

TMBA 1391

## CHAPTER 1391 MATTHEW THE THIRD

As soon as the four children said goodbye to the teachers, the vehicle slowly drove away from the school gate.

On their way home, Matthew remembered what the teacher said about Damian and looked at the boy who was having fun with Erica. "Among the songs the teacher played, which one do you like best?" he asked.

Damian tilted his head to the right and replied, "I like all of them."

"Would you like to learn how to play the piano?" "Yesterday he said that he wanted to be a famous star like Debbie and Chantel. Does he actually want to be a pianist but still doesn't realize it?" Matthew wondered.

Damian blinked for an instant before asking for his father's permission. "Dad, is that okay?"

Matthew looked at his son with a smile that reached his eyes and said, "Yes, as long as you want it."

"Thank you, Dad!" The little boy's eyes lit up. He resembled Erica a lot when caught by surprise.

In fact, the boys looked more like their mother than their father.

After dinner, Matthew took Boswell to the company with him. There, Matthew started to show his son how to do the work.

In order to prove how serious he was about what he had said, Boswell paid full attention as he learned from his father.

Whenever he couldn't understand about something, Matthew would patiently explain it to him until he got it.

Meanwhile, many of the company's employees grew fond of the boy and began to address him as Matthew the Third since he was Carlos' grandson.

Later in the evening, Erica was with her children at home when she unexpectedly received a call from Matthew. "I got an emergency in the company, and I can't go home now. Could you bring me two documents I have in my safe in the study as soon as possible?"

"Sure!" Noticing the unusual urgency in Matthew's tone, Erica quickly got off the bed and told the maid to keep an eye on the three children playing in her room. Then she ran to the study.

They were still on the phone as Erica followed Matthew's instructions to open the safe.

If Matthew hadn't told her, Erica would never have known that there was a safe in that room. Putting her phone on the table, she said, "I'm done with the first lock, now what?"

"Turn right once and then turn left three times."

Crack! Erica heaved a sigh of relief and told the man on the other end of the line, "It's unlocked."

"Take out all the files on the top layer," Matthew instructed her.

The moment Erica squatted down to get the documents, several items at the bottom of the safe inadvertently caught her eye.

All of a sudden, the phone went silent.

Matthew waited a long time, but Erica didn't say anything else. So he called, "Rika?"

There was no response from the other end of the line.

Matthew raised his voice. "Rika!"

He called her three times in a row before he finally got a response from her. Yet it didn't get past him how faint her voice sounded. "I'm listening."

"What's wrong?"

With reddened eyes, Erica held a stack of files in her hands and shook her head. "Nothing. What do I do next?"

"Find an envelope with the number 19 and bring it to me in person. Ask the servant to look after the children until you're back. Don't let anyone else touch this file."

A single tear rolled down Erica's cheek as she nodded. "Okay."

"Now, I'll tell you how to lock the safe," Matthew continued.

Before closing the safe, Erica took out several other things from it without Matthew's knowledge. She then temporarily placed them on the table as she followed his instructions.

After they hung up, Erica left the maid to take care of the kids and took a car from the garage so she could drive to Hilton Group.

With her hands on the steering wheel, Erica couldn't shake the memory of what she had seen in the safe as tears kept falling down her face.

It turned out that Matthew had pretended too well.

About three minutes after she left home, she got past a parked car on the street. The mysterious vehicle immediately turned on its engines and started to follow her.

Erica had too much going on in her head that she didn't notice anything at first. She just kept driving fast towards the company.

However, once she stopped at the traffic light, she looked through the rearview mirror and saw a black car with no license plate right behind her. At that moment, she realized that perhaps she was being followed the whole time.

Wiping her tears, she glanced at the portfolio in the passenger seat and became vigilant in the face of the possibility.

The moment the light turned green, she stepped on the gas and drove off.

As expected, the other car sped up to keep track of her. Although Erica should have continued to drive straight ahead, she suddenly turned to the right, changing her entire course.

Whoever was behind the steering wheel of the other car seemed to have figured out that Erica had realized she was being followed. Therefore, the black car picked up speed in order to surpass Erica. Once it finally got past her, it blocked her way in the middle of the road.

Erica stepped forcefully on the brakes and ended up hitting her head against the steering wheel. "Ouch! It hurts!"

When she raised her head, she noticed two fierce men as they got out of the other car. One was holding a dagger while the other had an axe.

Quickly, she put the car in reverse to get out of there.

However, the men seemed to have guessed her intention as they rushed to her car and blocked her way.

'Oh, this can't be good!' Erica thought to herself, already reaching out for her phone to try to call Matthew.

Nevertheless, the people outside didn't give her a chance. The man holding the axe smashed the window open within seconds.

The moment Erica had seen the axe coming down her way without mercy, she dodged it quickly. Yet the cellphone she had managed to unlock, had slipped down under the passenger seat, making it impossible for her to reach out for it.

Now that her phone was not a possibility anymore, she had to focus on dealing with the man with the axe on her own.

At that precise moment, her phone started to ring. She glanced at the caller ID, and it was Matthew.

Anyway, she couldn't answer it now. Looking straight ahead, Erica sped up. She dragged the man holding himself at the window with her until she crashed into the car ahead.

The impact caused the man to be thrust away as the black car was totally knocked over.

But she wasn't off the hook yet. Before she could tell it, the other man at the end of the car, jumped onto her roof.

Quickly, he leaned over to the driver's seat window and reached out his hand to grab Erica's hair.

"Ah!" He pulled her hair so tightly that Erica almost cried in pain. Somehow she managed to step on the gas again, this time towards the lawn nearby.

Still, the man wouldn't let go of her hair by any means at all. With no other choice but to stop the car, Erica pulled him down from the roof with her two bare hands.

He fell to the ground but quickly got on his feet and grabbed the door handle.

Erica realized she would have to open the door herself and get ready to fight.

So, she jerked the door wide and fast, causing the man to be thrown back to the ground.

Getting out of the car, she asked him, "Who are you?"

However, he did not answer her question. Instead, he stood up and rushed towards her.

Erica stretched out her leg and kicked him in the stomach. Due to the pain he felt, the man immediately took a few steps back.

Meanwhile, inside the car, her phone kept ringing over and over again. She knew it was Matthew calling. But before she could get to it, she needed to deal with the man in front of her first.

Only at that moment, the other man she had already struck down, ran over to her as well, and despite her initial thought, she would now have to deal with not only one but two men at once.

At Hilton Group, Matthew was truly worried about his wife.

He knew something must have happened to Erica after calling her four times without getting an answer.

Still on the phone, Matthew suddenly stood up from his chair and told Boswell, "Stay here. Don't go anywhere before I come back, okay?"

Boswell agreed seriously, "Yes, Dad!"

#### CHAPTER 1392 ON BEHALF OF MATTHEW

Matthew strode out of the office with an earnest look on his face and ordered, "Owen, get someone to locate Erica's phone now." Next, he turned to another assistant. "Get the surveillance footage on the way from the villa to here."

"Yes, Matthew."

The two assistants immediately began to act on their orders.

It didn't take them long to figure out Erica's location. So as soon as Matthew got the address from Owen, he headed out straight away.

The moment he got there, he was greeted with a scene that made him feel both amused and helpless.

Right next to Erica's car, there were two men on the ground while she had one foot on each of them. With her arms crossed over her chest, she commanded arrogantly, "Call me 'my lady.'"

The men wailing on the ground obeyed her promptly. "My lady!"

"Who pulled my hair just now? Apologize to me! And then slap yourself in the face twice."

The one guilty to have pulled her hair said with some difficulty, "My lady, I did it. I was wrong!" Slap! He slapped himself across the face.

Matthew sighed helplessly before he walked towards her. "Rika!"

When she saw him coming over, the furious woman immediately calmed down her nerves. Then she waved at him and said, "Matthew! Ah! Sorry. I almost forgot. I've brought the file you asked." She had been so busy punishing those two thugs that she had entirely forgotten that the reason she left home in the first place was to bring something to Matthew.

Erica was about to retrieve the files from her car, but Matthew wasn't interested in them at that moment. He just pulled his wife closer and looked her up and down with his arms around her waist. "Are you hurt?"

Erica waved at him. "No, no. These two are just newbies. Even a younger version of me from a few years ago could have easily beaten them. I knocked them down with a single punch!" Indeed, she sounded so relaxed that it was hard to believe she had just been into a fight.

