

I Married a Beautiful Boss After the Breakup Chapter 1 - 10

Chapter 1

“David, I-I want to talk to you about raising my salary.”

Eric Johnson stood nervously in the general manager’s office.

David Westman, playing games on his gaming computer, looked up.

David leaned back into his big, sturdy office chair, looking at Eric with a smirk. “Oh, Eric, why did you suddenly bring this up?”

Eric bit his lips and clenched his fists. “David, I’ve been with the company for almost eight years, starting as an intern right after I graduated. My peers, who joined the company simultaneously, have become part of the management team while I’m still stuck in a technical position. You are fully aware of my current situation. My mother just had surgery and requires chemotherapy. Every week—”

David raised his hand and interjected, “Eric, let’s not bring in personal issues when discussing work here.”

Eric lowered his head upon hearing David’s words. His cheeks turned red.

He had been working diligently in this tech company for eight years since graduation. His technical skills and experience were top-notch within the industry.

Despite having a girlfriend and approaching his 30s, they were still not married because he could not afford a car and a house.

With a meager monthly salary of \$1,200, owning a car and a house in Salt City was impossible. As such, he was forced to ask for a raise.

It was time for Eric to start a family. Moreover, his family was struggling financially because of the hefty medical costs, and Eric's father, Blake Johnson, had to work three jobs just to make ends meet. After all, money makes the world go around.

The corner of David's mouth curled into a smile, seeing that Eric remained silent. Then he brought out a set of documents and tossed them on the desk.

"Eric, this is the layoff list for this month. Unfortunately, you're first in line. Take a good look at the papers and sign them if there aren't any issues. The company will compensate you accordingly."

"W-What?" Eric was utterly shocked. He felt his world was about to collapse. "David, why me?"

David smiled and said, "Simply because somebody is willing to take your place for less than \$1,000."

"T-That's impossible!" Eric looked up. "How is it possible to survive in Salt City with less than \$1,000?"

Salt City might not be a metropolis like Great City or Magic City, but it was still a capital city. It was impossible for someone to lower their salary to that extent.

"I'm telling the truth." David was running out of patience. "Sign the papers and beat it, or take a \$150 pay cut and stay. The choice is yours."

Eric felt a hard stab in his heart as he stared intently at David.

"I-I'll take the pay cut..." said Eric.

David stood up with a big smile and patted Eric on the shoulder.

“Attaboy! Eric, please don’t blame me. Times are tough for everyone. Your family needs money, and I’m already very understanding about letting you take a \$150 pay cut. Keep up the good work. The company will not mistreat any of its employees! You are staying. You have my word for it.” David smiled and tore the layoff list in half.

Eric heaved a sigh of relief, looking at the torn papers on the office floor. He had completely forgotten why he had come today.

“Alright. You may head over to the Human Resources department and report that you are willing to take a pay cut.”

David took a few tissues, indicating he was going to the restroom.

David suddenly remembered something on his way out and cursed, “Eric, I remember you are a computer expert, aren’t you? Please scan my computer for viruses and take care of it. I spent \$75,000 on this gaming computer, and it lagged while I was playing poker. D*mn those unscrupulous gaming merchants!”

Eric was left standing alone, lost in his thoughts. He fully regretted coming to ask for a raise.

Like a soulless body, Eric sat helplessly in front of David’s desk and stared blankly at the \$75,000 gaming computer.

The gaming computer was worth half a house in Salt City, and David often boasted about it.

Alas, that idiot who knew nothing about computers often browsed questionable websites. As such, even a supercomputer would get infected with viruses.

It was sad that some people would spend a fortune on computers to show off while others struggled to make ends meet. Unfortunately, that was the reality of the world they lived in.

Eric sighed heavily as he scanned the computer for viruses. At the same time, he was thinking about how to deal with his girlfriend.

She would be dismayed to find out that Eric had been forced to take a pay cut instead of getting a raise.

They were classmates in college and had been in a relationship for a decade.

