

## Unbreakable 1831

### Chapter 1831

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They were all adults, lying together with their bodies intertwined.  
The attraction was undeniable.  
Yet, Erick held back in the end, suggesting an alternative.  
Confused, Elin heard him ask, "Didn't you get your period?"

It took Elin a moment to understand what he meant. He had mistaken her bleeding for menstrual blood, not realizing it was from the breaking of her hymen.

With just a couple of experiences spaced widely apart, it was understandable for Elin's body to have such a reaction to the sudden closeness with Erick.

Elin managed a wry smile. The notion of a divorced woman like her remain untouched must be absurd to others. In particular, she had married the notorious Dayton.

Dayton had openly bragged about their postures to his friends, boasting of Elin's alleged willingness.

Even post-divorce, Dayton relentlessly tarnished Elin's reputation, declaring she was an undesirable woman.

Dayton went so far as to accuse Elin of masquerading as virtuous, while secretly harboring desires stronger than those of many men.

Whenever Dayton's name came up, Elin's face turned ashen, like brittle paper that might crumble at a touch. She often woke up from nightmares filled with Dayton's visions.

Before Elin could manage to get a divorce, she had endured two years living with Dayton, a man who seemed devilish. The mere mention of Dayton's name unleashed a flood of terrible memories and dreams.

At the thought of Dayton, a wave of discomfort swept over Elin. She got up, poured a glass of water, and tried to steady her nerves.

Unbeknownst to her, Erick was approaching from behind.

"Ah!" Surprised, Elin screamed and the glass slipped from her grip.

Luckily, Erick quickly caught the glass before it hit the floor. He felt the water, frowned, and muttered, "Drinking cold water in the middle of the night, can your body handle that?"

Erick, who had just saved the glass, wished he had advised Elin against drinking cold water during her period.

Erick's reunion with his sister had made him anxious about her well-being, prompting him to learn all he could about women's health.

Indeed, a man could know everything about caring for a woman. It all depended on his willingness and whether he thought she was worth the effort.

Erick poured the cold water and handed Elin a cup of warm water.

"Here, drink this."

Surprised and touched, Elin accepted the cup, murmuring gently, "Thank you."

Once Elin finished drinking, she felt a bit awkward and started making way to her bed, but Erick blocked her way.

Erick placed his hands on the table, drawing her closer, and raised an eyebrow. "You haven't told me about last night yet."

Chapter 1832

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Their close stance could easily give someone the wrong idea that they were a couple. However, Elin knew the reality of her situation. She was merely a casual companion for Erick. Trapped by Erick, Elin was flustered. With nowhere to run, she looked down and stammered, "What... What do you mean?"

Erick gazed at her and asked pointedly, "1008, your door's code. Set it on purpose with my birthday?"

Erick was uncertain about how to confront Elin, feeling slightly frustrated. Their connection would never receive his father's blessing. After all, Elin was merely the daughter of a maid. Even if Elin had never been married before, it still wouldn't be acceptable.

Elin squeezed her palm and responded quietly under his stare, "It's Dayton's birthday."

Erick froze, momentarily taken aback. He couldn't believe he had forgotten that Dayton, the guy he despised, was born on the same day as him.

Initially, their shared birthday had brought them closer than other children of nobility.

But Erick had never anticipated Dayton to be a pervert whose eyes were fixated on Elin, a timid and shy girl. It didn't take long before Dayton proposed to Elin, sparking Erick's jealousy.

Erick admitted to himself that he lacked Dayton's courage. In their world, marriage was a strategic move for advancing family interests, not a matter of personal choice.

Not in Erick's wildest dream did he expect Dayton dared to abuse and torture Elin, the marriage a deliberate move to provide convenience to satisfy his twisted sense of pleasure.

Yet, what truly shocked Erick was Elin's setting the passcode with Dayton's birthday, seemingly a sign of her enduring love despite everything.

Erick's eyes lingered on the old scar on Elin's shoulder, and he asked, "If you loved him so much, why did you run away?"

Feeling his gaze, Elin tensed and hunched her shoulders, betraying her discomfort. Unlike other women, she felt self-conscious about her back, not proud or confident to display it. The scars on her back were the results of Dayton's mistreatment of her.