His wife was awesome! She was worthy of an applause.

Matthew glanced at the two defeated men on the ground and noticed how Erica had beaten them black and blue.

Taking her hands into his, he examined them thoroughly. He found a small cut in the back of her right hand as a thin bead of blood oozed out from the wound.

His face darkened. "Did they do this?"

Erica withdrew her injured hand and comforted her husband with a smile. "It's no big deal. When I punched that guy, I accidentally scratched my fist on something metallic he had on his clothes."

Despite realizing that her cut wasn't deep, Matthew still couldn't hold back the distress and anger he felt towards it. So, furious, he turned around and walked to the men lying on the ground. To everyone's surprise, Matthew didn't come unprepared and took out a dagger he had attached earlier to his waist.

Before the men or Erica could react, he cut a deep wound in the hands of the two thugs.

"Ah—" one of the men screamed while the other gritted his teeth not to make a sound.

They thought it was over by the time they saw Matthew putting the dagger away, but they were wrong.

Matthew kicked one man in the stomach and asked in a cold voice, "Who sent you here?" The two sweaty thugs exchanged looks between each other.

Then, struggling to stand on their feet, they started to run.

Matthew flashed the fugitives a murderous look but didn't chase after them. Instead, he waited a bit longer before leaving the two cowards for the bodyguards to catch. "Take them back and interrogate them!"

"Yes, Matthew."

Erica was right. The two thugs sucked. Although Matthew had given them a head start, the bodyguards caught them shortly after they were sent to get them.

Next, Matthew averted his attention to Erica's car. There was no way she could use it anymore. So, as soon as he retrieved her phone and the files from her vehicle, he took her hand and led her to his car.

Matthew didn't drive away immediately, though. First, he disinfected her cut and put a Band-Aid on it. Only after making sure that the wound was properly seen to, he drove back to the company.

Meanwhile, at Hilton Group, everyone's feelings were running high.

The executives looked like ants on a hot pan with anxiety after Matthew's sudden departure. During the time he was out, at least a dozen senior executives came to the office to ask if Matthew had already come back.

However, no matter how much they insisted on asking, the only Hilton they would find in there was Boswell and not Matthew.

"Uncle, is there anything urgent going on that you need my father to be back so soon?" Boswell inquired the last person who walked into the office looking for Matthew.

The senior executive wiped the sweat off his face. He was too nervous to mind that he was about to vent his anger to a child. "Yes, Matthew is expected for the reading of a document. Several companies are waiting for him now. Matthew the Third, do you know where Matthew is?"

"Do you mean that you need my father to just read a document out loud?" Boswell asked thoughtfully.

"Yes, no one has the right to do so except for Matthew. Then he will take out the contract he had signed earlier and..."

Boswell listened to the executive's words, and after a while, he surprisingly asked, "Can I do it? I'm my father's biological son. Although I'm young, I can take my father's place..."

The man stood there, speechless at the child's idea.

However, three minutes later, the senior executive was walking into the meeting room, holding the little boy's hand.

Boswell had been coming to the company quite frequently in the past few days. Not to mention that Matthew had also taken the boy with him to all kinds of meetings. So, almost all the senior executives were already familiarized with the boy.

As soon as Boswell came in, everyone greeted him before turning to the senior executive who brought him. "why did you bring Matthew the Third here? Where is Matthew?"

Nevertheless, Boswell didn't give him a chance to answer. Raising the document in his hand, he raised his voice and said, "Didn't you want to hear the content of this document? I'll read it to you now."

"What?" The people in the meeting room looked at each other in shock.

Despite being a group of executives in their fifties, they learned to accept the leadership of a man in his early thirties. After all, Matthew had not only proved himself to be powerful but extremely capable of doing his job. But this? What was this? A ridiculous joke? How could they ever acknowledge a meeting

led by a child?

One of the shareholders of the company stood up and kindly urged, "Young Master, please don't make fun of this kind of matter..."

Someone else immediately echoed, "Yes, Young Master, how about you contact your father as a way to help us?" How could a little boy know the words on the document?

There was a hint of coldness in Boswell's eyes. Since he was only a three-year-old boy, he wasn't as intimidating as Carlos and Matthew were, but he wasn't to be underestimated either.

Regardless of anyone's approval of him, Boswell took his father's seat and stated rightfully, "My father wrote this document. I'll just read it out loud. Is there anything wrong with that?"

A dead silence followed the boy's speech. Paige then said calmly, "Ladies and gentlemen, I believe Matthew the Third is right. The content was written by Matthew, who had to attend something urgent and can't be with us at the moment. But Matthew the Third will only be announcing his father's words. Besides, as Matthew's biological son, he's allowed to represent his father. As long as Young Master can take it seriously, why can't we give him a chance?"

"Well..."

Immediately, a lot of discussion started to take place in the meeting room, but Boswell soon thumped his little hand on the table to stop it altogether.

"It's just a document. Why are you making a fuss about it? Weren't you all anxious about what we'll be working next? Whoever objects my reading, stand up now, and be responsible for the loss the company will suffer after this announcement is delayed."

The meeting room was quiet again. 'Who could afford this kind of loss?' Even if Matthew stood there today, he wouldn't dare to say he would take responsibility for it.

#### CHAPTER 1393 SCREWED THINGS UP

Someone in the crowd quickly changed his tune. "Yeah, you're right. The next step is more important. Go ahead, Young Master!"

"True. I think we need to get the big picture! It's just a file. Why can't Matthew's son tell us what's in it?"

Everyone shut up, even the haters. They'd given him a task, so they decided to listen.

Boswell opened the sealed document, skimmed the contents, and then read it out loud. "Senior executives and shareholders, to ensure cooperation with Strange Island Enterprise, the next phase is to purchase its strongest competitor, Forever Poet Co., Ltd."



That part of the meeting only took five minutes. Everyone held their tongues during that time. Only the child-like voice of Boswell could be heard, announcing major decisions that affected more than a dozen companies.

After the announcements, the once quiet meeting room was in an uproar. "Boswell, that can't be right. Forever Poet Co., Ltd is a well-known company with a long history..."

"Yeah. Traffic on the Sail site is at an all-time low. Why did Matthew decide on that course of action?"

Paige stood beside Boswell, motioning for everyone to be quiet. "I don't think we need to question how and why he does things, do you? Really, has he ever let you down? Now we have to carry out the contract with Innocence."

Based on what Matthew said, this was a done deal. Once the cooperation was declared, dozens of factories would be all over it.

While the meeting was in full swing, Matthew drove the car and told Erica, "My phone's dead. Call Paige and ask her to go to conference room 3. She can stall them till I get there."

"Oh! Okay!" She did as he asked. It didn't take Paige long to pick up, and Erica relayed Matthew's message.

Hearing that, Paige smiled. "Erica, please tell Matthew that Young Master has already announced our contract with Innocence."

"What? I must be hearing things!" Erica exclaimed in surprise.

"I wish you were. They were too anxious waiting for Matthew, so Boswell took control of the meeting and made the announcement himself. Now the factories have started their production cycles."

After hanging up the phone, Erica was still in shock.

Matthew maneuvered around another car and tried to find an open stretch of road. After he did that, he glanced at her and asked, "What's wrong?"

"Matthew... I think Boswell screwed things up..."

"What?" Matthew was confused.

Then Erica told him what Paige had said. Then she made a decision. "Get to the office, and step on it. I think we can fix this. Boswell needs to know he can't do things like that!"

Hearing that, Matthew smiled. "Even if we flew there, it would be too late."

"What? Then what do we do?" Erica was in a complete panic.

"Don't worry." Matthew took her hand to comfort her. "Actually, I don't think there's anything to fix. Boswell set the factories in motion, but that's it. So they start early. No big deal. He may have just done us a favor."

Time was money. If he started a project early, it could net him hundreds of thousands more.

If things went as planned, the next round of decisions would be his to make. As long as Erica brought the files to Matthew, seven or eight business deals could be made all at once.

But unexpectedly, Erica was attacked by thugs. Of course, Matthew would choose his wife over his business dealings. And he would do it without hesitation!

When Matthew arrived at the company, Boswell sat in the conference room and listened to what the attendees were saying. Seeing the man stride in, everyone visibly relaxed.

Matthew picked up his son from the chair, put him on his lap, and pinched the little guy's cheek. He was in a good mood.