Eric's girlfriend had issued an ultimatum a few days ago that it would be over for them if they did not get married soon.

The troubled Eric was not in the mood to scan the computer for viruses. He scrolled mindlessly through the computer and accidentally clicked on David's WhatsApp app.

The WhatsApp notification rang all of a sudden, and Eric was startled to see the profile picture of his girlfriend, Jasmine Pearce, pop up.

Eric was shocked. How did Jasmine get David's contact number?

Trembling, Eric clicked on the WhatsApp pop-up, and a disturbing photo was revealed before his eyes. He felt like the sky was crumbling down on him.

Jasmine: [Babe, I've sent you the sexy photo you wanted. Promise me to buy me that bag tonight!]

The woman in the photo was dressed revealingly and posing seductively.

David: [Despicable woman! I'm bored of seeing these kinds of photos.] David's reply appeared in the chat box.

Shortly afterward, another photo and a voice message appeared.

Eric's blood boiled. He could not believe what he had just witnessed and heard.

How could his pure and lovely girlfriend stoop so low in front of David!?

The chatting continued.

David: [Hahaha! B*tch! You look exactly just like your boyfriend, Eric. He was in my office earlier.]

Jasmine: [Babe! Why did you bring him up! I'm breaking up with that loser today so we can get together.]

David: [No way! It feels good to cheat with my employee's girlfriend and make him work his *ss off for me. Hahaha...]

Bang!

Eric slammed his fist into the computer screen.

He bit his lips hard as he could not believe the person his girlfriend had become.

Since when did David and Jasmine cross paths?

A train of memories flashed across Eric's mind, and he remembered bringing Jasmine with him to the company's dinner half a year ago.

'So, David and Jasmine must have met during that time!'

Eric wanted to stab the two of them to death so badly after the revelation of their six-month-long infidelity.

His eyes scanned the room, and he saw a sharp knife on the desk. It was the paper knife David used to open his envelopes, the perfect tool to kill.

Eric grabbed the paper knife and stomped out of the room, prepared to get his sweet revenge.

Suddenly, Eric's phone rang, and he snapped him out of his state of madness.

Eric's mother was calling from home.

"Mom, what is it? Did something happen?"

"Eric!" Mrs. Johnson cried out in distress. "Your father has been struck by a car while on his way to work! He's covered in blood, and the driver has fled the scene..."

"What!?" Eric was shocked and nearly fainted on the spot.

"Eric, calm down. A good Samaritan sent your father to the hospital. The doctor said that his surgery costs \$15,000. You need to come up with the money quickly or else..."

Eric's mind went blank at that moment.

He was at his wit's end as he did not have any savings. The \$450 he sent home every month was all he had.

"Eric, you have to think of a solution. I tried asking for help from our relatives, but none of them are willing to fork out money anymore. I'm so useless... I'm just a burden to you and your father..."

Eric's heart wrenched as his mother cried over the phone.

“Mom, that's nonsense! I'll come up with the money. Just make sure Dad gets his surgery fast!”

Eric hung up the phone. He could barely grip the paper knife, and it slipped off his fingers and fell on the desk.

He covered his face in agony and questioned God about his predicament.

“Heavens! Eric, what did you do to my computer!?” David had returned from the restroom. He was furious to see his computer screen shattered.

David grabbed Eric by his collar. “I spent nearly 100 grand on this, and you ruined it?”

Eric instinctively tried to grab the paper knife on the desk as he remembered that his girlfriend was cheating on him with David.

However, he was desperate to save his father, even if he had to put his life on the line.

Thus, Eric lowered his head. “David... I'm sorry about it! I need \$15,000 urgently. Could you please lend me the money! Please!”

David was taken aback by Eric's sudden request to borrow money from him, and he burst into laughter.

“Are you crazy? You just wrecked my computer and want to borrow money from me now? Do you know how much this computer costs? It's \$75,000! That's worth half a house in Salt City!” David shook Eric vigorously. “You punk! I demand you to compensate me fully or rot in prison for the rest of your life!”

