her baby! I might as well just do it!" she thought angrily.

"You wouldn't dare."

"Yes, I would!"

'Very good, ' Matthew thought with a smile. He gave her a thumbs up in his mind.

There was a hint of coldness in the man's voice when he spoke again. "You don't have to go see Dad and Mom. I don't have time to care about silly trifles between women."

Erica breathed a sigh of relief. "Well, good for you! I don't want to disturb you. Bye, Matthew."

Matthew sighed inwardly. Wasn't there anything else she wanted to talk to him about other than Phoebe?

But before he could ask, the woman hung up on him.

Looking at his phone helplessly, Matthew went back to his desk and asked the department manager to continue with his report.

A few minutes later, his phone vibrated again. It was Phoebe.

He frowned and put the phone aside, letting it vibrate on his desk.

Phoebe called him twice. She figured he was busy since he didn't pick her call. She sent him a message instead.

"Matthew, Erica has gone too far! I'm at the hospital to recuperate. She came here, and instead of apologizing, she slapped me in the face! My face is swollen because of her!"

#### CHAPTER 1246 LOVE IS IN THE AIR

Then, Matthew received a picture of Phoebe's swollen face. There was indeed a clear palm print on her pale face.

Half an hour later, after the department manager finished reporting, he finally texted her back. "Okay, thanks for the info."

Phoebe wasn't happy with his curt reply. She was hoping for more of a resolution.

Matthew came back to the villa around 9-ish like usual. When he walked into the bedroom, he saw Erica sitting at her laptop, working.

Hearing him come in, the girl immediately got to her feet and looked at him nervously.

Her big eyes shifted back and forth, as if she were planning something.

However, Matthew just gave her a quick glance and went to the closet without saying a word. Then he walked into the bathroom.

Half an hour later, he walked out. Having showered the day's dirt away, he was ready to settle in for the night. He wore the robe he fetched from the closet.

When he came out, Erica had already climbed into bed.

Standing by the bed, he looked down at Erica. She was playing with her phone. He cocked an eyebrow and asked indifferently, "I thought we'd try making babies."

Erica's heart pounded rapidly. So, did he want to sleep with her tonight?

She shifted nervously. It was not until then that Matthew noticed that she had just changed into the sexy wine red nightdress Debbie bought her. The way she sat made her even more ravishing, as her sexy legs were revealed by a garment's tendency to ride up.

The man's eyes were filled with desire in an instant, and he felt his male essence coursing through him like a boiling stream. He fought for control, eventually barking out a hoarse "Let's go!"

"Go? How do we do that?" She didn't know what to do first.

Matthew didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "We can start by getting naked." He was amused. His wife was so pure and innocent. She seemed a bit flustered now.

"O-okay." She felt foolish. 'Of course that makes sense,' she thought. 'Let's get our clothes off.'

Half-kneeling on the edge of the bed, Erica stretched out her hands to untie his night robe.

That went quite smoothly. Soon things progressed naturally, and the two lovers were tangled on the bed.

He was on top of her, nuzzling her neck and drinking deeply from her lips with every kiss. Erica trembled and said in a small voice, "I'm a little... scared..."

Matthew held her hand tightly and whispered, "It's okay. Nothing to be scared of..."

His deep, hoarse voice worked like magic. She relaxed a little.

They lost themselves in each other, and the moment. For a long while, only the sounds of love could be heard.

Some moments later, tears formed in the girl's eyes. There were all sorts of things she was thinking of, and none of them had to do with lovemaking. All sorts of shame and awkwardness about her body, her inexperience. Matthew was no stranger to sex—what if she didn't measure up?

And she began to tense up. Naturally, this caused some pain. She didn't expect the first time to be this

painful.

Her nails were deeply embedded in his muscles.

Her tears made his heart ache. He lowered his head and kissed away her tears, comforting her in a low voice, "Just relax, honey. Forget everything for right now!"

Erica wanted to flinch. She put her hands on the man's chest and sobbed, "Just leave me alone. I need to sleep..." Her tone was full of grief.

How could Matthew let her go to sleep right now? If he let her off this time, he might as well be a monk the rest of his life.

He lowered his head and kissed her red lips passionately, cutting her protests short.

The night wore on. When it was dawn, Matthew filled a tub with hot water and carried the sleepy woman into the bathroom.

When he tucked her back in bed, she was already fast asleep. He tidied things up.

It was afternoon before Erica finally opened her eyes. She looked around the bedroom, and found herself alone.

Staring at the ceiling, her mind went blank for a while.

After a bit, she came back to her senses and realized where she was. She was in their bedroom.

