

TMBA 1441

CHAPTER 1441 THE PROTECTION OF SO MANY PEOPLE

Several bodyguards had already run to try to find who had shot Noreen. Matthew stood up from his chair and looked at where he had heard the gunshot sound coming. He couldn't see anything.

After checking on Noreen, Owen said, "Matthew, she's dead." She got shot straight in the heart.

Frowning, Matthew ordered, "Leave it to the police."

"Yes, sir!"

Early the next morning, the news about Noreen's death was already spread all over the Internet.

The main headlines read: "The number one star of the entertainment industry, Noreen, was killed in the wilderness."

"Noreen died at the age of 35."

"Noreen was murdered and looked miserable before her death."

By the time Erica grabbed her phone, she also came across the news and was shocked for a moment. Then, she raised her head and looked at the man working beside her. "Noreen is dead!"

The man replied lightly, "Hmm."

'What does that mean? Did he already know it?' she wondered. "You knew it?"

"Yes." Matthew didn't hide it.

His answer sent a shiver down Erica's spine and she stammered, "Did you...kill her?"

'After all, Noreen was the one who orchestrated our sons' kidnapping and the fire that almost burned me to death. Did Matthew kill her out of revenge?'

Slamming the document on the table, he answered, "No."

She was relieved to hear that. "Then who did it?"

"Who else could it be except him?"

Erica fell silent, understanding who he was referring to.

As far as she knew, Noreen was caught by someone sent by Carlos when she tried to escape, and only

afterward was she handed over to Matthew.

Erica was about to ask him how he would deal with the woman when she came across the news of Noreen's death.

"Matthew, don't do anything against Michel yet. I want to take part in it once I'm recovered."

With so many people having her back, Erica was confident that she could get rid of Michel!

However, despite agreeing to her demand, Matthew still planned to take care of everything first so she could join only at the last minute to savor the victory.

It didn't take long for Matthew to find out the location that Noreen's last words referred to once he set his plan in motion.

As it happened, in the northern district of Alorith, there was a mountain named Parasol Mountain, and in its foot was located a resort called Parasol Resort. The place operated in a VIP membership business model, but Matthew didn't know anyone who was a member of it.

In fact, according to their preliminary speculation, only Michel and his people had a membership card.

Gifford had sent his men to spy the place, but after half a month, they still hadn't got the chance to get inside. It seemed there was something really wrong with the Parasol Resort.

Two months later, it was already winter. Although it was freezing outside, Matthew's villa was filled with joy.

Almost fully recovered, Erica had a lollipop in her mouth when she slowly got in the elevator and traveled from the third to the first floor. In the open kitchen, father and sons gathered around the stove with their eyes all fixed on the cooking pot.

As a matter of fact, the man cooked while the boys were watching him.

"If I'm not at home, you can cook for my wife. And in the future, you can cook for your wives," Matthew told them.

The four kids nodded simultaneously, and then Adkins asked, "Dad, do you enjoy cooking for our mom?"

He would often see his father preparing a bowl of noodles for his mother late at night, and every time he would make different kinds of noodles, unless his mother specifically wanted to eat a certain kind of noodles.

With a smile stretching the corners of his lips, Matthew answered, "Well, your mom likes to eat what I cook, and I also like to cook for her. So, I do enjoy it very much."

"Oh!" Adkins nodded, even though he didn't fully understand what his father meant. But as far as he was concerned, it seemed that cooking for his wife was a really happy thing for a husband to do. Adkins then decided that in the future, he would treat his wife just like his father treated his mother.

Meanwhile, Erica was leaning against the stair railing with a sweet smile on her face while she remembered all the good things that happened in the past few months.

As Matthew had promised, ever since she woke up after she got injured, he would say "I love you" to her every morning. He would often give her a good morning kiss afterward, which made her feel quite happy as well.

In the meantime, her studio had also started its activities, not to mention that her agenda was already full from the beginning to the end of the next year.

Matthew had accompanied her to take the photos of aurora before, and her work won the first place prize again. The winning photo was taken to Hilton Group by Matthew for commercial use, which earned Erica a lot of money!

Now, twirling the lollipop in her mouth, Erica thought about how she could repay her dear husband for everything he did for her. 'How about giving birth to a daughter for him?'

She touched her belly; there was a slight scar in it. If she gave birth to another baby, she would have to go through a C-section again.

But if giving birth to a daughter could make her husband happier, she wouldn't mind having another surgery! It wouldn't kill her anyway. 'Yes! That's it!'

Damian was the first to notice Erica at that moment. He said in surprise, "Mom, why are you downstairs?"

Grinning with a lollipop in her mouth, Erica came into view for Matthew and their sons. "I was just taking a walk in the living room. I was so bored upstairs." As she kept fiddling with her camera, she was almost going mad with boredom.

Boswell ran to her and took her hand. "Mom, didn't we agree that you should rest? Come and sit down now!"

Instead of sitting down, Erica stretched herself and said in a spoiled tone, "Ah, it's been over two months. I'm almost fully recovered. If you don't believe me, look!" She lifted her hand as if she was ready to punch the air.

But before she could do it, Colman grabbed her hand and said, "Mom, Mom! We know you're a good fighter, but the doctor said you should rest for another ten or fifteen days. Let's listen to the doctor,

okay?"

Adkins pulled the chair for her and added, "Yes, Mom, Colman is right. Sit down, please. Dinner will be ready soon. Just wait for it!"

Erica had been quite lazy lately. Matthew had hired a chef to cook all kinds of delicious food for her every day, but she couldn't exercise yet. So, she was almost getting fat.

Looking at the busy man in the kitchen, she didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Matthew tore his gaze away from her and acquiesced in their sons' behaviors.

'Why doesn't anyone believe me? I'm really fine!'

Erica patiently explained to her sons, "My dear boys, I'm really recovered. I can fight and climb. If you don't believe me, I'll take you outside so you can watch me climb a wall!"

"Mom, please stay at home. We'll practice boxing with you in half a month!" Boswell wrapped his arms around her neck and gave her a kiss on the cheek in order to comfort her.

Damian nodded, "Yes, Boswell is right. So, Mom, you have to be obedient!"

Erica was speechless.

'All right, all right. I lost! I can't resist my sons warning me so tenderly.'

Therefore, Erica stayed at home for another half a month. On the day she finally regained her freedom, she got up at six in the morning and went for a thousand and five hundred meters run with her husband and children.

In the end, Matthew was afraid that her health couldn't take it anymore, and with the help of the four children, he carried Erica on his back all the way home.

CHAPTER 1442 PREPARING FOR PREGNANCY

Erica felt like crying when she looked at the number on weighing scale and then at Matthew's eight pack abs. "Matthew, we agreed to eat together to gain weight. What's your secret? How is it that you've lost weight?" 'But I've gained five kilograms more!' she thought sadly.

The man's face remained unchanged. "There is no secret. I just make sure to exercise every morning and go to the gym regularly. I have never done anything else to lose weight."

Erica was speechless. The secret to keeping a healthy and fit body was to exercise a little bit in the morning and to maintain a regular gym life.

Forcing the words through gritted teeth, Erica said, "Just wait. I'll do morning exercises with you every day from now on. I'll be as lean as I was before!"

Matthew held her in his arms and comforted her, "Well, honey, you don't look that fat. You've just gained a little weight. Besides, it's easier to hold you now."

Erica wasn't going to fall for his sweet words!

What if he was just trying to make her fat and ugly because he wanted to have a beautiful girl on the side?

Erica was determined—the excess weight had to go, by hook or by crook.

After breakfast, Erica dropped her sons off to the kindergarten and her husband to the company, before heading to the hospital.

After a thorough examination in the gynecology and obstetrics department, the doctor finally told her, "Your body is fit to have a baby now. You can eat some folic acid supplements when you go back home. Try not to stay up late..."

Erica responded to the doctor's suggestions with a respectful smile. "Thank you, doctor."

"You're welcome. Besides, you were pregnant with quadruplets before. You must be careful this time. You should stay in bed and get as much rest as you can get, just in case if you get pregnant with more than one baby again."

Erica replied, "I understand. I don't think I will be pregnant with multiple babies again, but thank you for your concern." She would strangle Matthew to death if she were pregnant with a set of twins or more.

After the doctor's appointment, Erica left the hospital in a good mood. When she came across a big pharmacy just across the street, Erica wondered if she should pick up some folic acid supplements.

When she walked past the traffic light intersection, she unsuspectingly glanced at a car with the window half open, revealing the face of Michel.

The moment her eyes caught sight of him, the smile on her face transformed into a frown and she quickly hid herself before he could notice her. She turned around, waiting for his car to pass by before she hailed a taxi and got in without saying anything.

Since Erica wasn't able to deliver Michel's retribution yet, she decided to set her pregnancy aside until she had exacted revenge on him.

After all, many more people would suffer if she didn't first deal with Michel, the biggest drug dealer in the city.

As she was curious to see where he was going, Erica asked the taxi driver to follow Michel's car.

More than twenty minutes later, in order not to arouse the suspicion of Michel's driver, Erica paid the taxi driver quickly when they stopped at the red light, and then got in another taxi to continue the pursuit.

Michel's car finally drove to a suburb in the north district of Alorith. Erica had already known of the existence of Parasol Resort. For the third time, Erica got out of the taxi and changed the car

This time, however, she found a common private car instead of a taxi.

Without any hesitation, she opened the door of the back seat and sat in. In response to the driver's confused eyes, Erica took out her mobile phone and said to him, "I'm wiring you five thousand dollars. Please follow the Mercedes in front!"

The driver was utterly stunned as he looked at a Mercedes Benz in front of him and then at Erica's face. "Why do I feel like I've seen you somewhere?"

The Mercedes Benz was already driving off, doubling Erica's fear. "Hurry, I don't have time to lose. Ten thousand dollars, last offer! Show me your QR code. I'll transfer the money to you right now!"

As such, when he heard that he could get ten thousand dollars, he stepped on the accelerator and followed the Mercedes Benz.