Eric gnashed his teeth and barked, “David Westman!”

David was stunned.

“I know you’ve been messing around with my girlfriend! I won’t hold it against you if you lend me \$15,000. Otherwise...”

A hint of madness flashed through Eric’s eyes.

David was shocked upon hearing Eric’s words. He instinctively glanced at his computer screen and realized the WhatsApp conversation between him and Jasmine was on display.

David burst out into laughter.

“How dare you threaten me, you punk? Do you think I’m a pushover!?”

David grabbed Eric by the collar and punched him in the cheek.

Eric was caught off guard and fell backward. He instinctively stretched out his hand to grab something to steady his footing and, unfortunately, touched the shattered computer screen.

Buzz!

A deafening roar of machinery echoed in his ears, and Eric felt a paralyzing sensation spread throughout his body before losing consciousness.

Chapter 2

Eric regained his senses in the hospital and was confused upon seeing the unfamiliar surroundings.

“Eric, you’re finally awake!”

When a man noticed Eric had regained consciousness, he sprung to his feet hastily. He was none other than one of Eric's colleagues, Andy Bikman.

Eric looked at Andy and asked, "What happened?"

"You're really fortunate to be alive. You got electrocuted in David's office and almost died!" Andy blurted.

Eric was stunned. He finally recalled what had happened previously.

He had threatened David, but the latter caught him off guard and punched him.

Andy glanced at Eric and said, "I'll return to the office now that you are awake. Listen to me, Eric. Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater."

Then Andy left the ward.

Eric had no time to figure out what Andy's words meant because he needed to rush to the hospital where his parents were.

When Eric arrived, the red light of the operating theater was still on. Eric's mother and a woman in her 30s were waiting anxiously outside the operating theater. The latter was none other than his elder sister, Elly Johnson.

"Mom! Elly!"

Looking at the red light, Eric grew anxious as well.

Tears began trickling down Mrs. Johnson's cheeks when she saw Eric had arrived.

"Eric, we're sorry to be a burden to you!"

"Mom, that's nonsense. How is Dad's condition?" asked Eric.

Mrs. Johnson wiped off the tears on her cheeks and replied, “The doctors are trying their best to save him. They were willing to carry out the surgery after Elly came up with \$1,500. However...”

Eric gnashed his teeth and said, “Mom, don’t worry about the bill. Please, take good care of yourself instead.”

As Eric finished speaking, his gaze shifted toward Elly, and a glimmer of gratitude shimmered in his eyes. He knew times were also difficult for Elly, and the \$1,500 was all she had.

The surgery would take some time, so Eric headed to the staircase and brought out his phone. He scrolled through the list of numbers in his phone before making a call.

Eric squeezed a smile on his face. “Hey buddy, it’s me, Eric.”

However, the person laughed when Eric said he needed to borrow some money. Eric knew he was rejected immediately and hung up hastily after a few words.

Eric made a few more calls to his friends, only to be rejected repeatedly.

After scrolling through his contact list for a while, he stumbled across an unfamiliar number.

Sylvia Williams was his classmate back in high school. They had exchanged numbers during their previous class reunion gathering.

Sylvia was cold and aloof, but Eric remembered her family was loaded.

Eric desperately needed money for his father’s medical bill, so he gnashed his teeth and called Sylvia’s number.

The call went through and rang for a moment before a cold voice sounded. “Hello, who is it?”

Eric took a deep breath and said, “Is this Sylvia?”

“It’s Sylvia speaking. May I know who’s on the line?”

“It’s me, Eric Johnson...”

Eric remained silent. He was not certain if Sylvia would remember him.

“Eric Johnson? From high school? What’s up?” asked Sylvia.

Eric pressed his lips and said, “I-I know this is abrupt, but I urgently need money for an emergency. C-Could you lend me some money, please?”

Eric braced himself for yet another rejection. He knew that he and Sylvia hadn’t been close in the past, so it was only natural for her to turn down his request.

A few moments of silence later, Sylvia’s voice sounded again. “How much do you need?”

