

TMBA 1431

CHAPTER 1431 SEARCH AND RESCUE

Noting his pursuer nursing his sprained ankle, Damian felt relieved and sat on a big stone to take a rest. He had run for a long time and his mouth was dry.

He took a rest for a while and followed the sound of water to find a stream, ignoring Barry's shouts.

Fortunately, the stream was clear. He couldn't wait around long. He drank two mouthfuls of water to moisten his throat, and then washed his face.

As soon as he washed his face, he heard faint footsteps behind him. He suddenly turned and spotted Barry.

Barry dragged his injured ankle behind him and chased Damian, and was closing fast. He was three meters away, and showed no signs of slowing down.

Startled, Damian stood up in a hurry, balanced on the pebbles in the stream and crossed to the other side.

Barry made his way down to the stream as well. He picked up a mouthful of water and took a couple sips. "You guys really must be part of the Hilton family. I've never seen kids as resourceful as you two."

They were only three years old, but sometimes their intelligence seemed to dwarf that of a teenager. It was terrifying!

Damian blinked his eyes and answered proudly, "Of course we're smart. We're as smart as Dad!" To be honest, sometimes he felt that he took after his mother more, because he felt he was not quite as smart as his brothers.

Everyone knew who Matthew was, and they knew that angering him was dangerous. However, Barry had no other choice but to kidnap these two kids. But as dangerous as Matthew was, his boss was the more immediate threat. He wouldn't disobey him. Not if he wanted to live, at any rate. He sighed, "You brat, if you keep running like this, we'll be trapped in this forest overnight. Ever think about that?"

In fact, Damian didn't care. "Yeah, I don't like it either. How about you let me go? You can't catch up with me anyway!" he said.

Damian was right. Not only was Damian smarter, the man had sprained his ankle. There was no way he could keep up with the cunning, energetic little boy.

But a light bulb came on in Barry's head. He was going to trick the boy. "Okay!" he agreed.

Damian didn't move and sat still. "You mean it? If you go back on your word, you'll be a cheating dog."

"I mean it! Scram!" Barry nodded without hesitation. Who cared what a little boy called him? If he couldn't bring this boy back, he would be dead.

Of course, Damian didn't believe him. His father had told them not to trust anyone. The only ones he could safely rely on were his family members. Anyone else might want something from him. This man was not his family. Why should he believe him?

Then Damian turned and continued to run. Barry was a little confused. Didn't he just agree to let him go? Why would the boy scamper off like that? If he lost him, he'd be in big trouble.

Because one of his feet was injured, he couldn't jump over the stream, so he had to walk through it, soaking his socks and shoes.

But when he got to the other side, the child had disappeared into the forest. Damian was nowhere to be seen. It looked like Damian had tricked him, rather than the other way around. Barry continued to search for the boy in the forest, looking this way and that, moving branches out of the way as he continued on. It was getting dark, and the sounds of the night creatures fouled any chance he might hear Damian.

At the entrance of the forest

Gifford was trying to track down the kids when he came upon the minibus stopped at the entrance to the forest. He asked his men to bust the window of the minibus, and there were ropes strewn on a couple of the seats inside.

His intuition told him that the ropes were used to tie up the kids. They were probably brought here. He looked at the forest briefly, wondering exactly where the children were.

He formed two teams from the men he brought with him, and had them go in different directions. He figured if they carved up the forest, they'd eventually find the children. He contacted Sheffield and Joshua.

Later, the forest was disturbed by a vehicle making its way up the road. Various nocturnal creatures found quieter places to be. Wesley hopped out of the hum-vee. But by the time he got here, more than a dozen search and rescue teams had already entered the forest to search for the boys.

Someone was waiting for him at the entrance. "Wesley, the chief said the children are inside. They have already entered the target area and he asked you to wait for them here!"

Wesley nodded with a sullen face and asked, "Did you send for a helicopter?"

"Our chief has arranged it. The helicopter will be here soon!"

"Good!"

On the other side, Boswell was chased by two adults at the same time. He didn't dare stop, because he didn't want to be caught. Fortunately, he was more nimble than they were. But their legs were longer, and they were organized. Before long, one of his pursuers popped out of the brush and stood in his way. He thought about doubling back, and saw the other behind him.

The three of them stood in a stalemate, out of breath. They were only a few meters away from each other.

After resting for a while, the man with tattooed arms threatened him. "Caught at last!" he said ferociously. "I'm so tired. I'll kick your ass for this!"

Absent-mindedly, Boswell plucked a leaf from a green plant. He didn't bother to respond. He was hatching plans about how he might escape from these two men.

Two minutes later, the tattooed man walked towards him, an evil smile on his face.

Suddenly, Boswell leapt into the grass nearby. The tattooed man immediately followed him. Rather than climb the hill, he stopped and reached into the tall grass. The man immediately stumbled backwards when an iridescent black serpent reared up. The tattooed man screamed. In response, it spread its hood and sank its fangs deep into the man's inked up arm.

Then the thing who had bitten the man slithered past him. He could see a horseshoe shape on its hood as it made its escape. He wanted to kill it, but it had already slithered away.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, Boswell rushed out of the grass, made a face at them and ran down another path.

The tattooed man wanted to catch up, but the venom was starting to do its work. He felt faint, and his limbs felt rubbery. He was having difficulty standing, much less running.

When his partner saw what was going on, he didn't know whether he should stay here and take care of his buddy or continue his pursuit.

However, the tattooed man scolded him, "Find him! If the child runs away, we're both dead!"

The man nodded and left in a hurry.

The man with tattoos knelt on the ground. Their phones had already been lost because of the chase. At this moment, he could do nothing but let his body fall into the dirt.

Boswell could only run as fast as he could. He didn't know how long he had run before he came to the edge of a cliff.

He looked down, and saw a deep chasm. He stood beside it and shivered. There was another cliffside near him, though, with roots he could hang on to and he could climb it.

There was no way back, so he had to bite the bullet and climb up the side of the other cliff.

Before the enemy caught up with him, he hid his little body behind a large stone. The man stood at the foot of the cliff and looked up, but didn't see a thing.

Then he walked to the edge of chasm and looked down, wondering if the boy had fallen.

Luckless in his search, he retraced his steps and left.

However, it was getting dark and fluffy clouds of fog clung to the trees. The man soon lost his way. He searched for a long time, trying to find his friend, but he didn't know where he was.

In the private hospital of Hilton Group

Finding out that Erica was sent to the resuscitation room, Matthew finally breathed a sigh of relief.

Terilynn was taking care of the kids at the Hilton family manor. Debbie and Evelyn rushed to the hospital to meet Matthew.

Matthew stood at the door of the resuscitation room. His suit jacket was little more than rags and ashes. It was late autumn, so he only wore a thin white shirt. It was splattered with blood and soot.

The mother and daughter rushed to the door of the resuscitation room. "Matthew, how's Rika?" Debbie asked in an anxious voice.

Frowning, Evelyn waited for Matthew's answer.

Seeing them, the man's thin lips moved slightly. "She tried to save me, and a beam fell on her. I think it might have damaged her ribs." His voice was hoarse. He trembled when he thought of Erica.

CHAPTER 1432 A BEAR

Debbie's face displayed an expression of stunned disbelief. "How did it come to this?" She felt her chest tighten into a knot, like a cramp.

"Someone kidnapped the boys on purpose and tried to kill me and Rika!" Matthew explained, as he clenched his fists, barely managing to contain his anger. If his calculations were correct, then the person behind all of this had to be none other than Michel. Although Matthew didn't have any evidence to support his allegations, he was certain that the people he had sent to investigate would eventually find out who had hired those gangsters to kidnap the boys.

"Don't worry. Rika and the boys will be fine," Evelyn comforted her brother.

Closing his eyes with frustration, Matthew nodded to indicate his agreement. 'Rika and the two boys will be fine, ' he told himself continuously. If anything bad were to happen to them, Matthew would be consumed by guilt for the rest of his life.

Thinking of her daughter-in-law, Debbie paced back and forth in the corridor.

Not long after, Matthew, who had gone to the nursing station to get his wound taken care of, reappeared at the door of the resuscitation room. "Mom, Evelyn, you stay here and wait for Erica. I'll check on the boys and come back right after," he told the mother and daughter.

"Sure, go ahead. I'll inform you as soon as Rika comes out," said Evelyn with a nod.

Debbie reminded Matthew to be careful before she watched him leave the hospital in a hurry.

Before he left, however, Matthew took one last look at the light above the door of the resuscitation room. Then, without changing his clothes, he rushed over to the last known location where the boys had disappeared.

Meanwhile, after making sure that the man who had been following him was far behind, Boswell slid down the hillside from behind the rock.

Disregarding the mud on his clothes, the little boy took advantage of the last light to pluck two pieces of wood from the ground in hopes of building a fire.