Elin shook her head, her voice soft. "I don't love him."

A feeling of joy inexplicably stirred inside Erick's heart at her words.

Elin continued, "I've been his wife for two years. I have gotten used to it."

It was similar to the chill that swept over Elin every time she thought of Dayton. She had simply become accustomed to it. In public, she had to act like she adored Dayton, bowing to him and praising him...

Habit was indeed more terrifying than love.

Erick was stunned and didn't expect this. How could Elin have become accustomed to Dayton's

wife?

“Go back to sleep.” Elin gently pushed Erick away and hurried back to her bed. She feared that if she lingered even a second longer, she would not be able to contain her sorrow and her face would betray her despair in front of Erick. She didn’t want his pity.

Erick lingered in the kitchen, lost in thought. When he walked back to the bedroom and saw Elin curled up on one side of the bed, a twinge of pain struck his heart.

The bed was spacious, his own impression from just lying there still visible, yet she had distanced herself so easily.

As the cold wind slipped in, Erick’s thoughts sharpened. Even with his naive understanding of love, he could feel Elin’s detachment. As for their intimacy, she probably acted out of that cursed sense of gratitude.

Elin’s reaction should be seen as a relief, but Erick felt a blockage in his chest, his frustration boiling over. He couldn’t quite pinpoint the cause of his frustration.

After a brief pause, his pride wouldn’t let him stay here any longer.

He quickly dressed, regaining his composed and distant demeanor. He glanced at Elin on the bed, who seemed to be either asleep or feigning sleep. Without a word, he left, closing the door behind him.

The door made a soft rebounding sound.

Elin’s eyes snapped open.

Chapter 1833

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The room was silent as a ghost. Not a single sound stirred the air.

Had it not been for the faint woody fragrance clinging to the pillow slept by Erick, one might think Elin was alone.

Elin turned slowly, spreading her arms and placing her hands in the spot where Erick had lain, her palms gradually meeting. It was almost like she was holding him in an embrace.

As the warmth left her hands, the sadness in her heart started to grow, enveloping her completely. Memories flooded like waves, the past events cold and unyielding Like the sea.

In her youth, Elin knew what it was Like to have a happy life. Her family wasn’t rich, but they were quite comfortable.

Elin’s father held an executive position at a major company, and Elin’s mother, Annis, worked in finance at the same firm. Concerned that she couldn’t look after Elin properly, Annis hired a nanny after Elin was born.

With their income at that time, affording a nanny’s monthly salary was a piece of cake.

But those good times didn’t last. A senior executive at the company began showing interest in Annis, using work as an excuse to harass her. Trapped by their working relationship and authority, Annis endured his advances silently.

Interpreting Annis’ silence as compliance, the executive became more aggressive, eventually luring her to a drinking event to take advantage of her.

Annis desperately fled to the bathroom and called her husband, who rushed to her rescue. He was

unfazed by the executive's high status and determined to defend his wife against any threat. The incident escalated quickly, with Elin's dad dialing the cops. But because there were no cameras around the hotel and the power dynamics were tricky, plus the executive didn't get what he wanted and Annis wasn't seriously hurt, pressing charges was a tough call.

The company's leadership talked with Elin's parents separately, revealing the executive's ties to the chairman. Suggestion of not to make a big issue of the incident without concrete evidence was given, together with the threat that dropping the charge and apologizing to the executive were required, should Elin's parents still wanted their jobs. Only then would the executive not pursue the incident further.

Elin's father was shocked to find they were seen as perpetrators rather than victims. He was adamant about not complying, but Annis, aware of the high stakes, understood that resisting could allow the executive's influence to damage their reputations even beyond the company. Also, the chairman had promised to transfer Annis to avoid running into the executive again.

Annis consented to drop the case but firmly refused to apologize, insisting they had done nothing wrong.

The company had to agree, and that should be the end of it.

But not long after, retaliation from the executive started. The projects under Elin's father's management encountered problems, and then Annis got accused of embezzlement. Things got worse for Elin's father with his supposed slip-up causing a worker's fatal fall.

Following their dismissal, the company made a public statement, leading other companies, both big and small, to avoid hiring Elin's parents.