Eric was ecstatic and filled with great hope.

“\$15,000!” Eric replied hastily.

“Alright. I remember you living in Salt City, am I right? Come meet me at the Williams Corporation Tower.”

Sylvia hung up before Eric could even respond.

Despite this, Eric could hardly contain himself. \$15,000 was a large sum for Eric. He had been living a frugal life in order to save a little, but all his money had been spent on Jasmine.

As such, Eric could not even fork out \$1,500, let alone \$15,000, for his father's medical bills. Thus, Sylvia was his life-saver.

Eric returned to the entrance of the operating theater, bade farewell to Mrs. Johnson and Elly, and headed over to the Williams Corporation Tower in a hurry.

Williams Corp. was one of the best corporations in Salt City, on par with Sonex Corp. Eric had submitted his resume to the two corporations in the past but had not received a response from them.

It was only natural for such corporations to hold high standards and recruit only the elite. As such, a graduate from a local university like Eric could only dream of joining such corporations.

Eric's eyes were filled with envy when he looked at the lofty Williams Corporation Tower.

A local university graduate like Eric was common in the city at this time and era. As such, it was only a matter of time before a fresh graduate replaced Eric.

Sylvia excelled academically during high school, so it was no surprise that she worked for Williams Corp.

Shortly afterward, a tall, slender woman in high heels emerged from the Williams Corporation Tower.

Eric could feel a chilling sensation even from a distance, which grew more intense as Sylvia approached him.

Sylvia called out, "Eric?"

Her voice was melodious, as if God had meticulously tuned it.

Eric nodded and said, “Sylvia, I—”

Before he could finish his sentence, Sylvia raised her hand and interrupted him. “A man would never ask a woman for money unless he is in a desperate situation. I can lend you the money, but I have a favor to ask in return.”

“What is it?” asked Eric.

He couldn’t care less as long as she was willing to lend him \$15,000.

Sylvia glanced at Eric and said, “Are you married?”

Eric was startled. Was his marital status that important in this matter?

“I’m not married. But I do have a girlfriend who’s about to break up with me,” Eric said truthfully.

“That’s great,” replied Sylvia.

At the same time, she took a set of documents out of her briefcase and added, “That means I won’t be called a relationship wrecker since the both of you are breaking up. Take a look at the contract. The \$15,000 is yours if you agree to the contract.”

Eric was curious to know what sort of favor Sylvia was asking for and was shocked upon receiving and skimming through the contract she handed to him.

It was a marriage agreement—Sylvia wanted to marry him!

Eric did not know that a marriage agreement existed.

The agreement clearly stated that they would be legally married for three years, omitting the responsibilities of husband and wife. After the divorce, Eric would receive a substantial amount from the divorce settlement.

It was impossible for Eric to earn such a huge fortune for the rest of his life.

However, Eric was filled with doubts.

According to the contract, it was evident that Sylvia was wealthy. It would be impossible for a beauty like her not to find a partner. As such, why did she choose Eric?

After many years of working experience, Eric knew this was too good to be true. However, after recalling the rejections he had faced earlier, he gnashed his teeth and agreed. "I'll take the offer."

Eric was left with no choice and needed the money urgently.

Sylvia glanced at her watch and said, "Meet me at the town hall with your marriage registration permit an hour later. I'm very busy, so please be punctual."

Eric stood and stared blankly at Sylvia's delicate figure as she walked away.

He could hardly recover his senses, even after an hour.

After Sylvia left, Eric received a notification indicating \$15,000 had been transferred to his bank account. On top of that, he had a marriage certificate and a set of keys to a house in the Rosewood Estate in his hands.

Chapter 3

Eric had dreamed of buying a house in the Rosewood Estate after graduating. However, it would be impossible for him to buy a house in his lifetime while working for David. Needless to say, he did not expect his initial dream to be realized in such a way.

Before leaving, Sylvia had informed Eric that he must spend the night at the Rosewood Estate unless he had something urgent to attend to.