Pulling away the quilt, Erica wanted to get out of bed, but the soreness of her body made her fall back onto the mattress again. "Aah—" She winced in pain. What happened to her? Was she in a car accident? Why did every part of her body hurt?

And that was when she remembered the man's gentle words of comfort, and his vigorous motions the night before. It was all coming back to her. Last night, she and Matthew finally made love.

They finally experienced the most magical of nights.

They had been married for three months, and she finally gave herself to him.

So this was what having sex felt like. But this wasn't like it was in novels or on TV. Why was her experience different? Some people said it was the best feeling in the world. That an orgasm was a life-changing experience. But why did she feel as if she was torn apart?

And where was Matthew now? Was he at work, or in the hospital with Phoebe?

But it didn't matter where he was. She needed to go to the hospital later.

Erica didn't know how she managed to leave the bed and get to the bathroom. She eased herself into the tub, wincing most of the time. When she turned on the hot water, she started to relax. She grabbed her phone and texted Matthew. "You're a beast! A beast in human form!"

Last night, he was not human at all. He was like a wolf, a hungry wolf that had been starved for three days! 'No! Make that fifteen days!' He must be a wolf. Otherwise how could she explain how much pain she felt? Every muscle ached.

In the conference room of Theo Group

More than a dozen senior executives from Hilton Group and Theo Group were in a meeting, including Sheffield and Matthew. They had been planning to work together to develop a new drug.

Because it involved a hefty amount of capital, Sheffield and Matthew insisted on being there in person.

In the meeting, Sheffield sat back in his chair, his legs outstretched. He listened to Matthew analyzing the plan for the group. Everyone else was just watching Matthew idly. But Sheffield noticed something about Matthew's neck.

His normally perfect neck was now marred by scratches.

Sheffield counted. There were at least seven scratches of different sizes, and two rows of teeth marks partly covered by his collar. He thought Matthew must have had one hell of a wild night.

'Scratching and biting... That sounds like Erica alright, ' he thought playfully. 'Good for him!'

While Matthew was explaining the most important part of the project, his phone buzzed. He gave the room an apologetic look, then fished out his phone. He swiped the screen and saw he had a new text. When he saw the number, he knew who it was from.

After reading the text, the man suddenly smiled.

But it wasn't just a smile, it was full of joy and playfulness and it lit up the entire room. And it gave him an unmistakable glow.

It shocked everyone there.

What were they looking at? They couldn't believe their eyes. The always zombie-faced cold CEO was smiling? Was it possible?

Some of them began to rub their eyes, some covered their hearts, and some opened their mouths wide... Their CEO was so handsome when he smiled that the female staff couldn't breathe.

Even two male executives were charmed by his smile.

Rubbing his chin, Sheffield looked thoughtfully at the mysterious smile on Matthew's face. He looked like he'd just gotten laid. There was no misjudging the way he acted, the smile on his face.

'And he's never had that look before. So, was last night the first time Matthew slept with his wife?

But no! That couldn't be it! They've been married three months! So how could that happen? Maybe there's trouble in paradise?' Sheffield wondered.

The smile on Matthew's face only lasted a few seconds before it disappeared.

He didn't reply to Erica's message and continued to talk about the plan, breaking it down and analyzing it, expounding upon facts and figures his team had figured out.

After taking a shower, Erica went downstairs to the kitchen by elevator to find something to munch on. Fortunately, Matthew had arranged a chef to cook for her, so she wouldn't have to do anything when she woke up.

Without caring about her image, Erica casually leaned over the table, waiting for the chef to bring her the food. As she waited, she took out her phone and went to Weibo. She tapped out a status update: "The pure little sheep was finally eaten by the hungry wolf!"

She was somewhat glum when she read the comments on her post. Within a few minutes, some comments she hated had gotten a lot of likes.

A netizen with the user name Miss Flower commented, "Please! Eat me!"

Another user named Mrs. Ximena Post-2000s said, "Mrs Hilton, I'm one of the women of Matthew's harem. Come on! Ask your hungry wolf to eat me! Just once!"

#### CHAPTER 1247 SHOW OFF

The remaining comments were similar. 'Oh, my God!' Erica was so unsettled that she deleted the post in a hurry. It wasn't until then that she realized how many women coveted her husband!

What did Matthew do when he went out? How could he be so skilled at seducing women?

After the late lunch, Erica slowly made her way toward her car. Even though her legs were sore, she intended to visit the hospital.

At the hospital

Since the Campbell family members had just left, Phoebe, who was exhausted, closed her eyes, and the

maid tasked with caring for her, settled in a chair.