This led Elin's father into a spiral of depression and nightly drinking. When intoxicated, he would often blame Annis, accusing her of causing his downfall.

Back then, little Elin, barely five, was always afraid her mother would get hurt.

To keep going, Annis swallowed her pride and took up jobs Like washing dishes and cleaning streets.

Worried about leaving Elin at home with her drunken husband, Annis took Elin with her wherever she went.

Young Elin was a well-behaved child, always patiently waiting for her mother.

Later, Elin's father, while drunk, accidentally fell into a river and met his end.

Chapter 1834

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Following his death, Annis discovered he had mortgaged their home for a so-called business venture, but he actually wasted the money on alcohol.

Annis had to sell the house to pay off the debt. The executive, who had previously harassed her, saw an opportunity with Elin's father out of the picture and started pursuing her aggressively.

Desperate, Annis reached out to a wealthy lady she had met before, Casey, who was Raegan's mother.

Upon hearing about Annis' plight, Casey invited Annis and Elin to move abroad with her family and offered Elin a role as a playmate for Raegan.

This marked the beginning of Elin's new life with the Foster family.

The Fosters were a kind family, and Elin and Raegan quickly bonded as playmates.

Elin hoped for lasting happiness, but the mysterious disappearance of Casey and Raegan cast a shadow over the household.

Feeling awkward with the situation since it was Casey who had brought her to the Foster family, Annis expressed her wish to leave, but Mr. Foster convinced her to stay and help with the household.

Appreciating Annis' being efficient and organized, Mr. Foster gave her some chores around the house.

Annis and Elin lived in the servant's quarters, while Erick, devastated by his sister's and mother's disappearance, initially fell into despair.

Scolded by Mr. Foster, Erick eventually gathered himself, committing to his studies and personal development, hoping to find his mother and sister soon.

From a young age, Elin had seen Erick's determined presence all day.

For her, Erick was like an idol. Despite being outstanding in most aspects, he was always gentle, treating her and her mother with great respect.

At that time, Elin didn't realize that Erick only saw her as a sisterly figure.

As Erick grew up, his social responsibilities increased, and he often returned home drunk.

Fortunately, he had a high tolerance for alcohol.

When drunk, he merely slept soundly, never acting abusively.

During these times, Elin would leave a bowl of sobering soup by his bedside.

Erick would wake and smile at Elin, saying, "Little Elin has grown up, even knowing to bring me sobering soup."

Noticing the weariness on Erick's young face, Elin realized how hard he was working to succeed, exerting more effort than most. Hesitantly, she advised, "Mr. Foster, please don't push yourself too hard. I'm sure you will find your sister and your mother."

Erick's eyelids drooped, and he let out a wistful chuckle. "I hope so."

Seeing his downcast look, young Elin felt a sharp pang of empathy for the first time. She suddenly wanted to smooth out the furrows of worry that marred Erick's youthful face. Yet, she hesitated to reach out.

After a pause, Elin said with determination, "Mr. Foster, I will also work hard."

Erick rubbed his temples with graceful fingers and offered a smile.

"Do you have any dreams you wish to pursue?"

Chapter 1835

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"My dream is you, Mr. Foster!" Elin confessed boldly.

Erick paused, taken aback. "Me?"

Elin's boldness faded, and she looked down and murmured, "I just want to see you happy, Mr. Foster. I want to be capable, to help you find your sister and your mother."

The room was bathed in a gentle glow from the soft light cast over Elin's delicate face.

For the first time in these days, Erick had flashed a bright smile.

He sat up, met her gaze, and affectionately tousled her hair, saying gently, "Little Elin, you've really grown up. But remember to study hard, follow your dreams, live your life for yourself, and don't carry burdens for others, okay?"

Elin somewhat understood his words. In the dim light, Erick's handsome features and soothing voice stirred her heart deeply, making her grasp what it meant to be smitten. Erick leaned back, his voice laden with weariness. "Go back and get some rest, or you won't grow tall."

Elin nodded and left the room, but not without a backward glance.

Erick's shirt was unbuttoned, and the collar was loose, showing a bit of his delicate collarbone. Regardless of his pose, he was undeniably attractive.