Fortunately, his father had taught him how to make fire using two pieces of wood rubbed against each other.

However, he had never once tried it before. Despite his best efforts, the poor boy was unable to make fire.

Without heat from the fire, he would surely freeze to death. Not only did he need the heat, but he also hoped that it would help to signal to the people who were looking for him and his brother.

Strange unknown noises from afar took him by surprise from time to time, reminding him that he wasn't exempt of fear. However, he knew that it would be pointless to be afraid. The forest was too dark from him to proceed on foot.

The weather began to turn colder and colder as the icy winds swept the forest. Poor little Boswell trembled under a big tree, thinking about the warmth in his parent's embrace, the delicious food cooked by his grandparents and the laughter of his brothers.

He began to sob in a low voice at first, and then he burst into tears, wailing out in the serenity of the

night.

Boswell didn't know how long he had cried when suddenly he saw a helicopter in the sky.

Unfortunately, the people in the helicopter flew past him when they couldn't see him because he was under a big tree.

The next moment, he heard a loud bang, like the sound of a gunshot. He wasn't sure if he was right until he heard it again. This time he was sure that it was a gunshot.

The fact that there was a gunshot meant that someone else had joined them in this forest. Maybe his father had sent someone to rescue him, or maybe the gangsters had called in reinforcements. Whatever it was, Boswell was too afraid to sit around all by himself. He had to follow the sound and find the others first, before they found him.

He heard a voice coming from ahead of him. Gritting his teeth, he stood up and listened closely to find the source of the voice under the dim moonlight.

The forest was home to many pesky critters scurrying back and forth.

The boy would sometimes catch a squirrel running into the bushes from time to time and sometimes he would catch a pheasant running to hide itself from him.

Boswell told himself that even though it was dark out there, he had no reason to be afraid, unless it was a giant beast.

Suddenly, he could hear buzzing sounds from above. He looked up in confusion and found a drone with lights on.

The people sitting in the helicopter might not have seen him, but the drone was flying low enough to spot him from where he was.

Boswell was thrilled. He waved his hands and shouted at the drone, "Hey! I'm here! I'm here!" The boy jumped and jumped, making sure he was loud enough to attract attention.

Unfortunately, that was when what he had been fearing all along finally came true.

Boswell was too focused on the drone in the air to notice any sudden movements around him. He kept shouting happily, "Dad, I'm here! Can you see me? I'm here..."

When he realized that the drone couldn't hear him, he stopped shouting. Just as he closed his mouth, he heard an unexpected noise around him. All of a sudden, he felt a chill run down his spine, as if he were being watched by a pair of sinister eyes.

The little boy's heart leapt to his mouth and he slowly turned around, disregarding the drone hovering right above him.

"Ahh!" The enormous silhouette before him frightened Boswell out of his wits. As he took a step back quietly, he stumbled over a branch and fell on his back.

'Oh my God!' If his eyes hadn't deceived him, the ominous silhouette before him was a bear.

The little boy's face turned pale with fear, but he kept telling himself to calm down and think about what his father had said.

Their thoughtful father had also taught them how to deal with wild animals such as snakes or bears in the wild. According to his father's words, when met with a bear, running would be the first mistake as no matter how fast a human could run, no one could ever outrun a bear in the forest.

Another mistake would be to play dead. Although everyone had heard rumors of bears walking away from a dead body, this rumor was very far from the truth.

In fact, the chances of a bear taking the initiative to attack a person was very low in the first place. The best course of action would be to retreat without provoking it, but slowly walking away or climbing up a tree. If the person trying to escape the bear turned out to be unlucky, then the bear would climb the tree as well. Unfortunately, bears could climb trees faster than any man. Repeating his father's instructions in his head, Boswell decided to calm his thoughts and look to his surroundings for help.

The bear, however, was approaching him one step at a time. Just as it was only a few meters away from Boswell, it leaned forward and let out a deafening roar.

The bear's voice was so loud that it almost broke the poor boy's eardrums, but he didn't move a single inch of his body.

When the distance between the bear and the child was less than three meters, he raised his hands in surrender and tried to negotiate with the bear. "Mr. Bear, I'm just an innocent child. I don't want to hurt you. Please don't hurt me, okay?"

The bear was gigantic compared to the little boy. In fact, it was taller than the two of Boswell combined.

"As long as you don't hurt me, I will leave right away and never come back. I promise!

Please don't come any closer! I'm too skinny! Look at me! I don't have any meat on my body and my bones are too small. Why don't you just let me go? Maybe I'll bring you a fat pig some other day!"

When the bear was just about a meter away from him, it suddenly fell to the ground, its eyes still staring at him.

Boswell swallowed nervously.

After staring at the bear for a long time, he tried to stand up slowly from the ground. When he was certain that the bear wasn't going to harm him, he slowly tiptoed away.

Perhaps, it was his good fortune that the bear didn't attack him. He walked ahead with weary legs, while the bear followed him without any intention of attacking him.

When Boswell was about to take another path, the bear suddenly ran ahead and blocked his way.

Frightened, Boswell stood still and wondered what the bear was trying to tell him.

Silence permeated the air between them. Only the sound of the drone in the air and the small creatures squeaking in the distance could be heard.

When the bear saw him stop, it turned around and took the path that went deeper inside the forest.

Boswell couldn't figure out what the bear was trying to tell him, but when he tried to carry on in his way, the bear blocked his way again.

CHAPTER 1433 A BEAR AND TWO KIDS

Whenever Boswell tried to take the other path, the bear would stop him. Eventually, the boy realized the animal wanted him to follow it.

Despite the fear of being eaten by the bear, Boswell followed it into the thick forest. He walked for a few minutes straight until he came across a dark cave. Its entrance was illuminated only by the moonlight. Noticing they were headed there, Boswell thought this should be where the bear lived.

After the animal walked inside, Boswell didn't dare to run away as he was afraid it might anger the bear. So he waited at the entrance.

A moment later, another bear crawled out of the cave. No, no, no. It was not a bear.

It was actually a human toddler dressed in rags. The child looked even younger than Boswell. With its long and messy hair, it was notorious that the kid had been living out in the woods for a long time.

Boswell also noticed its face was dirty, and its body was wrapped in a strange animal fur when it followed the bear out of the cave.

In the dark night, the child's big black eyes stared at Boswell curiously.

Although Boswell couldn't tell if it was a boy or a girl, he was still excited to see another human. He tried to greet the toddler in front of him. "Hi!"

The toddler stared at him blankly, without saying a word or making any move.

At that moment, the bear set down near the cave, and the kid settled next to it as if the animal was its family.

Boswell didn't feel he had another choice but to sit down too.

Throughout the night, the temperature in the forest dropped sharply. It was probably only a few degrees out there. When a gust of cold wind blew, Boswell couldn't help but shiver. He quietly glanced at the other kid wrapped in a piece of fur. It didn't seem to feel cold even though its shoulders and legs were still exposed to the cold wind.

Boswell thought for a while and took off his coat. It was slightly ripped due to the tree branches he had come across in the woods, but the boy stood up and walked over to put it on the toddler, anyway. "I'm wearing trousers and a sweater. I won't feel cold," he explained.

When he got closer to the toddler, Boswell realized it had a strange smell. Perhaps because it hadn't taken a shower in a long time. Holding his breath, Boswell put his coat over the kid's shoulders and then went back to where he had been sitting.

They remained quiet in the forest for a while. The bear looked back at the toddler who was curiously staring at Boswell's coat and slowly lay on the ground.

When the toddler saw its posture, it immediately half stood and climbed onto its back in a sitting position.

The bear carried the child until they were in front of their guest. Boswell didn't understand what they meant at first, but at last, he plucked up the courage and climbed on the back of the bear, just like the other kid did.

Then, the bear stood up from the ground and clumsily carried the two children away from the cave.

A few minutes later, someone seemed to have found Boswell when a drone hovered over the boy's head. Next, several other drones were flying back and forth above his head.

Boswell waved at one of the drones, which was trying to come down a bit. The device followed him through the woods for less than a minute until it crashed into a tree. Consequently, the drone fell to the ground motionlessly.

"Wait a minute!" Boswell yelled out immediately.

Seeming to understand what the boy meant, the bear stopped in its tracks. Boswell quickly got off the bear and picked up the drone that fell nearby.

He realized the wing was broken, and it wouldn't be able to fly anymore.

Leaving the broken drone behind, Boswell climbed onto the back of the bear, and the animal proceeded slowly through the woods with the children.

As time went by, more drones flew over, and later a helicopter showed.

The helicopter accurately tracked the hovering drones' location as several fully armed people slid to the ground through the soft rope. Quickly, the men approached the bear and the two children.

The bear took a few steps back warily. But when Boswell saw the men who were holding a weapon in the front, he cheered happily, "Uncle! I'm here!"