Erica pushed the door and entered without knocking.

Surprised by the unannounced visitor, the maid jumped from her seat and asked, "Who are you?"

A charming smile lit up Erica's face as she pointed at the woman in the bed. "I'm here to see your lady."

"Oh!" the maid nodded. She glanced at the young woman again. Why did she feel as though this woman was familiar?

'Isn't she here to see a patient? Why did she come empty-handed?' the maid wondered.

Erica ignored the maid's puzzled gaze and sat on the chair beside the bed. As she was in no hurry to wake Phoebe, she quietly observed the woman.

Phoebe's face had lost its pink hue because of the blood loss and the surgery. Her eyes were closed, her breath was weak, and her lips were pale.

She was dressed in a hospital gown, and her slender arms, dull like her complexion, rested by her side. Her manicured fingers indicated that she was indeed from a wealthy family.

The sleeping woman woke, perhaps because she sensed someone's intent gaze. As soon as Phoebe turned, she saw Erica sitting by her side.

Her eyes flew wide open, and she became attentive. A trace of suspicion shone in her gaze as she questioned, "What are you doing here?"

"What am I doing?" Erica pouted so that Phoebe's attention would be drawn to her red lips. Before she came to the hospital, she asked a makeup artist to apply light makeup. Then, she contrasted it with tomato-red lip gloss. Her smile made her look more radiant.

In fact, she didn't know how she managed to walk into the hospital after getting out of the car. Thanks to Matthew, her legs were still trembling, and it was difficult for her to walk straight.

Irrespective of her discomfort, she had to share the news with Phoebe. Even if she had been unable to walk, she would have come in a wheelchair to show off to this woman!

Erica untied the silk scarf around her neck, fanned her hand as though it were hot, and said, "Why is it so stuffy in the ward? Is it going to rain today?"

Phoebe's gaze was drawn to the marks on Erica's neck. Her breath caught in her throat when she realized what they were.

Hickeys of various sizes on the woman's neck made it obvious what Matthew and Erica had done at home last night while Phoebe was alone in the hospital.

She grabbed the sheet tightly, and hatred filled her eyes. But she tried not to show any emotions. "What do you mean?"

"What do I mean?" Since a maid was in the ward with them, Erica was careful not to say anything of significance. By untying her scarf and exposing the marks on her neck, she had achieved her goal. Satisfaction coursed through her as she retied the scarf around her neck. With a charming smile, she said, "I'm here to tell you that Matthew doesn't care about you or the baby he made with you! While you suffered in the hospital, my husband and I spent the whole night sharing our bodies. How do you feel, Phoebe?"

Phoebe's face distorted as anger and indignation surged through her. She screeched, "Get out! You are not welcome here!"

The maid also frowned at Erica's odd behavior. "What are you doing here? Can't you see that Phoebe has not recovered yet?"

The smile on Erica's face became brighter and wider. She deliberately provoked, "Yes, I know she's sick, and that's why I came here to show off. Your lady is arrogant and dares to covet my husband."

Shock reflected on the maid's face when she heard the accusation. She hadn't known why Erica had behaved the way she did until this moment. Now, she saw Phoebe in a different light.

Just then, the door to the ward swung open again.

A man exuding an aristocratic aura stood in the doorway. The long black overcoat he wore above his dark blue suit and new dark leather shoes impressed on everyone that he was rich and had good taste.

Owen, dressed in a Western suit, peeped over the man's shoulder.

The sudden arrival of these two people brought relief to Phoebe as she thought Matthew would save her from Erica's pettiness. Her eyes filled with tears as she watched the man stride to the bedside.

However, in the next moment, her expression darkened when she saw the marks on the man's neck.

'How could they do this to me?!

Did they both come here to show off and hurt me?' Bitter thoughts and envy filled the woman.

Erica's heart skipped a beat as well. She hadn't expected Matthew to visit the hospital. Did he come here to protect Phoebe?



"Why aren't you resting at home?" he asked calmly.

'How can she have the energy to come to the hospital? It seems that she's fine, ' he deduced.

Erica felt as though he was questioning her. So, she stood and snorted, "Humph!" Then, she turned and stalked out of the ward.

Matthew followed her to the hallway outside, grabbed her wrist, spun her around, and said, "It seems that I failed last night."

Puzzled, she asked, "Failed at what?"

Their eyes met. The man answered expressionlessly, "You had the strength to leave the house. I need to work harder in bed."

It was then that he noticed that she had worn makeup today. While the tomato-red colored gloss added a mesmerizing shine to her lips, the slightly raised black eyeliner made her appear more mature. Matthew couldn't take his eyes off his wife!