Elin realized her admiration for Erick may have evolved into something deeper. Her feelings began to shift toward something more yearning. Despite knowing it was impossible, she couldn't stop herself from daydreaming their future.

Then, one day, Elin's paper stars tucked in a book slipped out, and Annis found them.

Shocked by the contents, Annis confronted Elin, leading to their first serious argument, during which she impulsively slapped Elin.

Annis regretted her reaction, yet her overwhelming feelings were one of heartache.

Crouching down, Annis pointed at Elin's notes filled with affectionate words and said, "Elin, we must live with integrity and gratitude. Mrs. Foster welcomed us generously. Mr. Foster funds your education. You must not entertain unsuitable thoughts about Mr. Erick Foster, do you understand?"

With a swollen face and indignation, Elin exclaimed, "Why not? I just like him! What's wrong with that?"

Annis, overwhelmed with frustration, gasped, "Do you want people to accuse us of having hidden agendas all along? What is our social standing, and what is Mr. Erick Foster's? Do you think you are worthy?"

Elin was stunned and at a loss for words. Mr. Foster's kindness had made her overlook the vast social divide between her family and the Foster family.

Annis ripped the notes into tiny pieces, crushing Elin's hopes. She said firmly, each word heavy with intent, "Mrs. Foster and Mr. Foster have shown us great kindness. We must never betray their trust!"

Elin burst into tears and ran out of the room. Just as she stepped outside, she overheard the driver saying that Erick had gotten drunk and hurt at a bar.

Worried, Elin pleaded with the driver to take her to the bar.

Seeing that Elin got along with Erick, the driver saw no harm in it and agreed.

At the bar, the driver told Elin to wait in the car while he went in, but time passed and he did not return.

Concerned, Elin left the car and entered the bar to look for Erick.

Chapter 1836

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When Elin stepped in, the loud music hit her ears hard. Since she'd never been to a bar before, the thick smoke made it tough to keep her eyes open.

Elin had only taken a few steps when a man with dreadlocks blocked her and said, "Little girl, are you here all by yourself?"

Elin tried to walk away, but he persisted. "Don't leave, little girl," he said, scrutinizing Elin's schoolgirl outfit, which, although out of place, highlighted her innocent beauty.

"Is this your first visit? Let me show you how to enjoy yourself," he offered, trying to put his arm around her shoulders.

Elin started to run away, and the man with dreadlocks chased after her for a long while.

Elin hid in an empty chamber, Luckily escaping further pursuit. She noted the room's decoration, which reminded her of the business gathering photos Erick often sent her.

This chamber looked similar to those in Erick's photos, and she began to check each chamber through the gaps.

Finally, in a chamber, Elin found Erick sprawled on a couch. She rushed in and saw that his forehead was bleeding, confirming that he had indeed been involved in a fight.

Elin, with her heart racing, stepped forward and grasped Erick's hand.

"Mr. Foster, what's wrong with..."

Before Elin could complete her words, Erick's eyes flew open, revealing bloodshot, veined eyes that gave him a terrifying appearance, clearly altered by alcohol.

Elin recoiled in shock and softly said, "Mr. Foster..."

Suddenly, Erick pulled Elin close, and his warm lips met hers, kissing her.

Elin's eyes widened, completely unable to react. At eighteen, she never even held a boy's hand, let alone shared a kiss.

Yet, despite her innocence, Elin was aware that Erick was intoxicated.

His behavior probably wasn't all his own. Alcohol likely played a part.

Recalling her mother's words, Elin quickly tried to push him away, her words muffled against his mouth. "Mr. Foster, see me clearly..."

Erick eased his hold slightly, his frown deepening as he peered at her. "Little Elin?"

Caught in his tight hug, Elin nodded quickly and said, "Let's go home, Mr. Foster."

Erick, not fully conscious, pinched Elin's chin, his voice softer and less rational than usual. "Help me..."

Those words detonated like a bomb in Elin's mind. This soft and gentle side of him was new to her. Bitterly acknowledging their gap, she didn't dare to imagine him being this tender.

Erick's lips drew near once more, gently sucking on Elin's soft earlobe, shifting the atmosphere in an instant.

Elin blushed, her eyes unfocused, unable to refuse. Because it was Erick, the man she had a crush on, she felt compelled to accept whatever came next.