And he wanted everyone to know it. With that silent gesture, Matthew had signaled to all present that he was proud of his son.

Which also shut down several of them. They didn't like the idea of Boswell having any decision-making power whatsoever. But now they had no choice but to be quiet.

The meeting returned to normal after Matthew arrived.

Sitting in Matthew's office, Erica remembered what she saw in the safe.

She really didn't expect to find the photo of her as a teenager in there. What was he doing with it? When did he take it?

And the stars in the glass bottle. She'd made those a few years ago. What were they doing in there?

Didn't he say that the stars were for Phoebe? Why didn't he give them to her? If they weren't for Phoebe, then why did he tell her they were? Erica had so many questions it almost made her dizzy.

After thinking about it for a few minutes, Erica couldn't sit still any longer. She decided to head home. She told Paige to let Matthew know, and left.

Paige arranged for a driver to take her back.

When Erica got there, the kids were still playing in the eldest child's room.

After greeting the little ones, Erica went straight to Matthew's study.

She opened the safe again, using the combination that Matthew had told her.

She rummaged through it again. One shelf had documents from work. The second shelf held a ton of boxes, as well as different keys. There were only four things at the bottom portion of the safe: the locks of hair she left him, the letter she wrote, the glass bottle full of stars, and her photo.

It was all about her.

Thinking why this might be, she felt hot tears forming in her eyes.

Did he plan all this from the start? Was the discussion about their marriage just a sham? Was it her in his heart all along? And if so, why did he hide it from her?

Did he ever really love Phoebe?

The ringtone shattered the still and brought her back to reality. She took the phone from her pocket. "Hello?" she said.

"I've done some poking around, Erma. The mastermind is in Alorith, but that's all we know. We don't know his name or what he looks like yet."

'In Alorith? That's great.' She didn't have to run all over the place looking for him. "I see. See what else you can dig up. Keep me posted."

"Yes, Erma."

In the evening, when Matthew came back with Boswell, Erica was bathing Damian and Colman. The two boys splashed enough to leave great puddles on the floor, like they'd had a water war.

Erica was a mess, her pajamas soaked through.

On the other hand, Adkins sat on a chair next to them, holding a water gun and pointing it at his two brothers from time to time. Colman kept screaming. The noise was so loud everyone on the third floor could hear it.

Boswell ran into the bathroom and wrapped his arms around Erica. "Mom!"

Erica smiled and kissed him on the cheek. "You're back. Where's your dad?"

"Downstairs. He's on the phone. He said he'd be up here soon."

CHAPTER 1394 LET HIM DIE

"Well, would you like to take a shower with your brothers?" Erica asked.

Shaking his head, Boswell answered, "No. How about my own bathroom? Please?"

"Okay. Ask the nanny to fill the tub for you. I'll be along after I'm done with your brothers!" She had so many sons and they had to take turns bathing.

"Okay!"

With the nanny's help, Erica finally finished bathing each of her sons.

Erica was in the master bedroom. She stared at the man exiting the bathroom, not saying a word.

Matthew put on his pajamas and glanced at her. "You should probably grab a shower," he said.

"Okay." She nodded and walked into the bathroom, burying the questions she wanted to ask him deep inside her.

At night, Erica was lying on the bed playing a mobile game, and Matthew was viewing the news on his iPad.

Someone pushed the door of the master bedroom open. Eventually, a boy's head could be seen in the widening gap. He gently called, "Dad, Mom."

It was Damian, their youngest son.

Erica sat up from the bed and looked at her son, confused. "What's wrong? Why are you up again, Damian?"

Standing at the door, an Ultraman toy in hand, he stared at them and said, "I can't sleep. Can I sleep with you guys?"

Matthew put down his iPad, got out of bed and walked towards him. Half squatting in front of the boy, he looked at him and asked, "Why?"

"Well, I've never done it before, and I feel safe with you," the little boy answered bluntly.

With a faint smile, Matthew closed the door and carried him to the bed.

As soon as Damian climbed into the bed, someone opened the door once more. This time, it was Colman. He screamed and ran to their bed. "Oh, yeah! We can sleep with Dad and Mom now!"

Under the couple's stunned gazes, he quickly crawled into the bed and huddled under the blanket with Damian.

The two brothers couldn't help but giggle. Erica was speechless. What a clever little guy!

Matthew was nobody's fool, and caught on immediately. "You didn't really want to sleep with us, did you, Damian? Colman put you up to it, huh?" he asked in a condescending tone.

"Yes, Dad. I was scared Mom would spank me if I asked," Colman answered and stuck out his tongue.

Matthew patted him on the leg gently and said, "Mom won't spank you just for that. Just ask, that's all. But she might spank you for getting your brother to trick us." Colman was so young, and he already got the hang of using others to get what he wanted.

Colman hid under the quilt and pleaded, "Dad, Mom, I'm still a kid. Don't hit me, please?"

Erica grabbed Matthew's hand and said, "Hit my kid and I'm kicking you out of bed. You can find your own bed after that."

Matthew couldn't believe his ears. He just wanted to tuck the two kids in. He didn't explain, but ordered his two naughty sons, "Close your eyes! Now!"

"Okay, thanks, Dad!" Damian said politely.

But as soon as Colman and Damian closed their eyes, Boswell also found his way in.

Blinking his innocent eyes, Boswell said, "Dad, can I sleep with you too? I'll do whatever you want tomorrow." Matthew knew there was a limit to whatever he'd ask.

Matthew wanted to laugh, but he managed to remain serious. He rested his hands on his hips and asked, "But isn't that how it works anyway? I ask you to do something, and you do it." Boswell sounded like he was doing him a favor by promising to obey Matthew. How else was he supposed to react?

Shaking his head, Boswell disagreed, "Not really. And not now. But in the morning, I'll be really happy. And do whatever you want me to—I won't complain."

"I don't care whether you want to or not. I'm your dad, and I get to tell you what to do. How do you think this works?" Matthew patiently reasoned with him.

At the same time, he noticed Colman reached out his hand from underneath the quilt and secretly waved at Boswell.

Glancing at his brother and then at Matthew, Boswell wondered why his dad was so hard-headed. He then looked at Erica for help. "Mom..."

Before he could say anything more, Erica patted the bed and said, "Your dad was just kidding. Come on

in!"

Upon hearing her words, Boswell ran to the bed and snuggled up under the covers with his two younger brothers.

Looking at the three little boys in the bed, Matthew shook his head helplessly.

Erica looked at the man standing by the bed and said, "Go ahead!"

"What?" Matthew was confused.

"Bring Adkins here too. He's gonna be mad if he doesn't get in on this!" she ordered.

Matthew sighed inwardly. He turned around and walked out of the bedroom to bring his eldest son there.

Adkins was still thinking about the last thing he'd read on the story book. Hearing the knock on the door, he peered at it in the dim light and said, "Dad!"

Matthew walked over and sat down by his bed. "Let's go."

Adkins sat up and looked into his eyes. "Where are we going?" he asked.

"Your younger brothers are in our room now. You can sleep with us tonight too!"

Adkins thought for a while and shook his head. "No. Don't want to."

"Why?" Matthew asked in confusion.

"Sleep with Mom. Not with my brothers. And not with you."

Matthew was shocked upon hearing that. "Why? Don't you love me?" Adkins was only three. What if this got worse as he got older? What did he do that made Adkins feel this way? What if Matthew were dying? Would Adkins ask the doctor to unplug him and get his mom to marry someone else? Would the boy really let him die?

"Yes, I do," Adkins answered.

"So why don't you come with me?" Matthew pulled him up, put him under his armpit and walked out of the bedroom, ignoring his cries.

Now that the four boys were all here, the problem was logistics. If the six of them slept in the same bed with their heads on the same side, the bed would be not wide enough.

The only option was for them to sleep with their heads on either side of the bed. Matthew and Erica had to separate and take care of two children each.

Putting his arms around Matthew, Colman blurted out, "I sleep with Dad tonight. I get Mom tomorrow!"

Without even taking a look at Matthew, Adkins and Boswell climbed over to Erica's side without saying a word.

Damian looked at his three brothers. He seemed to have no choice. Eyes wide open, he looked at Matthew and said, "Dad, let's lie down."

Finally, they could drift off to sleep.

The family of six huddled in the same bed, and the four children fell asleep first.

Matthew held Colman in his left arm, while Damian held his other arm and slept soundly.