At the sound of his voice, Gifford grinned and waved at him. "You brat, come over here!"

Although he was an adult, when he saw the size of the bear, Gifford didn't dare to approach it. Yet his nephew didn't seem to be afraid at all.

Boswell slipped off the bear and ran to Gifford, throwing himself into his arms. "Uncle, you're finally here! I was so scared!"

Gifford held him in his arms and looked him up and down as he asked worriedly, "Tell me, did you get hurt?"

"No, I'm fine. Uncle, did you find Damien?" Boswell asked. He had been thinking about his brother the whole time.

Gifford shook his head and told him firmly, "We haven't found Damien yet. But don't worry. Your two grandpas and your dad are looking for him. They will find him soon." Besides, the three gangsters who had kidnapped the boys had already been found and were now under control.

"Okay, let's go!"

When Gifford was about to leave with the boy in his arms, it occurred to Boswell. "Wait, Uncle!"

At that moment, the little boy slipped down from his uncle's embrace and ran towards the bear.

One of the armed men behind Gifford praised, "Chief, your nephew is so bold! It's the bear! Even I wouldn't dare to approach it, but the boy is not afraid at all."

"It would be great if this boy trained with us in a few years!" said another soldier.

Gifford looked at the child who was talking to the bear, and then he said with a smile, "The bear isn't stupid. Maybe it knows the boy isn't aggressive, and that's why it won't attack him."

A moment later, the toddler slipped down from the bear's back and crawled like an animal towards the soldiers.

The scene shocked the adults present. "Who is this kid? It looks even younger than your nephew."

Gifford shook his head in astonishment. The scene reminded him of the news of the boy who had been growing up with a wolf a long time ago. The kid could not only howl like the animal, but he also walked back and forth, supported by his four limbs.

'Was this toddler raised by the bear?' Gifford thought, furrowing his eyebrows.

After the bear left, Boswell approached Gifford and asked, "Uncle, what does the bear mean? Does it want us to take the kid away?" He pointed at the child who was still lying prone on the ground.

Looking back and forth between the leaving bear and the silent kid, Gifford made the decision. "Let's take the kid with us!"

After all, the forest wasn't the place for the child. Gifford decided that he would send the kid to an orphanage then.

However, he would be lying if he said it didn't cross his mind to bring the child back to the Leonard family and ask his parents to raise it. It was probably a terrible idea, though, since it could destroy his parents to raise another child that had no blood relationship with them. Afraid of that, Gifford decided it was for the best to send the kid to an orphanage.

When it was three o'clock in the morning, Gifford and his group came out of the woods with the two children.

Many people gathered at the entrance of the forest, looking forward to seeing the Hilton brothers.

The moment Matthew saw the children Gifford brought with him, he strode over and called, "Boswell!"

"Dad!" Recognizing his father's voice, the boy burst into tears.

Matthew took the dirty boy from Gifford's arms and held him. Wiping his tears, he comforted his son in a soft voice, "It's all right. You're safe now."

Boswell leaned on his shoulder and nodded.

Meanwhile, Wesley came over and looked curiously at the kid that was still in Gifford's arms. "Why is Damien's heir so long? This is strange. He seems shorter too..."

Hearing his brother's name, Boswell turned around and asked, "Where is my brother?"

Gifford didn't know whether to laugh or cry at his father's words. Instead, he explained, "Dad, are you out of your mind? This isn't Demien. I picked this kid up in the woods."

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Gifford didn't know whether to laugh or cry at his father's words. Instead, he explained, "Dad, are you out of your mind? This isn't Damian. I picked this kid up in the woods."

CHAPTER 1434 I'M HAPPILY MARRIED

"Oh! So who's this new kid?" Wesley asked, scratching his head. But the next moment, his mood darkened. "Do you just go around picking up stray kids? You can even walk into a forest, and come out with another kid. How do we know this kid isn't yours, Gifford? Maybe one born out of wedlock? Maybe you've been hiding the kid all this time..."

Gifford couldn't believe his ears when he heard what his dad said. "Come on, Dad. Boswell found the kid, not me. And the kid's not mine! What a crazy idea! I'm happily married, with a kid of my own!" How could he have a love child? That was impossible.

Wesley's words amused everyone. Boswell had no idea what a love child was. But he felt the need to explain. "Grandpa, we got this kid from Mr. Bear," he explained.

"Mr. Bear?" After Boswell's explanation, Wesley was even more confused.

"Yeah!" Boswell nodded.

"Apparently this kid was lost, and raised by a bear. No clue what happened to the parents. We're the first humans the bear saw, so it gave the kid to us," Gifford said to his father.

"Oh! How weird!"

Matthew handed the kid to Wesley. "Dad, you and Boswell go home and get some sleep. I'll have my men scour the forest for Damian. Don't worry, we'll find him!"

"Dad, I know where my brother was headed. I can go with you!" Boswell said to Matthew, wrapping his arms around Wesley's neck.

Stroking his little head, Matthew said, "No, we're good. You stay here with your grandpa. We'll take care of this. We'll find your brother, trust me." The child must be still in the forest. Sheffield and Joshua were still searching there with their people. With so many people looking for him, the child was as good as found.

Wesley left with the two children. Matthew advised Gifford to take a break. Maybe nap in the car for a bit. He'd been looking for the kids nonstop, and a power nap would work wonders. Matthew relieved the other crew that had been searching for his son, and took a fresh group of well-rested men with him.

Before Matthew could take a few steps inside the forest, he received a message from Sheffield. "I found Damian! The boy's hurt! Have the paramedics stand by!" the message said.

A while ago

In the forest, when night fell, Damian leaned against a big tree, his stomach rumbling.

He was very sleepy, but too jumpy to sleep. The forest looked very different at night. Branches that looked innocuous in daylight transformed to twisted, tentacle-like limbs in the darkness. The sound of night creatures was far from comforting, as well.

He managed to build a fire with a little good old fashioned ingenuity. He looked for dryer lint in his pocket, took some of the dry grass around him and added it to his fire pit, then he used his house key and a rock to create the sparks. He took some rocks from nearby and arranged them to surround the fire. But he had nothing to eat, so all he could do was stare at the fire and watch as it died down.

'No, I can't let the fire die, or I'll have more problems.'

Thinking of this, Damian stood up and began to look for some dry kindling to keep the fire going.

Fortunately, there were many branches close by, and he could ignite one of them so he could see better.

However, he didn't know what was hidden under the branch. Just as he was fumbling the branches, a little creature suddenly jumped up from underneath the branches and pounced on him.

"Ahhh!" Damian's little body was knocked down by the animal, and the black animal slashed his trousers and scratched his legs. The animal left several cuts in his legs. His dark blue trousers were soon painted red by the blood.

The little animal that hurt him left and vanished in the forest.

Damian sat there and waited for his wounds to stop hurting. After a while, he gritted his teeth, picked up the branches he gathered, and made his way back to the campfire.

"Oh! So who's this new kid?" Wesley asked, scratching his head. But the next moment, his mood darkened. "Do you just go around picking up stray kids? You can even walk into a forest, and come out with another kid. How do we know this kid isn't yours, Gifford? Maybe one born out of wedlock? Maybe you've been hiding the kid all this time..."

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Damian sat there and waited for his wounds to stop hurting. After a while, he gritted his teeth, picked up the branches he gathered, and made his way back to the campfire.

A few minutes later, he heard a buzzing sound. He craned his neck, so he could listen more intently.

Damian opened one of his eyes, and some mechanical contrivance was flying more than ten meters overhead. When he took a closer look, he knew it was a drone.

The drone began to land. It circled around the campfire and finally focused its lens on Damian.

Damian flashed a smile at the drone and said gently, "Hi Grandpa, Grandma, Dad, Mom."

'And my brothers, I miss you so much!'

The drone was sent by Sheffield and Joshua's team. When they saw clearly that there was a boy sitting beside the fire on the screen, they rushed over as fast as they could.

More than ten minutes later, Sheffield's excited voice came. "Hey, dear nephew!"

The reason why he called him that was that Sheffield couldn't see him clearly in the dark. He couldn't tell whether it was Damian or Boswell.

Hearing the familiar voice, Damian struggled to stand up, but the wounds on his legs were too painful. He sat back and called in a weak voice, "Uncle Sheffield, Uncle Joshua..."

They didn't know who it was until they found his campsite in person.

The little boy's face was dirty, but he was pale underneath. "Are you hurt, Damian?" Joshua asked worriedly.

Damian nodded, pouting.

Sheffield aimed his flashlight at the boy's body. His dark blue trousers were covered with dark red.

He asked his men to find the first aid kit, strip off Damian's pants and deal with his wounds first.