A frown appeared on his forehead when he wondered why she needed makeup for a hospital visit.

He was sure that Erica had come here alone. Did she make this effort for Phoebe?

When he learned that she was going to the hospital, Matthew worried that Phoebe would make her suffer. And so, he had hurried over from the Theo Group.

'Work harder in bed? Oh, no! Does he have any idea of how difficult it was for me to come to the hospital? I may really have to use a wheelchair if he worked harder in bed!' "I'm going home now." Now that she had achieved her goal, Erica just wanted to catch up on sleep.

"Okay. I'll ask Owen to drive you home." Matthew didn't ask her to stay. After all, she should be resting at home.

'Ask Owen to drive me home?' Erica was unhappy with his proposal. "Are you going to stay with Phoebe?" Envy laced her voice as she searched his face for the slightest hint of emotion.

"Did you have something else planned for me?"

Erica shook her head and tried to suppress the bitterness in her heart. "No, I'm leaving now!" What else could she say? Erica didn't think that she could ask him not to stay with Phoebe. After all, she didn't believe that she was that important to Matthew.

She turned and took a step away from her husband.

Matthew cocked his head to the side when he noticed how strangely Erica was walking.

It then dawned on him that she was just pretending to be strong.

A mischievous smile added a boyish charm to his handsome face. In a few giant strides, he caught up to her. Before Erica could process what was happening, Matthew had scooped her up in his arms.

Clueless as to what caused the change in her husband, Erica's mouth hung open. The shock from his actions left her feeling parched. She quickly wrapped her arms around Matthew's neck and said, "Y-you... Aren't you going to stay here with Phoebe?"

"No, I just remembered I have something more important to do. I'll come to her again when I'm free." Matthew was not in a hurry to question Phoebe about her miscarriage. Now, the most important thing was his little wife, who couldn't walk because of him.

Blood rushed to Erica's face when she saw the curious expressions on the passersby. She buried her face in his chest. "Put me down. I can walk by myself..."

"You can walk by yourself? Are you sure? It seemed like..." The man lowered his head and whispered in her ear, "I really need to work harder tonight."

What Matthew felt when he had sex with Erica was so addictive and wonderful that he found himself even more enamored with her.

#### CHAPTER 1248 HEARTLESS

Her moans, her begs for mercy, her tears... And how she moved gently under him.

He was unbelievably attracted to her. Meanwhile, Erica was having different thoughts. 'How could he say something like that in public?' She grabbed Matthew's collar with one hand, buried her head in his chest and protested in a low voice, "Shut up! Shut up!"

Matthew's smile widened; his wife was becoming more and more adorable by the day.

From the time Erica had stormed out of the ward, Matthew carried her. He carried her all the way, until they were back in their bedroom.

Placing her gently on their big bed, he said shortly, "Rest." He wanted her to regain her energy so that he could have sex with her again that night.

"Oh, thank you so much for your concern."

Without replying to her sarcasm, he turned around and left.

Erica yawned. She was tired, and quickly fell asleep.

She was woken up by the sound of her ringtone. It was already dark outside.

The call was from Watkins. She said on the phone, "Hello?"

"Erica, are you free right now?"

"Yeah. What's up?" She turned over and felt much better in that position.

After a pause, Watkins said, "I'm partly responsible for Phoebe's miscarriage. I want to pay her a visit. Do you want to come with me?"

Erica didn't answer. Instead, she asked him, "Do you also think that I pushed her?"

"No, of course not. Although I didn't see anything, I know that you couldn't have done such a vicious thing. I'm sure it is a misunderstanding."

The trust from her friend was refreshing. "Thank you," she said.

"You're welcome, Erica. So? Are you coming?"

"No. I already visited her this afternoon. You should go and see her." She didn't want to see Phoebe again.

"Okay, I'll call you after I meet her," Watkins said.

'Call me? Why?' Erica thought. But she didn't dwell on it. "Okay."

After hanging up the phone, Erica stretched on her bed. It was half past five. She was hungry again.

Moments before Matthew came back, Erica had just finished her dinner and was drowsily watching a horror movie sitting on the living room sofa.

Matthew threw his briefcase aside and loosened his tie. He watched the woman as she stared at the TV motionlessly; he tried not to laugh. 'She is so carefree. The Campbell family is about to sue her, and yet, she is sitting here as if nothing is going on.

She must really have a clear conscience to be so calm, ' he thought.

When he walked over to her, he saw that she had fallen asleep. Her long black hair was randomly scattered on both sides of her shoulder, and she was only wearing her usual thin cartoon pajamas.