In the dark of night, the smile in the man's eyes deepened.

The next day, Adkins woke up first. He sat up from the bed and looked at the scene on the bed with his sleepy eyes. Suddenly, he was a little confused.

He remembered that he and Boswell had gone to sleep with his mom last night. When he woke up, he was with his three younger brothers, but his parents were snoozing on the other side of the bed.

Colman slept horizontally, with his legs on Matthew's, and his head on Erica's legs.

Before he could figure out why his brothers were there, Adkins pulled his brother away from Erica.

Matthew suddenly woke up.

#### CHAPTER 1395 REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR BRAIN

Matthew checked the time on his phone. It was just half-past five in the morning. He sat up quietly as he observed Adkins struggling to move his brother away from Erica, and asked, "Why did you wake up so early?"

Letting go of Colman, Adkins answered, "I need to go to the bathroom!"

"Go ahead then!" Matthew urged. In fact, he wanted to hold his wife in his arms while he slept for a little longer.

The little boy got out of bed in a hurry, but when he passed by Matthew, something occurred to him. Stopping in his tracks, he asked in confusion, "Dad, wasn't I sleeping with Mom? Why was I with my brothers when I woke up?"

Matthew glanced at the boy and replied calmly, "Your mom insisted on coming to sleep with me in the middle of the night. You know, she's the only girl in our family. We need to pamper her as much as we can, and I can only sleep with her."

"Oh!" Matthew's answer convinced Adkins enough, so he went straight to the bathroom.

Like every other school day, Erica didn't sleep late. She would always wake up with the boys in order to send the four to class. That morning wasn't any different.

After washing up, Adkins asked Erica as she applied some skincare products on her face, "Mom, why did you have to sleep with Dad last night?"

"What?"

Matthew was passing by when he heard the question but paused only for a second. Continuing to look for his razor, he didn't say a word.

Adkins elaborated in a serious tone, "Last night, Boswell and I were sleeping with you. This morning, I found you and Dad sleeping together. I asked Dad about it, and he told me that you insisted on sleeping with him in the middle of the night. Then you hugged each other and slept together during the rest of it."

Erica was rendered speechless. She then glanced at Matthew through the mirror and came to the conclusion that she had indeed spent the night with him. "I didn't have to sleep with your dad!" she said.

Matthew stopped looking for his razor and walked to the woman in front of the dressing table. She seemed lost in thought. "You crawled to my side of the bed last night before we slept. Don't you remember?"

Erica frowned in confusion. Then she shook her head and answered truthfully, "No, I forgot." However, if she were to think about it, when she got up this morning, she was indeed at the other end of the bed where Matthew had slept the night before. Did she really climb over there?

"Never mind." The man walked into the bathroom indifferently.

Yet Erica couldn't stop thinking about it. 'Why do I feel there's something wrong with it?'

At noon, Matthew acted on his word and sent a white piano to the villa. The instrument was settled in a room opposite to Damian's bedroom. Additionally, a teacher was hired for the boy to start taking lessons.

Meanwhile, at Hilton Group, Matthew was working in his office when Paige walked in.



"Matthew, some women are causing trouble at the company's entrance right now," she reported calmly.

'Causing trouble?' Matthew stopped typing on his computer and asked, "What's going on?"

Paige coughed, trying to hold back a laugh before she explained, "They said they want to talk to you. It seems that Erica lied to them about something in Kuflya. Several of these women are famous businessmen's wives here in Alorith." Paige didn't think it was appropriate to ignore them, so she decided to tell Matthew about the matter.

Understanding what she meant, Matthew sneered, "Take them to the reception room!"

"Yes, Matthew!"

A few minutes later, a man in a suit and leather shoes came into the room filled with angry, rich ladies. Their looks of dissatisfaction, however, immediately shifted into something else the moment they put their eyes on him.

'Wow! Matthew is so handsome!

Look at his slender legs. Oh my God!' Their husbands were nothing compared to this man.

Sitting straight in the armchair, Matthew asked politely, "I heard that you were looking for me?"

By the time the women came to their senses, one of them complained, "Matthew, your wife lied to us. In fact, she went too far!"

The others echoed. "Yes, no wonder she is called Miss Troublemaker. We treated her as a good friend, but she reciprocated our kindness by lying to us!"

"She told us there was holy water in Tow Village. We trusted her! Each of us spent thousands of dollars on a plane ticket, not to mention the long time it took to get to the fucking Tow Village. And for what?"

"That's right. She didn't simply deceive us into going to that shitty place. The key point is that the river she mentioned is not some divine river. It's clearly a stinky ditch!"

'A stinky ditch?' A faint smile showed on Matthew's face.

As soon as the women were done rambling, the reception room grew silent again. At that moment, Matthew stood up and cast a cold glance at them. "Ladies, don't you have anything else to do?"

'Huh?' The ladies exchanged confused looks among themselves before one dared to ask, "Matthew, aren't you going to give us an explanation?"

Putting his hands in his pockets, he answered them coldly, "What explanation do you want me to give you? Because, honestly, I can't see why you're blaming others for your own stupidity. Or do you think you are all so charming that I'll want to teach my wife a lesson only to satisfy you?"

"But Erica wronged us. Shouldn't she be taught a lesson?" another woman retorted.

"Yes! How can you say we're stupid? All we did was trust Erica's word. She was the one who lied to us!"

"Exactly!"

Matthew's face darkened as he called out in a piercing tone, "Paige!"

The assistant immediately came over and answered calmly, "Matthew!"

"Buddha surged in the sky of Kuflya. Many people saw it and fell to their knees to make a wish. Of course, everyone's wish came true after that. Go there and check it out now," Matthew ordered.

His words left the women stunned.

Paige frowned for a moment, unsure of what he meant. But then it dawned on her what her boss's point was. "Yes, Matthew! I'll do it right now."

Without any other word, she turned around and left the meeting room.

The ladies were all speechless at the scene. Anyone smart enough could see that Matthew was making fun of them. Still, some people didn't understand it. One of them muttered, "Is this woman a fool? How could there be a real Buddha in this world?"

Matthew nodded and continued, "Yes, you are right. How could there be a real Buddha in this world? Also, how could there be real holy water in this same world we're talking about? Were you idiots to believe such a thing is real? We're in the twenty-first century. Don't you know the reason my wife gave birth to quadruplets is because of our genes?"

Without giving anyone a chance to react, he added, "Some of you even possess a master's degree. Honestly, if I were you, I would find a wall to bump my head into it a few times to sober up.

Also, if it's not clear yet, I'll tell you now that it's impossible for me to teach Erica a lesson. She's my wife! Has any of that convinced you already, or are you still looking for an explanation?

If it hasn't, I strongly advise you to remember bringing your brain with you next time you go out!"

Afterward, Matthew strode out of the reception room.

It didn't take him three minutes to get rid of a dozen rich ladies from Alorith.

Paige, who was expecting at the door, couldn't help but burst into laughter as soon as she heard what Matthew said. However, the moment she saw him coming out, she regained her composure and began to follow him.

The rich ladies remained in the reception room for a few minutes more. They still wanted to vent their anger, but they wouldn't dare to cause any more trouble after being scolded by Matthew himself. Telling their husbands about it would be useless. Instead of taking their side, they might actually scold them as well.

After all, most of their husbands were CEOs in the financial business and depended on keeping a good relationship with Matthew.

#### CHAPTER 1396 NOT IN THE FACE

When the group of women left Hilton Group, their faces were twisted into masks of rage.

Erica was blissfully ignorant of what else was going on, and continued snapping photos from the balcony of their villa.

'Hmm...I still need a drone. But I don't want to dip into the cash Matthew floated me. Let's see if I can take on some freelance work and pay for it that way,' she thought.

She took out her phone and sent a message to Chantel. "Hey, know anyone who needs portrait work? I'll even take on a contract with a company at this point. I need cash and fast! Let me know, okay?" She was so short of money that she started to tackle other people's projects for pay.

It took a bit for Chantel to reply. "Hey, I just got your message. I was shooting my new drama. We just broke for a meal. And I've got a plum assignment for you. Why don't you take pics of me? I've always wanted to be a model for the famous photographer, EM!"

Erica chuckled, "Sounds like a plan. And if we screw up, I can always fix it in post. But I couldn't charge you—you're a friend. And I have to focus on making money now."