Sheffield took a good look at the claw marks. They weren't shallow, but not real deep. He knew these wounds weren't made by weapons, or happenstance. "Did an animal get to you?" he asked.

Damian nodded and then shook his head. "Yeah, but I don't know what it was. I've never seen anything like it."

"All right! I'll clean your wounds. This might sting a bit. So brace yourself!" Sheffield handed the flashlight to Joshua and opened the first aid box himself.

A few minutes later, Joshua lifted the little boy in his arms. Sheffield worked on extinguishing the fire before catching up with the rest of the team.

After more than ten hours, the group of people turned the forest upside down. It was impossibly vast, and a difficult task to find anyone. Finally, they found both boys who disappeared, but not all at once. They also recovered a little girl.

Wesley had her cleaned and cut her hair because he could see lice in the strands. The next day, he took her to the hospital for a check-up.

The child was a little more than a year old and couldn't walk or talk. Except for a little malnutrition, there was nothing else wrong.

In the hospital, after Erica was wheeled out of the resuscitation room, she was directly sent to the ICU. She didn't return to the VIP ward until her condition stabilized. But she was still in a coma. Debbie and Evelyn were watching over her.

Matthew's clothes were rumpled, he had a 5 o'clock shadow, and there were dark circles under his eyes. He hadn't slept yet. Instead, he came to the hospital and asked someone to move Damian to the ward opposite Erica's, so that he could take care of mother and son.

In a villa in Alorith

At this moment, there were more than a dozen people at the villa, and the mood was grim. Everyone was worried.

The man at the head of the table held his cup tightly in his hand, wishing that he were holding a deadly weapon. He'd use that weapon to get rid of Noreen.

In the end, Michel couldn't help cursing. He didn't behave like the gentle and elegant CEO anymore. "That fucking bitch! Who does she think she is? Why would she be so stupid as to try and murder Matthew and his woman?"

The people around him were so frightened they didn't even breathe. They were worried he'd lose his temper.

"Who allowed her to get after the Hilton family? Damn it! Now Erica is in the hospital, in a coma. What's more, her father and brother are involved, not to mention Sheffield!" This was the reason why Michel went into hiding. If he dared to hurt anyone in the Hilton family, he would have countless enemies.

Knowing that she had made a huge mistake and that Matthew and Erica had not been killed, Noreen ran away. She knew she was doomed. Michel gritted his teeth and demanded, "Go and find Noreen now. Get rid of her at all costs!"

He had never thought this woman would derail all his plans. Now he needed to clean up her mess.

CHAPTER 1435 ANGELINA

Michel's subordinate hesitated for a moment, twitching in his seat uncomfortably. After all, Noreen was Michel's mistress. "Michel, all things considered, Noreen is still the leader of the Immortal Killer Sect. Are you sure you don't want to save her?" he asked.

'Save her? Noreen is a blithering idiot. I would have wiped out the entire Ortiz family if I had the chance!' Michel gritted his teeth angrily. "I would have helped her, no doubt, if she had crossed someone else. Anyone apart from Matthew, but unfortunately those are the cards we've been dealt. Just find her and..." Michel wrapped his fingers around his neck gesturing his wish to his subordinate.

Noreen had served Michel for more than a decade. In fact, she had more information on Michel than his own wife did. If she were to fall into Matthew's hands, it would be absolutely disastrous for Michel and thousands of his cronies. Unfortunately, Noreen had to die!

"As you wish, Michel!"

The big room succumbed to the dreadful silence once again. One of the men boldly suggested, "Michel, we can't sit still and do nothing. We have to find a way to destroy the evidence first!"

Needless to say, Michel knew exactly what to do. "Hide all the goods. Stop all distribution for the time being and tell everyone to lay low until I say so."

'Even if Matthew suspects me, he can't do anything to me without any credible evidence, ' Michel mused.

"Yes! Michel!"

Michel's diligent subordinates didn't leave until midnight.

However, each and every one of them had one thing in mind—Noreen. She was the biggest thorn in their side and the one person that could ruin everything for them.

The next morning at the Hilton family's manor

A little girl with her head shaved clean, sat cross-legged on a white carpet that almost covered the entire room, while the boys gawked at her looks.

Godwin rested his chin on his hand and stared at the quiet little girl. "Boswell, is she really a girl?" 'Why is there no hair on her head?' he wondered.

Boswell nodded. "The doctor said that she's a girl."

Godfrey leaned forward a little and asked, "What's her name?"

"She has no name yet. Grandpa asked us to come up with something," Adkins said.

Crossing his arms over his chest, Colman thought for a while and said, "How about we name her Lemon?" Colman had a weakness for sour foods!

Boswell shook his head almost immediately. "No, she doesn't like lemons."

"I think we can name her after the names of Chinese herbs. I know a lot of good ones," Godwin suggested. Since he was passionate about Chinese medicine, his wish was to find a girl in the future whose name was somehow connected to Chinese medicine.

Boswell refused straight away, shaking his head again. "She doesn't need to take Chinese medicine."

Adkins looked into the little girl's eyes and said, "How about we call her Grape? Look at her big and round eyes. Don't they look like grapes?"

"Too tacky!" Boswell shook his head again.

As soon as he finished his words, the other boys looked at him at the same time and said, "You name her then."

After racking his brain for a good name, Boswell finally decided to name the little girl Candy.

The others snorted in derision at the same time, angrily glaring at Boswell. Adkins sneered, "You're even worse than Mom when it comes to coming up with names. You'd better take Godwin's suggestion and name her after Chinese herbs."

Embarrassed, Boswell scratched the back of his head. "Okay then. Godwin, what did you have in mind?" Boswell was the one who found and brought this little girl home, as such he felt as though it was his responsibility to give her a name.

"Okay..." Godwin gave him a list of names. "Pollia japonica Thunb., Pinellia ternata, Aster, Angelina Root, Cistanche, Indigo..."

'Angelina?' Boswell's black eyes lit up. He looked at the girl and bobbed his head up and down in a thoughtful manner. She was as cute as an angel! "Let's call her Angelina!"

"Angelina..." Godwin tried to recall what the Angelina Root looked like, but despite his greatest efforts, he wasn't able to remember as there were too many Chinese herbs dancing about in his mind.

Eventually, he gave Boswell the nod of approval. "Okay! Then her name will be Angelina."

As Debbie came downstairs, shaking a feeding bottle in her hand, she mumbled to herself, "I'm glad I found this in the storage room. I remember getting this for Jeffrey but we never got to use it. I didn't think it was going to come in handy now." When she passed by the living room, she said to the children, "Take care of the baby girl. I'm just getting her some water."

"Okay, Grandma!" Adkins replied loudly.

Debbie rinsed the feeding bottle and poured some water. Then she went back to the living room, picked up the little girl and began to feed her.

Carlos walked in with a can of formula in his hand. "Honey, I got this, but they didn't have the brand you asked for. The man at the store said this was very popular with the kids now."

"Okay, put it in the kitchen first. I'll feed her some water first."

Adkins told Debbie, "Grandma, we have given her a name."

Boswell nodded, "Yes! Godwin named her after a Chinese herb and we all agreed to it!"

Carlos overheard their conversation, as he poured himself a glass of water and walked up to them. "Wow, that's great. What's the name? Tell me."

Boswell puffed up his chest proudly and said, "Her name is Angelina!"

Carlos thought for a while. 'Angelina is a good name, but... what kind of Chinese herb is that?'

Godwin explained, "Well, it's a kind of traditional Chinese medicine. Angelina Root! It's my idea! And Boswell made the final decision."

"Cough—" It was indeed rare of Carlos to lose his composure like that and spit out the water from his mouth.

Debbie was stunned too. Deep down inside her heart, she couldn't help but feel amused.

Godwin and Boswell didn't know what had happened. Boswell asked gleefully, "Grandpa, what do you think?" Why else would their grandfather be so excited?

Godwin felt quite proud of himself. "Grandpa, slow down. You shouldn't drink water in such a hurry."

Carlos took out a tissue and wiped the water from the floor. Then he asked the maid to clean the rest.

He took a deep breath and asked Godwin, "What did your father teach you?"

"What?" Godwin was confused.

Carlos was on the verge of breaking down. He took out his phone and sent a message to Sheffield. "What have you been teaching my grandson? If you can't teach him good things, just send him to me!"

Confused, Sheffield asked, "Wait, what's wrong, Dad?" 'What did Godwin do this time?' he wondered.

"The boys picked out a name for the little girl—from a list of Chinese medicines provided by your son. And Boswell decided on the name at last—Angelina! Because your son told them that apparently there is a Chinese herb called Angelina Root! Do you see the problem now?" Carlos explained to Sheffield patiently.

The correct name was Angelica Root!

Sheffield understood the problem at once and texted back. "Dad, I'll bring him back home right now and teach him well!"