She looked charming as she slept peacefully, unlike the troublemaker she was while awake.

Her pretty face was round and fair. Her skin had a light glow. Such good skin needed to be well-preserved.

Matthew took out his phone and sent a message to Paige. "Make a private series of skin-care products for my wife." He added some dos and don'ts. "She is preparing for pregnancy. Pay attention to the ingredients in the products. Make sure that she can use them even after she gets pregnant."

"Yes, Matthew."

Matthew put away his phone and held Erica's hand. She was a little cold.

'The heating needs to be turned on at night, ' he decided.

It was only late autumn, but he didn't want her to catch a cold. After all, his muddleheaded wife couldn't take care of herself.

Only while she was asleep and couldn't see anything would Matthew release his true feelings unto his beloved.

He looked at her, his eyes full of love and such tenderness. No one could ever imagine that Matthew was capable of such emotions.

He turned off the TV and was about to pick her up when she slowly opened her eyes and saw the tall figure beside her. She muttered, "Matthew."

"Yes?"

Erica yawned and checked the time. It was half past eight. "You're back early tonight."

"Yes. I came back in a hurry so that I can make a baby with you."

Erica was wide awake now. She almost choked on her own saliva. She moved away from him unconsciously. "Right now?"

"Yes." He couldn't wait any longer. He wanted to have a child with her.

Erica pinched the corner of her pajamas uneasily. "Can it wait?" She still felt a little sore.

Matthew obviously hesitated for a moment, and finally compromised. "Once."

He had waited for her consent to have sex for such a long time. How could he skip a night? She was underestimating his urge. She had to comfort, at least once every night, the heart that she had broken countless times.

'Once? That may not be so bad, ' Erica thought shyly.

The previous night, Matthew had sex with her all night long. She actually had no idea how long one round was. "Okay," she agreed reluctantly.

That was all he wanted to hear. His eyes gleamed with a knowing smile.

That night, Matthew did keep his promise. Only problem was that his "once" lasted way too long.

Before going to bed, he went to wash himself while Erica lay in bed, holding on to the doll in her arms, smacking her tongue in satisfaction. Sex was not too bad, except that it was a little tiring and she felt a little pain in the waist.

If she had known earlier that it felt so wonderful, she wouldn't have run away on Matthew's birthday.

Erica wished that she could go back to the night before his birthday and climb over the wall to sleep with him.

In the hospital

Her face pale as a sheet, Phoebe sat on the bed and gritted her teeth at the man's inane questioning. She insisted, "How could I possibly have hurt my own child? It was Erica! She pushed me down!"

Matthew's face turned so grim, as if it were covered in a thin layer of frost. "I know what kind of woman my wife is, but deny it all you like. I wonder if you would have had the guts to face Nathan if he were alive."

Hearing Nathan's name, Phoebe's breathing became rapidly fast. "Matthew, do you know why Nathan had that car accident?" she asked.

Something dark flashed across Matthew's eyes, but he didn't say anything.

"Before the accident, we were quarreling in the car because of you. He knew that I loved you, but he still married me without hesitation." Phoebe paused and took a deep breath. She continued, "Not long after we got married, he began to show dissatisfaction in me because I only cared about you. He complained that I was always talking about you. Matthew, don't you feel my love?"

Phoebe broke down completely. She cried and questioned the heartless man in front of her.

Everyone knew that she was in love with Matthew, including the members of the Campbell family.

The reason why the Campbell family hadn't attended Nathan's funeral was because they had wanted Phoebe to marry Matthew. But she ended up marrying Nathan because of what Matthew had once said.

Soon after the wedding, Phoebe's status in the family declined greatly, and they looked down upon Nathan, who was a mere vice manager of a company. They never treated him as the son-in-law of the Campbell family. Besides, they considered attending his funeral would bring bad luck.

Matthew looked at Phoebe indifferently even as she cried. "What if I did feel it? It's your own business whom you love. It has nothing to do with me," he said coldly.

His heartlessness made her shiver. "Have you never loved me?" she asked, still unwilling to give up. On the day that she had married Nathan, she had hoped to see regret on Matthew's face, but there was nothing. He was unaffected.

"If I loved you, then what about my wife?" Who could spoil Rika like he did?

If Erica had married another man, she wouldn't have been this happy, because nobody could have loved her as much as he did.

#### CHAPTER 1249 ERICA RUNS AWAY

Erica was careless and often got into trouble. Matthew believed that if she had married someone else instead of him, her husband's family might have alienated her because of who she was. Matthew would not allow this to happen!