Tessie and Chantel knew better than anyone how good Erica was at photography.

"No problem. Just use your professional name EM. People will be lining up in the streets to model for you! But I'll put the word out you're looking for work!"

The name "Erica" wasn't well-known in the photography industry, but everyone knew EM.

"Thank you! Love you, dear sister-in-law."

Looking at the word "sister-in-law," Chantel smiled happily. It had been more than two weeks since she saw Gifford. Keeping this in mind, she rang her assistant. "I'm heading back home in two days. Get me tickets, please. I'll be gone for at least that long."

"Yes, ma'am," came the assistant's prompt reply. Chantel ended the call, and called her agent to let her know. Her agent wasn't okay with it. "Two days? You're in the middle of a shoot, not to mention the fact that your time off is affecting the work we can find you! Have you thought about that? Your opportunities will be drying up! Why don't we wait a bit to schedule a vacation?" The agent was just looking out for her. She knew Chantel had always been short of money.

But Chantel shook her head. She had promised Gifford to be home more often. No matter how much money she made, it was not as important as family. "Just make sure to let everyone know."

Knowing Chantel had made up her mind, the agent had to acquiesce. "Okay," she said. "It's your career."

Like a good friend, Chantel came through for her. The next day, Erica had some lucrative work.

The subject of her photo shoot was a famous young man named Dylan. He was a rising star in the industry, and figured that some photos by a high profile photographer would do a lot for his reputation.

He projected the image of a tough guy onscreen, and got tons of action movie roles. But he was really quite effeminate! Definitely not what Erica had bargained for.

'It's not my business. I'm just a photographer. I take pictures,' she thought.

However, what annoyed Erica was that the effeminate man was way too chatty. While she tried to line up the perfect shot, he kept babbling away. "Why do you wear a mask?" he asked as he pointed his fingers at her in a womanly way.

Erica didn't want to talk, but she felt embarrassed if she ignored him. "I have a cold, and I don't want to give it to you. Hence, the mask." She pointed at her face.

"Oh, I see. How old are you anyway?"

She answered perfunctorily while adjusting the shutter speed, "Take a guess."

At that moment, the studio was in an uproar. Rather than the usual din of calls for "action," sound effects, and lines being recited, there was a different kind of commotion.

She didn't pay much attention to it. Sometimes people stood and gawked at a star walking on set. That kind of thing happened at least a couple times a day.

But this time, it was different!

This was no star, even though everyone recognized him.

The moment he stepped into the studio, he saw a woman in a mask snapping pics while a man posed for her.

He walked up silently and finally stood beside her.

Dylan shouted excitedly when he saw the man beside Erica, "Wow! It's Matthew! Matthew is here!"

'Matthew?' The woman who was taking photos suddenly had a bad feeling about this. She turned her head and—sure enough! She didn't even know how long Matthew had been standing behind her.

"Ah! Honey! When did you get here?" Erica put down the camera at once and walked to her husband with a smile, holding his arm.

But that was just an act, as she thought to herself, 'I'm screwed. He caught me lying again.'

Matthew glanced at the woman wearing a mask. Unsatisfied, he pulled it off. Only when her tiny face was completely exposed did he feel better. "Is it fun to hang around in the studio?" he asked sarcastically.

The scene astonished everyone nearby. They then realized that the photographer was Mrs. Hilton!

Erica smiled awkwardly. She told Matthew that she was hanging out with friends today. "I need the money. This shoot alone is worth a couple hundred thousand. How could I turn that down?"

If it weren't for the money, she would have smashed the camera in front of the effeminate man and left!

Dylan didn't seem to notice what was going on between the two. He ran over and cut in, "Matthew! I'm so excited to see you!"

He must be really excited to have tears in his eyes like that.

Matthew was not so enthused. He didn't even acknowledge Dylan's presence.

However, Dylan didn't seem to notice that, either. He continued, "I'm a big fan, Matthew. Can I have your autograph?"

Matthew's cold eyes fell on his face. "Talk nicely!"

"Oh—what? What did I say that was so wrong?" The young star pouted his lips.

"Hahaha..." Seeing the embarrassed look on Matthew's face, Erica couldn't help laughing out loud.

Matthew couldn't stand it anymore. He had always hated this kind of man. He cocked a fist, threatening to hit the star. When Dylan saw his angry face, he moved aside and said, "Aw, Matthew, please don't do this to me! You're my idol. Not in the face! Not in the face!"

Seeing that Matthew was about to beat up Dylan, Erica quickly pulled on his sleeve and said, "No, honey. It's not worth it!" "Let me finish taking photos of him and get the money first before you hit him! Otherwise, that's two hours I'll never get back!" she exclaimed in her mind.

Matthew straightened his clothes, grabbed her wrist and said, "Come with me!"

"No, I can't leave now. Look, I have a job to do! Just be patient, and I'll be done soon!"

"You don't have to earn money this way!" Matthew disagreed. Why did his wife have to put up with this womanly man to earn that paltry amount?

Erica held his hand tightly and begged, "It's not the money; it's my reputation. What if people knew I walked off a job like this? C'mon, let me finish!"

Seeing the embarrassment in the woman's eyes, Matthew sighed helplessly and his heart softened. With a straight face, he said, "I'll wait for you in the car. I'm leaving in ten minutes!"

"Okay, okay, I'll be quick!" He said ten minutes. But she could shoot for twenty minutes.

The man then left the studio.

In the end, Matthew waited for the woman in the car for thirty-nine minutes before he saw her running over in a hurry.

When she was about to get in the car, another staff member stopped her to talk about the clean-up process for the photos. More than ten more minutes passed.

When she finally opened the door and got in the car, the man stared at her expressionlessly. After she sat well, he asked indifferently, "You value your time pretty highly. Don't you think you should value mine?"

Putting the camera bag aside, Erica leaned over to hold his arm and said in a low voice, "I'm just busy today. You know, I'm a normal person. I can't just stay home every day, right? Part of it is that I'm bored. And you saw the gloves I'm wearing. I won't hurt myself. Don't worry!"

"You have a comeback for everything, don't you?" He only asked one question, but she told him a lot.

CHAPTER 1397 GO TO THE ZOO

Erica chuckled and said, "No, I don't. I promise you that I won't take photos every day. Just occasionally, okay? But don't deprive me of my hobby, please?"

She pouted, putting her hands together as she begged him.

Seeing the pitiful look on her face, Matthew knew he would feel guilty if he denied her request. "Okay, but on one condition. I'll check your clients out and pick them for you from now on."

Clients like that effeminate young star from earlier, for example, weren't an option. Erica wouldn't benefit from getting in touch with people like him.

"What? But you are so busy..." She didn't want to bother him. "Besides, when I complained to Chantel, she told me that she didn't mean to pick out that man. It was her agent who arranged it. Next time someone wants to be photographed, she will personally check them out before sending them to me."

Although Matthew didn't seem to like the idea very much, he didn't say anything either.

At that moment, Erica knew that she had succeeded in persuading him. She then asked, "How did you know I was there?"

Rolling his eyes at her, he thought to himself, 'She has the nerve to ask?' "You were not in the mall." He had put his work aside to go to the Shining International Plaza and look for her. But the moment he got there, he realized she had fooled him.

"Ha-ha, you are so smart, honey. Oh, don't be angry! If you had allowed me to work, I wouldn't have lied to you. So, it's your..."

"It's my fault?" Matthew blurted out what she wanted to say.

'Well...' Despite her beliefs, she didn't dare to blame him out loud. "No, no, no. It's my fault. From now on, I'll tell you in advance where I'm going as long as you don't mind my bothering you!"

Matthew touched her chin, raising it slightly so he could look her in the eye. "Do tell me in advance!" How could he mind it? She was Erica, his beloved wife!

"Okay, okay!" she agreed. Since Erica had vowed to love and cherish Matthew, she would listen to him.

Then Erica sat back and closed her eyes, failing to notice when the car headed to the suburb. About ten minutes later, she looked out of the window and didn't recognize the scenery. She asked curiously, "Where are we going?"

"The zoo!" His words were short and precise.

"What?" Erica was confused. "Why do you suddenly want to go to the zoo?" Besides, shouldn't they

bring their four children along for a visit to the zoo? Why were the two of them going alone then?

"You'll know when we get there."

"Where are the kids?"

"In the kindergarten."

