

TMBA 1371

CHAPTER 1371 GO SOFT ON ERICA

Although Matthew wanted Erica to stay away from other men, she had been training with several male soldiers. Therefore, how could she do as he asked? Besides, it was Wesley who insisted that she should train among the soldiers. 'Why didn't he just go to Dad? Why did he come here to teach me a lesson instead? What a jerk!' Erica thought, doing her best to roll her eyes discreetly.

Putting his hand on her waist, Matthew asked sternly, "Do you still want to argue?"

She shook her head immediately. "No, no, no."

He had come to her with an invitation to take her to lunch. But despite his words, he had brought her to this place so they could have sex. Now she had missed lunchtime in the base.

At that moment, Matthew regained his usual and elegant image as he dressed neatly again. Afterward, he got out of the car and lit a cigarette.

Leaning against the car window, Erica smoothed her messy hair and called the man smoking outside, "Hey, Matthew! I'm hungry. Let's go and have lunch!"

Matthew breathed out a mouthful of smoke before he looked at the flushed woman in front of him. However, she soon became blurry through the haze. "Come with me," he offered.

'Come with him? Back to Alorith?' she wondered. "No, no. I haven't met Wendy yet. I've promised to see her before leaving for Alorith. Why don't you wait for me so that we can go back together?" she asked. She didn't want to break her promise.

She planned to return to Alorith after she met Wendy, and then her two best friends—Hyatt and Rhea.

Upon hearing her answer, Matthew didn't say anything back. He stubbed out the cigarette and called Owen, to whom he ordered, "Let's go!"

More than ten minutes later, the luxury car dropped her off at the base.

With a hat in her hand, the woman stood in front of the gate in shock as she watched the luxury car driving away again. 'How could Matthew, my husband, do such a thing to me?

He said he was going to take me to lunch! Yet he took me to the wilderness to have sex with me. And then he sent me back with an empty stomach.

What a jerk!

As it was already past lunchtime, Erica didn't find the canteen's door open. So she went to the snack bar

and bought a box of instant noodles along with some other snacks.

Then she slowly made her way back, trying to balance the snacks and the box of noodles in her hands when a soldier she had never seen before walked towards her with a big smile. "Aren't you Gifford's sister?"

She smiled at him and answered, "Yes, Gifford is my brother."

Noticing the stuff in her hands, he asked, "Why did you buy these? Didn't you have enough food during lunch? Or did you simply skip it?"

Erica held the instant noodles in her arms and said wistfully, "The second option, I haven't eaten anything yet."

The man laughed. "If you go out and tell people about this, they will say that we're bullying you. Let's go. I'll take you to the canteen and tell them to cook you something."

'Cook me something?' Erica's eyes lit up as she asked cheerfully, "Really?"

The man was amused by her. "Why would I lie to you?"

"Great! Thank you so much!"

Luckily, Erica met a kind-hearted man and ended up having a nice meal thanks to him.

After lunch, she rested for some time before going to the training ground.

However, she wasn't fit for the training at all. As soon as she got there, she asked straightly for a leave with the excuse that she had a stomachache.

But while Tessie was still practicing with the soldiers, Erica felt embarrassed to go back to the dormitory on her own and decided to sit nearby to watch the rest of the training.

Less than an hour later, Wesley showed up with a long face. Erica was feeling a bit lazy up until she saw her father. Immediately, she put on a bright smile and ran over to him. "Dad, my dear dad! Did you come here to see me?"

'Wow, it must be Matthew who called Dad!' she thought to herself.

But Wesley didn't receive Erica gently. Instead, he reached out his hand and pinched her ear. "Did you call Matthew?" He had deliberately chosen not to give her a cellphone, nor had he allowed her to buy one herself. Yet she still found a way to contact Matthew.

"Ouch, it hurts, Dad! Let go of me first!" Erica yelled. Her father was twisting her ear so ruthlessly that

she could swear that he would rip it off her head at any moment.

"Well, it seems you've made some progress in the past few years. Now you know you're supposed to call Matthew when you are in trouble," Wesley mocked. Unfortunately for Wesley, however, Matthew always had a way to stop him from teaching Erica a lesson.

With a flattering smile, Erica held her father's arm and behaved like a spoiled child. "No, I didn't. He came to see me on his own. Besides, even Matthew is not angry with me anymore, Dad. I'm your daughter, your own blood! Isn't it about time you stop being so mad at me?" Then her face grew more serious as she complained, "I haven't lived a good life for a few years now. I've also paid the price for running away from home. Dad, please have mercy on me!"

Wesley told himself not to believe her sweet words, but he gradually eased out the pressure on her ear until he let go of it altogether.

Realizing Wesley's heart had softened, Erica added, "Dad, only when we have children of our own, we are able to recognize our parents' kindness. After I gave birth to my four sons, I began to understand it mustn't have been easy for you and Mom to raise the three of us. I will take good care of you and Mom in the future. Don't stay mad at me anymore, okay?"

Wesley rolled his eyes at her. He didn't believe a word of what she said. "Stop pretending! If Matthew doesn't care about what you've done, I don't either."

Wesley shrugged. Nevertheless, Blair was right. Her husband would eventually get soft-hearted for his little girl.

Erica, who was not a fool, knew perfectly well how to seize the opportunity. Releasing her father's arm, she waved at Tessie a few yards away. "Tessie, hurry up! Let's go!"

"Did I say you could leave?" Wesley wanted to scare her.

But this time, Erica simply ignored him by getting in his car and making room for Tessie.

Wesley was beginning to regret letting Erica go.

He felt as if he was releasing a tiger to its natural habitat.

On their way back, Erica didn't stop talking. "Dad, it's been a long time since I last saw my sons. Please, get me a cellphone. I want to video chat with them!"

"Get one yourself!" Despite what he said, he still drove her downtown.

Erica knew exactly where he was taking her. After all, she did grow up in Askor.

As soon as she saw the car heading to the downtown area, she couldn't hide her excitement any longer. "Dad, you're so kind! I love you!"

Wesley snorted, "Sit still!" Careful for Erica not to see it, he couldn't help but raise one of the corners of his mouth.

Poor Wesley! His two daughters had always been the apple of his eye. He just didn't have the heart to beat or scold them no matter what they did.

Yvette, at least, didn't cause him any trouble.

But Erica was the definition of a troublemaker. His blood pressure would often skyrocket because of her. Yet whenever he saw her annoying face, his rage would instantaneously fade.

Poor Wesley was indeed at the mercy of his wife and two daughters for the rest of his life.

When they got to the store, Erica bought her and Tessie the latest smartphones released by Hilton Group. While she picked a white device for herself, she gave Tessie a black one.

After they settled everything, Erica asked Wesley to take her and Tessie to the mall so she could also pick up gifts for Hugo and Wendy.

As their aunt, she didn't think it was appropriate to see her nephew and niece without any gifts.

Two days ago, she had an excuse. She had just come back home in a hurry and didn't have the time to buy Hugo his gift. Today, she was going to make it up for it.

Then after she met Wendy, Hyatt and Rhea, she would go back to Alorith and be reunited with her husband and children.

As for the moment, Erica couldn't wait to send Matthew a message. Therefore, as soon as she got her new phone, she typed, "Honey, it's me, your lovely wife!"

#### CHAPTER 1372 IT'S JUST A WASTE OF TIME

About half an hour later, Matthew saw Erica's message. He only replied, "Mm."

'Okay. What does that mean?' Erica stared at the screen of her phone and pouted her lips in dissatisfaction.

She was so annoyed that she closed her WeChat. 'Well, I'll ask him about it when I get back. Not long now! I can't wait!'

After dinner, when Erica was going back to her room, she heard voices from Gifford's room. It sounded like Gifford and Chantel fighting inside.

Chantel's voice was soft when she said, "Look, we're shooting now. I was supposed to leave tonight, but I put it off until the day after tomorrow. But I've got a fan signing tomorrow. I need to take off."

"So you think I'm not busy?" asked Gifford in a cold voice.

"Of course you are," Chantel answered. She knew that well. They both were. As a star, she did grueling 15 hour shoots. As a soldier, he might work from 6:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., grab a quick dinner, and go prep for a jump at midnight. He was in command, too, which meant he was higher in rank. Higher rank meant more pay and more hours. He was a high-ranking military officer. How could she possibly compete with that?

"Yes, I'm super-busy and yet I can spare a few days to take care of Hugo. Whatever work you have, put it off. That's an order!" he demanded.

Chantel remained silent. She wondered if he knew the cost of what he was asking.