The following process weren't as nice. Erick hurriedly kissed Elin, entering her urgently. He seemed off since his body was unbearably hot as if he were a piece of glowing metal.

Chapter 1837

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At that instant, Elin cried out in pain.

As they continued, it was clear Erick was oblivious to Elin's discomfort, merely seeking a means to vent his needs.

Once it was over, Elin collapsed into Erick's arms, overcome by the pain.

When she woke up later, Elin shifted her sore body, accidentally rousing Erick.

Erick appeared confused at first as if he couldn't grasp what had happened.

Elin straightened her top and sat up slowly. Then, she called out hesitantly, "Mr. Foster..."

Erick scrunched his eyebrows together, pressing a hand against his forehead as he rubbed it, clearly suffering from a hangover. Once he saw who was with him, his face quickly turned stern, and he asked in a cold tone, "Why is it you?"

As words spilled from Erick's lips, Elin noticed a trace of agitation on his rugged face.

"Does he find me bothersome?" Elin muttered to herself and found it hard to express the turmoil inside her, though "blindsiding" seemed to fit.

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Erick was still on the far side of the sofa, his mind seized by shock. The scene before him had left him unable to think clearly.

Elin, the girl he had watched grow up, whom he had always loved like a sister, now lay beside him, without clothes. The shock hit him hard, leaving him dazed.

His voice turned cold. "How did you end up here?"

Elin's fingers trembled, surprised by the chilly detachment in his voice. "I heard you were hurt..."

Her voice faded away, lost in the silence.

Erick's expression became a mask of displeasure as he listened to her.

His tone was forceful and almost harsh. "Are you out of your mind? Do you think you can just waltz into a bar like this?"

This marked the first time Erick had spoken to Elin with such severity, his words sliced through the air sharply.

Elin, still shaken from a fiery dispute with her mother, had escaped, only to face a disastrous first sexual experience. Now, she was grappling with this stern rebuke. Her heart twisted in agony, sour like a lemon soaked in acid.

Erick's expression was cold, pressing down on Elin heavily. Feeling wronged yet holding back her tears, she lowered her head and apologized. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have come..."

Erick's anger flared as he saw the hickeys on Elin's delicate neck.

Lucky for her to have slept with him. What dangers might have awaited her had she encountered a complete stranger? However, meeting him might not have been the best outcome for her.

While Erick was adept at navigating interpersonal relationships, matters of the heart remained foreign to him. Confused by his feelings, he only recognized the scorching anger burning inside him.

Elin's rash actions to come for him in a bar had sparked his anger like a lit fuse.

Erick had unwittingly become a pawn in a sinister plot, disoriented and vulnerable from a spiked drink.

A business partner had set up a honey trap by sending a woman to seduce Erick while he was

intoxicated. The thought of spending an intimate night with a stranger repelled Erick. Seeking refuge, he retreated to the safety of a chamber.

Chapter 1838

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Yet, the inner fire became increasingly difficult to contain. When Erick tried to get up and grab his phone, he bumped into the table and struck his head. Upon finding his phone, he quickly called his driver to pick him up. Elin's tagging along was beyond his expectation. This incident could have been avoided, and Erick had no time to deal with these complications now. Furthermore, a bar was not an appropriate place for a young and naive girl like Elin. It was a breeding ground for danger, a crossroad of temptation and risk. In her innocent school uniform, Elin stood out starkly among the provocatively dressed women, becoming an easy target for unwanted attention, or worse.

A shadow fell over Erick's face at these possibilities. He icily said to Elin, "None of my affairs are any of your concern. It's obvious you don't understand your place. Have I been too lenient with you?"

Erick's words were intended as a caution, a warning to make Elin aware of the dangers that lurked in places like this. However, when they reached Elin's ears, they transformed into sharp blades, shattering her heart and leaving her wounded and resentful.

Elin's gaze smoldered as she clenched her fists, holding back the tears that threatened to overflow. She knew that showing tears now would only attract more scorn.

The confidence Elin had meticulously built over the years crumbled under Erick's scorn. She fell into a pit of self-doubt, unable to meet Erick's gaze since that fateful day.