Erica transferred ten thousand dollars to the man's account and then urged him, "Please drive slowly. Don't let them notice you!"

Michel's final destination was indeed the Parasol Resort. When he got out of the car, he almost found that Erica was in the car behind him.

Luckily, she ducked quickly and hid in the back seat of the car, before she told the driver, "Get out of the car and ask the security guards at the gate if you can go in. If you can, then tell them you want to have a get-together with some friends in there. I'll give you more money."

The driver got out of the car with his phone, but before he could even get close to the main entrance of the Parasol Resort, two bodyguards came over. "What are you doing?"

The driver hid the nervousness inside his heart behind a fake smile and did as Erica had asked him.

One of the bodyguards waved his hand to him and said, "This is a private manor. No outsiders are welcome. Please leave now!"

The other bodyguard tried to look inside the car. At this point, Erica was almost glued to the floor of the

car, fearing that the bodyguard would see her.

The driver quickly ran back to his car, turned around in a jiffy and left without hesitating for even a minute.

On the way back, Erica met with her own driver and bodyguards. However, she wasn't ready to go back home just yet. Her next stop was the camera store where she bought a drone.

She returned to Parasol Resort with the drone, but this time she found a higher ground within the vicinity, with a relatively flat surface to fly the drone.

Erica paid extra money and bought a relatively quiet drone to avoid being detected.

The entire resort encompassed a large area, but the tallest building was only two-story high and there were a few bodyguards patrolling the yard.

Erica kept the drone as high as possible and she only ever lowered it when she was absolutely certain that there were no guards walking back and forth.

After carefully observing the place for more than ten minutes, Erica finally found something amiss on one of the two-story buildings.

There were five or six people sitting in a pavilion on the second floor. If she didn't see it wrong, the person on the host seat was none other than Michel.

There was another suspicious man that seemed familiar to Erica, but she wasn't certain as she couldn't see his face clearly. She had never seen them before, but they didn't look like ordinary people to her.

With the press of a button, Erica recorded everything.

Unfortunately, as soon as she clicked the automatic return button, one of the bodyguards was quick to notice the drone. Immediately, a group of reinforcements gathered around and pointed their guns at the drone in the sky.

Frightened, Erica quickly downloaded the video she had just recorded into her mobile phone and then ran away with the remote control. In fact, she didn't really have a need for the drone anymore.

By the time the security guards came to Erica's location, she was already long gone.

In the Parasol Resort, Michel stared at the drone in his hand and asked someone to pull out the memory card and connect it to the computer.

Unfortunately, there was nothing on it.

"Go and find the owner of this drone," he ordered calmly. The drone was brand new and relatively expensive. Only a handful of people in the city could afford such a drone. As such, it wouldn't be difficult to find the owner.

Michel's subordinates took the drone and left to fulfill their boss's command.

They had already found a scapegoat to pin the death of Noreen on. This man was a nobody, who claimed that he had killed her because he was too envious of her fame, even though he didn't have any connections with Noreen prior to the incident.

This was the explanation provided for the public, but Matthew didn't believe a word of it.

The discovery of the drone led Michel to believe that the Parasol Resort was no longer the safe haven he thought it was.

Three of Michel's bodyguards took the drone and drove towards downtown. However, when they reached a corner halfway, they were intercepted by a woman.

The woman was a pitiful sight to see, face covered in grime and clothes barely hanging on to her shoulders. She limped to the driver's window and asked, "Sir, I haven't eaten for three days. Can you spare some money for a meal?"

The three men in the car were annoyed by the woman and the driver pushed her hand away. "Go away!"

CHAPTER 1443 WATKINS' FATHER

The woman walked up to them again, exaggerating the side-to-side motion of her hips. She made her voice about an octave higher. "You know, I've got a birthday coming up soon. Know how old I'll be? 18. If you could help me, I'd be really grateful..."

'She's only eighteen! And she's pretty too!' The men in the car were obviously taken with her. While the driver hesitated, the woman suddenly pressed the unlock button next to her. The mechanism made a sound and the door was unlocked.

Under the driver's vigilant eyes, she opened the door and said in a soft voice, "Don't worry. I just want you to see what you'll be getting."

Then, the woman moved quicker than the eye could see. She pulled the car keys from the ignition and threw them in the bushes. After making sure they couldn't find the car keys without a concentrated search, she clapped her hands and turned around to look at the men in the car with a smile.

The three men in the car knew something was up now, so two of them got out of the car to deal with her.

Before they could do anything, they were ambushed by two men who jumped to the ground from the small hill next to them. They advanced on the men threatening Erice. A short tussle ensued, where one of the attackers waited for the thug to attack him, then stepped inside his attack and took him down with a series of palm strikes and a knee to the gut. Another thug brandished his gun, and got it taken away from him—his arm broken.

Erice was quick and accurate. She took the men who were fighting with her to the ground as fast as she could, employing some joint locks.

Then she ran to their car to look for the drone.

It was on the back seat! She successfully grabbed the broken drone, and then the three of them ran away as fast as they could.

Back in her own car, Erice patted her chest and breathed a sigh of relief. Fortunately, she had gotten the drone back. If they decided to look into it, they would find out in short order that she was the one who bought it.

On their way back, they passed by the Champion Group. Looking at the tall building through the car window, Erice suddenly recognized the men she'd captured on video.

Because of this, she asked the driver to head to Hilton Group. She had to find Matthew before she did anything else. He needed to know.

The car stopped at the entrance to the main offices of Hilton Group. Heedless of her image, Erice rushed into the company, drone in hand.

If the driver hadn't been there to run interference for her, the security guards would have caught Erice. She ran past them so fast they could only catch the barest glimpse of her.

Erice entered her husband's office like a gust of wind. Paige was taken aback for a moment before she realized who it was.

Another special assistant tried to sort his papers. She had messed them up as she flew past. He raised his head and asked Paige, "Paige, did a bird get loose in the building?"

Paige nodded, "Erice just flew by."

The assistant lapsed into stunned silence at what she said.

Since Matthew was not in the office, Erice had to head to the main operations area and ask Paige where he was. Then she knew Matthew had left with Owen.

She didn't know when Matthew might be back. It could be in the afternoon sometime.

Erice nodded thoughtfully. "Then I'll grab a shower first. I'll need something to change into."

"Yes, Erice. I'll only be a moment!" Paige answered with a smile.

When Erice finished bathing and changed into clean clothes, Matthew still hadn't come back yet. She had to call him. "Hi, honey. You busy now?" she asked.

"Yes. What's wrong?" he asked in reply.

"Nothing. I was just wondering. I'll let you get back to work. I know you're busy. Call me back when you're done?" Erice didn't want to interrupt his work, so she didn't tell him what was up right away.

"Yeah. I'll be along shortly."

After hanging up the phone, Erice stowed the drone in Matthew's lounge and went to her studio.

This was where the corporate photographers mainly plied their trade. The company made extensive use of photography and videography used to promote their brands, products and services. Each person had a part to play. Some documented social events. Others specialized in portraits or even headshots. They all created visual content for company newsletters, quarterly reports, and marketing materials.

Erice strolled around the studio. She didn't have to wait long. Matthew called her about ten minutes later.

Phone in hand, she walked into her largely unused cubicle. She secured a hands-free set and connected to her phone. Erice couldn't wait to ask, "Honey, guess who I saw at Peresol Resort?"

Frowning, Matthew asked, "Did you go to the Peresol Resort alone?"

"Yeah, but don't worry. I just used the drone to snap a few pics; I didn't show up in person."

"Okay. By the way, who did you see?" he asked.

"Neville Cruz! Wetkins' dad! So? Are you surprised?" she asked. She actually saw Wetkins' father at Peresol Resort.

As far as she knew, after staying in the small village for two years, Wetkins had been secretly sent to America. Matthew knew that. He hadn't gotten where he was by being stupid. He let him go only because Wetkins hadn't started anything. He kept his head down for two years.

Cemille married the former who lived next door to Wetkins. Her mother-in-law was from hell. She had her doing all kinds of housework. Indeed, she taught her how to do the housework. But still, she didn't

like Cemille et ell.

When the poor farmer found out Cemille and Wetkins were ex-lovers, he hatched a devious plan. He moved their bedroom so they'd be close to Wetkins, separated by only a single, thin wall. He tortured Cemille in bed every night. He knew Wetkins would hear it, and all Wetkins could do was fume.

Wetkins was disabled, and Matthew's men were watching him, so he couldn't stir up trouble again.

When her husband left her alone, Cemille always ran to Wetkins for comfort and loving. But they were found out. The sheriff beat Cemille black and blue, and then beat Wetkins with a stick.

Fortunately, when Wetkins was nearly dead from the beatings, his father showed up and whisked him away to the United States.

Cemille begged Neville to take her along too, but he refused coldly. It was her fault they were in that situation. He would be a much more powerful man if his son hadn't tempted the wrath of Eric or Matthew. She put his son up to it.

How could he be bothered to care about the women who ruined his son?

So Wetkins was now in the United States, and the businesses under Neville's Champion Group were transferred bit by bit to the US as well.

Cemille gave birth to two daughters in the village. Many rural dwellers preferred boys to girls. Her mother-in-law was not happy that she had only given birth to daughters. As time passed by, Cemille's mother-in-law found the women willing to try and give birth to a son. She moved her in, and she became the men's mistress.

And the mistress was more than willing to do whatever Cemille's mother-in-law wanted.

As for Phoebe, she was in a better situation than her sister. Although Nathan's tombstone in the mountains was a grim reminder of the price they paid for challenging Matthew, she reclaimed a piece of land and lived an idyllic life.

Matthew chuckled when he heard what Eric said. "I've known about this for a long time."

"What?" Eric was staggered at the thought. So Matthew knew all this time there was something wrong with Neville.

"I don't think I stuttered." Matthew felt a little guilty and realized that he should have told her earlier.

Eric was a little upset and asked, "Then what else do you know?"

"I also know that there's something up at the Peresol Resort, not to mention Peresol Mountain." Eric

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"Then why didn't you tell me?" Erice esked unheppily.