Eric felt hopeless but quickly came to terms upon thinking about the large sum of money he would receive as a divorce settlement three years later.

After recollecting his thoughts, Eric hailed a taxi and returned to the hospital. He let out a huge sigh of relief after depositing the remaining \$13,500 into the hospital account. The heavy burden in his heart was finally lifted.

Mrs. Johnson and Elly were still waiting anxiously outside the operating theater. The two of them approached Eric instantly as he came through the doors. Before they could exchange words, Eric's phone rang.

Looking at the incoming call, Eric furrowed his brows and put away his phone after rejecting the call.

"Mom, Elly, Dad's surgical bill—"

His phone rang once again before he could finish his sentence.

"Eric, the call seems important. Why don't you answer it since Dad is still in the operation theater?" Elly suggested.

Eric shook his head, put away his phone again, and continued. "Mom, Elly—"

His phone rang again.

Eric answered the call impatiently, "What is it?"

It was his girlfriend, Jasmine.

Jasmine seemed not to discern Eric's tone and said, "Eric, I was at the mall and found a dress I really like. It's only \$300. Please transfer the money to me so I can buy it."

Eric was fuming upon hearing her request.

The audacity she had to ask him for money after she had stooped so low to flatter that good-for-nothing David! What a shameless woman!

"I don't have the money!" Eric hung up right away.

“It’s Jasmine?” asked Elly.

Eric nodded silently. He felt embarrassed even thinking about the matter.

Elly added, “Another conflict? Jasmine is still young, so it’s only normal for her to spend more. Dad is still in the operating theater. Why don’t you—”

Eric interrupted his sister. “Elly, I got this. We’ve been together for a while now, and I believe I treated her well. But every time she calls me now, it’s always about money. There are some issues that are inconvenient for me to explain to you for now. I’m breaking up with her after Dad is out of danger.”

Eric pressed his lips together and remained silent after saying that.

His father was still fighting for his life on the operating table, yet Jasmine was treating Eric like a cash dispenser.

However, just when Eric was hoping for a moment of peace, his phone rang again.

Eric took a deep breath, trying to suppress his anger, and answered his phone.

Jasmine asked, “Eric, you’re not in the office? Where are you? I’ll go meet you.”

Eric sneered. Jasmine must have contacted David and found out he was not in the office. Moreover, since Andy had helped him apply for leave, David must have informed Jasmine that he was also in the hospital.

After contemplating, Eric replied, “I’m in the hospital. You may come over.”

Eric wanted to see how shameless she could be.

The red light outside the operating theater was still on when Jasmine arrived. She came over in high heels, ignoring Eric’s mother and Elly as she walked straight to Eric.

“Eric, the dress I like is very pretty. My bestie laughed at me when I couldn’t pay for the dress. Do you know how embarrassed I was?” Jasmine felt something was amiss as she spoke.

In the past, Eric would always smile warmly at her, even when she vented her frustration at him.

However, Eric was looking at her with scorn on his face now.

“Are you done talking?” Eric said indifferently. “I wouldn’t have the face to show up if I were you, Jasmine. You really are shameless for showing up here and asking for money. My mom and Elly are here, and you totally ignore them. Fine, I won’t hold it against you. However, if I were you, I wouldn’t show up here asking for money. I’d go to David instead!”

Jasmine was utterly shocked, unable to fully comprehend what she had just heard.

Had he found out she was cheating on him with David? But how?

Jasmine would never allow Eric to go through her phone, and David had promised to keep that a secret.

“You...” Tears began to well up in her eyes. “Eric! You’re suspecting me of cheating on you with David!? I barely even know him! I’ve only met him once!”

Jasmine gnashed her teeth, her whole body trembling uncontrollably as if she had endured unimaginable mistreatment.

Jasmine was quite a beauty, so she looked pitiful and vulnerable with teary eyes. Who would not be sympathetic and soften their hearts when they saw her like that?

However, Eric would never fall for it again after seeing the WhatsApp chat between Jasmine and David.