Erick, a man typically reserved and controlled, rarely showed such bursts of temper. He abruptly ended his call with the driver, then stood and tossed a suit carelessly onto the sofa, signaling for Elin to put it on.

This gesture was merely a condescending act of charity, a clear indication that he viewed her presence as an unwelcome inconvenience.

Elin draped the suit over herself, a dismal attempt at preserving some dignity. Despite the situation, she could not risk being seen in public in her current attire. Her mother's voice haunted her, scolding her for not recognizing her place and for chasing impossible dreams. Just as Erick had pointed out, she was not even supposed to concern herself with someone of his stature.

Coming from vastly different worlds, Erick was the heir to the prestigious Foster family, and Elin was merely a maid's daughter. It was inappropriate for her to mistake Erick's kindness as an invitation to care for him, much less to develop feelings for him.

Erick's harsh words abruptly snapped Elin out of her daydream. Indeed, she needed to understand her position. Who was she, anyway? Just the daughter of a maid, confined to the servants' quarters of the Foster estate. That was her reality.

As Erick's eyes shifted, he saw Elin standing there. Her head was bowed, her body seeming to have lost all its energy. The oversized suit hung loosely, almost reaching her knees, making her look like a ghost, vulnerable to being whisked away by the slightest breeze.

Elin's usually bright eyes were now dim and lifeless, like stars smothered by the cold grip of despair. Her pale complexion made her look almost ethereal, as if she might faint at any moment. A pang of guilt struck Erick when he realized his words might have been too harsh. Elin was only eighteen, probably even more lost than he was in the complex dance of relationships. He carefully chose his next words. "Tonight's matter..."

"It's fine," Elin whispered softly, barely audible. "I'm fine. Don't worry about it. I won't say anything to anyone."

Erick found himself momentarily speechless, his eyes locked with hers, both filled with unvoiced thoughts.

Thinking Erick doubted her, Elin quickly pledged her silence. "I swear I'll keep this secret... I..."

Elin's gaze drifted to a mirror, reflecting Erick's imposing figure.

His features were striking, his presence almost otherworldly. Her voice trailed off to a whisper. "I know my place."

Though it seemed everything was settled easily, Erick felt more irritated than relieved. A nagging thought bothered him that things shouldn't have ended this way.

Erick leaned forward, about to speak, when Elin, like a bird startled into flight, quickly backed away and rushed out the door. Her departure looked more like an escape than a mere exit.

As Elin raced through the door, she collided with the driver, who had just arrived. His worry eased a bit when he saw her. "Thank goodness you're here! I've been worried sick. I couldn't find you anywhere!" he exclaimed, his voice filled with relief.

The driver had served the Foster family for years and had grown close to Annis. Elin, a model child, had always had a special place in his heart, and over time, he had come to adore Elin as if she were his own daughter.

Chapter 1839

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Confronted by the driver's concerned look, Elin quickly adjusted her clothes, worried he might spot something wrong. Her voice was raspy as she apologized, "I'm sorry to worry you."

The driver tenderly stroked Elin's head and asked with genuine concern, "What happened? Why are your eyes red and puffy?"

Before Elin could respond, Erick came over, frowning when he saw her still standing in the cold wind. "Why aren't you in the car?"

Elin looked down and answered softly, "I was waiting for you to get in first, sir."

Erick was taken aback by her sudden shift in demeanor, leaving him momentarily speechless. He then walked over to the car.

After Erick got inside, Elin went to the passenger door and had just opened it when she heard his stern command. "Get in the back."

Her hands trembling slightly, Elin slid into the backseat, trying to make herself as small as possible. A sharp pain down there gripped her, causing her to curl up.

“Are you still feeling unwell?” Erick asked, his concern evident as he reached out to check her forehead.

At his touch, Elin instinctively flinched away, pressing herself against the car window to put distance between them.

Erick’s hand froze in midair, his fingers tightening.

Elin’s face showed no emotion, her voice steady and reassuring as she said, “I’m fine.”

Elin’s calm demeanor convinced Erick to drop his concern and focus on other matters. His priority was to deal with the aftermath of the bar incident. He was determined to find the person responsible for drugging him.

The car sped down the road, moving quickly and quietly, the silence within almost palpable.