"Honey, don't worry about it. Just run your business. When we're elmost done, I'll let you do the lest step!"

'The lest step?' She pouted end esked heppily, "Whet's the lest step?"

"Teke ell the evidence end give it to the police. Let's sit beck end wetch Michel end his men get heuled off to jeil,"

seid Metthwe. Erice wes in e gloomy mood efter heering thet. Her four sons could do thet es eesily es she could!

It wes en insult to her intelligence!

Erice didn't sey anything for e long time. Metthwe knew whet wes on her mind, so he comforted her petiently for e while. Finelly, he hung up the phone efter telling he'd get beck to her leter thet night.

Sitting in her office, Erice pondered over e confounding conundrum—were her enemies too powerful or wes she just useless?

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"Then why didn't you tell me?" Erica asked unhappily.

"Honey, don't worry about it. Just run your business. When we're almost done, I'll let you do the last step!"

'The last step?' She pouted and asked happily, "What's the last step?"

"Take all the evidence and give it to the police. Let's sit back and watch Michel and his men get hauled off to jail,"

said Matthew. Erica was in a gloomy mood after hearing that. Her four sons could do that as easily as she could!

It was an insult to her intelligence!

Erica didn't say anything for a long time. Matthew knew what was on her mind, so he comforted her patiently for a while. Finally, he hung up the phone after telling he'd get back to her later that night.

Sitting in her office, Erica pondered over a confounding conundrum—were her enemies too powerful or was she just useless?

CHAPTER 1444 WEDDING IN SPRING

At the end of the year, Hyatt and Rhea held a wonderful and beautiful wedding ceremony.

Matthew was very busy during the New Year. Since he couldn't come back from Singapore, he sent his bodyguards to escort his wife and four sons to Askor.

Gifford and his entourage were already at the airport of Askor to pick them up.

The arrival of a certain group of people in the VIP passage of the airport attracted the attention of many.

There were more than a dozen bodyguards passing through in convoy, all surrounding the mother and her sons.

The four boys looked almost identical as they were wearing the exact same clothes. As soon as they saw Gifford, they released the hands of their bodyguards and ran towards him with excitement.

"Uncle!" they called out in one voice. Everyone in the hall watched them in awe.

The crowd couldn't help but marvel at the adorable children. 'Wow, quadruplets!'

Their muscular bodyguards trotting behind them anxiously was a spectacular scene to behold and the crowd broke into a boisterous laughter.

The boys ran and jumped on Gifford—one hung from his neck, one on his back and two on both hands.

Gifford still kept smiling the whole time. "Wow, these guys are a handful, huh? No wonder Matthew still keeps a good figure even though he hasn't gone to the special training in such a long time." Matthew's real secret to keeping a good figure was grabbing his sons and running two laps around the house every day.

Dressed in a thin white down jacket, Erica took off her sunglasses and greeted the people beside Gifford, "Hello, guys!"

"Hello, Erica." They greeted Erica respectfully.

After exchanging greetings, they all left the airport together.

This time, the Leonard family household looked livelier than ever. Erica and her four sons were back, so was Yvette. Now that Yvette was back home, both her husband and daughter would be joining her as well. Suddenly, there were all these people breathing in new life into the Leonard family residence.

Needless to say, the children were the happiest, especially Wendy. All of a sudden, she had so many cousins taking care of her that she even forgot about her mother.

But there was one more person who hadn't come home yet—Chantel.

Unfortunately, she wasn't able to come back for the holidays because she was still shooting a movie abroad.

Although Gifford was disappointed that his wife couldn't make it, he didn't show it on his face. However, he did start to consider whether he should persuade Chantel to quit the entertainment industry and have her find a stable job in Askor.

In truth, he never thought that Chantel would become an internationally recognized celebrity one day after he had taken her to a big city.

The next day, Erica left the four children and Hugo in the care of her parents as she had to attend and bear witness to Hyatt and Rhea's wonderful wedding.

Hyatt was a successful photographer now and his studio in Askor was doing well enough to support him and Rhea.

Another person who was equally, if not more, thrilled to see Erica was Hyatt's father.

Three years ago, he met Matthew when he was on a business trip to Alorith. Thanks to Erica, Matthew poached him to work in a bank under the Hilton Group in Askor. His salary was now three times higher than it was before.

The living standard of his family had improved greatly just because of Erica's help. No wonder he was very happy to see her at the wedding.

Hyatt and Rhea's wedding went on without a hitch. That night, Erica didn't go home until the wedding was over.

On their way home, Yvette held Erica's hand and asked, "Rika, do you still want another child?"

Erica nodded without hiding her real emotions. "Of course! I want to have a daughter with Matthew."

"Okay, then you should be more mindful of what you eat in the future!"

"I know, thanks Yvette. What about you? Do you want one more kid?" Erica asked.

"I haven't decided yet. Your brother-in-law isn't bothered either way. Anyway, I've been struggling for a long time," Yvette sighed.

"Come on, don't worry about it so much. Just let nature take its course. If you get pregnant, then keep the baby. If you don't, then forget about it," Erica said, smiling warmly.

"You're right. If I ever have another child, be it a girl or a boy, the kid can be Wendy's friend in the future."

"Yes, that's the spirit. Look, I already gave birth to four sons and I still want to have a daughter with Matthew. Yvette, don't you think I'm a good wife?" Erica asked. She was starting to feel proud of herself.

Yvette was amused by her and echoed, "Yes, you're right. My sister is the best wife in the world!"

"Of course!" Erica brazenly winked at Yvette.

The two sisters didn't go back home straight from the wedding; instead they went to pay Tessie a visit first.

Tessie didn't attend Rhea's wedding because she felt ashamed to see her, so she waited for Erica in her flower shop.

Tessie's flower shop was not by any means a small one. Under her diligent management, it had been upgraded from a few square meters to more than thirty square meters.

When they arrived, it was at about ten o'clock in the evening. To Erica's surprise, Tessie was accompanied by a man in a camouflage uniform, who was mopping the floors, in the flower shop.

Erica was taken by curiosity and she asked Tessie directly, "Is he one of your new employees?"

Tessie chuckled and joked, "Yes, he is!"

The man turned around when he overheard their conversation. Almost immediately, Erica screamed, "Louie? Is that you?"

Yes, it was indeed Louie Vance. Louie was the soldier that Erica and Tessie got to know when they were sent to the military training by Wesley.

Erica heard rumors that Louie had a crush on Tessie, but she thought that Tessie had turned him down.

But why was Louie here today?

Louie put down the mop in his hand and politely invited the two sisters to have a seat.

Tessie didn't hide the truth from Erica for too long. "Rika, I'm with Louie now!"

Louie held Tessie's hand with a grin on his face and nodded at Erica and Yvette. "Yes, I've also brought Tessie to meet my parents.

We're going to get married in the spring next year!" Erica was so shocked that her jaw almost dropped to the floor. Tessie not only had a boyfriend, but also was going to get married next spring.

Just at the thought of this, she pulled Tessie out of Louie's hand and led her out of the door, while the two people watched them in confusion. She pulled Tessie close and whispered, "Does he know about Ethan?"

Tessie thought that something was wrong, but when she heard what Erica had to say, she burst into laughter and said, "He knows. He is divorced as well, but he doesn't have a child. I have told him everything. He doesn't mind."

Tessie even told her the truth about letting Erica take the blame for her. Although Louie was disappointed at her, when he saw that she had realized her fault, he changed his mind and decided to give her a chance.

"Oh, that's good. Do you really like him?" Erica asked. She was just worried because it was all so sudden.

Tessie shrank back as she felt a little shy. "Yes, we have been living together for some time." Louie would come to help her manage the flower shop on his break.

"What? So soon?" Erica was so surprised. "As long as you are happy, I am happy for you!"

When the two went back inside, Louie stood up straight, looking a little anxious. He was so nervous when he watched them leave abruptly that he couldn't wait to ask Erica, "Erica, do you have any

objections with Tessie marrying me?"

Erica wasn't expecting him to confront her like that, but she responded with a smile. "Of course not! As long as you promise to treat Tessie well, I wish you both all the happiness in the world!"

CHAPTER 1445 THE REST DEPENDS ON HER

When he heard what Erica said, Louie breathed a sigh of relief and nodded seriously. "Don't worry! I'll be good to Tessie," he said. As long as Tessie was okay living with him, he'd make her really happy.

His first wife had cheated on him. She couldn't take the loneliness anymore, or so she said. He divorced her once he found out.

They continued their bull session. Louie told Erica he owed her dinner. He had to find some way to repay her for taking care of Tessie.

Erica didn't turn him down. Anyway, she was going to stay with her family for New Year. Matthew would be coming up to visit, and they'd go back home to Alorith together.

She had never imagined she'd be without him for so long. She'd been there half a month, and Matthew hadn't shown up yet. And he did something pretty major while she was gone.

One day, she was out with the kids. They were at a playground, and the kids were having a great time, laughing and shrieking. Wesley was playing with his grandsons nearby. Erica sat on a swing and casually opened Weibo.

She listlessly scrolled through the shared content and status updates. Finally, something caught her eye. "Michel, Drug Lord, Captured."

She tapped it to get a more in-depth look. It said, "Michel, CEO of Wilkinson Group, long suspected as a drug lord and racking up an impressive list of charges, was hauled in for questioning by local police yesterday.

Eight major players in the financial industry remain under suspicion, including the well-known entrepreneur Neville, chairman of Champion Group. The police say they'll know more as they continue their investigation."

She jumped off the swing excitedly and asked Wesley, "Dad, where's my brother?"

Gifford hadn't been home these past few days. Chantel had been here two days already, but hadn't yet seen her husband.

Wesley knew he couldn't hide it from her anymore. "Your brother, Sheffield, and your hubby are doing something in Alorith," he answered.

"And just what are they doing?" Erica pressed.

Standing in front of her, Wesley didn't answer her question. Instead, he said in a soft voice, "The men in our family can handle themselves. We don't want you going up against a drug lord."