Erica took a peek in their room. One of them sat on the bed, the other stood by the window, and Hugo was playing with his toys on the sofa.

She poked her head in, waved at the little boy and whispered, "Come to Auntie!"

Although she lowered her voice, all three people in the room heard it and looked at her.

Erica grinned and said to Chantel, "Looks like you guys are busy talking. I'll set Hugo up in a video chat with Adkins and the other kids. Oh, and Hugo can sleep with me tonight. Say good night to Daddy and Mommy, Hugo."

"Good night, Daddy, Mommy!" said Hugo, who had already run over to Erica and was now hugging her legs.

Gifford nodded and watched them leave. Erica shot the two one last grin and closed the door behind her.

There were only two people left in the room. Standing in front of Chantel, Gifford put his hands on his hips and asked, "Have you made up your mind?"

This time, she didn't complain. As long as he was happy, she would do as he said. "Okay."

If she had to give something up for him, it was worth it.

Gifford was satisfied with her response. "I got Hugo some time off too. He doesn't need to go to school tomorrow. We'll go out and have some fun."

The three of them had never gone out together. This was an opportunity for them to spend more time with Hugo.

"Okay." She nodded again.

Gifford sat down next to her and said, "I think Rika's right. We can have a daughter, and Hugo will have a sister. We can go to bed early, so her little act of kindness tonight wasn't in vain."

'Have a daughter?' When she heard that, Chantel's face turned a red. She didn't mind if he wanted another kid, but... "It's only seven o'clock now. It's too early..."

Ignoring her protest, Gifford held her shoulders. The two lay back at the same time. "Can you spare a few days every month?" he asked.

"I'm not sure," she replied honestly. She really didn't know. She didn't take regular breaks. Dramas typically shot their episodes as close together as possible. She might not catch a break for two months or so.

"You don't know either?" Gifford leaned sideways, one hand supporting his head, and looked at his wife. "You work too hard. You should get three to five days off a month so we can spend some time together."

Of course, he would try his best to spare a few days every month to make this work. He would focus on making their love grow, getting closer, and taking care of her and the kid.

Chantel blinked her eyes and her mind went blank. She asked foolishly, "Do you still want me around?"

Gifford was unhappy to hear that. He turned over and pressed himself onto her. "Why would you even ask that? You know that I do."

"I know..." But she also knew they weren't a normal couple.

Looking at the face so close to hers, she suddenly thought of something Erica said when she was in Tow Village. "Okay, I'll come back every month and spend more time with you together," she said, boldly putting her arms around Gifford's neck. Since he didn't want a divorce, it would be better this way. It just so happened that she didn't want a divorce either.

But there was this weird feeling that she got, like Gifford wasn't his normal self. She didn't know if he were trying to make up for something, because he wanted to spend more time with her. He became more attentive and loving. In short, very un-Gifford-like.

Gifford raised his eyebrows. 'She's gotten bolder. When did that happen? She must be up to something.'

After all, Erica did the same thing. She would always butter him up if she wanted him to help her. And

when she didn't want his help, she would be cold and indifferent to him. He was already used to it.

He held her chin and asked in a questioning tone, "Penny for your thoughts?"

Chantel's face turned red. Knowing that she had to tell him sooner or later, she decided to simply spill the beans. "Did you know they found a ton of drugs in Tow Village? That was just a few days ago."

Of course, Gifford knew. It was in all the papers. Not only that, his sister was involved in uncovering that.

"We want you to help us investigate those guys. Those thugs were working for someone. We want to know who," she said.

"Why do you care? I don't get it." Gifford really didn't know what Chantel and Erica were up to all this time.

Chantel shook her head. "You can ask Rika about it. If you say yes, she'll be stoked."

"So, Erica put you up to this?"

Chantel smiled awkwardly and nodded.

Gifford stroked her long hair and said in an imperceptible gentle tone, "Don't hang out with Erica too much. She's a bad influence!"

"You don't get it. Rika—"

Gifford interrupted her and said the words she was going to say. "Rika is a good girl. She didn't do anything wrong. You misunderstood her. Am I right?"

Chantel was slightly stunned. How could he know what she wanted to say?

"Let's not talk about my sister anymore, okay? That's kind of creepy when we're in bed together. Let's make some babies!" he said firmly. It was a waste of time for them to talk about Erica when they were alone.

'Huh? Is he really Rika's brother?

Besides, he is over thirty-six years old now. How could he be so horny?' she thought to herself.

Soon, the room was filled with their scents and sounds. Meanwhile, Erica made a video call to Matthew.

When the video call was connected, Matthew's expressionless face appeared on the screen. Erica greeted him with an ear-to-ear grin, "Hi, my hubby! Home so soon?"

Hugo leaned over and greeted Matthew, "Goo-Good evening, Uncle Matthew!" He stumbled over some words, simply because he was so young.

When Matthew saw Hugo, he nodded and said, "Good evening, Hugo!"

The next moment, before Erica could say anything, Matthew's phone spun violently and his face could not be seen anymore. What could be seen was four little heads huddling together.

"Mommy!"

"Mommy!"

The four children's voices were sweet, almost artificially so, which made Matthew frown.

Except for Colman, none of the kids acted like spoiled brats when he was around. When they saw Erica, they all seemed to have changed into totally different people.

"Awww...you're adorable. I miss you much, guys!"

Damian kissed the phone. "We miss you! When will you be back? It's been a long time!"

"Yeah. There are some bad aunts who want to be our mommy. Hurry, or Dad's gonna bring them here!" Colman echoed.

"Bad aunts?" Erica's heart skipped a beat. She had never heard that before.

#### CHAPTER 1373 SHE IS HOME

"Yes, but Mommy, don't worry. We will help you keep an eye on Daddy before you come back!" Adkins calmly assured Erica that he and his brothers wouldn't allow those bad aunts to succeed in seducing their father.

Erica glanced at the man beside the boys, but his face didn't reveal anything. No reaction. No emotion. Instead, his eyes remained focused on something else as if he was deep in thought.

'Does his silence... mean yes? What a jerk!'

She thought about confronting him, but ultimately decided to comfort her sons. "It doesn't matter. Mommy will be back soon. You'll probably see me in two days."

She wondered if Matthew would come and pick her up then.

Next, the boys chatted some more with Hugo before they reluctantly ended the video call.

Matthew didn't say a word to Erica after all, and she sighed all night about it.



'Didn't he say that he loved me very much? Why didn't he say anything to me just now? We've slept together earlier, haven't we? Why is he still mad at me then?' she thought unhappily.

Later, as planned, Erica got to meet her niece—Wendy.

The little toddler in pink casual clothes had her hair tied up in a ponytail, revealing the whole extent of her round and soft cheeks. She was the cutest girl Erica had ever seen. Although Erica already had her four sons, she couldn't help loving Wendy so much that she didn't want to stop holding or kissing her.

'Well, I changed my mind. I know I have four sons, but I would love to give birth to a beautiful little girl like Wendy for Matthew in the future!' she thought to herself.

Wendy was shy around strangers, so Erica wanted to break the ice and spend more time with her. In the evening, she asked Yvette if she could take the little girl to her bedroom, which her sister agreed. Soon after, they fell asleep together.

Two days passed, and Erica was still at the Leonard family's house. Concerned about it, Wesley found his daughter eating durian when he came over to ask her, "Since you're not training in the base anymore, when will you leave for Alorith? Your in-laws have called you several times already. Do you want them to come and pick you up again?"

Wesley disliked the smell of durian, so he kept himself a few meters away from Erica.

She shook her head and swallowed a piece of durian before answering, "I've booked a flight back to Alorith tomorrow afternoon. But please, don't tell them. I want to surprise Matthew!"

"Surprise him? Is it really necessary?" Wesley mocked.

"You're an old man and understand nothing about young people's love!" Erica said absently.

Wesley was immediately displeased on hearing that. "Who are you calling an old man?"

"I'm calling you! Is there anyone else here?" Erica blinked innocently.

Wesley was rolling up his sleeves, ready to teach his naughty daughter a lesson, but when he saw the durian in her hands, it was like she was holding a biological weapon against him. In the end, he had to give up his intentions under the smug look on her face.

The next day, Tessie left the Leonard family's house with a generous amount of money and rented a house. With the rest of the sum, she opened a flower shop for herself and decided to settle down in Askor for the time being.

As for Erica, before she left, she paid a visit to her best friends—Rhea and Hyatt.

The moment Rhea saw her, she wasn't able to hold back her tears. Because of Erica's disappearance, Rhea and Hyatt hadn't gotten married yet. Rhea wanted to wait for Erica to return so she could be her bridesmaid.