Carlos gently patted Boswell's head and corrected the kids. "There's no Chinese herb called Angelina Root. It's Angelica Root. A-N-G-E-L-I-C-A."

Confused, Boswell asked, "Angelica?"

Carlos nodded and said, "Yes. But, both Angelica and Angelina are good names. You can pick one."

The boys nodded their little heads in unison and Boswell affirmed that they still wanted to name the little girl Angelina.

Later that day, Sheffield brought Godwin back home and made him write the words "Angelica Root" one hundred times. Since then, Godwin had lost his love for Angelica Roots. However, from time to time, he would add some Angelica Root to his father's food out of spite.

CHAPTER 1436 INTERROGATION

As a result, Sheffield felt very confused about his own body for some time. After all, he used to be a doctor. He was well aware of the changes inside his body—change in sleep, appetite, and blood circulation.

One day, Sheffield found that the Angelica Roots he had stored away were getting fewer and fewer in number, which made him suspicious.

Soon after, he caught his son red handed, secretly adding Angelica Root powder into his bowl of porridge. A misdeed, to which Godwin admitted full responsibility in the end.

Ever since, Sheffield couldn't help dreading the idea of his son switching Angelica Root to Datura when he was older. What if Godwin decided to add poisonous herbs instead to his food in the future?

As such, he decided to stop his son from learning about traditional Chinese medicine in its entirety.

Godwin, however, was passionate about traditional Chinese medicine. When Sheffield forbade him from learning about Chinese medicine, he snitched on him to his grandfather. Needless to say, Sheffield would never dare to speak over Carlos, so he had no choice but to turn a blind eye to Godwin's love for

Chinese medicine.

Matthew couldn't stay calm anymore that afternoon when he watched Erica lying still in a coma. He paced around the ward in an irritable mood before he decided to pay the attending doctor a visit.

The man frowned and coldly asked, "Didn't you say that my wife would wake up today from her coma?"

The attending doctor wiped the cold sweat off his forehead and said, "Matthew, don't worry. Erica will be awake before tomorrow morning."

Matthew cast a cold glance at the doctor, who was so frightened that he immediately shut his mouth.

The man warned him coldly, "If my wife doesn't wake up before tomorrow morning, I'll burn down this hospital!"

"Y-yes, Matthew!" The doctor had no choice but to agree.

In the evening, Matthew, who had returned to Erica's ward from his son's ward, received a call from Owen. "Matthew, she's here!"

"Okay, I'm coming now."

After hanging up the phone, Matthew walked to the bedside, kissed the forehead of the woman whose eyes were still closed, and softly whispered, "Rika, I'm going out for a while. When I come back, I want you out of bed, okay?"

The woman didn't respond. Stifling his sympathy, Matthew turned around and strode out of the ward.

The group of bodyguards that stood outside the ward all stood straight at once and saluted Matthew.

He nodded back at them and went to the opposite ward.

Inside the ward, Damian was leaning against the bed, attentively listening to Wesley telling him a story.

"Dad!"

Matthew felt a little better when he heard his son calling him. He walked over and touched the little boy's head. "Does it still hurt?"

"It doesn't hurt, Dad!"

"Well, just get some rest tonight. If you're feeling better tomorrow morning, you can go home." Luckily, Damian didn't suffer any serious injuries. He could have been discharged from the hospital that day, but Matthew didn't want to take any risk with his son's health. After all, he was attacked by an unknown

animal, so Matthew made him stay in the hospital for close observation.

"Okay!" Damian was relieved to hear that he could be going back home tomorrow. "But, what about Mom?"

Matthew replied affirmatively, "Mom is fine. Sleep well tonight and she will be up tomorrow morning!"

"Okay!"

Matthew then greeted Wesley before leaving in a hurry.

As soon as he left, Carlos and Debbie came to the hospital to take care of the injured mother and son.

After leaving the hospital, Matthew went straight to a dock where a slightly old ship was parked near it.

Dozens of bodyguards surrounded the ship, as Matthew entered the underdeck cabin led by his trusted men.

There was a faint musty odor inside the damp cabin that filled Matthew's nostrils. A woman was tied to a pillar. Her eyes were covered tightly and her mouth was stuffed with a duster cloth. Owen and six other bodyguards were watching her in the room.

After Matthew came in, Owen went over to take off the blindfold from the woman's eyes, but he deliberately left the duster cloth in her mouth.

Noreen slowly squinted her eyes open and gradually adapted to the light. At last, her eyes fell on Matthew, who had a malicious expression on his face. A shiver travelled down her spine, shaking her to the core. She kept mumbling through the gag in her mouth. Clearly, she was trying to say something.

The man seemed unmoved by the look of remorse in her eyes. He took off his coat and handed it to his subordinate next to him.

Slowly rolling up his sleeves, he picked up a whip hanging on the wall and cracked it in the air to attract everyone's attention.

The sharp sound of the whip shook Noreen back to her senses and her face displayed a deathly pallor.

Matthew looked at the whip and said, "I'll give you one chance."

The bodyguard next to her immediately removed the duster cloth from the woman's mouth. When she could finally speak, she immediately said, "Matthew, what are you talking about? Ah!" Before she could finish her words, Noreen was silenced by the excruciating pain that surged her entire body.

The whip left an open wound that hurt so badly that she had to shut her eyes and grit her teeth to

withstand the pain.

Dizzied, the pain almost knocked her unconscious as she whimpered helplessly.

Matthew's eyes widened in anger and he screamed, "How dare you hurt my wife and my children? I will show you what the true meaning of suffering is!"

Erica was lying comatose in a hospital bed after she broke two of her ribs when she shielded Matthew from a falling roof beam.

Of course, he wouldn't spare Noreen even if she begged him!

"No, I didn't..." she answered with difficulty, gritting her teeth.

Crack! He whipped her again. The woman felt a similar burning pain coursing through her whole body, but this time she didn't even have the strength to scream.

Matthew took the wet tissue from the bodyguard and wiped the blood off the whip. "I won't take no for an answer. I want everything you have on Michel, nothing more, nothing less."

On the verge of passing out, she raised her head with great difficulty and looked at the man in front of her, who maintained a calm composure, as if he was not the one who had just whipped her. "Michel... I'm not very close to him, and he doesn't tell me... everything..."

As soon as Matthew dropped the wet tissue on the floor, he whipped Noreen again. In an instant, the whip was stained with blood again.

"Ahhh!" Noreen was starting to lose consciousness.

Owen shook his head helplessly. This woman had to be the dumbest woman in the world. In his ten years of serving Matthew, he had never seen his boss strike a woman so hard and with so much hatred.

Matthew's actions were a reflection of how angry he really was.

It became very clear that Erica and the boys were everything to him.

Matthew's hatred was so venomous, he couldn't even look the woman in the eye. "I have many ways to make you yield. With every second of mine that you waste, I will double your suffering!"

Noreen was fully aware of her current situation. As she was Michel's mistress, she definitely wouldn't expect Matthew to let her go. In the end, she decided to place her last hope on Michel. "Matthew, what do you want to know?"

Playfully throwing the whip in the air and catching it, Matthew said, "I'm giving you one chance at life.

Tell me everything you know and don't waste my time anymore!"

Michel, that cunning old fox, never gave Matthew an opening for him to attack from. The people Matthew had sent in the past to gather information about Michel's crimes all came back empty handed.

The bloodied floor was proof of how hard Matthew had whipped her. Somehow stifling the pain, Noreen explained, "Michel... He took bribes and made false accounts. We are a couple..."

Crack! Matthew whipped her until her back was a bloody mass of open flesh in front of everyone else to witness.

CHAPTER 1437 ACTIVELY PREPARE FOR PREGNANCY

"Ah!" Noreen screamed.

The pain from her wounds suddenly washed over her like a tidal wave, ten times worse than before. Instead of showing her an ounce of respite, Matthew whipped her without mercy.

"Ah...no!"

Matthew was like an imp of the Devil, if not probably the Devil himself incarnate. "I am not interested in what he has done in his company."

Noreen tried to stay awake but it was too hard, her head spun and the dizziness overcame her. "Matthew, I am the number one star... in the entertainment circle. Do you know what a big mistake you've made by kidnapping me? In less than 24 hours, news of my disappearance will spread all over the Internet, and then..."

Finally, the pain was just too overwhelming and Noreen lost consciousness as she couldn't take it anymore.

'How dare she threaten me at the face of death?' Matthew thought furiously. Every fiber of his being wanted to strangle that woman, even if the whole world found out that he was the one who killed her. Matthew could care less about what the world thought of him.

Thinking of his wife who was still in a coma, Matthew chucked the whip to his bodyguard beside him with a murderous look in his eyes. "Throw her down into the sea."

"Yes! Matthew!"

Plop! At night, the waves were powerful in that violent way of storms and their roar echoed across the sea to the land.