They had Matthew, Gifford, Sheffield, Joshua, Remus, Harmon and Sean. Each of them had their own strengths, each of them useful in the fight against evil.

Erica pouted and cried indignantly, "Dad! You're so sexist, you know that?"

Although she was not as powerful as a man, she could at least help. She thought Matthew would bring her along.

But now? What was he doing? He did everything behind her back.

"I'm not sexist. I just think that men should protect their women. Come on, let me explain it to you."

Wesley pulled out a small stool and sat beside her.

What Matthew feared most was that Erica would be angry, so Wesley decided to talk to her first. Maybe he could smooth things over.

"What is there to say? You can talk to me till you're blue in the face, but it won't change anything. Matthew broke his promise. He not only left me here alone, but also dealt with my enemy. He thought I wouldn't find out? I wanted to avenge Orange myself!" The more Erica thought about it, the angrier she became.

Wesley patted her on the arm and demanded, "Come here, you. Let's talk about this like reasonable adults."

Seeing his stern eyes, Erica had to reluctantly sit back down on the swing, gripping the chains defiantly.

"Put yourself in Matthew's shoes for a minute. If you were him, would you hide behind a woman and let her put herself in danger?" Wesley asked in a calm voice.

"Dad, it's not like that..." Matthew wasn't hiding behind her; it was just that she didn't want him to get involved.

"But it is, sweetie! I know you want to find the evidence of Michel's crime, but have you really thought this through? You're good, but not that good. By the time you uncover everything, Michel's grandson will be all grown up, and replace him. More importantly, if you delay this kind of thing for one more day, that will put countless people at risk from his dealers. They have a well-entrenched network, and he could easily increase the number of people hooked on his product. Michel's not your garden-variety drug lord. The police had found out a ton of drugs in Kirk's place, and he was just a lackey. If those supporting Michel rallied their forces, then he might be difficult at best to deal with. He'd be like a plant

with many roots. You might uproot some of them, but the rest just can't be seen. It's really scary, Rika." Wesley looked serious. He didn't try to frighten Erica, nor did he lie to her. He believed that she understood.

Erica knew her father was right, but she was still angry Matthew went back on his word.

Wesley looked at his silent daughter and knew she was fuming. "Well, don't be angry. You and Matthew have the same goal, that is, you want to bring Michel and his men to justice. You want to do it to avenge your friend. But what about Matthew? He did it all for you! Just for you! Why would he risk his life otherwise? He's the CEO of Hilton Group. Why did he mess with a powerful drug lord? If you're still mad at him, Rika, I'll disown you. I'm not going to have someone like you as my daughter. Think it over!"

After saying that, Wesley stood up and left the garden.

Erica was flabbergasted. Apparently he hadn't thought it over, either. Would he give up seeing his grandkids that easily? She had not even been that angry. She thought she stated her case firmly, without getting upset. Why was Wesley so mad? Why did he leave as soon as he stood up? "Aren't you watching the kids?" she asked.

Without turning his head, Wesley answered, "No. I was pissed off so I let Blair handle them."

Erica was not convinced. She whispered, "You're mad at me, not them. Don't punish them to get back at me, okay?"

Blair looked at the father and daughter from a distance and guessed what was going on. She figured that Erica had put Wesley out of sorts again.

She watched her grandsons play in the garden and didn't seem to mind at all. Erica and her father were always fighting. It was how they showed they loved each other. Ironically, Wesley was closer to Erica than Blair was.

At Orchid Private Club

Matthew lit a cigarette and played with the lighter. He closed his eyes and tried to relax.

Cigarette in his mouth, Sheffield looked around but couldn't find his own lighter. Finally, he stood up, grabbed the lighter from Matthew's hand, lit his cigarette, and handed it to Gifford.

At the sight of the lighter, Gifford suddenly remembered something and popped off with, "Dad has a lighter that's so old it's broken. He still keeps it around. It's one of his little treasures."

Joshua reclined on the sofa and replied, "Maybe your mom gave it to him. He wouldn't throw something like that out."

Sheffield took off his suit jacket and draped it over the back of the chair. He agreed with Joshua. "A woman gave it to him. Yeah, it's just like him to keep it around."

Gifford chuckled. "You're both right."

"Of course I am. After all these years, your dad is still a henpecked husband," Sheffield said with a proud smile.

The three of them chatted for a while. Gifford kicked Matthew's toes and asked, "Hey, what are you thinking about?"

Matthew opened his eyes and looked into Gifford's eyes. "I'm thinking about your sister."

Before Gifford could tease him, Matthew added, "She's going to be so pissed when she found out what we did!"

Gifford chuckled after hearing that.

Sheffield burst into laughter. "Dude, you are so screwed. Don't let her cook or pour you a drink." Erica was not that easy-going.

In fact, from the very beginning, they had been investigating Michel and his business behind Erica's back, and had done their best to expose and report him.

Matthew glanced at Sheffield indifferently. "Man, you're the charmer of the group. Tell me what to say to her."

Sheffield exhaled a mouthful of smoke and said, "I think she can be swayed by reason but not be cowed by force. Do something to demonstrate you're sorry. Kneel on a keyboard or durian shells. The rest depends on her."

CHAPTER 1446 I'LL RUB IT FOR YOU

"Don't worry about it too much. After all, you have my dad as your backer. If Rika gets too troublesome for you, you can always ask Dad to punish her for you!" Gifford comforted his brother-in-law.

'Punish Erica? No, that's not what I want.

I want Rika to forgive me on her own or else what would be the point?' Matthew thought to himself.

Joshua poured himself a glass of whisky and took a few sips before saying, "Sheffield is right. The time and place are important factors that you must consider in these cases. My advice is to put your dignity aside and throw a durian and a keyboard on the floor in the living room in front of everyone and let Rika make the decision when Wesley and his family come to Alorith to celebrate the New Year."

Sheffield knew what was on Joshua's mind so he decided to play along. He continued, "That's when we'll all persuade Rika together. She's definitely not going to turn down a room full of people, right?"

"Rika is not that unreasonable. She will definitely save your face. So this matter can be over!" said Joshua.

Raising an eyebrow at Joshua, Matthew asked, "Do you have any idea who Rika is?"

"What?" Joshua was confused.

Matthew flicked the cigarette between his two fingers and said, "When my wife gets angry, she won't even think twice about making me kneel on a keyboard at the entrance of the company!"

Joshua was rendered speechless, eyes widened with shock. Matthew was right. After all, Erica was not an ordinary girl.

Sheffield thought for a while and said, "Matthew, then you should be praying for yourself, my friend. I think it's time to accept that there's not going to be an easy way out of this!"

Gifford looked at the men in the room in disbelief. "Hold on! Aren't you guys blowing this out of proportion? Erica is not like that at all. Let me tell you something, Matthew. Don't listen to Sheffield. Just because he always ends up kneeling on the keyboard, he wants you suffer the same experience. He is not helping you at all."

"Hey, hey, Gifford, you better watch what you're saying?" Sheffield stared at the man discontentedly.

Ignoring him, Gifford continued, "In my opinion, if Erica gets too stubborn, just tell my dad. I promise my father will subdue her with one move, and if he can't, he'll definitely do it in two moves. Anyway, Dad will find a way to make her forgive you."

Matthew took another drag from his cigarette, as he let their suggestions pass from one ear and out through the other. "Thanks guys, but I don't think any of those suggestions are going to be helpful."

"Do you have a better way?"

"Yes."

"What? Tell us."

Matthew suddenly revealed a mysterious smirk, which was out of character from his usual nature. "Sometimes people just don't get what couples go through," he said.

"Excuse me? You make it sound like we're all single over here!" retorted Sheffield.

Without responding to him, Matthew asked Gifford, "When are you going to give your wife an actual wedding ceremony?"

Gifford had a stunned expression on his face and he wondered what this had to do with him. "A wedding? What are you trying to say?"

"Have you ever thought of giving her an actual wedding ceremony?" Matthew enunciated every word slowly in a tone of condescension.

A man who was not romantic at all, like Matthew, knew he should give his wife a grand wedding. Gifford was not a fool. Why didn't he think of giving his wife a wedding?

Gifford didn't have a response.

His silence was his way of admitting his fault.

And from that day onwards, the word "wedding" got carved into Gifford's mind.

As time went by, passing away with each blink of an eye, the arrival of the New Year came closer. Two days before the festival, Matthew and Gifford showed up at the Leonard family's house together. However, since they didn't inform their family of their arrival in advance, Erica went out shopping with Rhea.

The kids, however, were playing around in the back yard and Wendy was watching Damian drawing.

It wasn't until evening when Matthew's wife finally came back home.

When Erica saw Matthew, she was stunned. "When did you come here?"

Matthew came over to hold her hand and observed her expression carefully. "I came with Gifford at noon." There was no sign of anger on her face.

Erica nodded. She looked around and saw no one in the living room. The maid must have been cooking in the kitchen. Her facial expression changed as she complained, "I went skiing with Rhea this afternoon. I fell on the ground a few times. My butt hurts!"

This time, it was Matthew who was stunned. 'Doesn't she know that Michel is temporarily imprisoned? But how could she not know the news?' he thought. He quietly whispered in her ear, "Let's go back to your room. I'll rub it for you."

The woman's face turned red in an instant. "Go away! Don't think that I don't know what you are thinking!"

In truth, Erica admired Matthew very much because as a man with his insatiable sexual appetite, he

hadn't had sex with her for more than two months during the time she was injured.

Perhaps now that she was healthy again, the man couldn't hold his urges anymore.

Matthew stopped the woman who was trying to escape from his arms and admitted his thoughts. "Since you already know, let's go back to your room!"

"No way! Let go of me! The maid will come out of the kitchen soon!"

While they were enjoying a moment of intimacy between them, they failed to notice Colman. He was on the staircase in silence, putting his hand over his mouth to stop himself from laughing, but in the end, his effort was in vain as laughter exploded from his mouth.

The two people in the living room looked upstairs at the same time in confusion. Erica quickly slapped off Matthew's hand and said, "It's all your fault. The kid saw us."