His Rika was born into a rich and influential family. She came to this world to enjoy love and be spoiled. He wanted her to be happy her entire life.

It was true that she was naughty and mischievous, and sometimes, she could be very irritating. But so what? To Matthew, these were the traits that endeared her to him. If she didn't have these characteristics, she might not have attracted his attention.

He genuinely believed what he had said before—she didn't need to do anything. She brought him happiness simply by being with him.

"Matthew, you indulge her too much! She will cause serious trouble in the future!" Phoebe had never been bold enough to speak this way in Matthew's presence. This was the first time, and perhaps, the last.

"Why is it wrong to indulge my wife? Can't I take responsibility for her actions? Phoebe, Erica didn't cause your miscarriage, and even if she did, I would not let anything happen to her!" If he couldn't bear responsibility for such a trifle matter, he didn't deserve Erica.

The woman on the bed shook her head in disbelief and murmured, "This can't be happening! Matthew, I've loved you for six years. How can you do this to me?"

After all these years, in the end, she got nothing but the status of a married woman.

'Six years? So what?' Matthew thought. The years he had harbored feelings for Erica were... It had been so long that he couldn't even remember!

She had attracted his attention from the very beginning. Perhaps those early days didn't count as he hadn't developed feelings for her then.

A few years ago, Wesley brought Erica to the Hilton family manor, and that was when Matthew began to like her. He thought he had fallen in love with her only after their engagement.

It was possible that he became infatuated with her earlier, so early that he couldn't be sure when it began. Irrespective of the time, Erica was a capable woman who had stolen his heart at such a young age.

"You are a vicious woman. You killed your child. That was Nathan's only child. I won't let you get away without facing the consequences of your actions! You are fortunate as this is not the right time to ask you to leave Alorith. But, I'm warning you. Pray for yourself, and don't ever mess with Erica again!"

'What? He is going to force me out of Alorith?' Fear coursed through Phoebe at the thought. She didn't want to be reduced to living in a slum as Tessie had been. She begged the man with tear-filled eyes, "Matthew... Let's be friends, okay? Just like old times..."

Before Matthew could say anything, the phone in his pocket vibrated.

It was Erica.

When she learned that he had gone to the hospital, Erica had been so consumed with anxiety that she had paced the room hundreds of times. After much deliberation, she finally dialed his number. Once the call connected, she ordered, "Come back!"

"What's wrong?" Matthew asked.

Erica glimpsed at the nearest window. It was still bright outside, too early to go to bed. But Erica didn't care about the time. She insisted, "It's time to come home and make a baby with me!"

She wasn't ready to be a mother yet. But, she made the offer as she just didn't want him to see Phoebe.

Matthew froze. Too tempted to refuse, he strode out of the ward without giving Phoebe a parting glance.

The drive to the villa usually took him half an hour, but he arrived in less than twenty minutes!

Pretending to sulk, he playfully scolded the woman, "You've started ordering me around now. I have to rush back home as soon as I get your phone call. You're getting bolder, woman."

Erica pouted and replied, "Well, that's right. I was curious to see what was more important to you, having a baby or being with the woman you love."

Matthew answered without hesitation, "The woman I love!"

Erica snorted. "Humph!" She was furious with his response. 'He chose Phoebe over his unborn child.' Erica confronted him, "But you left her and came home because I want to make a baby."

'Men are really animals as they think only with their lower parts!'

Matthew was rendered speechless.

Over the next few days, Erica found that Matthew tried really hard to make a baby. She was exhausted and in great discomfort from their over-energetic late-night activities.

She regretted offering to give him a baby.

A week later, Hyatt found that he couldn't ignore the changes in Erica anymore. He needed to ask if something had changed with her. "What's wrong with you? Why do you have such dark circles under your eyes? What have you been doing staying up late? Stealing cows?"

he teased.

"Alas! I don't want to talk about it!" Earlier, she had bragged that Matthew would be exhausted to death while trying to make a baby. But now, she was the one who couldn't keep up. The embarrassment was too much for her to bear.

'I'm the one who is exhausted all the time.'

Matthew, on the other hand, looked and behaved like normal.

That morning, she had to struggle to open her eyes. To her surprise, he was already dressed and ready for work. He showed no signs of weariness from spending a passionate night with his wife. On the contrary, he appeared energetic, as if he had slept for three days and nights.

She, however... Alas!

Several days later, Erica was so tired and weary that her mind began to play tricks on her. She couldn't stand it anymore!

She didn't want to die while trying to make a baby, and that was precisely what she thought would happen if she had to spend one more night with Matthew.