A woman was thrown into sea with her hands tied by a rope. The other end of the rope was fastened to the guard rail of a speed boat. Noreen flipped chaotically across the water as she was dragged on a rope

behind a running speedboat.

"Cough, cough, cough." If the pain had rendered Noreen unconscious, the torture she was experiencing now woke her up.

She spat out water, coughing and struggling to catch her breath, but the pain had drained her body of all strength.

Matthew stood on the deck and looked at the woman in the sea, his cold eyes displaying no emotions.

Just as she was about to go under, one of Matthew's bodyguards pulled the rope and brought her back to surface.

Thirty minutes later, when the speed boat had returned to the pier, the woman was almost lifeless, barely holding on to her life.

Just as Matthew was about to confront her again, his phone started ringing. It was Debbie. "Mom?"

"Rika has regained consciousness! Matthew, come to the hospital at once!" Debbie was almost screaming because she was so excited.

The murderous look in that man's eyes suddenly dissipated when he heard the good news. "I'll be right over!"

Before leaving, Matthew glanced at the woman on the floor and ordered his men, "Keep an eye on her. If she is hungry, feed her peanuts, and if she is thirsty, give her sea water."

Noreen was allergic to peanuts; even a tiny piece could make her suffer for an entire night.

And drinking sea water was only going to make Noreen suffer serious dehydration. It seemed as though Matthew had no intentions of giving her some respite.

When Matthew returned to the hospital, Damian had already fallen asleep and Wesley was talking to Carlos in the corridor.

He greeted the two elders first. Wesley replied, "Matthew, Rika has regained consciousness, but she hasn't fully recovered yet. She still needs some more rest."

"Yes, the doctor said that there is nothing to worry about anymore. She'll make a full recover soon," Carlos said.

Matthew nodded and walked into the ward.

Inside the ward, Debbie was texting Blair, keeping her updated on Erica's physical condition. When she

noticed him come in, Debbie put away her phone and helplessly said, "Rika was acting like a child. She kept asking to see you the moment she opened her eyes. Luckily she's asleep now."

Matthew nodded, maintaining silence so that Erica wouldn't feel disturbed. He sat down on the edge of the bed and held Erica's hand, and his eyes, that bred nothing but hatred just a while ago, was now full of tenderness.

"Where have you been? Your sister said you didn't go back to the manor," Debbie asked in a low voice.

Putting his wife's hand to his lips, he replied in a cold voice, "I was just out to take care of some unfinished business. After all, someone has to pay the price for putting Rika here."

Debbie understood what he had meant. "Your dad said it was Noreen's doing. Is that true?"

"Yes."

Gifford had his people torture Barry, who in turn confessed that they had received their orders from the boss of the Immortal Killer Sect.

Carlos pushed the door open and stepped inside just as he had overheard the conversation between mother and son. He snorted derisively at Matthew and said, "This was your fault! How many women have you been messing with? Phoebe, Camille, Noreen... All of that stops now! I don't want to hear another word about this again!"

Before Matthew could say anything, Wesley stepped forward and said, "Carlos, it's not the boy's fault. It's obvious that Rika had provoked Michel's people. This time, it had nothing to do with him."

Frustrated, Carlos looked at Matthew contemptuously and said, "It seems that you have found someone to back you up?"

Glancing at him, Matthew didn't bother to answer his question. "Dad, Mom, please go home and get some rest. I'll stay here with Rika."

Debbie didn't want to leave, but she had no say in the matter as her son was already pushing out.

Wesley also wanted to stay and look after Damian, but Matthew said that Gifford and Sheffield would come over later, so Wesley followed the elderly Hilton couple to the Hilton family's manor.

Around midnight, Sheffield and Joshua appeared in the hospital together.

Sheffield explained to the man who was waiting for them at the door of the ward, "Gifford had to leave on some urgent business. Don't worry, Joshua and I will be here tonight."

Nodding his head, Matthew took out a pack of cigarettes from his pocket and glanced at the two men.

The two men knew what Matthew was insinuating, so they told the bodyguards to guard the door and left for the smoking area at the end of the corridor.

In the smoking area

Matthew lit a cigarette and looked out the window in a pensive manner.

Sheffield exhaled a mouthful of smoke and teased, "You might as well quit smoking now that Rika is back. Don't you want to try for a daughter this time?"

Joshua chimed in, "I think Sheffield is right. When Rika recovers, you two should just stop worrying about anything else and think about having a daughter or two while you're still young!"

Thinking of the scar on his wife's belly, Matthew flicked the ash off his cigarette and said, "Last time when Rika was pregnant with four babies, she left me for more than three years. What if she leaves me again if I get her pregnant again?"

In truth, Matthew didn't want Erica to suffer the pain of childbirth again.

Not even if he wanted a daughter.

Sheffield puffed smoke on his face, which angered Matthew at once. He was just about to teach the naughty man a lesson, but Sheffield yielded just in time. "Hey, we're in a hospital. Be a gentleman! To be honest, I don't think Rika is to blame for what happened between you two. You never confessed your feelings to her even though you loved her since such a long time ago. Then one day, Rika suddenly found out that not only did you have feelings for her, you were deeply in love with her. The fact that the goddess of your heart wasn't that bitch from the Campbell family, must have come as a shock to her. I can totally see why she would feel confused and unable to make the right decision."

Joshua nodded, "Now that she's back in your life, just have a good and happy life with her. Give birth to a niece for me as soon as possible."

In the days when Erica went missing, Matthew had been looking for her everywhere like a madman. To quell the sadness in his heart, he would force Joshua and Sheffield to drink with him, and sometimes, their night-outs would end in a friendly fight. Since Matthew was trained in martial arts, he would easily beat up Joshua.

Matthew, however, wasn't feeling very chatty today. "Of course, I want to have a happy life with her."

Not only did he want to have a happy life with Erica, Matthew wanted her to have the best possible time of her life with him.

CHAPTER 1438 LICKING HER WOUNDS

"I like the way you think." A cigarette hanging out of his mouth, Sheffield sent his wife a message asking her to go to bed early.

There was a moment of silence in the smoking area. Matthew didn't wait for the man who was furiously tapping away at his phone to acknowledge him. "So, after this, go ahead and assume command of the Violet Eagles. When you have time, of course."

Sheffield looked up from his phone, and stared at Matthew. It was a look that said, 'Seriously?' "Now I know you're a masochist. Erica won't be happy." Matthew knew quite well what he was doing. He was muscling in on Erica and Chantel's territory. But he only focused on what he wanted.

"She has me. What does she need a goon squad for? No, I'll be the person she goes to when she needs help." The longer Erica wielded the power of the Violet Eagles, the more dangerous she'd become.

Sheffield put his phone away, and started stroking his chin thoughtfully. "But your wife is using your name to gather power. The branch of the Violet Eagles in our city alone has more than one thousand members. It's a challenge to keep them all in line."

Not to mention the number of people in Kuflya involved with them. Membership there dwarfed their numbers in Alorith. It required a generous amount of funds to maintain an international cartel of that size.

'Matthew knows how to pile on the workload, ' Sheffield sighed.

"If the Violet Eagles were formed using my name, then you can use your name to take over, right?" Sheffield was well-known in gangland. And these guys weren't even all that violent, mostly preferring to run ATM cloning schemes, protection rackets, etc. Should be easy for him to get a piece of the action, and leverage that into control.

Joshua knew what Sheffield was talking about. With a smile, he quietly looked at the two big shots who were jockeying for advantage. Matthew was no dummy, and neither was Sheffield. It was just that neither of them wanted to handle this.

But Sheffield lost it first. He always did. Erica might be able to get Matthew's goat quite easily, but he was better at dealing with Sheffield.

This time was no exception. Sheffield snorted at Matthew, "Don't play dumb. You know that's a damn lot of cash! And I can't get it easily, thanks to your dear sister. She's starting to clamp down on the money we have. I want to see some moolah first before I take this on! You hear me?"

Matthew was unconvinced. He had a wife too. "What a coincidence! My wife's the same way. Only I'm more miserable than you. Rika not only has control of the family checkbook, but has her hands in the company's financial affairs."

'What's Sheffield playing at? It's not like they're an unruly bunch. They're a well-oiled machine. Why would he need any money at all? Even if he did need cash, Sheffield could afford it. It's just a few mil, ' Matthew thought. 'He doesn't deserve to be my brother-in-law if he can't afford that.'

Joshua put out his cigarette and kept smiling. He watched the two top figures in the city exchange their tales of woe, trying to outdo each other. This was like watching a chess game between two masters. And Joshua was nowhere near as influential as these guys. He knew better than to interfere.

"Wow! Matthew, you're one of the richest men in the world. Why are you such a penny-pincher?" Sheffield wondered where Matthew got it from. 'My mother-in-law's not like that, so maybe it was... Aww, forget it.'