Erica was even more puzzled. "Are you sure we should go to the zoo just the two of us?"

Matthew glanced at her and asked coldly, "You don't want to?"

How could she not? She immediately put on a smile. "Yes, of course I do!" She was happy to spend some time with him as if they were two lovers out in the world on their own.

As Erica daydreamed, a few minutes passed until Matthew elaborated a bit more, "I'll take you to see a few pets." Then he added, "I've raised them."

"What? You've kept a few pets in the zoo? How is that possible?" Erica looked at him in astonishment before she began to guess, "What kind of animal are we talking about? A little Leo? A big ti-ker? Or a big leon-bard?"

The man frowned and asked, "Is there any problem with your tongue?"

"Oh. I mean, is it a little lion, a big tiger, or a big leopard?" She had taught her sons to identify some animals in the past, but the children would frequently slip on their pronunciation, and she would unconsciously imitate them every so often.

"So what's that little Leo... Or whatever you've just mentioned?"

Embarrassed, instead of telling him the truth, Erica cleared her throat and began to talk nonsense.

"Well... the little Leo is me! Don't you remember I was born in August and I'm a Leo? I suppose I'm also a little pet you keep then!"

Matthew rolled his eyes at her. "Oh, really? You are my little pet? Then I think I should put you on a leash. Otherwise, my little pet might run away again."

Erica scratched her head and chuckled foolishly.

Finally, the car drove into the zoo. After a few minutes' ride, the vehicle stopped in front of the Panda House's gate.

Once the driver got out of the car, he opened the door for Erica while Matthew helped himself out.



Before she could decide whether she should take the camera with her or not, Matthew held her hand and said, "Let's go!"

A few staff members were already waiting for Matthew and Erica at the door. When they saw the couple coming, they greeted them warmly, "Matthew, Erica, Welcome!"

Matthew gave them a single nod as Erica replied politely, "Hello!"

Next, the staffers led the couple inside the Panda House.

Seeing many pictures and panda elements around her, Erica finally came to her senses. She then asked the man beside her, "You have kept pandas?" 'Oh, my God! This is too expensive! Pandas are a national treasure!'

"Yes, I've adopted three pandas." In fact, Matthew earned the right to adopt the pandas. He would regularly transfer money to the zoo, and the zoo would spend this money on the three pandas he chose to care for. Therefore, Matthew was the honorary owner of the three pandas.

"Oh my God, you are too extravagant!" Erica exclaimed. Matthew really stood out from everyone else. Regular people may raise a guinea pig, a boa, or even an alpaca. But Matthew chose to raise pandas. They were a national treasure, for god's sake! Rich people were indeed willful.

Matthew held her hand tightly but didn't say anything.

Afterward, the staffers took the two of them to go through a standard disinfection procedure. It was necessary to put on a one-time isolation suit, a mask, and gloves before entering the living area of the pandas.

Erica was nervous and full of expectations during the whole process. Compared to her, Matthew was very calm. With his face blank, he kept listening to Erica showering the staffers with questions such as whether she could hold a panda or not while she was inside.

Before getting into the living area of the pandas, Erica first noticed a square stone board fixed outside, with the words: Matthew has adopted and raised the three pandas called Lili, Riri and Kaka since they were born.

The date of the adoption was written just below.

Staring at the three names given to the pandas, Erica felt a little strange. However, her brain didn't register the meaning behind them at that moment. She asked Matthew casually, "Did you name them? Why Lili and Riri? These names are so strange."

'Kaka is fine. But don't Lili and Riri sound almost the same?' she thought.

Matthew looked at her but didn't answer her question. Instead, he pointed at one direction and suggested, "You go and ask them yourself if they like their names."

"What?" Erica shifted her gaze to where he was pointing and said, "Wow! It's a panda! A big panda! Matthew, look, they are coming!"

Although that wasn't the first time Erica saw a panda, she never thought she would get so close to one before.

She couldn't help shaking Matthew's arm, excited to see the panda in front of her.

One of the staff members ran over to the nearest panda and picked it up. With his cheeks flushed from the effort he made to carry the animal, he waved at Erica. "Erica... Don't you want to hug it?" In his mind, he was afraid that Erica wouldn't be strong enough to hold the panda.

"Yes, yes!" Erica immediately let go of Matthew's arm and hurried to them. "Little cutie, I'm here!"

Meanwhile, another panda noticed them coming and slid down from the tall tree. Then, it slowly crawled its way to the humans' side, circling around them.

#### CHAPTER 1398 PLAYING WITH THE PANDA

The Panda House staffer kept eagle eyes on Erica as she held the panda. Although the panda wasn't that big, it seemed like he had handed her a bag of boulders instead. She couldn't lift it. "Oh, it's so heavy!"

The staff member was on the verge of laughing, but he held it back. "Yes, Lili is six years old. That's an adult panda. She weighs about 110 kilograms, much heavier than you, Erica."

"110 kilos?" Erica's mind was blown. "Wow. He's right. She's a lot heavier. No wonder he seemed like he was straining when he held the creature. It took a fair amount of strength to do that!"

Soon, three pandas waddled up to Erica. She asked, "Since I can't lift them, can I 'rua' them here?" She used a Chinese Internet slang there, "rua" meaning that you like something a lot and you want to play with it.

"Rua?" Matthew asked. He'd never heard that term before. He was now standing next to Erica.

Even the staffer was confused by the word "rua." Erica then reached out two hands and made a gesture to explain, pinching a pretend panda in the air. "Yeah, rua. Like this."

"Oh..." One of the staffers got it. He was a younger fellow who often surfed the net. He pointed at the panda next to her with a smile and asked, "Erica, sure you want to rua it?"

Erica nodded with a smile, "Yes!"

"You can play with it, but I wouldn't get too rough. They look defenseless, but they're not. If anything happens, don't say I didn't warn you."

"No problem!"

Looking at the woman gently touching the panda, Matthew asked the young staffer, "What was she talking about?"

The worker racked his brains, trying to find a more suitable word to help Matthew understand.

"Matthew, Erica wants to...well...play with it. Yeah, that's it!"

"Play with it?" Matthew seemed to get even more confused.

"Yes, she wants to play with the panda!" Ignoring the confused man, the staffer turned to Erica and reminded, "Remember Erica, be careful. If you piss it off, it will rua you instead!"

"Okay! I will!" Erica decided to pinch the panda more before it got angry!

Matthew took out his phone and opened the Google. He searched for the word "rua" and waited a second or two. Only then did he understand what it meant.

He put away his phone and shook his head helplessly. He watched the woman play with the pandas. She pinched them so much before they ran off, and then she ran after them trying to entice them back with shoots of bamboo.

The panda named Riri stretched out its paw and patted the woman on the leg. Erica loved it, and started giggling. Her bright laughter filled even the dark spaces in Panda House.

Matthew stood there, his eyes following the woman, his gaze filled with infinite tenderness.

Erica had asked why he didn't take the kids along in the car.

It was because this was the place he built for her. Why would he bring the children? So they could tear up the place?

However, he would definitely take his sons to the zoo to see pandas and hug them, but not here. Well... It was actually okay with him if he brought his kids here. After all, it was a testament to money spent well. But he'd only let them look through the fence. They didn't need to come in.

More than an hour later, Erica fed the pandas with the bamboo in her hand and reluctantly followed Matthew out of the Panda House.

Before leaving, Erica looked at the stone board with the names of the three pandas engraved on it again,

and a strange feeling washed over her.

When she got to the car, she suddenly screamed, "Matthew!"

The man was startled by her cry, and so was the driver. He quickly turned his head this way or that to see if there was anything dangerous.

After calming himself down, he asked helplessly, "Why did you scream?"

She turned to him and held his hand tightly, tears in her eyes.

Before she could say anything, he frowned and asked, "Why are you crying?"

Hot tears slid down her rosy cheeks. She finally understood how the pandas had got their names. Lili, Riri and Kaka were all named that for a reason. Each name represented a syllable of her own name.

After waiting for a long while, Matthew began to look her up and down. "You okay? Did one of the pandas hurt you?"

She shook her head, tears streaming down her cheeks, and answered him in a choked voice, "No... Matthew, how long have you had these pandas?"

"Almost six years." The pandas had been adopted by him the day they were born.

The woman wiped her tears messily. "Their names... Did you give them those names from the beginning?"

"Yes," he nodded. 'Did she... figure it out?' he thought.