As soon as the sun set, Erica studied the guard's movements from her window. She needed to find a way to escape the villa unnoticed.

She knew that the bodyguard followed her during the day, which was why she couldn't escape even if she wanted to. But night time was the perfect opportunity.

A few minutes later... "Ouch! Help!"

When the bodyguard heard the scream coming from the villa, he hesitated for a moment before heading for the door.

Just as he was about to ring the bell, he found that the door was unlocked. He immediately pushed the door open and rushed inside. "Erica, what's the matter? Are you all right?"

Meanwhile, a figure climbed out of the window, ran toward the wall, and threw a rope upward.

Erica had inherited Wesley's battle skills. She was good at climbing, especially walls.

In less than two minutes, she had scaled the tall wall. When she turned to check, she saw the bodyguard scurrying upstairs to find her.

'I'm sorry, but I have to go.'

Just as she was about to jump from the wall, a female's voice came from below, "Hello, miss."

"Ah!" Startled, she almost fell off the wall.

When she saw that a girl was standing below the wall, she breathed a sigh of relief. "Hello. What are you doing here?" Erica asked. Since this area housed many wealthy families, each villa covered a large area, and no one could be seen within ten miles.

The girl on the ground raised her head and answered, "I am searching for someone. As I lost my phone, I'm not sure which villa they live in." She couldn't remember which villa was Matthew's. "May I know your surname?"

Afraid that the bodyguard would spot her, Erica climbed down the wall before she replied. "My surname is Leonard."

The strength it took to climb down the wall left Erica breathing heavily, which caused the other female to mishear her.

'Her surname is Lewis? Then she is not the person for whom I'm looking,' the girl thought.

The bodyguard checked the top floor but didn't find Erica. He thought he should report to Matthew.

"Matthew, I have bad news—"

He reported the situation in detail and followed Matthew's instructions to check the wall he had been guarding. There was indeed a rope.

'Oh, my God! I was played! I'm screwed!'

As soon as Erica jumped off the wall, the bodyguard chased her.

At the same time, the two security guards protecting the community had received orders from Matthew to join the search. Fortunately, they had been patrolling nearby.

#### CHAPTER 1250 WILD CHILD

As soon as Erica heard the noise from the wall and saw two people running toward her, flashlights knifing through the gloom, she knew they were after her.

Time pressing, she grabbed her hand and began to run.

"Why are we running? You tick someone off?" The girl was confused. 'Or maybe she stole something? After all, she climbed over the wall, ' she thought.

"Yeah, a real big shot. By the way, I saw you sneaking around the wall. You should run too, otherwise we'll both be caught. Something tells me that won't be a walk in the park," Erica answered without looking back.

'Oh, my God! Thanks to that jerk Matthew, my legs feel like concrete, and I think I'm slowing down in my old age, ' she thought.

At the Leonard family's house

Blair rang Gifford. "Hey, do you know where Chantel is? If not, go find her!" she yelled.

"Hey, hey. Slow down. You mean she's missing?" he asked in confusion.

"Today's Saturday. She should be here. She texted me she was going on a trip, but I haven't been able to get ahold of her since then. It's been six or seven hours, and I think she turned off her phone. It goes straight to voice mail," Blair said. Chantel usually stayed at the Leonard family's house on weekends to make sure Blair and Wesley were well taken care of. This was weird.

Knowing that things sometimes go wrong on trips, Blair just wanted to call to ask if she had arrived. Six or seven hours should be plenty of time to get somewhere and settle in.

"Where did she go? Maybe she's still on the plane," Gifford said. "Six or seven hours isn't that unusual if you're flying to another country. And you're not supposed to have your phone on then, anyway."

Blair shook her head. "Your father had someone look into it. She flew to Alorith. That's only 2.5 hours by plane. She should be there by now. And why isn't she answering her phone?"

"I think you're overreacting, Mom. Tell you what: I'll call you as soon as I find her. Don't worry. She'll be fine."

"Okay."

Near a five-star hotel in Alorith, two girls whispered to each other while taking turns checking out the entrance.

At first, Erica wanted to ask the girl beside her to go home, but she got to thinking—if she used her ID card to check in, Matthew would have no trouble finding her. She didn't feel like having that conversation.

So instead she urged the girl to check in for her. "I'll give you two thousand dollars. How about you book a room for me?"

"Two thousand?" The girl's mouth was wide open.

Puzzled, Erica looked up at the five-star hotel in front of her. Then she realized two thousand might not be enough. She raised her hand and showed the girl her five fingers. "Not enough? How about five? Sound good?"