Sheffield was also one of the richest men in the world. Matthew didn't want to put up with his crap any longer. He got straight to the point. "Noreen hasn't told us any useful information yet. Michel is no fool, though. He has to know she has been captured by my men. Still, it wasn't like it was a small thing. It attracted a lot of unwanted attention. I don't think he'll try anything dumb, though. But we can look into it."

Sheffield nodded and said seriously, "But we can't focus on her right now. Our real concern is Michel. Luckily, most criminals are dumb, so Michel will slip up and leave some evidence behind. He'll give himself away eventually. Don't worry. I consider it my civic duty to put people like him behind bars."

Joshua laughed and mocked him, "People like him? You're not so innocent yourself." If it was a civic duty to put bad guys in prison, then wouldn't Joshua have to do the same to Sheffield?

Sheffield chuckled and gave him a playful punch on the shoulder. "Get real, dude. This is serious!"

Joshua stopped laughing, lost his smile, and let them continue talking. "Please, go on."

Matthew told Sheffield his plan, and they finally reached an agreement. The three men returned to the wards as soon as the smell of tobacco on them faded.

Sheffield and Joshua looked after Damian. Sheffield had wanted to go to Erica's ward and tease her a bit, but Matthew kicked him out. So, he had to hang out with Joshua in the boy's ward.

At 2 A.M., Matthew caught a quick shower. He'd already set everything up, so he thought it might be a good time to rest. He gently moved Erica over, slipped into bed himself, and decided to catch some zzzs.

However, less than half an hour after he closed his eyes, the sleeping woman slowly opened hers.

In the darkness, she sat up in bed. "Ouch!" Because of her sudden movement, it aggravated her injury.

Matthew sat up too and looked nervously at the woman. Her face was contorted in pain. "Rika, what's wrong? You hurt yourself, didn't you?"

When the pain gradually subsided, she shouted, "I'm fine! I'm going to take revenge! Matthew, I'm going to kill Michel!"

Erica had slept for a long time and had been dreaming.

There were quite a few people in her dream, including Michel. He had wrapped a rope around Boswell's neck and told her, "Back off, or I'll kill your kids!"

Then the scene panned over to show all of her kids tied up, and Erica awoke, enraged.

She was panting in anger, her heart beating a mile a minute. Matthew comforted her. "Rika, it's too late now. You're hurt, so you couldn't even if you really wanted to. Just get some rest and focus on getting better, okay?"

She suddenly looked back at the man beside her, confused. "Matthew?"

"Yeah. It's me." He wanted nothing more than to hold her, but he simply helped her lie back down on the bed. Her ribs were broken, so hugging her would be bad.

After crying for a while, Erica finally calmed down, shook off the anger and fear.

She looked at the man lying next to her pitifully. "Matthew, I didn't see you when I opened my eyes today. I thought you left me!"

Her distressed look made his heart ache. He lowered his head and kissed her on the lips. Touching her face gently, he said, "That'll never happen, honey. That's not me."

Erica was his life. There was no way he'd abandon her.

"My back hurts. And it itches. Think it'll leave a scar?" When she reclined on the bed, she needed to lie on her side.

"Don't worry. I got this. Sheffield is working hard preparing some traditional herbs for you. Trust in his skill." He'd love her, scar or no. It didn't matter to him. But if she was really broken up about it, he'd take her to get plastic surgery. They could cover up a scar like that, no problem.

She nodded. "Where are the kids? Are they okay?"

She drifted in and out of consciousness. When she woke up this afternoon, Debbie told her the kids were fine. She was hoping to get them on video chat, but she fell asleep before that could happen.

"Of course they are. They came to see you when you were asleep." Matthew wasn't about to tell her about Damian. He was in the ward opposite hers. He was afraid she'd spend her time worrying about

him and not be able to get a decent night's sleep. She needed to heal.

"Ahh. They're so sweet!"

She believed him implicitly, and Matthew felt relieved. That was one less thing to worry about. "Yeah, they are. It's late. You need your rest. We'll talk about it tomorrow, okay?"

"Okay!" And he was right. Erica was sleepy. She put her arm around Matthew's waist and closed her eyes.

CHAPTER 1439 YOUR SON PICKED HER UP

Outside Erice's ward, Sheffield lowered his voice and said, "It's okay. Nothing happened. Matthew is with her."

Joshua nodded, and then the two returned to Damien's ward.

When they heard Erice's scream, they thought something had happened. Therefore, the two sleepy men suddenly sobered up and ran out to see what was going on.

But in the end, it seemed that Erice just had a nightmare. And since she had her husband with her, they didn't think it was necessary to worry about it.

By the following day, Erice got the news that all her body levels had returned to normal. Now she only needed more time to heal from her injuries. As the attending doctor made rounds in the wards, he reminded her, "For now, you should breathe into your abdomen to avoid any activity on your chest. Also, you must pay attention to have more nutritious meals such as food high on protein, fruits, and vegetables. And try not to cough so forcefully..."

Erice kept nodding throughout the doctor's recommendations. After he was done, she said, "Thank you, doctor!"

"You're welcome, Erice."

As soon as the doctor left, she asked the men standing next to her, "Do you remember anything he said?"

Obviously, she didn't. Matthew sighed inwardly and said, "I could see how carefully you were listening."

"Well, I remember a thing or two. For example, I should eat more fruits and vegetables, but do you remember anything else?" Erice answered confidently.

With no other choice, Matthew answered, "I've asked the nutritionist to arrange your meals according to your physical condition. Don't worry."

"Well, that's good!"

At that moment, the ward's door was pushed open, revealing Wesley and Cerlos with Demien in his arms as they came in.

"Mommy!" Demien was really happy to see his mom.

However, Erice's heart skipped a beat once she saw her son in the hospital gown. "What's wrong with Demien?"

Sitting down on the chair by her side, Wesley explained, "He was scratched by an animal. But don't worry, he's fine. You're the only one who's still lying on the bed, seriously injured."

Erice looked at Matthew reproachfully. "Didn't you tell me the children were fine?"

Matthew didn't deny it. "He's indeed fine. I just wanted him to stay here for one more night to observe his condition."

Cerlos carried Demien to Erice's side and added, "Rike, don't worry. The doctor has just reexamined him. He'll be discharged soon. We'll just need to apply ointment on him when we get home."

The child leaned over and held her hand carefully.

Erice then raised her free hand and pinched the boy's cheek. "That's good. What was the animal that scratched you?"

"I don't know. It reminded me of a squirrel, but it was black and also much uglier than a squirrel..." Demien reported quite seriously.

Erice was amused by his stern expression but didn't laugh at him. "I'm sorry, baby. I couldn't protect you and your brother. It won't happen again!"

Demien shook her head. "Mom. No, it's our fault. We didn't protect you as we should. You've been seriously injured. Mom, I talked to Grendpe. He'll teach us martial arts in the future so we can better protect you!"

Moved by her son's thoughtfulness, she preised him with tears in her eyes, "Demien, you're so awesome! You're such a considerate young boy!"

Wesley looked at his phone and informed, "Your mother and sister are on the plane with Hugo. I'll pick them up later."

"Why are Mom and Yvette coming here?"

Wesley rolled his eyes at her. "Do you assume everyone is as heartless as you are? Your mother couldn't sleep all night after your accident. She will only have peace of mind once she sees you."

This bed girl was the reason his wife couldn't sleep well at night. Once she recovered, he must teach her a lesson.

"Okay then."

Soon after, Debbie and Terilyn arrived with the other three boys.

For a moment, the word was quite agitated. As soon as Boswell saw his mother, he ran over and hugged her on the bed. "Mom, I'm so sorry. I didn't protect you!"

"Neither did I!"

"Neither did I!"

Adkins and Colmen also approached Eric epologetically.

Lowering his head, Adkins said guiltily, "Mom, as a man, I failed to protect you and my younger brothers. I'm sorry."

"Mom, you must get better soon, or I will always be sad," Colmen declared.

Eric was so moved by her sons that she was finding it hard to hold back her tears. "Thank you, my boys. I don't blame any of you. You're still young but have done a good job!"

Boswell shook his head. "No, Mom. Demien and I got you into trouble."

"Yes, Mom. Don't feel guilty..." Colmen comforted her.

The word was noisy, with all the boys speaking simultaneously.

Suddenly, Matthew took a step near them and commended, "Shut up!"

The four kids immediately became silent as they looked at their father with their eyes wide open. A moment later, Adkins asked in a low voice, "Dad, do you want to say something?"

Glancing at the four kids, Matthew answered, "Whatever happened had nothing to do with you. It's my fault. I was the one who failed to protect my wife and sons..."

"Well, Mom, I'm sorry. I didn't protect you and my brothers," Adkins restated himself.