Seeing him nod, Erica leaned in his arms and burst into tears, her sobs racking both their bodies.

Matthew couldn't think of anything more to say.

Even the driver was worried about her. He summoned up his courage and asked his boss, "Matthew, what happened to Erica? Is she hurt?"

Rubbing the woman's head, Matthew said, "No. It's okay. Let me handle this." 'Those seem to be tears of joy,' he thought.

"Okay. Very good, sir!"

Lulled by Matthew's gentle words, Erica stopped crying. She raised her head and asked the man in a choked voice, "When your dad asked you to marry me back then, You said no, right? I remember that..."

She was starting to get it. He didn't just love her while they were married.

He'd always loved her. Or so it seemed. He was smitten with her a long time before their marriage.

When she was still a teenager, angering her father and then running all day to escape him. When she didn't know what love was. He had a crush on her back then.

Matthew took out a tissue and dabbed at the tears on her face. He didn't deny anything, but said gently, "I didn't like the idea of anyone controlling me, so you bet I said no."

Erica burped. Although she knew it was not good to talk about this kind of thing in the car, home was too far away, and she couldn't wait to know the truth. "But I once asked you if Phoebe was the goddess in your heart. You said 'yes!'" That was why she always thought Phoebe was the love of his life.

The man took out another piece of tissue and wiped her nose. "Do you remember what you asked me? You had two questions. My 'yes' was the answer to your second question—is that because your dad doesn't like Phoebe?"

As Sheffield said, women liked digging up the past and using it against their boyfriends.

Erica was stunned. "Why didn't you make that clear?"

The man cocked an eyebrow. "Why didn't you tell me Ethan wasn't your kid?" He thought she carried a torch for Ethan's father. After all, she'd given birth to his child. This was pretty early on, though. Matthew didn't want to make fool of himself by hitting on a woman who couldn't love him back.

Later, when he knew Ethan was not her child, he didn't know how to confess his feelings. It had become habit to hide them. If she hadn't asked him, he wouldn't have explained anything to her.

After all, he had never confessed his love to a girl, so he didn't know the words to use.

To him, the matter of love was hundreds of times more difficult than signing a contract worth countless millions.

Suddenly, Erica hugged him. "Matthew, you are so annoying. To think I didn't know what I was missing out on. Have you ever thought about what you would do if I married someone else?" No wonder her parents always said she was lucky. They were right. She really was lucky.

She had a family who loved her a lot before she got married, and after marriage, she had a husband who loved her deeply and four gifted sons.

Her life was perfect.

With a confident smile, Matthew said, "I always get what I want. And I wanted you."

It all depended on his whim.

#### CHAPTER 1399 AN EXPERIENCED DRIVER

Unconvinced, Erica punched Matthew on the shoulder. "You're so annoying. You didn't tell me anything. It's your fault that I misunderstood you then!" If she had known earlier that Matthew had always loved her, she wouldn't have wasted so much time being jealous of Phoebe in the past.

Matthew said helplessly, "Yes, whatever you say. It's my fault."

Erica also wanted to ask him about the plastic stars he ordered her to fold, but the driver was also in the car with them. She would have to save it for when they got home.

Resting her head on his shoulder, she burped and then sighed, "Oh! I really wanted to be a panda. I would eat and sleep all day long. And no matter how fat I was, I would still have someone to love me."

Matthew was amused by her words. Weren't they just talking about themselves? Why did she suddenly change the subject back to pandas?

'My wife's logic is really confusing. I always find myself trapped in its maze.' He couldn't help but smile.

"You can eat and sleep all day long like a panda if that's what you want," he cooed.

"No, thanks. Men enjoy women with a good figure. If I get fat like a panda, I'm afraid Noreen will show up at our house tomorrow."

'Noreen?' Matthew was puzzled, and then he asked, "What does she have to do with it?"

"If you don't like how I look, you will take her home as your mistress one day!"

All the tenderness Matthew held in his eyes was quickly replaced by wrath. At that moment, he wished he could strangle Erica. Did she really think that his love for her was that shallow? "Shut up. Don't talk to me now."

Erica couldn't help laughing at his angry outburst. Holding his waist, she challenged him in a sweet voice, "If my weight reached 110 kilograms, you wouldn't be able to carry me. What would you do then?"

"I would exercise harder," he answered. In 2018, a weightlifting champion lifted 163 kilograms in the snatch, and 197 kilograms in the clean and jerk. That man won three prizes with a total of 360 kilograms lifted, breaking the world record.

If someone could lift that much weight, Matthew believed that he could do the same—or even better.

Erica, who had no idea that her husband was thinking of her now as a barbell, suggested melodiously,

"Why don't you also put on some weight? In that case, we can be a couple of fat people." 'We've shared weal and woe, why shouldn't we gain weight together as well?' she thought to herself.

"Okay." Although he had agreed, he was afraid he wouldn't be able to hold his end of the deal since he had been working out every day.

"Then I can eat as much as I want from now on!"

"Of course."

On the way home, Matthew answered a phone call urging him to get back to the company. So, as soon as he left Erica at the villa's door, he hurried to Hilton Group.

Erica didn't mind it at all since she also had work of her own to do.

Eventually, she realized she had lost track of time while editing Dylan's photos and forgot to pick up the boys. They had been off school for over an hour by the moment she remembered to check the clock. Apprehensively, she called Matthew. "Oh, Matthew! I forgot the time. Did you pick up our sons?"

"No, I didn't. But Mom and Dad picked them up. They should be in the manor now."

"Oh! Really?" Erica heaved a sigh of relief. "That's good. Will you come back for dinner tonight?"

"Actually, I have a dinner to attend later. But you may eat at the manor. Terilynn will take Jeffrey too."

"Okay!"

The moment Erica hung up, she received a call from Terilynn inviting her to have dinner in the manor. Upon accepting it, she turned off the computer and headed straight to her in-laws' place.

Once the dinner was over, Erica went to play with the kids until she got a call from Owen. "Erica, Matthew has drunk some wine, but I'm busy now. Could you go pick him up?"

"Sure!" She didn't hesitate to agree to his request.

Just in case, Owen asked to confirm, "Erica, do you have a driver's license? How many years have you been driving?" A long time ago, when Erica went to pick up a drunk Matthew, she dared to drive without a license. Owen wanted to make sure the episode wouldn't repeat itself.

"Yes, I have a driver's license, and I'm quite experienced. I've been driving for over two years! Don't worry!" she assured him.

'Experienced? Really?' Owen didn't believe her. How did Erica get a car to drive in that poor Tow Village? Nonetheless, he said, "Please don't race, Erica. If you can't make it, call me back."

If he hadn't known what Matthew was thinking, he would have definitely arranged a professional driver.

"Got it!"

Once she arrived at the Caesar Hotel, Erica parked the car in front of the main entrance.

Before heading out that night, she had purposely chosen the cheapest car from the garage.

Yet the cheapest car in the Hilton family's garage worth no less than five million dollars.

She could still remember the last time some gangsters stopped her car in the middle of the road and broke its window. Not to mention that time she drove to The Princess cruise ship at high speed and ended up scratching the vehicle.

With those two experiences in mind, Erica was now very careful with her driving. Fortunately, nothing happened before she got to the hotel that day.

Relieved, she dialed Matthew's number and asked, "Honey, I'm here. How long will it take until the dinner is over?"

"I'm coming out now," Matthew replied.

"Okay, I'm waiting for you at the door."

"Alright."

A few minutes later, people started coming out of the hotel. Erica could see Matthew in his grey suit in the middle, leading the group.

He was followed by at least seven or eight people who had come out just to see him off.

At the same time, Erica got out of the car and opened the passenger's door for her husband in advance. She then stood beside the vehicle, waiting for him with a smile on her lips.

As the men approached her, she saw one who seemed familiar to her next to Matthew. Then Erica remembered she had met him at Matthew's office door one day she went to the company looking for her husband. His name was Michel, who, in turn, had also recognized her.

"Matthew, you and Erica love each other so much. We are all so envious of you!" Michel told Matthew with a grin.

Matthew then looked into Erica's eyes and felt really good inside. With a smile that reached his eyes, he asked, "Shouldn't a man marry his wife only to love and spoil her?"



Michel laughed heartily. "You're right, Matthew." Next, he greeted Erica, "Erica, it's so late. You must be tired, and yet you came to pick up Matthew."