Hyatt was about to cry too. After several years together, Rhea would never plan the wedding with him until now. Recently, he had opened a film studio in Askor, and the business was good. Rhea had her own job as well, so the couple had been living a stable life.

Finally, after bidding her friends and family farewell, Erica flew back to Alorith.

Taking off her sunglasses, she looked at Matthew's villa in the Pearl Villa District when she got there and could barely contain her excitement.

'I, Erica, am back! From now on, I will never leave Alorith again!' she swore inwardly.

She walked to the door and put her finger on the biometric lock as she always used to do. However, she was surprised to hear the "beep" granting her access inside the villa.

It had been over three years since she left, but Matthew had never erased her fingerprint from the system. Instantly, she felt warm in her heart.

Once she came inside, she realized there was no one in the villa. The place was as clean as usual, and the carpet was still the same white one as before. Still, there was plenty of new furniture that she didn't recognize.

After she ended her tour around the living room, she went straight to the third floor.

Pushing open the master bedroom's door, she quickly noticed that most of the objects in there were still the same from three years ago. The only thought in her mind then was that she was finally home.

Yet something was bothering her. Despite not expecting to see Matthew at the villa at this time, she found it strange that her children weren't there either. But then it occurred to her that since Matthew had to go to work, he might have dropped the boys off at the Hilton family's manor. After all, Carlos and Debbie would be worried sick if the children were left at home with no one to look after them.

As she had come to surprise Matthew, she put her stuff away in the bedroom and took a taxi to Hilton Group.

Her first setback revealed itself when she found out that all the security guards at the company's entrance had been replaced by new ones who didn't recognize her.

If it weren't for an old employee nearby who remembered her and explained to them that she was the CEO's wife, she wouldn't have been allowed past the main entrance of the building.

After thanking the old employee, Erica walked in the elevator.

As soon as she got on the CEO's office floor, she found out that except for Paige and Owen, all the other assistants in the secretary department had also been replaced by new ones.

Fortunately, Paige hadn't left for the day yet. In fact, she was astonished to see Erica in front of her after such a long time and so unexpectedly. "Erica! You're here!"

Embarrassed, Erica smiled and greeted her, "Hello, Paige. It's been a while!"

Paige approached her and nodded before asking, "When did you come back from Askor?"

"I've just arrived."

"Will you be staying for good now?" Paige asked cautiously.

Erica grinned. "Yes. I won't be leaving again." She would never leave her dear husband again!

"I'm glad to hear it!" Then Paige turned around and introduced Erica to the other curious assistants. "Hey, guys, this is our CEO's wife. From now on, you should treat Mrs. Hilton with the same respect you treat our CEO. Understood?"

Paige's words laid a solid foundation for Erica among the special assistants. Immediately, several of them stood up and greeted her in unison, "Hello, Mrs. Hilton!"

Erica gave them a big smile. "Hey, guys!"

After exchanging greetings, Erica pointed at the closed office door and asked Paige, "Is he inside?"

Paige turned to look at the door behind her and shook her head. "Matthew is going to attend an important party tonight. He left about ten minutes ago."

"Seriously? What a shame!"

Paige thought for a while and said, "Why don't you call Matthew and ask him to come back? Or maybe you could go after him. Tonight's party is really a big deal. If you're free, you could go and meet him there."

Honestly, Paige hoped that Erica went to the party and showed everyone that Mrs. Hilton was back. The longer she was away, the more women would approach Matthew in order to seduce him. But if Erica exhibited their love to the public, she would be able to get rid of the other women who had been surrounding Matthew since she left.

The sudden appearance of the four boys had already been the cause of much envy among all the socialite divas in Alorith. They were shocked to find out that the Hilton family wasn't just wealthy and powerful but also the bearers of incredibly good genes.

From the daughter of the mayor to the international superstar, all of them were eager to put their claws into Matthew and become the next Mrs. Hilton.

Surely, Erica was puzzled by Paige's words. "If the party is so important, why should I, an irrelevant person, attend it?"

#### CHAPTER 1374 MATTHEW'S WIFE

Paige smiled mysteriously and whispered in Erica's ear, "Aren't you afraid someone's going to steal Matthew from you? You know, I take his office clothes to the cleaner's on a regular basis. They always smell like women's perfume, so we need to get that taken care of. Matthew never cheated on you. But he gets plenty of women approaching him, asking his hand in marriage, and women who want to have his baby. Not to mention those women who just want him because he's hot. Don't you want to go to the party and deal with them yourself?"

"Oh..." It suddenly occurred to Erica that even her sons told her that Matthew was surrounded by women who wanted him. Then she finally committed to it. "Of course I'll go. I'm free now. I can have a little fun too, right?"

Paige breathed a sigh of relief. As expected, Erica was still the same as before. With Erica around, she didn't have to watch Matthew like a hawk. Erica would do that for her.

After getting the address of where the party was going to happen, Erica was about to leave, but Paige put a hand on her shoulder to stop her. She looked Erica's dress up and down. Even Erica's everyday clothes were stylish, but definitely not suitable for a large banquet. "Erica, maybe a makeover might be in order. I can pull strings at a salon, you can have your make-up and hair done by a professional stylist," she offered.

Erica looked down at her own clothing. That was probably a good idea. "Okay!" she agreed.

Later, when she was in the salon, Erica got a call from Chantel. "Hey, Rika. I'm in Alorith. Where are you?"

Erica looked at the make-up artist in the mirror, who was applying liquid foundation on her face, and answered, "Back in the city. I just got here. What's up?"

"There's a party tonight. On 'The Princess' cruise ship. I guess Matthew's coming. Wanna go together? We'll show those guys how it's done." Chantel just flew from another city and was on the way to the cruise ship.

The Princess? That was the ship Paige told her about.

With a smile gracing her lips, Erica answered, "Of course. I'm coming too."

"Okay, see you there!" Chantel was happy to have Erica there. At least that was someone she'd know.

"Okay, bye!"

It was getting dark.

Many luxury cars adorned the marina parking lot. Men and women in formal clothes began to line up, waiting to board The Princess.

The party was beginning to fill up. The guest list was like a who's who of elites, rich men and women, old and young. Some were entertainment moguls while the others were financial whiz kids blown in from out of town. The brightest stars weren't in the sky tonight, they were at the party.

Countless bodyguards in black suits were guarding the ship inside and out, and there were also many plain-clothed bodyguards hidden among the partygoers.

Everyone was on time—all the guests arrived before the stroke of eight. The party was scheduled to go off without a hitch.

Before the workers were about to roll up the red carpet so that the cruise ship could make its tour around the harbor, a clear voice called out to the staff, "Wait a minute!"

The staff members turned their heads in the direction of the voice, and saw a beautiful woman, high heels in hand. She looked like she was from one of the rich families. They didn't dare ignore her. They walked over and one of them asked respectfully, "Hello, miss. Do you have an invitation?"

"I don't have one of those," she answered carefully.

"Well..." The staff members were in a dilemma. "I'm sorry, miss. But you can't board without...ahem...one of those," he mocked.

Just then, another woman came up behind her. She looked a little green and embarrassed. Apparently she got carsick. But face to face with the event staff, Paige put that all aside. "This is the wife of Hilton Group's CEO," she announced. "Matthew is on the guest list. Just call her his plus one."

Paige and Owen were pretty well known in the city.

They were Matthew's right-hand assistants. In many occasions, seeing one of them was equivalent to seeing Matthew himself.

The staff members looked at Erica, their mouths open in shock. They thought she was a naughty rich girl, but to their surprise, this was Matthew's wife. They immediately took two steps back and made way for Erica. "I'm sorry, Mrs. Hilton. Welcome to the party!"

Erica put down her high heels on the ground and put on the shoes with Paige's help. She was really not used to wearing them.

Paige didn't forget to tell her, "Erica, I'm taking off now. I have to attend two dinner parties in Matthew's stead tonight. You should be able to find him, right?" She believed Erica would be the most eye-catching woman tonight.

"Okay, I know. Go ahead. I'm good here." After putting on her high heels, Erica stood straight, straightened her chest and raised her head. In an instant, she looked more imposing than before.

Seeing Erica safely aboard the cruise ship, Paige breathed a sigh of relief.

She kept patting her chest to suppress her nausea. She was never letting Erica take her anywhere again.

Erica put the pedal to the metal all the way here. It would usually take forty minutes to get to the marina, but she made it in half that time. Paige uttered many prayers out of sheer terror on the way.

However, Paige also had one more thing to do, and that was to have the car repaired.

When they pulled in, Erica backed into a wall. Although the scratch was not very obvious, it still needed to be treated.