Matthew took her hand and went upstairs. "So what? We are a couple."

'What's wrong with me being intimate with my wife?'

When they reached the second floor, Colman ran to them and asked, "Dad, where are you going?"

"Your mother fell down when she was skiing. I'm going to have a look. Why don't you go and play with your brothers?" Matthew replied with a straight face.

"What? Mom, are you hurt?" Colman asked. His eyes were full of concern.

"I'll let you know after I have a look. Go ahead and play outside!" Matthew answered on behalf of his wife.

"Oh, okay! Dad, don't forget to let me know!" Colman was certain that his mother was in safe hands.

Matthew nodded and took Erica back to their room.

The house was riddled with children and they were mostly playful, naughty boys. Matthew was afraid that one of them would suddenly walk in on them being intimate, so he shut the door and made sure it was locked.

He pressed Erica against the door, and without giving her a chance to say a word, he lowered his head and kissed her red lips.

He whispered in her ear, "Honey, I've missed you."

Erica smiled, stood on her tiptoes and wrapped her arms around his neck. "I've missed you too."

Without giving her any chance to speak anymore, Matthew pressed her against the door and kissed her deeply.

About ten minutes later, someone knocked on the door. Bang! Bang! Bang!

Completely disregarding the person on the other side of the door, Matthew carried on with his work.

Adkins' voice came from outside the bedroom. "Dad, it's me, Adkins!"

However, there was no sound from the inside.

After mumbling something at the door for a while, Adkins twisted the doorknob again, but found it locked.

Matthew had his palm over the woman's mouth to stop her from making any sound.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Someone knocked on the door again. This time, it was Damian. "Dad, we are here to see Mom. Is Mom okay?" he asked.

"What are you doing, Adkins?" Gifford asked.

The commotion outside was starting to worry Erica so she tried to push Matthew away, but the man didn't budge an inch.

"Dad said that Mom got hurt and they're inside, but why aren't they talking to us?" Adkins looked completely puzzled.

CHAPTER 1447 KNEEL ON THE KEYBOARD

Gifford looked confused for a few seconds. When he came to realize what was going on, he laughed and dragged the kids away. "Okay, kids, come with me. Your dad is probably taking care of your mother. Let's not disturb them!"

'I'll bet he is taking good care of her, ' he thought to himself.

"But we want to be there for Mom too," said Boswell. He was more worried about Erica's injury.

Without any hesitation, Gifford pulled away the children and assured them, "Don't worry, your mother is a strong woman. A measly fall on the ground isn't going to hurt her. We'll see her after dinner. Come along now!"

"Uncle, why are you acting so strangely?" one of the boys asked.

The children's voices were getting farther and farther away and Erica breathed a sigh of relief. She bit the man's chest to vent her anger and said in a low voice, "It's all your fault. Now, Gifford definitely knows what we are doing!" Gifford would be a fool not to realize what they were doing in the bedroom.

"What's the big deal? We are all adults!" Matthew said.

'The man has a wife too! I'm sure he will understand us.'

When it was time for dinner, Matthew and Erica were still missing at the table. Gifford forbade anyone from calling them, which gave Blair more reason to be confused.

After listening to the kids give their explanation one by one, she finally understood what they were doing.

'Come on! These two people!' She rolled her eyes secretly.

In the end, Boswell was so hungry that he ran upstairs after lying about going to the bathroom and knocked on the door of his parents' bedroom. "Dad, Mom! Dad!"

This time, the door was opened rather quickly. Inside, Matthew was already dressed in a suit, but Erica was nowhere to be seen.

As soon as the door was opened, Boswell poked his little head into the room and looked around. Before he could say anything, Matthew picked him up, walked out of the room and closed the door. Then they went downstairs together.

"Daddy, is Mommy okay?" the boy asked.

"Yes, she's just in the bathroom because she has a stomachache," Matthew answered.

"Oh, I see! I got tired of waiting for you at the dinner table, but Uncle Gifford wouldn't let me call you." Boswell put his arms around his dad's neck and acted like a spoiled child.

With a smile at the corners of his mouth, Matthew said, "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have taken so long." If he had known that the children would be hungry, he would have let go of Erica a lot sooner.

"I forgive you!" Boswell said with a smile. After all, his father had apologized to him in such a nice way.

When Erica cleaned herself and went downstairs, the kids had already begun to eat. Wesley was talking to Matthew about something. The moment Blair saw her, she complained, "You're late!"

Erica felt misunderstood, but she didn't want to explain. Matthew, however, stood out to defend her. "Dad, Mom, I'm sorry. It's all my fault!"

Blair waved at him with a smile and said, "It doesn't matter. Let's start eating."

Erica pouted her lips. 'That's not fair! Mom always treats Matthew so nicely!' She was starting to miss her mother-in-law already. If she were in the Hilton family manor right now, she wouldn't be getting scolded, but Matthew would.

On the afternoon of the New Year, Matthew and Erica returned to Alorith with their four children.

Unfortunately, just as soon as they left, Chantel came back home to her family. As such, she failed to see Erica.

However, the two families still managed to have a nice and quiet time during the New Year.

On the second day of the New Year, Erica and Matthew were supposed to go back to her parents' home according to the customs, but since they had already stayed there for a period of time before the New Year, they didn't go back to Askor.

On the third day of the New Year, Wesley came to the Hilton family's house with his family.

Last year, the Hilton family went to the Leonard family's house to celebrate the New Year. This year, it was the Leonard family's turn to come to Alorith.

Last year, no one was actually happy during the New Year. After all, the whereabouts of Erica and her children were unknown, and the atmosphere could barely be raised.

This year was different. Everyone was here and they had four more boys. The Hilton family's manor was bustling with noise and the laughter of children.

The two CEOs, Matthew and Sheffield, gave themselves a few more days off to be with their family at the Hilton family manor.

After lunch, the elders took the children to bask under the sun in their garden while the young people were drinking and chatting in the living room.

Taking a close look at his wife who was chatting with the other women happily, Matthew winked at two maids and soon they walked into the living room with one durian and a keyboard.

When Erica saw the durian in the maid's hands, she looked at Matthew in confusion. "I thought you didn't like durian?"

"Wow! Matthew, are you serious?" Joshua couldn't help laughing.

The maids put the durian and the keyboard in the middle of the living room. Matthew walked over silently, tidied his clothes and looked at Erica. "Honey, I can kneel on durian shells or the keyboard. You

choose!"

Erica already knew what happened to Michel, but she didn't tell him that she knew, nor did she have an argument with him about it. He was always worrying about it in the back of his mind, afraid that one day she would lash out at him.

So he decided to take the initiative and admit his fault, hoping that perhaps she would appreciate his sincerity and forgive him.

Erica, however, was a bit confused. "Did you do something wrong?"

The man looked at the confused little woman and sighed. "Well, do you need me to remind you? Michel!"

"Oh!" Erica finally knew what this was all about. 'So he is talking about Michel.'

Matthew nodded. "Choose one. I'll kneel on it."

To add insult to injury, Sheffield said, "Rika, choose the durian shells. Let him remember how powerful you are so he won't dare to go against you next time."

Yvette held Erica's hand and said softly, "Rika, I've heard about what happened with Michel. Matthew did it for your own good!"

When Chantel gave Gifford a nudge, he looked at his wife wondering what she was expecting of him now.

Chantel rolled her eyes at Gifford, having lost her patience and said, "Rika, Matthew is so good to you. Don't be so hard on him!"

Erica was rendered speechless.

She looked at Matthew and asked, "Who gave you this piece of advice?" This was definitely not the way Matthew did things.

Sheffield couldn't wait to take credit. "Of course Joshua and I told him to do that. Rika, don't worry. We are all on your side!"

However, Erica snorted contemptuously and glared at the two brothers-in-law present. "Sheffield, Joshua, how could you do this to my husband?"

Erica knew that she wouldn't have been able to get rid of Michel on her own. All things considered, how could she blame Matthew for fulfilling her wish?

Sheffield and Joshua looked at each other in stunned disbelief.

Erica defended Matthew and said, "My husband has done so much for me, and yet you still want me to punish him! You are so hateful! Evelyn, Terilynn, I think they have gone too far this time. What do you think?"

With eyes wide open, Sheffield looked at his wife and explained, "Honey, Matthew was the one who came to us for advice on how to ask for Rika's forgiveness. We have nothing to do with this! Matthew, please explain!"

Erica was truly unpredictable. All of a sudden, she started defending her husband in front of everyone, and Sheffield realized that he was made to look like an outsider.

The same thing happened to Joshua as he was shocked by the sudden complaint. "Matthew, please tell your sister the truth!"

Matthew smiled. 'I have the loveliest wife in the world! Look at how protective of me she is. That's great!'

"You don't need to explain, Matthew. I know your brother-in-law well. He hasn't knelt on the keyboard for half a year, and I think he wants to do it again!" said Evelyn casually.

CHAPTER 1448 WE'LL FIGHT TO THE DEATH

Resting her chin on one hand, Terilynn blinked her round eyes at Erica and said, "Don't worry! I think your brother-in-law wants to do all the housework from now on. Well, I've made up my mind. I'll fire the maid when I go back, and Joshua can do all the housework for the next three months!"

Not only did Sheffield and Joshua fail to set up a trap for Matthew, but they also succeeded in getting themselves in trouble. They felt like weeping, but had no tears.

Unwilling to yield, Sheffield said, "Rika, aren't you mad that Matthew went behind your back?"

"Of course I'm angry?" Erica answered honestly.

Joshua nodded, "So, let's punish Matthew together! What are you waiting for?"

Erica shook her head. "No, I slapped myself when I was angry."

'What do you mean?' Everyone looked at Erica with puzzlement.

Even Matthew was stunned. What drove his wife to slap herself when she was angry?

Erica calmly took a bite out of the apple in her hand while everyone watched her with anticipation. "I was very angry at the time, but when I thought about what an excellent husband this man has been to

me, I decided to slap myself!

He is, after all, my prince charming!"