He glanced indifferently at Jasmine and said, “Jasmine, we’re done. I’m officially breaking up with you!”

Eric turned away without hesitation.

It only took a moment for one’s heart to die and end a decade-long relationship.

“Eric!”

Eric did not expect Jasmine to grab him and cry, “What’s wrong with you? How could you do this to me? We’ve been together for almost a decade! Don’t you know me? Eric!”

“Jasmine!” Eric pushed her away and said, “Do you really want me to expose your affair with David to make you convinced!?”

Jasmine was shocked that Eric had found out about their affair.

She took out a tissue and wiped her tears.

“Alright, Eric. If that’s the case, I’m demanding compensation for all the years I’ve spent with you! Pay me \$13,000, and I’ll leave you peacefully. Otherwise, I’ll make your life a living hell!”

“You won’t get a single penny! Get lost!” Eric was furious.

“Very well!” Jasmine’s face darkened. “Yes, I cheated on you with David! Eric, you’re a sore loser! David’s able to afford whatever I want, and you are broke! You’re turning 30 soon, and who’s willing to marry a poor loser like you? After breaking up with me, you’ll end up single for your entire life!”

Eric laughed and pulled out his marriage certificate. He badly wanted to plaster it on Jasmine’s face!

“Jasmine, this is my marriage certificate. Sorry to disappoint you, but I’m married!”
Revenge had never felt so sweet.

Eric put away his marriage certificate after Jasmine saw his name on it. She was completely shocked to find out that Eric was married.

“Now get lost!” Eric turned away from Jasmine.

“Alright, Eric. This is not over yet!” Jasmine stormed out the door. She did not seem sad at all.

Perhaps it was true that she had been treating Eric as her cash dispenser after all.

Elly recovered her wits and asked tentatively, “Eric, you’re married? Since when?”

Eric smiled wryly and said, “Elly, it’s a long story.”

He never expected a marriage certificate to come along with the money he borrowed out of desperation.

—

At the Williams Corporation Tower.

Sylvia took a photo of her fresh marriage certificate, blurred Eric's ID number, and uploaded it to the family's group chat.

Sylvester: [Sylvia! You're married!?!]

Brook: [Good heavens! You're married? A flash marriage? Why so sudden!?!]

Conner: [Eric Johnson? Sylvia, is our brother-in-law from the Johnson family in King City?]

The corner of Sylvia's mouth curled into a faint smile upon seeing her family members' reactions in the group chat. Even her secretary was shocked by their reactions.

After pondering for a moment, Sylvia texted her eldest brother, Sylvester.

Sylvia: [Sylvester, I'm married. So, according to our agreement, I'm still in charge of Williams Corp. for the next three years. Am I right?]

Shortly afterward, a profile picture of a wolf head replied.

Sylvester: [Of course! Sylvia, bring Eric over for dinner tonight. We should get together as a family. We are eager to meet him.]

Sylvia ignored Sylvester's message.

She did not want Eric to meet with the family temporarily. After all, their marriage was just a tool for her to prolong her term as Williams Corp.'s CEO.

Chapter 4

In the hospital.

Eric's father was wheeled out of the operating theater and transferred to the ICU.

Mrs. Johnson again broke into tears, so Eric and Elly quickly comforted her as the surgery was successful.

The ICU was off-limits, so the Johnsons had to wait quietly outside until Mr. Johnson regained consciousness.

A loud voice startled Eric at that moment, causing him to jolt in his seat.

“Eric, you b*stard! You ruined my youth! I demand compensation!”

He hurried to the nearest window and peered down, only to witness Jasmine brandishing a megaphone and bellowing beneath a crimson banner that bore the words: “Eric, you scumbag! Compensate me for ruining my youth!”

“You dumped me after all the years I spent with you! You scumbag! Get down here right now!” Jasmine shouted through the megaphone.

A commotion was stirred in the hospital because of her.

Everyone was curious who Eric was to have offended a woman to such an extent. The crowd gathered behind Jasmine expanded so out of control that even the security guards could not hold them back. Moreover, some of the security guards even joined in to watch the show. They were curious to know who Eric was as well.