Erica was the last one to enter the cabin, and the door had been closed.

The event staff outside had already told their people inside who Erica was, so as soon as she appeared, they opened it for her.

This attracted the attention of many people in the cabin. They all looked at the cabin door, trying to see who dared to be late for such an occasion.

But no one could tear their eyes away.

As the door was opened, the woman in red revealed herself.

She wore a red strapless knee-length dress and a pair of black high heels. There was a red bow tied in back, highlighting her slender waist.

Her long black hair was tied behind her, a diamond tiara keeping it together. A pair of simple round black diamond earrings dangled on either side of her neck.

She wore only a little makeup. She'd gotten a tan while training, and her skin was red now. It had gotten that way in the two days she was there. Her full red lips shone with lip gloss, which glistened under the stage lights.

She sported a necklace and bracelet fashioned of crystals and black diamonds. She was also wearing a similar-themed anklet. She looked every inch the wife of a CEO.

She looked mature and lovely. Standing in the light, she shone like a sun.

Her beauty overshadowed every woman there. The woman standing next to Matthew was the focus of tonight's party, but now the focus changed thanks to Erica. She was a being from heaven who chose to grace them with her presence.

Even if she was late, she didn't feel embarrassed. When she saw the man in the crowd she missed the most, she smiled playfully and walked elegantly towards Matthew, the most dazzling man there tonight.

With every step she took, more and more people recognized her.

"Wow! Isn't that Erica, Miss Troublemaker? She's back!"

"Yes, it's her! Why does she look so hot?"

"Oh my God! The necklace, bracelet and anklet, that's Black Angel, right?"

"Black Angel! You mean the set that sold for 1.8 billion? She's wearing that? Am I dreaming?"

"No, you're not! It's that jewelry set, no doubt about it. I like it so much, but I didn't have money to buy it..."

"Miss Troublemaker's back. She's a tough nut to crack. I think Noreen Ortiz's in trouble now! She thinks she's Matthew's girlfriend. She keeps hyping her relationship with the guy. She's just asking for a slap in the face."

## CHAPTER 1375 HELLO AUNTIE

When they referred to Noreen, they were referring to the woman cozying up to Matthew, treating him like her boyfriend. She was a famous star, like Chantel. She had a fan base, and to them she was impossibly beautiful and elegant, a goddess, if you will. And her fans were primarily male.

Today, she wore a wine-red deep V-neck evening dress and a collar manufactured by Mikimoto jewelers. It was an amalgam of South Sea pearls, pink conch pearls, Tahitian pearls, white pearls, and so on. All of them cultured and set in various metals like gold and platinum, along with diamonds. This particularly pricey piece was on loan, meant to show off the line. Her wavy blonde hair fell over her left shoulder, revealing the long drop earring dangling from her right ear—a graceful rainbow pearl suspended by an

18k golden chain.

As Erica approached, Noreen clung harder to Matthew's arm, trying to get herself even closer to the man.

And just like everyone else, Matthew's eyes had never left Erica's lithe form. She was a thing of beauty, radiant and nearly unattainable. Especially today.

The voluminous skirt of the red bubble dress parted to reveal her shapely legs. She looked like a princess.

Matthew had a slight smile on his face, an enigmatic thing that was sometimes not there when you looked for it. Noreen thought it was for her. She was wrong.

Erica continued making her way through the guests. Before she could say anything, more people began commenting. "Matthew's wife is here. What does Noreen think she's doing? Doesn't she know she should stay away from Matthew?"

"Maybe she doesn't know Erica is Mrs. Hilton? After all, Erica hasn't been in Alorith for a while now."

"Maybe! I don't know!"

It was almost as if Erica couldn't see the woman with Matthew.

She quickened her pace when she was about to reach him. Finally, she gave him a hug in front of everyone and said in a sweet voice, "Hi honey!"

As soon as Erica put her arms around the man, Noreen went red with embarrassment. Her face almost matched the red of her dress.

Matthew and Erica were husband and wife. She knew that, and had to step back. She was merely his escort. Erica was his wife.

Noreen released his arm. But she stood still, as if she didn't want to leave.

The man's big palm stroked Erica's face, and his expression was unfathomable. Finally, he said in a soft voice, "You're so bad." She came here without telling him. Wouldn't that make her a bad girl?

Erica giggled and then looked at the woman beside her husband, as if she had seen her for the first time. She tilted her head intimately in his arms and looked at Noreen in confusion. "Honey, who is this?"

Then she greeted Noreen in a sweet voice, "Hello, Auntie! I'm Erica Leonard, Matthew's wife."

However, Erica had to admit that Noreen was very beautiful, mature and sexy.



When the two women stood together, there was still a big difference between them. One was mature and sexy, and the other was cute and lovely. One was approachable, the other not so much.

'Huh? Auntie?' Erica's greeting made Noreen insecure. Did she really look that old?

Sighing helplessly in his heart, Matthew thought to himself, 'She's still as bad as ever! And it's sexy as all get-out!'

Hearing the mockery from the crowd, Noreen quickly snapped out of it. She smiled politely and said to Erica, "Hello, I'm Noreen Ortiz. I'm only 35. Far too young to be an auntie. Matthew and I go way back. In fact, I think I'm closer to his age than you are. Three years older, in fact. But it's nice to meet you. You can call me Noreen."

'Wow, she's good. There's a saying that if a woman is three years older than her man, they're a perfect match. Her mentioning her age was a deliberate move. Noreen's trying to imply that she and Matthew are meant for each other, '

Erica thought to herself. With an apologetic look on her face, she said, "My bad. I called you auntie because I thought you were almost 50! It's a good thing you set the record straight, huh? But, you might want to use more makeup, or drink more water. I can see the wrinkles around your eyes."

At this point, she let go of Matthew and took Noreen's arm. She acted like they were good friends, and continued to babble on about the entertainment industry. "My sister-in-law is also an actress. She told me people like you have to eat right and exercise. And I'd attack those wrinkles too. The industry has no use for an old actress. I'm serious about this. Tell you what, I can introduce my sister-in-law to you and she can give you some great skincare tips."

When Noreen heard that, the corners of her mouth twitched. "How old is your sister-in-law?"

"25. But she looks pretty young for her age. My brother's always saying she looks like a teenager." Erica was lying through her teeth. Her brother never said anything like that.

Noreen turned her head and rolled her eyes so Erica wouldn't see. She was 10 years older than Erica's sister-in-law. Why should she compare the two of them? It was not fair from the get-go. But she tried to remain gracious. She said "thank you" instead of "fuck you."

Then she let go of Erica's hand and walked up to Matthew. With a smile, she said, "Matthew, we haven't said hi to Mr. Arlen yet. Why don't we head that way?"

Glancing at his wife, Matthew nodded and told her, "You wouldn't mind waiting here, right? This won't take long."

'What? How can he do this to me? Is it just her? Or does he go with any woman who asks him to keep

her company?' Flames of fury were burning in Erica's eyes.

Out of the corner of her eye, she saw a few people. Her anger nearly vanished. She flashed Matthew a lovely smile and said, "Okay, it doesn't matter. Go ahead. I see some old friends I can hang out with. I'm going to say hello."

'Old friends?' Matthew was confused and didn't know who she might be talking about.

Noreen was not one to miss an opportunity. She took Matthew's arm and said, "Let's go, Matthew!"

Acting casually, as if she didn't see Noreen holding her husband's arm, Erica waved at them. "Bye!"

Everyone else was very disappointed at this scene, because Erica didn't embarrass Noreen at all! She didn't tear her down, or slap her, or make her cry. It was obvious that Noreen won that bout. Since when did Miss Troublemaker become a pushover?

Matthew was about to say something when Erica walked the other way, hailing her friends. "Hi, Red! Blue! Yellow!"

Matthew knew the FC group better than anyone else.

He had already investigated the group when she ran into FC. He knew better than anyone who they were.

Hearing his wife calling the names of the three men, Matthew stopped in his tracks. The woman on his arm was taken aback, and had to work not to stumble over her heels.

He stood, frozen, watching his wife hug the three men politely.

What was more, there were many male celebrities clustered around FC at the moment. His wife was so happy that she practically drooled over them like an anthomaniac.

Matthew felt jealous. She'd learned a lot in those three years she spent on the run. His wife seemed to have gotten better at attracting the opposite sex.

Seeing Matthew's dour expression, Noreen didn't say anything, let alone urge him to meet Arlen. She didn't want to tempt his wrath.

Fortunately, Matthew made the decision for her, and they went to meet Arlen.