Then, Erica came over and patted on Matthew's shoulder. "Now you understand, don't you? I expect you to learn from this experience so that in the future you can just slap yourself when you make me angry, and ask yourself why you have to make your loveliest wife angry. Just like I will reflect on why I am angry with my prince charming."

Matthew, who had just been lectured by his wife, felt embarrassed and he didn't know what to do.

"Hahaha!" The people in the living room burst into laughter because of Erica's words.

Just then, Wesley and Carlos, who were about to go upstairs, saw what was happening in the living room.

Matthew stood in front of some durian shells and a keyboard, while Erica was eating an apple and giving him a hard time. Even a child could tell that the woman was bullying the man.

"Rika!" Wesley roared and strode towards them. 'This girl has gone too far this time! How dare she do this to my son-in-law in front of everyone!'

Startled by his roar, Erica asked, "Dad, what are you doing here?"

Wesley's face darkened. "If I hadn't come in, I wouldn't be able to see you bullying my son-in-law. And you are doing this in front of everyone! Rika, you've crossed the line!"

Then he raised his hand to teach Erica a lesson.

Luckily, Carlos, who was standing right next to Wesley, grabbed his friend's arm and said, "Wesley, Matthew needed to be taught a lesson.

Don't blame Rika. I know what kind of person my son is!" It seemed as though Matthew had a poor reputation in the Hilton family. Anyone who didn't know him personally would mistake him for Carlos' son-in-law instead of his son.

Erica put the unfinished apple into Matthew's hand and rolled up her sleeves angrily. "Come on then. Let's have a fight. The winner will have the last say!"

Erica was frustrated at how every time she had an argument with Matthew, Wesley would come to his rescue and scold her without any concern for the truth whatsoever. She would even slap herself when she was so angry, let alone beat her father.

In fact, what Erica meant was that she knew she couldn't beat Wesley, and of course he would still have

the last say.

Wesley, however, saw things very differently. All he thought about was how rebellious and out of control his daughter was.

The crowd burst into yet another laughter. Irritated by her words, Wesley decided to accept Erica's challenge.

Matthew quickly pulled the woman behind him and said, "Dad, you must have misunderstood her. Rika is not angry with me."

"Matthew, don't defend her. She is my daughter and I know her very well. I know how narrow-minded she can be!"

When Remus and Joshua realized that things were starting to get heated between the father and daughter, they stood up and grabbed Wesley's arms.

On the other hand, Gifford, Sheffield and Yvette sat still without moving.

Chantel pushed Gifford and anxiously said, "Go to Dad and calm him down!"

"Why are you even worried? Have you ever seen Dad hit Rika?" he asked.

Chantel paused for a moment to think and then nodded in agreement. Wesley's confrontations with Erica had always been like this. He would always threaten to beat her, but he would never lay a finger on her, not even once.

Carlos dragged Wesley upstairs. Knowing that her father couldn't hit her, Erica took advantage of this and said, "Hey, maybe if we have a disagreement next time, we can fight to the death!"

As soon as Wesley's ears caught what Erica had said, he turned around and sprang from the stairs like a tiger. Luckily, Joshua and Remus were there to intercept him. Remus struggled to keep himself from laughing the whole time. "Dad, please calm down. Rika was just kidding," he coaxed his father-in-law.

Wesley was so angry that his face turned red and his neck became thick. "Matthew, if she doesn't listen to reason in the future, just let me know. I'll beat her black and blue until her own mother will be unable to recognize her."

Erica pouted her lips.

Matthew cleared his throat and said, "I know, Dad!" Everyone knew that Wesley was just joking.

The farce finally ended after Wesley and Carlos went to the second floor.

Matthew didn't have to kneel on the durian shells or the keyboard. However, Sheffield wasn't so lucky as Evelyn made him kneel on the keyboard for fifteen minutes in their bedroom.

Joshua had to buy fresh groceries and cook delicious dishes for his wife. He tried everything and said all the sweetest words to avoid housework for three months.

In the evening, because everyone was so happy, several people, including Blair, decided not to limit themselves while drinking.

Wesley felt a headache coming on as he glanced at the crowd coldly and then landed his eyes on Erica. "Your mother is going to ask for Wahaha probiotic milk as soon as she gets drunk. It has been like this for decades. Who let her drink so much wine?" he asked.

Erica shrank her head and decided to stay silent because she was the one guilty of getting her mother drunk.

But the next moment, Wesley raised his voice and shouted, "Erica!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Was it you?"

"Yes!" Erica responded so fast that it was too late for Matthew to cover her mouth.

"Run five kilometers!"

"Yes... No!"

Erica's refusal fell on deaf ears as Wesley was hell-bent on punishing her.

Just then, Matthew said, "Dad, let me do it." The man was willing to take responsibility for his wife's actions.

The four kids looked at each other and ran to Wesley. "Grandpa, we will do it!" Adkins said.

"Yes, Grandpa. We know Mom hates running!" With his head tilted to one side, Boswell looked at Wesley, who was holding Blair in his arms.

Colman jumped up and down a few times before saying, "Grandpa, look, I'm a lightweight. I can run five kilometers."

"Grandpa, we'll do it on behalf of Mom. I know you won't turn us down. How about this? The four of us will join Dad and run one kilometer each," said Damian. Then it would be five kilometers.

Carlos refused to entertain this any longer. "How can you punish my daughter-in-law? You're not looking to disrespect me, are you?"

Wesley held his wife tightly and calmly answered, "No, I'm just punishing my daughter!"

Yvette reminded him, "Dad, you should just go and buy some Wahaha probiotic milk. Otherwise, you will be the one to suffer when Mom wakes up and doesn't find her drink!" Wesley felt distressed, but he knew Yvette was speaking the truth.

While others burst into laughter, he had no choice but to go out to buy some Wahaha probiotic milk for his wife.

CHAPTER 1449 THE BANDIT CHIEF

Boforo loovong, Wosloy glorod ot tho troublomokor ond thought, 'Woll, you thought you could sot mo up, oroco? Just woot ond soo.' "Romombor to run fovo kolomotors!" ho romondod hor.

"Okoy, Dod!" oroco roodoly ogrood to hor punoshmont.

But sho rollod hor oyos os sho dod so. Obvoously, sho was up to somothong.

Wosloy's tono was horsh ond holploss oll ot tho samo tomo. "Don't moko ony troublo for mo!"

"No, o won't. Don't worry," oroco promosed quockly.

'Don't worry? How could o not worry?' Wosloy was suro that oroco wouldn't run tho fovo kolomotors os sho was told.

Suro enough, oftor Wosloy como bock, ho hod Wohoho molk on hond. Ho spont samo tomo mokong suro Bloor was okoy. oroco wolkod on colmly ond told hom, "Dod, o fonoshod tho 5k run loko you oskod!"

Wosloy dodn't boloovo hor ot oll. Ho storod ot hor coldly ond spot, "o'vo boon gono loss thon twenty monutos. You suro you fonoshod your run?"

"Yos, o dod. Roght, Dod?" sho oskod o foguro bohond hor. ot was Corlos, ond ho stoppod forward with hos wofo.

Corlos noddod ond lood. "Oh yooh, ot's truoo. o sow ot with my own oyos. Toko good coro of your wofo."

Wosloy's mond was blown. Ho hold hos wofo, who was suckong down hor molk, ond romoonod solont.

Woll, ho roolozod that ho couldn't punosh oroco around tho Holton fomoly on tho futuro. Thoro woro

too many poeple dofondong hor.

oftor the forst month hod possod, oroco sont all the ovodonco of Mochol's cromos collectod by Motthow ond others to the Prosocutor Gonorol's Offoco.

Holf o month lotor, the poloco offocoolly sot up o tosk forco to onvestogoto the ollogotoons ogoonst Mochol ond hos componoons.

From wontor to sprong, the poloco hod found moro thon 30 tons of drugs on Porosol Mountoon ond moro thon o dozon drug cochos hod boon uncoverod. Smugglong routos hod boon doscoverod ond closod up. orrosts woro modo. Thos was front pogo nows.

Lotor, Mochol ond Novollo woro sontoncod to dooth for thoor hoonous cromos.

on Morch, Motthow ond oroco trovobod to Mopburg. They wontod to vosot Orongo's tomb ond poy thoor rospects.

Orongo was burood noor hos homo town, on the country ho'd boon born on.

Orongo hod modo many froonds whon ho was olovo, so hos tomb was burood on the myrood flowors ond gofts from hos froonds ond olloos.

ot hod boon olmost o yoor sonco oroco hod boon horo.

Lost tomo, oftor Kork was orrostod, oroco vosotod Orongo's tomb beforo hoodong bock to oloroth.

Plocong the bouquot of flowors on front of Orongo's tombstono, oroco lookod ot the photo on the stono ond broothod o sogh of roloof. "Orongo, o'm sorry o dodn't como to soo you toll now. o con't woot to toll you the good nows. Mochol ond hos mon hovo boon orrostod. You've boon ovongod. of thoro os anythong o hovan't dono, just toll mo..."

oftor o whool, sho lookod bock ot the mon basodo hor ond told Orongo, "Thos os my husbond, you know hom. Thanks to hom ond the othor mon on my fomoly, Mochol ond hos mon woro orrostod. of ot woron't for thom, o moght stoll bo collectong ovodonco of Mochol's cromos."

Beforo loovong, Motthow solomnly bowod to Orongo's tombstono ond solontly thankod hom. 'Thank you for sovong my wofo ond kods!'

Sonco sho como bock from Mopburg, oroco hod dovotod oll hor ottontoon to hor photography busonoss.

Moro poeple know that the dork horso on the ondustry, known by hor profossoonol nomo, oM, was octually oroco, Motthow's wofo.

on oorly summer, oroco oskod Motthow to toko hor horsobock rodong. Ho hod boon on o bod mood, bocousho sho was vory busy rocently ond dodn't hovo much froo tomo to spond woth hom. Now thot sho fonolly hod tomo, of curso ho jumpod ot tho chonco.