Elly furrowed her brows in the hallway. As a woman herself, she knew Jasmine would never resort to a public display if Eric did not wrong her. Furthermore, if things escalated, the hospital might hold Eric responsible.

Elly looked at Eric with suspicion.

“Elly...” Eric finally explained to her that Jasmine had been cheating on him with David.

Elly was flabbergasted. ‘No wonder Eric was so furious at Jasmine previously.’

Elly sighed and said, “No matter what, it’s better to solve this quickly before things escalate. It’s inappropriate to cause such a scene in the hospital.”

Eric nodded. He had to take the bull by the horns. Jasmine would eventually come up and cause more disturbance if he ignored her.

Jasmine’s voice grew louder when Eric showed up. She rushed toward Eric and shouted through the megaphone, “Eric! I thought you were a coward! You’re nothing but a man with no sense of responsibility!”

“I’m almost 30 now! I’ve been with you for almost a decade, and you still can’t afford to marry me! I just wanted to buy a dress, and you told me to leave, and you married another woman!? What did I do to deserve this?”

Jasmine then cried, “Eric, you’re not getting away with this if you don’t give me an explanation!”

The crowd pointed at Eric and whispered among themselves.

“The young man looks like a decent guy. Who knew he dumped his decade-long girlfriend to marry another woman? What a scumbag!”

“I’d be cursed for life if my future son-in-law turned out to be someone like him!”

A middle-aged woman pointed at Eric and scolded him, “Young man, you should be honest and upright with your actions!”

Eric was at a loss for words.

He found himself unjustly accused and branded as a vile and negligent man, while Jasmine conveniently played the role of the victim despite her own infidelity.

Eric’s expression darkened as he looked at Jasmine and said through gritted teeth, “Exactly what do you want!?”

He never expected Jasmine to play the victim and garner sympathy, turning the crowd against him. Nobody would listen or believe him if he spoke the truth.

Jasmine crossed her arms and wore an indifferent expression as she said, “That’s simple. As stated this morning, I want \$13,000 as compensation, or else I’ll ruin your reputation by making a huge scene and showing the rest of the world who you really are!”

Eric frowned and replied, “You know I’m broke!”

Jasmine sneered. “Then sign a promissory note! That will do. Didn’t you receive your salary today? Give it to me, and you can pay the rest slowly. I need money to sustain myself now that I’m left alone.”

She then turned to the crowd and said, “I spent a decade with him. It wouldn’t be too much to ask for \$13,000 as compensation, no?”

She appealed to the crowd, using them to her advantage, and most of the people nodded.

“My child, your youth was wasted. \$13,000 is nothing!”

“Hmph! \$13,000 is too small an amount to compensate for the youth of such a fine young woman!”

Eric was drenched in a cold sweat as he listened to the crowd’s comments. Meanwhile, Jasmine grinned with immense satisfaction. She had successfully leveraged the power of the public to make Eric yield to her.

She would never let Eric slip away from her fingers, even if he had to use a lifetime to pay her off \$13,000 and be together with David.

Eric found himself stuck in a difficult situation. He was disgusted by Jasmine’s maneuver, but there was nothing he could do about it. The crowd would condemn him if he snapped back at Jasmine.

Meanwhile, a luxury Toyota Sienna minivan pulled up nearby when Eric was at a loss.

“Ms. Sylvia, we’ve arrived,” the chauffeur said respectfully as he opened the door, occasionally glancing at the crowd from the corner of his eye.

Sylvia got out of the minivan and furrowed her brows upon noticing the commotion across the street. Her frown deepened as she saw Eric’s name on the banner.

‘Why is he here?’ Sylvia thought.

Eric had not told Sylvia that his father was hospitalized. However, the lines were connected after she recalled how urgently Eric needed \$15,000. Moreover, it would be impossible for two people of the same name to simultaneously appear in the same hospital. Hence, he definitely must be the Eric Johnson with whom she had gotten married in the morning.