Thanks to Orange, Erica had a good relationship with the other three members of FC.

After Matthew left, Yellow reminded her in a low voice, "I'd keep an eye on those two, if I were you. Noreen could hold a masterclass on seduction. I think she has a crush on your hubby. I'd hate to see you

lose him, Erma."

Yellow was used to calling Erica "Erma." That was the alias she took after she left Alorith.

Erica didn't follow Matthew because she wanted to find a good way to punish Noreen. And being around them was making her blood boil. Now she was cooling down and could think more clearly. "Agreed. But I'm handling it, trust me."

Her guts were telling her that this woman was going to compete with her for her husband.

It was not easy for Chantel to shed her hangers-on and find Erica. "Rika..."

As soon as Chantel called her name, Erica fell into a familiar embrace before she could react.

#### CHAPTER 1376 ONE HUNDRED DOLLAR CHECK

The man's breath felt fresh and clear against her skin. Erica didn't need to look back to know who the man holding her from behind was.

Before she could turn around to validate her guess, however, the people around them began to greet him. "Hello, Matthew!"

"Hello, Matthew, Noreen!"

At this moment, she understood that both Matthew and Noreen were behind her.

Erica smiled. Her husband had barely left her for three minutes and was already back so soon. Why was that? 'It seems he still cares for me, ' she thought, giggling.

She then greeted Chantel with a wink and turned around to look up at the man holding her. He didn't look much friendly.

"Honey, have you brought the checkbook?" Erica asked.

"Yes. Why?" Matthew looked away as he spoke lightly.

Erica stretched out her hand and demanded, "Write me a hundred dollar check."

'A hundred dollar check? What is she planning?'

Even though he had no idea what she was going to do with it, he still took out the checkbook with no hesitation and wrote the number before handing the check to Erica.

A second later, Erica waved the check in front of Noreen and said, "Thank you for accompanying my husband while I wasn't here. This your tip. I know this isn't much money, and I apologize beforehand.

But as you all know, my husband and I have four sons to raise. Our family has got to save every little penny we can now. But please, take it!"

The tip of one hundred dollars was a straight insult to the famous actress, Noreen.

However, the mention of Erica's four sons was what felt like the real slap in her face.

Noreen didn't make a move to take the check. But regardless of the actress's livid face, Erica folded the check in two before she stuck it into her dress.

It was impossible not to associate the scene with a rich man putting his money into a stripper's bra.

Immediately, everyone who had already wanted to laugh at Noreen wasn't able to hold back any longer. Noreen, on the other hand, was furious to get humiliated in front of all those people, but she had to refrain from lashing out at Erica no matter how mad she was.

Chantel shook her head helplessly. Erica was naughty, but she didn't mind giving her a hand. "Rika, isn't the jewelry set you are wearing now the same one purchased at 1.8 billion a few days ago? I bet Matthew bought it for you. How generous of him!"

1.8 billion! This number not only shocked many of the people around, but also Erica herself.

'What? Paige didn't tell me that!' Erica thought. While Erica was in the studio, Paige had gone out for a while and later come back with the set of jewelry. At that time, she didn't think of asking Paige about it. But as it turned out, the set she had brought to her was worth 1.8 billion dollars.

And to think that some ignorant people were actually believing Erica's words and assuming that Matthew wasn't as wealthy as he used to be anymore. It was all nonsense.

Once again, Noreen felt like she was slapped in the face. Now by the 1.8 billion worth jewelry on Erica's neck, hands, and ears.

Soon, Erica came back to her senses and managed to suppress her shock. Looking at Matthew, she said sweetly, "Honey, you're always so good to me!"

A hint of tenderness revealed itself in Matthew's eyes. "You're my wife. If I don't treat you well, who should I?" Then he lifted her chin and whispered close to her face, "If you'd like it, I will give you much more than 1.8 billion."

He didn't mind playing along with her as long as she stayed away from other men.

Moved, Erica hugged him. "Honey, you're so kind!"

As if she didn't notice how embarrassed Noreen was, Chantel added, "How can Matthew not have

money? It's just a matter that some people aren't worth more than a hundred dollars!"

Although Noreen had taken one insult after another quietly so far, she couldn't help looking at Chantel with resentment. Chantel hadn't just stolen a lot of attention from her in the past two years, but she was also on Erica's side against her.

However, unlike Erica, who was untouchable, a woman with no background like Chantel wasn't the same case. "Who the hell do you think you are, Chantel?" she yelled.

Chantel didn't seem to mind her attitude. Instead, she smiled innocently. "Noreen, you misunderstood me. I didn't say anything about you. You're admitting it yourself."

"How dare you!" Noreen was so angry that she seemed about to explode. "Guards! Throw this woman out!"

The situation escalated when two men cut through the crowd, addressing respectfully to Noreen. "Noreen!"

Promptly, Noreen pointed at Chantel and ordered her bodyguards, "Take her out!"

"Yes, ma'am!"

Noticing that the bodyguards were about to move, Erica suddenly intervened, "Wait a minute!"

She let go of Matthew, who was talking to other men, and walked up to Noreen. Her smile immediately disappeared as she looked at the actress coldly and asked, "Who the hell are you? How dare you speak that way to my friend?"

Erica didn't hesitate to push Noreen. Her high heels weren't of any help to keep her balance and she ended up falling awkwardly to the floor.

"Ahhh!" The woman's scream attracted even more attention to herself.

She didn't expect that Erica would have the guts to assault her. Angrily, she shouted, "Erica!"

"I'm here!" The girl scratched her ear and said, "There is no need to be loud. I can hear you."

"How dare you push me!" Noreen had always been known for her arrogance in the entertainment industry, but now she was outdoing herself and acting completely crazy.

"Why wouldn't I? Yes, I pushed you. So what?" Squatting down, Erica raised Noreen's chin as gently as Matthew did to her a few minutes ago, but the smile she gave her was wicked. "Dear, didn't you understand it yet? If you didn't, I'll push you again and again... Until you understand it!"

"How dare you!" Glaring at her, Noreen wished Erica would drop dead at her feet right at that second!

She had long heard that Erica and Matthew had been divorced and that his ex-wife had left Alorith. But when Noreen thought she was about to succeed in becoming the next Mrs. Hilton, Erica suddenly came back. It seemed that all her efforts to be with Matthew had been in vain after all.

Meanwhile, many female stars had gathered to watch Noreen get humiliated. Many of them had had their opportunities robbed by Noreen at some point in their careers. Amused, they began to laugh at her openly. "I didn't come here expecting that Noreen would have such a day!"

"That's right. She's the number one star in the entertainment industry. Not in my wildest dreams did I imagine that the first lady in the financial business would be the one to teach her a lesson!"

Erica, you're awesome.

Thank you for doing something that we wanted but never dared to do."

Noreen gritted her teeth once she heard what everyone had to say about her. She then looked at the man beside her. He was still discussing business with others as if nothing was going on around him.

"Matthew, I came to the party with you. Will you allow your wife to bully me like this? Won't you do anything about it?"

Only then did Matthew cast a glance at her. "What do you want me to do? Discipline Erica?"

"Yes! Not only did she insult me, but she also pushed me!"

He settled for three simple words and answered, "I wouldn't dare." He was afraid that if he taught Erica a lesson again, she would run away from him for another three or four years.

But then, to everyone's surprise, a malicious look flashed across Matthew's face as he stared at Noreen and asked, "Do you want to frame me?"

Noreen was confused. "Matthew, what are you talking about?"

Matthew's voice grew colder. "If I discipline my wife in favor of another woman, she will get mad. What if she decides to leave me after that? I would be alone. Are you trying to frame me then?"

## CHAPTER 1377 ONE HUNDRED BEES

Erica didn't know whether to cry or to laugh at his words. It almost seemed like Matthew was scared of his wife.

But there was no way that was true. Erica was afraid of him. How could the reverse be possible?

As soon as the bodyguard helped Noreen up from the floor, she heard Erica mollifying Matthew, "Honey, don't worry. I won't run away anymore. I want to be with you forever!"

"Good girl! I'll hold you to that. " The man lowered his head and gently kissed her forehead, which made everyone jealous.

Then Matthew switched gears effortlessly, dropping into shop talk as if nothing had happened.

Leaning on her bodyguard, Noreen shot Chantel a vicious look before leaving. This woman was responsible for her humiliation. If she hadn't said anything, Erica wouldn't have knocked Noreen to the floor.

Erica noticed the look in her eyes. She knew that Noreen considered Chantel her enemy now.