Erica wasn't much used to attending social events and didn't know how to return his compliment. Therefore, she answered sheepishly, "It's fine. I was free anyway."

Matthew held the woman in his arms and said, "Thank you, Michel. We're leaving now."

The moment Matthew came near her, she smelled the strong scent of alcohol emanating from him. But instead of commenting about it, she smiled and nodded as everyone said their goodbyes.

By the time they left the hotel, Matthew leaned back in the passenger seat and then glanced at his wife behind the steering wheel. "Have you brought your driver's license?"

"Ah! I forgot!" She didn't take her purse with her when she got out.

"But don't worry, I have a driver's license. I've been driving for over two years now. I won't make the same mistake as before."

Matthew closed his eyes and said helplessly, "Then my life is at the hands of Erica!"

"Don't worry! I promise you will get home alive!" she said with great confidence.

Matthew twitched his lips. "Well, I'm glad to know I'll be home alive. But Erica, promise me I won't lose an arm or a leg in our way there, okay?" He couldn't afford to lose any of his members. After all, he needed his body intact in order to satisfy his wife's sexual drive in the future.

Erica chuckled. "Fine, I promise you, Matthew! You won't get hurt."

"Good girl."

Matthew sounded like he had too much to drink. However, the smell in the car was not bad, perhaps due to the quality of the wine he had drunk.

Finally, the car drove into the Pearl Villa District. Once Erica parked it, she got out of the vehicle and ran to open the door for Matthew. As she helped him out, she warned, "Slow down!"

#### CHAPTER 1400 ACTING LIKE A SPOILED KID

Matthew took this opportunity to wrap Erica in his arms. He put his lips closer to hers and drank deeply. "Honey, I feel a little dizzy."

His voice was soft and seductive, like music to her ears. She hugged him happily. "Come lean on me. I'll

help you in."

"Okay. You're so good to me."

The couple finally entered the villa. Erica kicked off her shoes and bent down to take Matthew's shoes off as well. He leaned against a wall for support.

Realizing what she was about to do, he yanked his foot away from her. "I'll do it myself!" He quickly took off his shoes and put on the house shoes.

"We'd better get you upstairs," Erica said. "Let me help you," she continued. 'We'd better take the elevator; we're both pretty beat.'

Erica had figured out the best way upstairs, but the man wasn't heading for the elevator. He stayed in the living room.

Confused, she looked at the man who stood rooted to the spot and asked, "What are you doing? Let's go!"

Matthew held her in his arms and cupped her cheeks. "Honey, do you love me?" His warm breath fell on her face.

She blushed and said, "What do you think?" 'Didn't I already tell him I love him?'

The man lowered his head and kissed her on the lips. "I want to hear it again." His voice was deep and hoarse.

The tenderness in his eyes and voice melted her heart. She asked uncertainly, "Matthew, is there a reason you're acting like a spoiled kid?"

He reminded her a lot of Adkins and Boswell when they wanted something from her. They came to her trying to butter her up. They looked gentle but a little cold.

She was now sure they got this from Matthew.

Colman and Damian were more like her. They often played it cute and sweet.

Embarrassed, Matthew raised his voice and retorted, "Spoiled? Seriously?" How could he act like a spoiled child? That was not like him. If word got out about that, wouldn't he become a laughingstock?

Erica stepped away from him and said, "Yeah. You should take a look in a mirror. If you're just trying to get something out of me, I'm not saying it. It doesn't matter anyway, does it?"

Matthew grabbed her wrist, stopping her right there. "It matters to me. Now say it!" This woman would

drive him crazy sooner or later!

Of course he cared whether she loved him or not.

Erica snickered. "Okay, let's say I do say it. What's in it for me?"

"Seriously?" He looked at her clothes and fought the impulse to tear them from her. "I'm all yours tonight. So where do you want to do it? In the living room, dining room? Maybe on the sofa, out on the balcony..." Seeing her face turn as red as a ripe apple, he chuckled and added, "Wherever it happens, I'll make sure you have fun, too!"

Erica gritted her teeth. "Wow! Really? This is so not cool!" "Not happening. I'm going to sleep, and you should too!" She just wanted to get some rest.

Matthew seemed to take great delight in flirting with her. Maybe it was the alcohol, maybe not. He mimed taking off his clothes. "Come on, Erica. Take it all off! Do this for me, and everything I own is yours! Even me!"

The woman's reaction was beyond Matthew's wildest dreams. Her eyes lit up. "Really?"

"Of course!" This woman was still as lovely as she ever was!

Erica immediately took his hand and guided him to the elevator. "Let's get to the room! I'll take off everything and you'll be penniless!"

Matthew just stood there. When she turned to leave, he said, "No. I want to see you strip those clothes off right here, right now. We'll go back to our room later."

'Here?' Looking at the large living room, Erica hesitated.

The living room was big and bright. She didn't feel comfortable doing anything right there.

Matthew seemed to know what she was thinking. He smiled and took out his phone. As he tapped on his phone, several lights in the living room faded out, and finally, only the lights by the stairs were lit.

Erica crossed her arms over her chest in the dim light and warned the man nervously, "Don't do anything stupid!" 'This is the living room. What if our kids come in all of a sudden? The bedroom is better. That way we can lock the door,' she thought.

"I won't." He wouldn't do anything stupid. But this wasn't stupid at all!

They stood there, staring at each other. "Don't touch me," the woman said.

"I won't," he said, inching closer to her.

A moment later, the woman said, "I mean it!"

"Okay!"

The moment hung in the air as if frozen. Time seemed to freeze. But she missed his touch as much as he missed hers. Finally, the woman said, "Alright, come on!"

Just like that, the two shared their bodies in the living room.

And, at last, Erica relented. She said "I love you," over and over, as they explored each other's bodies.

Erica was soaking in the tub after midnight, trying to recover from lovemaking. She was sore and tired. The man came in, and she only had the energy to groan at him. 'I guess that's what they mean about dying for money.'

Matthew kissed her slightly swollen lips and said, "I'll carry you to bed after I catch a shower."

'That's more like it!'

But Erica couldn't help thinking something was wrong. She had said "I love you" to Matthew many times during the course of the night. But he hadn't said it to her once!

What could she do to make Matthew, the man who always locked his feelings away, confess his love to her?

Three days later, Matthew was poking around the safe. He found some items were missing!

He knew Erica had been staying home and behaving herself. Since he had her there, he didn't need to look at the things in his safe. Those items were what kept him sane when she ran off for three years.

He had something to put in the safe. When it was safely tucked inside, he went to look at the photo of teenaged Erica, but he couldn't find it at all!

He figured out a couple more things were missing, too. When he calmed down, he remembered that Erica had opened his safe a few days ago. She must have taken the missing items.

That meant she had found the secret buried in his heart for so many years. Matthew's face changed dramatically when he realized it.

He closed the safe, and went to the bedroom to find the woman. She was still editing Dylan's photos. "Give them back to me," he said.

"What?" Erica had forgotten she'd taken anything from the safe, so she was a little confused when

Matthew asked her for something.

He was visibly displeased. "You know what I mean."

"How would I know if you don't tell me?" she retorted.

The man's Adam's apple bobbed and he slowly spat out, "The photo." 'And the bottle of stars, the letter she wrote to me, the lock of hair.'

"Oh!" It was not until then that Erica remembered what she had hidden. She had wanted to ask him about those things the day they came back from the zoo, but because he went straight to work, she had never found a chance to ask him.

Keeping this in mind, Erica raised her head and asked the man, "Why did you take a pic of me while I was still a teenager?"

Matthew didn't say anything, like a child who didn't know how to explain his behavior.

"Why did you ask me to fold those stars and say they were for Phoebe?"

The man still kept silent.

Erica withdrew her hands and said, "Those things are mine now!"

Unexpectedly, Matthew reacted quickly and pulled her out of the chair. He looked at the woman with a long face and insisted, "Give them back to me!"

It was a secret he had kept for a long time. When the secret was out, and he hadn't been prepared for it, he went a little crazy.

Even if Erica was the only one who knew, Matthew hadn't had any time to psych himself up to admitting anything. He just couldn't accept that someone knew his secret before he was ready to confess it.

Erica could see that he was clearly upset. But why should she give them back? They were hers, right? If she didn't know better, she would have thought the woman in the photo was not Erica herself, but someone else entirely, and he didn't want her to know.