Maybe it was the relentless ache of his headache or the remnants of his hangover, but Erick leaned back and closed his eyes, seemingly drifting off to sleep.

Elin tried to make herself smaller, hiding within the large folds of Erick’s suit and even muffling her breaths.

As they drove past a pharmacy, Erick’s sharp command cut through the silence. “Please pull over.”

“What do you need? I’ll go get it,” the driver offered promptly.

Erick glanced at Elin before responding, “I’ll get it myself.” He then exited the car and disappeared into the pharmacy, reappearing moments later with a bag in hand.

Upon arriving at the Foster estate, Elin quickly got out of the car, eager to leave the cramped space.

But before she could walk away, Erick’s voice halted her. “Elin, wait.” He held out the pharmacy bag to her. “Here, don’t forget to take these.”

Elin looked at the bag, seeing the emergency contraceptive pills within. She gripped it tightly, whispering, “I will.”

Erick paused, hesitating before he spoke again. “About tonight, it was unexpected, and the blame falls solely on me for failing to control myself. If there has been any harm to your body, please let me know.”

As Erick spoke with a hint of tenderness, Elin, who had been holding back her tears throughout the ride, could no longer restrain them.

Erick sighed, looking down. “Earlier, I was worried sick about you going to a bar alone. That’s why I was so harsh. I apologize. Please don’t take my harsh words to heart,” he pleaded.

He paused before adding, “And... I’m not in the right mindset for relationships right now. If you’re hoping for some kind of commitment from me, I’m afraid I can’t offer that.”

Chapter 1840

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Erick knew his words reeked of selfishness. He hadn’t come to terms with the evening’s events yet, let alone expected Elin to understand.

He cared deeply for her, having seen her grow up. The thought of her emotional pain troubled him. With genuine concern, he offered, “Elin, if there’s any way I can make amends, anything you wish for, I’ll do everything in my power to fulfill it.”

Erick knew he couldn’t commit to a serious relationship or marriage until he resolved his own

family issues. This promise to fulfill Elin's wishes was the best he could do.

Erick's eyes lingered on Elin's youthful, innocent features. A wave of shame washed over him, realizing he could only offer her the stark truth. "If you're still upset, I can talk to Annis, try to make

things right with her..."

"No!" Elin interrupted sharply, her voice filled with distress.

"Don't tell my mom!"

Seeing that Elin had finally broken her silence, Erick's expression softened. "Think about it. Let me know what you decide, and I will honor it," he said gently.

Elin had never expected an apology or an explanation, let alone compensation. Accepting any form of reparation would only reinforce the idea that she was manipulative and reduce their intimate moment to a mere transaction. To Erick, she might have been just a passing chapter in his life, but to her, it was the surrender of her first love. She harbored no regrets.

Her voice was a faint whisper as she spoke. "I don't need any compensation. Let's just pretend this never happened. You got nothing to worry about."

Erick's irritation flared at Elin's poised acceptance and her seeming indifference to giving up such a significant first experience.

Grasping her shoulder firmly, he emphasized each word. "Know this, even for me, mistreating you is forbidden."

Retreating to her room, Elin sank into the comforting warmth of her bath. Erick's parting words echoed in her mind, a persistent reminder:

"Know this, even for me, mistreating you is forbidden."

Elin understood Erick's harsh outburst might have stemmed from genuine concern for her. Yet, once spoken, words could carve deep impressions, indelibly marking the heart. Memories of the hurt would resurface uninvited, carrying a residual sting of sadness. It was impossible for her to remain untouched by them.

In the following days, Elin deliberately avoided Erick, and it seemed he reciprocated, as their paths hadn't crossed.

One afternoon after school, Landen called Elin to his study.

Entering respectfully, Elin asked softly, "May I ask what you need of me?"

Landen looked up with a kind expression and inquired, "You're turning 18 this year, correct?"

Elin nodded.

Landen then asked, "I've heard you're interested in pursuing design in college?"

"Yes, sir," Elin responded.

"Have you considered Uchaesau? Sterling University College of Creative Design has an excellent reputation."

Elin was surprised by his suggestion. Uchaesau was far from Swynborough, and she had planned to apply to a renowned local design academy, which would allow her to stay close to her mother.

"I've been planning on applying to the design academy here in town,"