As soon as Noreen left, the onlookers at the scene also dispersed. Erica excused herself, getting away from Matthew for a moment. She said she needed to talk to Chantel. After a moment's consultation, the two girls left the hall together. They decided to follow Noreen. Not a bad idea. If she was stirring up trouble, it would be better to know about now.

Their destination was a lounge. The door was not shut entirely, and Noreen's voice drifted out. "Why was Erica here? And how could Chantel bully me like that? Find that bitch. I'll make her pay for what happened today!"

Then she stretched out the check and tore it to bits, as if she had done the same to Chantel and Erica.

"Yes, Noreen," a man said.

"Good news. You can stay put. Ladies and gentlemen, may I present Chantel!" Erica's voice suddenly came. She guessed right. She knew that this woman was planning something else. She just headed that off at the pass.

She'd learned well from Camille and Phoebe. Shut them down immediately, or face more trouble in the future. So Erica did just that.

Since she got Chantel in some hot water, she figured it was her job to get her out of it.

When she saw the two women at the door, Noreen shivered and asked, "Why are you following me?" She was in the middle of smashing things in her room. Next up: a lamp that was the latest target of her anger.

"Thought you were looking for Chantel. Well, here she is!" Erica leaned against the door and answered lazily.

Chantel pretended to be frightened and said, "Noreen, I didn't mean for that to happen. Please forgive

me."

Seeing the fear on her face, Noreen felt better. But she forgot that Chantel was an actress, and a very good one at that!

She also knew these two women came here for a reason. Ignoring Chantel, she asked Erica, "Come on, I promise I'll leave Matthew alone. What more do you want?"

"What more do I want?" Erica turned and waved at the hidden bodyguards.

A few strong men were at her side in an instant. "Erica!"

"Take Noreen away!" She wanted to make sure that from now on, Noreen would be afraid whenever she thought of her and Chantel.

"Yes, Erica!"

While Noreen screamed, one of the bodyguards covered her mouth, and then one grabbed her arms, the other grabbed her legs, and they took her out of the room.

When they passed Erica on the way out, the CEO's wife deliberately pronounced her sentence. "Considering that it is her first time, just lock her up with one hundred bees for a night. If it happens again, lock her in a cage with a Tibetan Mastiff. And if she still hasn't learned her lesson, then find a wolf and do the same. She'll stay under lock and key until she knows better."

Erica learned this from Colman. The boy had once locked Pike's two goons in their neighbor's bee house for an entire day. When the two goons came out of the bee house, their faces were swollen like a pig's head.

'Bees, Tibetan Mastiffs, wolves...' Noreen was so frightened that she felt dizzy. But her mouth was covered entirely by one of the bodyguard's hands, and she couldn't beg for mercy.

"Yes!" the bodyguards answered in unison.

Just like that, Noreen was quietly spirited away.

Silence returned to the corridor. Erica rubbed her hands together, removing the imaginary dust. "That's one woman down. Hopefully we won't have to do this again!" She came back to spend time with her husband and didn't want to deal with all the women who were drooling over him. It was exhausting.

Chantel was a little worried. "Rika, I think we may have a problem. Noreen must have some serious backing for her to get so popular that quickly. Is it really a good idea to punish her like that?"

She was afraid that Erica would be in some serious trouble after this.



Erica wasn't worried. She was not afraid of her. "It doesn't matter. She is powerful, so what? We're not entirely without resources. You have my brother, I have Matthew, and don't forget that we have the Violet Eagles too! What are you afraid of?"

'She's right, ' Chantel thought.

Chantel was not good at throwing her weight around, but Erica was right, and not worried. So gradually the anxiety in her heart faded.

The guests at the party were all bigwigs—rich, powerful, or both. A lot of them were in finance. A lot of them had made a killing with their investments. And quite a few of them saw how Noreen was humiliated, and they learned the price of messing with Erica. They secretly discussed cutting ties with Noreen, to make sure they didn't accidentally piss off Erica.

Eighty percent of what Noreen lost would be transferred to Chantel. Chantel would have more work waiting for her if she wanted it.

When they returned to the banquet hall, Erica and Chantel found Matthew.

Chantel didn't want to see the guy at first, because she was afraid that he would get even with her for hiding Erica and his kids' whereabouts. And why wouldn't he?

But Erica didn't think he would be that petty. She wanted everyone to know that she and Chantel had Matthew's backing before Gifford and Chantel took their marriage public.

She was his wife and Chantel was his sister-in-law. They were both family to Matthew.

Erica's plan was a success. Everyone could see that Erica was on good terms with Chantel. Anyone who wanted to curry favor with the Hilton family wouldn't dare to neglect Chantel now.

Some of the stars, who were jealous of Chantel's popularity and wanted to make trouble for her, immediately nixed the idea. They didn't want to anger Matthew or Erica. And they would include Chantel in their plans, if they had any.

Matthew was still talking about work with a group of his peers, and it took less than two minutes for Erica's eyes to glaze over. She whispered to Chantel, "Let's grab a bite to eat!"

"Okay!" Chantel didn't like social engagements either, so the two women went to the dessert table.

Unfortunately, the world was full of fools. They thought if Matthew couldn't see them, they'd have a chance to mess with Erica.

For example, at this moment, a woman bent her elbow slightly.

She knocked over her glass of juice by accident, and the green kiwi fruit juice spilled all over the table, spreading over the tablecloth, and dripping on anything underneath.

Standing next to the kiwi fruit juice, Erica and Chantel were eating the waffles on their plates, talking and laughing. They didn't notice what the woman was doing.

When Chantel bent over to laugh wildly at one of Erica's jokes, she happened to see the liquid flowing down from the table to the ground. Some of the liquid had already dripped onto Erica's beautiful dress. "Rika, be careful!"

Chantel pulled her away. Wearing high-heeled shoes, Erica took two quick steps back and almost fell. If it weren't for Chantel holding her up, she would have hit the floor.

Everyone in the crowd approached the two women to see what was happening. Only a woman in a black evening dress made a point of moving away. Chantel noticed her and called out, "You, stop!"

#### CHAPTER 1378 MESS WITH THE BEST, DIE LIKE THE RES

Everyone looked at the woman Chantel called out to. But the woman continued walking like she hadn't heard a thing.

Finally, someone told the woman, "Lucia! I think Chantel is trying to get your attention!"

Panic flashed in the woman's eyes, but she took a moment to get ahold of herself before she turned to see. Chantel was busy mopping Erica's dress. The woman smiled at her and asked, "Yeah? And what do you need?"

The green juice had created an angry dark stain on the red dress. It was painfully obvious, and had ruined the dress, hopefully just for the evening. Pointing at the stain, Chantel asked, "Did you knock that glass of juice over?" Her tone told everyone she was furious.

'This is just too much. We dealt with someone earlier, and now another person decides to mess with Rika. Do they really think she's such a pushover?' Chantel thought in exasperation.

Before the woman could say anything, someone else piped up. "It must be her. I saw her drinking the same kind of juice before it happened."

"Come to think of it, you're right. I think she did it on purpose."

A woman approached Erica and whispered in her ear, "That's Lucia Aungier, a local model. At another party she was at, she made a point of falling so that Matthew would catch her. She laughed it off like she was drunk, but she was so obvious."

'Fell so Matthew would catch her?' Erica's anger flared.

She was already pretty heated because of the stain on her dress, and the fact that someone might have done that intentionally. When Paige had sent dozens of dresses for her to pick from, she chose this one immediately. That was the one she wanted. No matter how beautiful and expensive the other dresses were, she didn't even bother trying them on.

Erica had come here to build prestige as Mrs. Hilton, to establish once and for all that Matthew was her husband, and he was off the market. So she wasn't going to take this from anyone, particularly someone who had designs on Matthew.

Seeing that there was no way out of this, Lucia decided to apologize. "I'm so sorry, Erica. I didn't mean to do that. Maybe my dress brushed the glass of juice and knocked it over by accident. How about this? I'll pay to have it cleaned, and then have it sent to you. How does that sound?"

The woman had a good attitude and she did sound sincere, which was hard to find fault with.

Erica's eyes darkened. If she hadn't seen the smugness in Lucia's eyes, she would have believed that the woman was apologizing to her sincerely.

"You stained my brand-new dress. Deliberately, from what others are saying. You think an apology is enough? Do I look like I'm that laid-back?"

If Lucia hadn't done it on purpose, Erica would accept her apology—though reluctantly.

But obviously, this woman knew what she was doing, and pretended to be innocent. Not only that, she made a pass at her husband when she wasn't around. No, she was not going to go easy on someone who did that!