Two pooplo woro ot tho stoblos, wootong to mount thoor horsos. Ono woro block, tho othor was on ponk.

Woorong o block rodong suot, Motthow clombod onto tho soddlo of o Forghono horso forst, ond o ponk-clod oroco dod tho somo. Hor horso was whoto, just os sho spocofood.

Sho lookod voloont ond horooc ostrodo hor stood. So dod Motthow. Boforo ho could soy anythong, sho shoutod, "Lot's go! o'm tho bondot choof. o'm goong to fond o hondsomo mon to bo my husband!" oftor soyong thot, sho squoozod tho horso's body woth hor colvos ond hools whoolo toppong ots hondquortors woth o rodong crop. Tho horso, rospondong to onstructoons, contorod owoy.

'Bondot choof? Hor husband?' Motthow's oyos dorkonod. Ho contorod oftor hor, ompotoont to got tho onomol to full gollop.

oroco was loughong ond pullong owoy from hor husband. Sho turned to Motthow, oskong, "Why oro you followong mo oll tho tomo?"

"Dodn't you soy thot you woro lookong for o hondsomo mon to bo your husband? Woll, horo o om!"

on fact, sho was jokong.

Motthow oddod, "You'ro not thot good ot rodong, so your hondsomo husband os comong for you, bondot choof!"

"Hohoho!" oroco was omused by hom ond burst onto loughtor os sho urgod hor horso to o gollop.

For o momont, tho vast foolds of gross ohood woth tho womon's wold loughtor.

But tho loughtor dodn't lost long, bocousho somothong hopponod to oroco.

Sho suddonly slumpod onto tho soddlo, ond sho trood to movo hor logs onto tho horso's borrol. Tho horso, sonsong somothong was wrong, slowod down. Motthow wotchod os sho brought hor hands to hor bolly. "Hurry up. Coll tho omporool doctor. Ugh! ot hurts! o thonk ot's pooson. Coll tho omporool physocoon!"

Sho forcod tho words out through grottod tooth. Hor vooco was thock woth poon. Sho dodn't soom to bo fokong ot. Frownong, Motthow sood, "onough of tho bullshot. Whot's wrong?"

"Honoy, o hovo o stomochocho."

She seemed to be on good ground. Matthew's breath tightened and he quickly got off the horse, not caring whether he tumbled or not. "Let's get you down from there!" He walked over to her white horse.

With his help, she gingerly dismounted.

At that moment, her focus was pure and devoid of sweet adornment or future. She had endured this kind of pain before, and the pain on her lower abdomen was terrible. It was definitely not the kind of cramps she got when her aunt Flo visited.

Under the man's anxious eyes, she slowly spit out a few words. "I think I might be pregnant. The baby...save the baby," she said weakly.

Her words struck the man into a cold sweat.

She had just hit the back of the horse. If she was really pregnant...

Matthew took out his phone and called the ambulance. Then he called the person in charge of the stables and gave him the location. "Send a car here! Now!"

Half an hour later, she was on the way to the emergency room again. She was indeed pregnant. She almost had a miscarriage because of strenuous exercise.

It hadn't been long—7 weeks. She was busy from dusk until dawn every day, so she really didn't notice anything was wrong.

But she didn't know that her period was irregular because she was pregnant.

When Carlos and Dobbo got the news and rushed to the hospital, they found that she was lying on her back with an IV.

Carlos patted his son on the shoulder and said, "So Roko's pregnant. Why didn't you tell me about it to her? Why did you take her out for a ride?"

That day, Matthew didn't reply. He silently endured Carlos' nagging.

She, who was lying on the bed, woke up weakly, "Dad, I insisted on doing it. That isn't on Matthew at all. Don't blame him."

"Roko, you don't have to defend him. He is a man on his knees. He didn't even notice you're pregnant. It is his fault!" Carlos believed Matthew was to blame, and no one could change his mind.

Dobbo sighed. "Simplify it, everyone. Thank God Roko and the baby are all right. It's good news. Don't be angry."

Carlos' face softened when he heard that.

Knowing the lesson from the past, Matthew had kept on eye on oroco during her pregnancy. He didn't even allow her to leave the house, let alone travel abroad. He was afraid she would run away from home again.

Before leaving, Wesley glared at the troublemaker and thought, 'Well, you thought you could set me up, Erica? Just wait and see.' "Remember to run five kilometers!" he reminded her.

"Okay, Dad!" Erica readily agreed to her punishment.

But she rolled her eyes as she did so. Obviously, she was up to something.

Wesley's tone was harsh and helpless all at the same time. "Don't make any trouble for me!"

"No, I won't. Don't worry," Erica promised quickly.

'Don't worry? How could I not worry?' Wesley was sure that Erica wouldn't run the five kilometers as she was told.

Sure enough, after Wesley came back, he had Wahaha milk in hand. He spent some time making sure Blair was okay. Erica walked in calmly and told him, "Dad, I finished the 5k run like you asked!"

Wesley didn't believe her at all. He stared at her coldly and spat, "I've been gone less than twenty minutes. You sure you finished your run?"

"Yes, I did. Right, Dad?" she asked a figure behind her. It was Carlos, and he stepped forward with his wife.

Carlos nodded and lied. "Oh yeah, it's true. I saw it with my own eyes. Take good care of your wife."

Wesley's mind was blown. He held his wife, who was sucking down her milk, and remained silent.

Well, he realized that he couldn't punish Erica around the Hilton family in the future. There were too many people defending her.

After the first month had passed, Erica sent all the evidence of Michel's crimes collected by Matthew and others to the Prosecutor General's Office.

Half a month later, the police officially set up a task force to investigate the allegations against Michel and his companions.

From winter to spring, the police had found more than 30 tons of drugs in Parasol Mountain and more

than a dozen drug caches had been uncovered. Smuggling routes had been discovered and closed up. Arrests were made. This was front page news.

Later, Michel and Neville were sentenced to death for their heinous crimes.

In March, Matthew and Erica traveled to Mipburg. They wanted to visit Orange's tomb and pay their respects.

Orange was buried near his home town, in the country he'd been born in.

Orange had made many friends when he was alive, so his tomb was buried in the myriad flowers and gifts from his friends and allies.

It had been almost a year since Erica had been here.

Last time, after Kirk was arrested, Erica visited Orange's tomb before heading back to Alorith.

Placing the bouquet of flowers in front of Orange's tombstone, Erica looked at the photo on the stone and breathed a sigh of relief. "Orange, I'm sorry I didn't come to see you till now. I can't wait to tell you the good news. Michel and his men have been arrested. You've been avenged. If there is anything I haven't done, just tell me..."

After a while, she looked back at the man beside her and told Orange, "This is my husband, you know him. Thanks to him and the other men in my family, Michel and his men were arrested. If it weren't for them, I might still be collecting evidence of Michel's crimes."

Before leaving, Matthew solemnly bowed to Orange's tombstone and silently thanked him. 'Thank you for saving my wife and kids!'

Since she came back from Mipburg, Erica had devoted all her attention to her photography business.

More people knew that the dark horse in the industry, known by her professional name, EM, was actually Erica, Matthew's wife.

In early summer, Erica asked Matthew to take her horseback riding. He had been in a bad mood, because she was very busy recently and didn't have much free time to spend with him. Now that she finally had time, of course he jumped at the chance.

Two people were at the stables, waiting to mount their horses. One wore black, the other was in pink.

Wearing a black riding suit, Matthew climbed into the saddle of a Ferghana horse first, and a pink-clad Erica did the same. Her horse was white, just as she specified.

She looked valiant and heroic astride her steed. So did Matthew. Before he could say anything, she

shouted, "Let's go! I'm the bandit chief. I'm going to find a handsome man to be my husband!" After saying that, she squeezed the horse's body with her calves and heels while tapping its hindquarters with a riding crop. The horse, responding to instructions, cantered away.

'Bandit chief? Her husband?' Matthew's eyes darkened. He cantered after her, impatient to get the animal to full gallop.

Erica was laughing and pulling away from her husband. She turned to Matthew, asking, "Why are you following me all the time?"

"Didn't you say that you were looking for a handsome man to be your husband? Well, here I am!"

In fact, she was joking.

Matthew added, "You're not that good at riding, so your handsome husband is coming for you, bandit chief!"

"Hahaha!" Erica was amused by him and burst into laughter as she urged her horse to a gallop.

For a moment, the vast fields of grass echoed with the woman's wild laughter.

But the laughter didn't last long, because something happened to Erica.

She suddenly slumped into the saddle, and she tried to move her legs into the horse's barrel. The horse, sensing something was wrong, slowed down. Matthew watched as she brought her hands to her belly. "Hurry up. Call the imperial doctor. Ugh! It hurts! I think it's poison. Call the imperial physician!"

She forced the words out through gritted teeth. Her voice was thick with pain. She didn't seem to be faking it. Frowning, Matthew said, "Enough of the bullshit. What's wrong?"

"Honey, I have a stomachache."

She seemed to be in great pain. Matthew's breath tightened and he quickly got off the horse, not caring whether he tied it up. "Let's get you down from there!" He walked over to her white horse.

With his help, she gingerly dismounted.

At this moment, her face was pale and beads of sweat adorned her features. Erica had endured this kind of pain before, and the pain in her lower abdomen was terrible. It was definitely not the kind of cramps she got when her aunt Flo visited.

Under the man's anxious eyes, she slowly spat out a few words. "I think I might be pregnant. The baby...save the baby," she said weakly.

Her words scared the man into a cold sweat.

She had just hit the back of the horse. If she was really pregnant...

Matthew took out his phone and called the ambulance. Then he called the person in charge of the stables and gave him their location. "Send a car here! Now!"

Half an hour later, Erica was on the way to the emergency room again. She was indeed pregnant. She almost had a miscarriage because of strenuous exercise.

It hadn't been long—7 weeks. Erica was busy from dusk until dawn every day, so she really didn't notice anything was wrong.

But she didn't know that her period was irregular because she was pregnant.

When Carlos and Debbie got the news and rushed to the hospital, they found that Erica lying in bed with an IV.