"I'm sorry. I didn't protect my mom and Demien," Boswell said.

"I'm sorry. I didn't protect my mom and brothers," Colmen apologized.

"I'm sorry. I didn't protect my mom and brothers either," Demien echoed.

The adults were all rendered speechless. The four boys were really incredible. They should be praised for remaining united and caring, not to mention for being brave for taking all the responsibility for themselves.

A few minutes later, Joshue came into the ward with the child in his arms, only to find the crowd already present there. "Sorry, I'm late." Last night, he and Sheffield barely had any sleep while they were in the hospital, so this morning they headed home to take care of the baby. After Joshue got up, he rushed back to the hospital.

The moment Erica saw the toddler in his arms, she asked in shock, "Terilynn, when did you and Joshue give birth to the third child?" "And why did they shove the baby's head?"

Terilynn burst into laughter.

Joshue waved his hand and quickly explained, "It's not ours. It's the baby girl that your son had picked up. Look how cute she is!"

"What?" Erica was even more astonished.

Boswell explained, "Mom, I got lost in the woods, and then the bear brought me to her."

Debbie took Angeline in her arms and complimented her. "She's such a good girl. Anyone can hold her, and she won't cry. But we can't put her down, or she will crawl all over the floor."

Terilynn said, "It's understandable. After all, the child was raised by a wild animal and didn't learn how to walk yet. Of course, she can only crawl on the floor like a bear."

'It turns out that the baby girl was raised by a wild bear,' Erica nodded thoughtfully.

Then she looked at Wesley and said, "I guess our family is really good at picking up other people's children, isn't it?"

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Then she looked at Wesley and said, "I guess our family is really good at picking up other people's children, isn't it?"

CHAPTER 1440 LET'S GIVE IT FIVE YEARS

It all happened like magic. First, Erica took care of Ethan and gave him a home. Then, Gifford brought Chantel home and his parents took her in. But of course, no one expected the two would marry. After that, Erica and her sons took in a little boy named Kenney and got him off the streets. And now Boswell had come upon a little girl in his misadventures in the forest—Angelina.

Wesley felt a headache coming on. "Okay, you've figured it out, huh? You're like a kid magnet. Every time I turn around, you've found some poor child to take care of. You even have kids yourself, and yet you're still surrounded by other people's children. A few years ago, your mom and I helped you take care of Ethan. But what about this little girl?"

They had so many kids to watch over. What if Erica and Matthew wanted to have even more? Too many young ones would definitely be a pain to handle.

Yvette might have her own place, but she still lived close by. When she had to work or attend to other obligations, her daughter, Wendy, would live with Wesley and Blair. She was also the Leonard family's child, and they took good care of her. Although Gifford only had one kid, he confided in his mother that he wouldn't mind having more.

Matthew suggested, "Maybe we could consult with a welfare house. They should know what to do with her." Hilton Group donated a lot of money to the welfare houses every year. After he had his own kids, he knew how expensive raising a child could be, so he doubled the amount he donated.

Although he also wanted a daughter, he didn't want to adopt Angelina without knowing who she was, who her family was. Were they good people? Would they want her back? But after he got her housed and settled, he could spend more money on this girl and ask people there to give her special treatment. That was not a problem.

Debbie agreed with her son. "That's a good idea, I think." When Ethan's biological father came to claim him, Wesley and Blair were very sad. He was still a powerful memory, and they often talked of him fondly. But they were too far away to visit him easily. Debbie was afraid the same thing might happen if she adopted this little girl.

Carlos stayed out of it. He let the young couple handle the matter.

But no one really wanted to take care of her. Terilynn, Joshua, Sheffield, and Evelyn were far too busy to take care of their own brood. And they didn't feel comfortable using a nanny. So, their kids spent most of their time at their grandparents' houses.

However, the four boys weren't so sure about that. When they heard Angelina would be sent away, they were a little reluctant.

"Dad, can you find her a place nearby?" Adkins asked. If she lived close, they could go visit her more often.

Boswell felt depressed. "Dad, why does she have to go?" After all, he brought her back here. But life, to a child, was quite simple. They had only been together two days, and they'd already become friends. Why would you want to see your friends go away?

Taking a look at Boswell, Colman asked Matthew, "Dad, don't you want a daughter?"

Of course, Damian agreed with his brother. "It's not like she's sick or anything! That has to count for something! Can't you adopt her?"

After listening to the children's opinions, Matthew came to a resolution. "I like Adkins' idea. We'll send Angelina to a welfare house nearby. This isn't a decision we need to make right away. Let's give it five years. If no one's come to claim her in that time and you still want her around, I'll adopt her. But if her parents find her first, then..."

He didn't finish his sentence, but the kids understood.

Wesley nodded and said, "You should listen to your father. He's a smart guy, and I like his plan." Angelina must have parents. But was she kidnapped? Did she get lost? Or did her parents abandon her?

Matthew had sent someone to look into this, but he wouldn't have answers overnight. After all, the bear that cared for her couldn't speak. There were no cameras nearby, no guards posted that far into the woods.

Boswell asked, "What if someone else adopts her before that?"

Carlos answered, "We'll ask the welfare house to do an extensive background check. If the adoptive family is rich, then at least they could provide a good home for her."

No matter how good the welfare house was, it could only provide food and shelter for the girl. If she was adopted and brought home as a daughter by someone, then she'd be loved and cared for.

"Being rich doesn't mean they're good people. What if they're bad? Would she be able to go back there?"

"Yes. Like your dad said—five years. If Angelina's still there, we'll take her home and you'll have a little sister!" Carlos liked girls too. It didn't matter if the Hilton family had one more daughter.

He, too, was afraid this girl would be another Ethan. If Angelina's biological parents found her and took her away after they had gotten attached, the four children would be even sadder.

Although the kids didn't want to see her go, they had to listen to Matthew. After all, she was not a stray animal they found on the streets, but a person.

After discussing it with his children, Matthew ordered Owen to handle this matter in person.

In the welfare house

After filling out all the paperwork, Owen handed the little girl over to the director of the welfare house in person. She looked pretty in her light pink princess dress. "Director, her name is Angelina. We want her to be given the best care. Remember that, and remember her name!"

The director nodded, "I will, Owen."

"Take good care of her. Maybe one day she'll be the little princess of the Hilton family." Although she wasn't related to the Hilton family by blood, she'd have a good life if she could claim a connection to them.

Hearing his words, the director immediately took custody of the child. "Don't worry, sir. I'll ask someone to take good care of little Angelina here."

"The four young masters of the Hilton family will come and see her when they get some free time. You know what to do, right? I'm leaving now."

After seeing Owen off, the director made special arrangements. Angelina had her own room, and the employees were under strict orders to treat her well.

After leaving the welfare house, Owen went to the suburb outside the city.

When he arrived, Matthew wasn't there yet. So, he asked his men to prepare everything first.

It was getting dark. Since Erica was being taken care of by the hospital staff, not to mention Blair and Yvette, Matthew took this opportunity to do something else.

That something else was rather sinister, if satisfying. He was going to give Noreen a taste of her own medicine.

He figured out she was responsible for his wife's injuries. For their own harrowing ordeal trapped inside a burning house. Time to repay the favor. He doused the area with gasoline, and watched the flames rise higher. When the whole house was ablaze, Noreen's hoarse voice came from inside. "I was wrong. I know I was wrong! Please! Matthew, please don't kill me!"

Sitting in the car outside the house, Matthew pretended not to hear her screams.

Ten minutes later, a bodyguard came over and reported, "Matthew, I think she's had enough."

Matthew nodded, "Fine. Get her out of there."

"Yes, sir!"

The men forced their way into the blaze, wearing special protective suits and using crowbars and axes to clear a way in. Then they brought Noreen out. Most of her body was covered in burns, her once elegant looks ruined by a spiderweb of burnt and melted flesh. Then, the pitiful figure, half-wailing half-coughing, was thrown on the ground outside the house. Matthew was sitting on a chair.

In less than three days, Noreen had been brought down. Once she was a star, now she was barely alive. She lay on the ground and tried to open her eyes. Between coughs, she forced out the words, "You taught me... a painful lesson... I'll tell you everything I know about Michel. Just please, help me."

The man sneered, "You're in no position to make any bargains."

As she moved her fingers, she accidentally touched the blisters on them. She closed her eyes tightly, knowing that she would be tortured even more cruelly if she didn't talk. The pain was intense; it was like fire lived and danced inside her.

When the pain faded a bit, she said weakly, "Once a month. 3 A.M., on the 20th day. You can find him at the Teddy Bar of Parasol—"

Bang! Suddenly, a shot rang out.

"Ah!" Noreen's body convulsed, and her eyes widened. At last, she lay motionless. Blood pooled in her mouth, and a thick, red lake spread across the ground.