"No, no. I'm really sorry. Please forgive me. I'll pay to have it cleaned, I swear." Lucia seemed to be very anxious and scared. Miserable and alone, she faced the truth of her situation. Hot tears started to fall.

Everyone was watching with interest. If Erica didn't frame this right, they'd think that she was a hot-headed bully who pushed around everyone she didn't like. Thinking of this, she threw the wet tissue she had used to mop up the stain on the table and took a step forward. "Okay, let's say your story is true. Turn around."

Her words confused Lucia. "What?"

Erica was a little impatient. "Just do as I say!"

The woman turned around slowly, and finally stopped, facing Erica again.

Erica sneered, "You're wearing a strapless, form-fitting, mermaid dress. No decoration, no tassles. Your

dress couldn't have knocked anything over. Mine can, thanks to the bow in the back. No, this is all you. I don't get where you come off, thinking you can fool me. Your dress doesn't flare that way, or drag across a table, or anything. And yet you're trying to tell me that the dress knocked the glass over? Maybe it was your elbow? And since your elbows aren't covered, you should have felt it when your elbow hit the glass. So how could you say you didn't do it on purpose? Think I'm an idiot?"

Lucia was stupefied by her retort. Erica was right, but Lucia just couldn't admit it. "I'm sorry, Erica. I really didn't know I knocked it down. Maybe I touched the tablecloth..."

"Shut up!" Erica was getting more and more fiery. The woman still wouldn't admit it and was still making excuses when everyone knew she was lying.

At this moment, Matthew noticed a crowd forming at the dessert table. He had a bad feeling about this and walked over there to see what the commotion was.

When he got closer, he found the woman drawing this crowd was none other than his wife. "What happened?"

Hearing him speak, the crowd greeted him and made way for him. He smoothly strode to Erica's side. She was fuming with rage.

What he didn't know was that he picked the wrong time to stand with her. Erica glared at him and asked, "Do you know this woman?"

She was livid, and had no respect for him. Her tone and bearing accused him.

Her attitude scared the people around her so much that they held their collective breath. 'Wow! No wonder she's Mrs. Hilton! She's probably the only person who could talk to Matthew that way.' The guests were laying odds on whether the CEO would have an angry response.

Matthew did not react the way everyone expected him to. Instead of annoyance, the man displayed tenderness. "Who?" he asked softly.

Erica pointed directly at Lucia. Until then, he hadn't spared her a look. He wasn't even looking around for anyone, and devoted his full attention to his wife.

His deep eyes took in the woman's face for less than two seconds and then moved away. He had a good memory, which served him here. "We met once. At a dinner party."

"So, is it true that she fell into your arms on purpose when she was drunk?"

The man thought for a while and nodded. "On purpose? I don't know. I did make sure she didn't fall." But he hadn't thought about it after that. Only then did he see the stains on Erica's dress. Matthew frowned and asked, "What's wrong with your dress?"

"She tipped over a glass of green juice on purpose and it spilled on my dress." Erica changed her attitude and leaned against his chest, acting like a spoiled child. "Honey, Paige found a bunch of dresses, but this was the only one I liked. This woman stained it deliberately. I hope it's not ruined!"

Matthew's face gradually turned gloomy. He wrapped his arms around his wife's waist and gave Lucia death glare. He said coldly, "This is ridiculous! Why won't you leave my wife alone? Guards, take her to the top deck. Tie her to a chair and keep her there for three days and nights!"

Although he didn't deal with Noreen himself just now, it didn't mean he didn't care! And now there was someone else trying the same shit. What were they trying to do? And why choose his wife? He could turn a blind eye when the Leonard family punished Erica, because they were their elders. But these other two women? They were nothing to him. And yet they were ballsy enough to try and mess with his wife. They needed to be taught a lesson.

His words made everyone gasp. 'That long? If she dies of exposure, will he be held accountable?'

I sure wouldn't want to piss him off. You mess with the best, die like the rest, ' they all thought.

#### CHAPTER 1379 NOT REAL FRIENDS

Matthew's words sent Lucia to the floor on her knees and she begged, "Matthew, I'm sorry. I promise that it will never happen again! I know that it was my fault, but..."

The man didn't seem to care about the woman's pleading and he ruthlessly watched her get taken away. There were over a thousand people in the cruise ship, but not one person dared to speak for her.

Matthew whispered in Erica's ear, "The ship is heading back. We'll go straight home when it reaches the shore."

"Okay!" She nodded in response.

"I'll have someone bring you a fresh set of clothes first."

"Thanks, but that won't be necessary. I've cleaned up most of the stains with wet tissues. We'll be home soon, so don't bother!"

"Fine." Matthew didn't force her.

For the remainder of the party, there wasn't a single man or woman who dared to provoke Erica.

When Chantel was in the bathroom, Erica took the chance to call Gifford. "Gifford, I think that Chantel has offended someone she shouldn't have because of me. You have to keep her safe."

"Are you serious? What kind of trouble have you gotten Chantel into now? You've already made every

member of the Leonard family suffer. Just make trouble for the Hilton family if you have nothing better to do!"

Erica stuck out her tongue and goaded him deliberately, "I didn't mean to get her in trouble. Are you going to help her or not? If you don't, I'll find someone to protect her!"

"Who said I wasn't going to help her? I know how to take care of my wife. I don't need your help. You'd better worry about having to coax your husband."

Erica answered proudly, "My husband is not angry with me anymore. Just now, he punished a bad woman for hitting on him in front of everyone."

"Humph, you think too simply of your husband. Just because he is looking out for you doesn't mean he isn't angry with you. I bet he was just being nice in front of everyone. Wait till you get home, that's when you'll have to apologize to him." Any good man would look out for his wife in front of others, but it didn't mean that Matthew wasn't angry at Erica.

"It doesn't matter! At least, my husband has shown me enough respect in front of people. I don't mind apologizing to him later when we go home." After returning home, Erica was planning on doing whatever Matthew would ask of her without any complaint.

"What's on your mind? Matthew is not an ordinary man and he is very successful. Shouldn't you show him respect in public as well? How can you let him act humble around you in public? You're wrong there!" Gifford lectured his sister.

"No, no, no. Gifford, I disagree. Yes, he is a successful man, but all men and women are equal. Only when he gives me enough respect can I return him the same respect. Don't you think so?"

"Um... I guess you're right." Gifford seemed to have been brainwashed by his sister.

"Listen, you need to treat Chantel well in the future too. Don't always try to make her give you face. Forget your male chauvinism and just take good care of her. Only in this way will she love you more!"

Gifford came to his senses and said, "I don't need you to tell me what to do. She's my wife. I can take care of my own problems. Mind your own business."

"Okay, don't forget to keep your wife safe."

"If there is nothing else, I will hang up." Gifford hung up before Erica could even respond.

She was rendered speechless. Ever since she came back from Tow Village, Gifford had been indifferent to her. He must have been mad at her about something!

'Forget it. Just let him be angry. Chantel will cheer him up for me, ' she thought.

Erica picked up a cherry and put it into her mouth. A moment later, several women surrounded her and looked at her with smile. One of them plucked up the courage to speak and finally said, "Erica, we want to ask you a question."

Erica glanced at the women in front of her and recognized them instantly. They were the rich ladies who had a good relationship with the Campbell family from a few years ago. Now some of them had already been married as well.

The two women she had dealt with earlier were from the entertainment circle, and now this group of women was from the business circle. Erica thought to herself, wondering why she was so popular among women. 'Why can't I attract more handsome men instead?'

Nonetheless, she still nodded expressionlessly. "Please go ahead!"

The women approached her with excitement and asked, "Erica, how did you get pregnant with four sons? Is there some kind of secret? We are all so envious of you!"

'Secret?' Erica nodded and smiled mischievously, "Yes!" 'Of course it's because my husband is strong and has good genes!' she laughed in her mind.

"Erica, will you please share your secret with us?" After all, if they could sire a few sons as well, the rich ladies wouldn't have to worry about their status in their husband's family.

Erica took out a tissue, wiped her mouth and leaned her head forward.

The ladies leaned in closer with their ears as if to listen in carefully.

When Chantel came out from the bathroom, she heard Erica say, "The secret of having four sons... I only drank the holy water from a river of Tow Village in Kuflya. The origin of the river is a spring that has existed for thousands of years. After the baptism of time and nature, it's said that it's become a river with spirituality. Many women in Tow Village have been pregnant with three babies, four babies, and even eight babies because of drinking the water of that river."

"What? Really?"

"Oh my God! Eight babies? How is that possible?"

"Calm down. There was something on the news about a woman who got pregnant with eight babies!"