The girl's mouth was agape. 'Does she really want to spend five thousand to book a hotel room?' "Why don't you check in on your own?" she asked. She'd better be on her guard.

"Because... I forgot to bring my ID card!" Erica lied, blinking her innocent eyes.

"All right! Just promise me one thing!" Chantel didn't have much money with her. She didn't want to dig into the money Wesley and Blair had given her.

"Name it!" As long as she could have a good night's sleep, she'd promise her anything.

Chantel cleared her throat and began, "This is my first time in Alorith. I don't have a place to stay tonight. You're on your own, right? Let's get a room with two beds."

"Deal!" 'She looks younger than me, but I don't think she's smarter,' Erica thought.

But she didn't have cash, and she wasn't about to power up her phone. As for Chantel, she'd lost her phone, so they couldn't book a hotel room at all. They needed a way to pay.

The two girls had to go to a bank first. When they passed a wonton shop, the pair smiled at each other

and entered the shop at a quick clip.

Chantel ordered two bowls of wontons and two bottles of sparkling water.

Erica took a sip of hers, an orange-flavored one. 'Wow, this is awesome.' She hadn't had one of these since she married Matthew. She took a good look at Chantel and asked, "You're not from around here, huh?"

"No, I'm not. I'm from Askor," she said.

"Hey, me too! Who would have thought? You a college student or something?"

Erica's question came so fast that Chantel had to answer her question before she could marvel at the fact that they were both from Askor. "Yes, I'm an acting major. I want to be an actress."

"Acting? Nice! Maybe you'll be famous and I can say I knew you when." Obviously, Erica was very interested in her career choice.

Chantel nodded and took a sip of her drink. "Yeah. Not everyone makes it in this business, but I'll work hard!" If she became a star, she'd earn a lot of money and repay Wesley and Blair.

"I think you can do it!" Erica commented.

"Thank you!"

The friendship between the two girls came very quickly, like a tornado. They had only known each other a short time, but both of them clicked like old friends. And both of them blew into town like a storm.

"So, what about you? Why were you climbing that wall?"

Erica blinked her eyes and told a lie. She whispered in her ear, "I'm a man's mistress. I was trying to be unobtrusive. Was I?"

Chantel was stunned. She looked at Erica and didn't answer her question, because she didn't believe what Erica said. She didn't look like a mistress at all.

Instead, she looked like a wild child from a rich family.

"Then, I couldn't stand his morbid hobby, so I ran off!" Well, she was not lying that time.

When she heard what Erica said, Chantel was flabbergasted. After thinking about it and trying to poke holes in her story, she just broke down and accepted it.

"So do you think less of me?" Erica thought she should switch careers with Chantel. If she became an

actress, she was sure to become famous. She knew how to lie and pretend with the best of them.

"Why would I do that?" Chantel asked, confused.

"Because I—"

A waiter brought the two bowls of wonton they'd ordered and interrupted her.

Seeing the delicious food, Erica didn't want to keep talking. "Thank God, I'm starved! Do you want chili sauce?"

"Yes!" Chantel nodded. "Food without chili sauce is like a person with no soul!"

If Erica could turn on her phone now, she would definitely friend Chantel on WeChat, because she really liked the girl.

More than ten minutes later, Erica entered the hotel with her head down and took the elevator to the 13th floor.

In the room, Chantel was still amazed at the luxurious decor. Erica breathed a sigh of relief and slumped onto the sofa. "I need a shower. You want to go first?"

"There are two bathrooms. We can take a shower at the same time!" When she saw Erica's dirty-minded grin, she clarified, "Not like that!" In order to make it convenient for the guests, there were two shower rooms and a bathtub in the suite.

"Okay!"

Erica had always been wild and free. In the dead of night, she hugged the pillow for comfort and gradually fell asleep.

Erica was roused from her sleep by someone knocking on the door. She didn't know how long she'd been asleep. She was still in a daze, and wanted to tell the person knocking to go away.

She got up from bed, holding onto a nightstand to steady herself, and put on her slippers. She woke up more and walked towards the door, completely forgetting where she was. She opened the door hard and shouted, "What the hell? Ahhh! Why are you here?" When she saw the person standing there, she immediately woke up.

Gifford rolled his eyes at her. "Get out of the way!"

"What? How did you know I was here?" Realizing she had asked a stupid question, she changed her tone and followed Gifford into the room. "Hey, did Matthew send you? Are you supposed to take me back with you?"

Standing in the middle of the room with arms akimbo, Gifford pointed at Chantel, who was also confused, and told Erica, "I'm not here for you. I'm looking for her. I'm sure Matthew will be here soon."