Carlos patted his son on the shoulder and spat, "So Rika's pregnant. Why didn't you pay attention to her? Why did you take her out horseback riding?"

This time, Matthew didn't retort. He silently endured Carlos' nagging.

Erica, who was lying in the bed, explained weakly, "Dad, I insisted on doing it. This isn't on Matthew at all. Don't blame him."

"Rika, you don't have to defend him. He is a man in his thirties. He didn't even notice you're pregnant. It is his fault!" Carlos believed Matthew was to blame, and no one could change his mind.

Debbie sighed. "Simmer down, everyone. Thank God Rika and the baby are all right. It's good news. Don't be angry."

Carlos' face softened when he heard that.

Taking a lesson from the past, Matthew had kept an eye on Erica during her pregnancy. He didn't even allow her to leave Alorith, let alone travel abroad. He was afraid she would run away from home again.

CHAPTER 1450 TWINS

When Erica was eight weeks along, the ultrasound showed she was carrying more than one baby—she was having twins! Matthew was a mighty baby-maker! At least, that was what Erica thought. He should be feeling proud of himself now.

She looked at the man who had done this to her. He was as calm as ever. Erica felt like weeping, but had

no tears. She wanted to strangle Matthew again. Why did he always produce so many at once? Wasn't one child good enough?

But since she was pregnant, she could give Matthew hell. After all, what was the point of being bloated and miserable if she couldn't take it out on him? At the thought of this, Erica lost her temper. "Get out!" she ordered.

"What's wrong?" he asked innocently.

"The moon's not full tonight.

We're not sleeping in the same bed. No way," she said. "What does the moon have to do with anything?" What he could do? He couldn't change the phase of the moon.

"It is because I say it is. It's your fault it's not full!" she spat.

Matthew was confused, but he knew she was mercurial. There was no arguing with her when she was like this. He could only go downstairs to whip up a bowl of noodles for her. That was probably the best thing for his pregnant wife.

It did make her feel better, though. And he was able to sleep in the same bed with her.

But in the dark of the night, Erica rested an arm and a leg on Matthew.

It was uncomfortable, but it was meant to be. It was just to make sure he was awake for one more of her demands. "Don't wear a blindfold to bed!"

Well, he could only do as she asked.

"Don't close your eyes!" she ordered again.

Well, he opened his eyes and looked at her.

"Don't breathe!"

On the verge of collapse, Matthew still kept his cool. "Don't breathe? Don't be silly! So...how can I make you happy?"

The woman thought for a while

and answered, "Well, um... you could dance for me."

Matthew was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. He walked into the study. He knew the one person who could answer his questions: Sheffield. He picked up the phone and dialed his number.

After riding him for how late it was, Sheffield listened patiently as Matthew described what was going on. After Matthew concluded his tale of woe, Sheffield burst into laughter. "I guess you'll have to figure out what you can do to make her happy. So it's your fault that the moon's not full. It'll probably be your fault when it's cloudy, too.

All you can do is love her, and try to be patient. Now here's what I want you to do..." After hanging up, Matthew thought Sheffield was right. And he started dialing—he had more calls to make.

Erica woke up early. She was ravenous, and not real happy. But when she emerged from the elevator, the sight that greeted her eyes was a treat.

Matthew walked towards her and said affectionately, "Honey, I know you don't feel good because you're pregnant, so I got these flowers for you, because I love you." He gestured behind him, and there was a huge dome of flowers on the table.

In the center of that arrangement, held in bamboo shoots, were some red roses and globe amaranths. "Wow! That's a lot of flowers. How many flowers did you get?" There were so many flowers there was no way she'd be able to hold them all.

"There should be 1,314 flowers on that table. I had them shipped by air. I also got you 48 roses and 32 globe amaranths." The word for 1314 sounds similar to "my whole life." Roses symbolize passionate love, amaranths immortality. 4,832 is approximately how many weeks of life one has from birth to death. But she knew this. "It means I'll love you passionately forever."

The look on her face was a mixture of surprise and happiness. Matthew really wanted to thank Sheffield because it was his idea. 'Maybe I should get him flowers, too,' he thought, smirking.

"Honey! I love you too!" Erica sweetly kissed the man on the cheek.

From that point forward, he made a point of getting her a bouquet of flowers each day. He had to buy more vases and pots for them to go in, but she was worth it. Not only did he get her flowers, but also all kinds of gems. He tried to please his wife by giving her things that all women wanted. Everything he did was simply to make his pregnant wife smile sweetly.

Fortunately, she was just pregnant with twins, not quadruplets. She had a detailed exam and an ultrasound when she was seven months pregnant. And there were just two of them inside her womb, not four.

When she was eight months along, the doctor recommended bed-rest. Matthew left nothing to chance and made sure she obeyed the doctor's instructions.

After she wailed for the umpteenth time that she would never get pregnant again, Matthew tried to mollify her, also for the umpteenth time. "Okay, I feel you. We won't have any more kids."

Leaning against his chest, Erica asked, "Are you busy today?" What she loved the most was that each day, he would come home from work. They could cuddle and talk. Even if they fought, she was still happy.

"No."

She buried him in questions. "So how's business? You used to be super-busy, but not since I got pregnant. In the last 8 months you only went on a business trip. Company's not in trouble, is it? My studio running okay? How did the photos turn out?" She took a deep breath after that, allowing Matthew to get a word in edgewise.

The man patiently answered the woman's series of questions one by one. "Business is booming as usual, and profits are up. I get my employees to go on business trips for me. And yes, your studio is running great. I've got the best photographers filling in for you. All the photos are credited to the photographer 'for EM Studios.' Your job is to rest, and not worry about this."

"Oh! All right! Let me see your phone!"

Matthew took out his phone from his pocket and handed it to the woman. "Here you go, honey."

As long as Erica didn't run away from him, he would give her whatever she wanted.

She unlocked his phone and looked at the screen. The wallpaper was a photo of the six of them. "You never let me look at your phone before. Why now? What's changed? What was on there that you didn't want me to see?" she asked.

"Hmmpf." Matthew didn't deny it.

When she heard this, Erica opened her mouth wide and looked up at the man. "What did you do?" He admitted it!

"There were a lot of your photos on my phone, and I used your photo as the wallpaper. I was also afraid that you would open the Weibo app and find my username." So far, he had nothing to hide from her.

"Really?" Erica asked suspiciously, and then opened his phone album.

The first photo she saw on Matthew's phone was indeed her. It was a photo of her from two days ago. She was fast asleep. Her belly was big, and her hair was a mess. She didn't look good at all. "I'm so ugly in this photo. Delete it," she protested.

Matthew grabbed her hand and said, "Honey, this photo is mine. You can't delete it." She had taken away the glass jar of folded stars and the photo he'd snapped of her so long ago, and refused to give them back to him. Of course he refused flatly.

Erica thought about it a while and decided to let it go. They slept together every day, and he knew how she looked. "Okay, then let go of me. I won't delete it, I swear."

Matthew didn't let go of her hand until he got her promise.

There were about three hundred photos in the album, many of which were of her and the children, and their wedding photos. Of course, most of the photos were of Erica.

The two of them curled up together, scrolling through his gallery. Erica started doing the long blink, and before long, fell asleep in Matthew's arms.

Looking at the sleeping woman, Matthew felt sorry for her.

It was really hard to be a mother. She had to endure the pain of morning sickness at the start of her pregnancy, and then had to carry that weight around every day. Her body was changing and it was out of their control. She had abdominal cramps, leg cramps, and had to go the bathroom all the time.

His hand swept across the woman's big belly, and there was a sudden movement where he touched. Babies often push against the walls of their cage, and these kids were no exception.

Matthew put his hand back on her belly again. There it was again—that strange smaller bulge. He waited a moment and then the bulge returned, in another location. He smiled. His precious daughters were active.

Matthew was addicted to the game. He saw the bulge again, and moved to touch it. It was like some bizarre game of whack-a-mole.

The pregnant woman didn't feel anything and stayed asleep.

After what seemed like forever, the bulges stopped. Maybe the kids were tired and went to sleep themselves.

Matthew got comfortable in the bed and fell asleep himself, his wife in his arms.

However, before long, he was awakened by the sounds of crying.

He opened his eyes and saw his wife's face, streaked with tears.

Matthew moved to hold the woman in his arms. He asked worriedly, "Honey, what's wrong?"

Erica kept crying without saying anything.

Turning on the bedside lamp, Matthew looked at the crying woman and asked, "Are you in pain? Tell

me!"

Erica nodded sadly.

"What's wrong? I'll call the doctor over!"

"My tummy hurts."

Matthew picked up the phone and was about to call the doctor, but before he could unlock it, she put her hand on his. When he looked into the woman's eyes, he heard her say, "I'm just... I didn't have enough food last night, so I woke up hungry. Just get me some food..."

'So... she's crying because she's hungry.'

Wiping the cold sweat from his forehead, Matthew breathed a sigh of relief. He put the phone back on the nightstand and asked, "What do you want to eat? I'll cook it."

"I want some lobster." In her dream, a giant lobster bit her belly and threatened her to eat her children. Erica was so angry she swore to eat the lobster.

Then she woke up.

She wanted lobster, which was easy for Matthew.

Erica liked seafood noodles a lot. That was why Matthew cooked them for her, and kept all kinds of seafood in the fridge.

Matthew called the maid downstairs and asked her to fetch an Australian rock lobster. He would cook it later. Then he put on his pajamas and said to the pregnant woman, "Go back to sleep. I'll call you when it's ready."

Shaking her head, Erica said, "I slept too much already. I'm not sleepy now. Help me downstairs?"

Unable to refuse her request, Matthew lifted her up from the bed and the two entered the elevator together.

At three o'clock in the morning, the villa was brightly lit and buzzing with activity. Two maids helped prep the lobster, and Matthew steamed it.

At four o'clock in the morning, the pregnant woman ate the lobster from her dream like she was hoping.

Afterward her husband carried her upstairs, and she fell fast asleep.