"Yes, I've heard of that news as well. It's a true story based in Mipburg! Apparently, this kind of thing also happens in Kuflya."

Erica's words caused all the women to break into heated discussions.

Chantel remained silent and shook her head in amusement. How could she not admire that woman's skills? Erica went to Tow Village for the first time when she was about to give birth. What did her pregnancy with four babies have anything to do with the water from the river?

Besides, Chantel had been to Tow Village more than ten times, but she had never heard of such stories.

"Erica, please give us the specific location of that river."

"Yes, Erica. We will remember your kindness for the rest of our lives."

Erica pretended to be baffled. "Okay!"

Meanwhile, Matthew, who had been keeping an eye on Erica all this time, thought that Erica was being bullied by someone again, so he strode over, leaving his business partners behind.

He only heard the woman's last words. "It's at the entrance of Tow Village. There is only one entrance and the other three paths are surrounded by mountains. The spring water comes down from the mountain. If you can live there and drink the water for a few months, you'll be sure to be pregnant with at least a set of twins! If you are lucky enough, giving birth to four babies like me will be a piece of cake!"

"Wow! Thank you so much, Erica!"

"Erica, you're so kind. You're an angel!"

"You're welcome. We're friends. Glad to be of help," said Erica with a bright smile on her face. 'Not real friends at all,' she sneered in her mind.

"Yes, yes!"

Matthew stood still and he couldn't help but shake his head as he listened to their conversation. 'Just another group of brainless women! The only reason why Erica was able to give birth to four babies was because of me. Was there any other reason?'

#### CHAPTER 1380 A SPOILED BRA

'If you all want to believe in Erica's nonsense, don't come to me when you realize you've been fooled. I'm not going to punish my wife for these stupid women!' Matthew thought to himself.

The group of women celebrated excitedly for some time. Only when their state of awe began to fade, they came to notice the man standing behind them.

Having got what they wanted, the women surrounding Erica dispersed and freed the way for Matthew.



Erica looked at the man walking towards her and grabbed a cherry, waving it in front of him. "Come on, eat it!"

Matthew shook his head and stated, "We're leaving."

"Oh, okay!" She was actually glad to go home. Regardless of where she was, Erica stretched her body.

Then she turned to Chantel and asked, "What about you? Come to our place with us."

Chantel showed her the phone in her hand. A notification from a recent missed call from her assistant displayed on the screen. "No, thanks. My assistant is waiting for me at the hotel. I'm going abroad tomorrow morning. You can go home first!"

"Okay, we are leaving now." Erica intertwined her fingers with her husband's.

His big palm was still as warm as she remembered. It felt so good to get back together with him.

"Okay, bye!" Chantel watched the couple go before she answered the phone, which was already ringing in her hand again.

"Hello, it's me."

"Chantel, there are several bodyguards at the hotel now. They said Mr. Leonard sent them. Do you know what happened?"

"What? Mr. Leonard?" 'Did Gifford send them?' she wondered.

"Yes. How is everything with you there? Can you come back now?" asked the assistant.

Chantel glanced at the lively cabin full of people before she answered, "Well, I'll talk to Mr. Arlen first. If I can leave earlier, I'll go back to the hotel immediately."

"Okay."

Outside, Matthew and Erica had barely left the cabin when she began to stir uncomfortably beside him. Holding his arm, she stood still and didn't let go of him.

"My feet hurt!" she said in a soft voice. The man glanced at her but didn't move.

Ignoring his silence, Erica tightened her grip on his arm and added, "You should carry me to the car. It's the first time in years that I had to wear high heels for so many hours. I can't walk when my feet hurt so badly." No one could blame her for being in pain.

'Huh! We hadn't seen each other for over three years, but she got more and more sensitive, didn't she?'

The man pretended to be impatient. "No one ever dared to ask me to do such a thing." Despite his harsh words, he immediately scooped Erica in his arms.

She didn't hesitate to put her arms around his neck as she smiled sweetly at him. "Well, I asked you because you're my dear husband!" And she could ask him whatever she wanted.

Yet she would never realize how much the words "my dear husband" had filled his heart with joy.

After getting off the cruise ship, Matthew put her in the back seat of his car and sat beside her.

The first thing Erica did once she was inside the vehicle was to free her feet from the grasp of those painful high heels.

Next, she put her feet up on Matthew's slender legs and swayed them in search of some relief.

Matthew's eyes hovered over the pair of feet resting on him, and then he clenched his jaw. "Erica!" he warned.

"Hey, don't be so mean! My feet hurt. I rarely put on high heels, please be considerate!"

'Hmm... So, her spoiled brat behavior seems to have increased a lot over these past few years. And she still manages to manipulate me with it, ' he thought to himself.

A few moments later, Erica removed her feet, adjusted herself, and finally rested her head on his lap. Looking up at the scowl on Matthew's face, she asked, "Honey, are our sons at Dad and Mom's place? Let's go there. I really miss them."

"No!" Matthew refused. He didn't want to go there that evening. Since his wife had finally come back to him, he'd been looking forward to spending the whole night with her, and he didn't want anyone to disturb them.

"What? Why? Then bring the boys back to our villa." She really missed her children.

"There is something I want to talk to you about this evening. We can discuss our sons in the morning!"

"Fine!" Erica agreed. She happened to have something she wanted to talk about with him as well.

When they arrived at the villa's gate, Erica sat up and released Matthew's legs so he could get out of the car. After he got out, he waited for her beside the vehicle. But instead of coming out, Erica curled up her legs above the seat without making any mention to stand.

Matthew knew what she wanted. Only this time, he didn't lift a finger to carry her into the villa.

'He was so gentle on the cruise ship! I knew it was all an act!' she thought wistfully.

A couple of minutes passed, and Erica heaved a heavy sigh. Holding her high heels in one hand, she moved towards the car's door and whined, "Oh, I shouldn't have come back. No one cares about me in Alorith anyway. I'll go back to Tow Village tomorrow... Ahhh!" Matthew hauled her up from her seat before she could even conclude that stupid sentence.

Despite her first shock reaction, the woman soon smiled in triumph while she kissed Matthew on the cheek. Not even the dark look on his face could intimidate her now. "I take back everything I just said. My husband is very good to me!"

Matthew rolled his eyes at her and remained silent.

Once they got inside the villa, Erica wanted to get off him and leave the shoes at the entrance.

But Matthew didn't give her a chance. He told her to simply drop them on the floor and carried her upstairs.

As soon as they came into the bedroom, he threw her over the king-sized bed. Erica tried to escape, but Matthew quickly grabbed her by the ankle and pulled her to the middle of the mattress. When he had her where he wanted, he pressed his body on top of hers.

Close enough to feel each other's heart beating inside their chests, he pinched the woman's chin and stared at her red lips before he asked word by word, "Erica, have you had enough fun?"

Putting her arms around his neck, Erica was confused. "I don't get it. What do you mean?"

"You've been away for over three years. Were you happy during this time?"

"No, I was not!" She had learned fast that a life without Matthew was a mess.

"Really?" He didn't believe her at all. "Because I think that now that you had your fun, you finally decided to come home."

Erica smiled awkwardly before she kissed his thin lips. "Honey, I won't leave you anymore."

Nevertheless, now that she was back, he was going to punish her in bed. Matthew leaned over and kissed her sultry red lips as he pulled the hem of her dress up her thighs.

When he was about to take off her dress, Erica grasped his hand and said out of breath, "Wait a minute, honey. There's something I want to talk to you about!"

Kissing her on the neck, he whispered, "Just say it."

"I can't say it with you acting like this. Matthew, you don't want to listen to me, do you?"

"No, I don't." He just wanted to make love to her as much as possible. After all, he had been deprived of having sex for the past few years.

Depressed, Erica complained, "You will listen to me whether you want to or not.

Would you always hang out with other women while I was away? If I hadn't come back tonight, would it have been Noreen in this bed with you now? Ouch! Why did you bite me there? I'm not kidding." She brought a hand to where he had just bitten her and rubbed it. He did it on purpose!

Matthew's eyes flicked over the woman rubbing herself, and his pupils dilated. He found Erica so attractive.

Pushing the man who had been watching her, she ordered, "Say something!"

Matthew held her hands over her head and asked, "What do you want me to say?"

To begin with, he had never brought another woman back home. And even if he had, he wouldn't have been so stupid to do it when he knew that his wife was about to return. Did she really think that he was so clueless?

Her flight number, her boarding time, her time of arrival, the time she went to Hilton Group... He knew everything.

There weren't so many coincidences in this world. But there was a man who orchestrated it all behind the curtains, and that man was Matthew.