The chauffeur quickly called out, “Ms. Sylvia, Mr. Sonnex is not in that building.”

“I’ll be back in a moment!” Sylvia strode off.

She saw Jasmine holding Eric back through the gaps in the crowd.

“Eric Johnson! Are you going to hand me the money or what? Sign a promissory note if you don’t have the money! Moreover, give me all your salary you received today, and I’ll back off. Otherwise, I’ll continue to make your life a living hell!”

Jasmine had a determined look on her face as if she had nothing to lose.

Before Eric could utter a word, he sensed a whiff of fragrance.

Meanwhile, the crowd was shocked by a sudden, loud, resounding slap.

“How dare you ask Eric for money, you disgraceful woman!?”

Chapter 5

Eric was stunned. He did not expect Sylvia to show up, let alone give Jasmine a slap across the cheek, which was utterly gratifying.

Jasmine was dumbfounded.

Her head buzzed, and her cheek burned intensely from the blow. Sylvia might appear delicate, but she was surprisingly strong.

“H-How dare you hit me!?” Jasmine trembled uncontrollably after regaining her senses.

She raised her hand to return the favor, but Eric blocked her.

Jasmine nearly lost her footing as Eric gently pushed her away.

Sylvia remained silent as she glanced at Eric’s back.

“Eric Johnson!” Jasmine burst into rage. “How dare you lay your hands on me!?”

She never expected Eric to make a move against her for another woman.

“Why not?” Eric stared indifferently at Jasmine. “Enough with your shenanigans. Get lost, or I’ll expose your dirty secret to the public. I believe they’d be thrilled to hear such an exciting story.”

Sylvia’s sudden appearance gave Eric time to recollect himself. He could still turn the tables before the crowd came to their senses. After all, Jasmine was being unreasonable simply because she was exploiting the crowd’s sympathy. However, Eric would not let her have it her way.

Indeed, Jasmine hesitated upon hearing Eric's words. She would be at a disadvantage if Eric spilled the beans to the crowd.

Jasmine glared menacingly at Eric and barked, "This is not over yet, Eric! Wait and see!"

Jasmine gestured at the two men holding the red banner and left the scene.

At the same time, Sylvia's chauffeur appeared to disperse the crowd. He waved his hand and said, "Alright, the show is over! Everyone, back to business!"

After the crowd dispersed, the chauffeur discreetly distanced himself. In his opinion, Sylvia must have a reason to assist Eric.

Eric turned around and said, "Thank you, Sylvia."

Although they were former classmates and were legally married now, there was no emotional connection between them.

Sylvia nodded and said, "Did you borrow money from me for the sake of your family?"

Eric nodded and remained silent. The agreement clearly stated they would live separate lives and never interfere with each other's lives.

Sylvia added, "If she shows up again tomorrow, tell her to go to the Williams Corporation Tower. \$13,000 is nothing. Let her have it, or solve it yourself quickly. I don't want this to drag on any longer. Apart from that, do you still owe anyone money? How much? I'll help you repay your debts all at once. I can't clean up after you every few days."

Eric chuckled. Not because he had found himself a wealthy woman but because of how domineering Sylvia was.

"Are you filthy rich?" asked Eric.

Sylvia ignored Eric's question and said, "I'm a very possessive person. You're mine now that we're married, so nobody can lay a finger on you!"

Sylvia turned around and left after saying that, leaving Eric stunned on the spot.

Her actions earlier obviously exhibited her domineering nature. It might seem Sylvia was helping Eric, but he speculated she was just asserting her dominance. Their marriage was

out of convenience rather than love or emotional connection. However, Eric was relieved that the issue with Jasmine was solved, at least for now.

At one of the corners of the hospital building, the chauffeur quickly caught up with Sylvia. She suddenly stopped dead in her tracks and pondered. A moment later, she said, “His name is Eric Johnson. Go to the director of the hospital and find out which of his family members is hospitalized, and report back to me at once. Also, prompt the hospital to transfer his family member to a private ward immediately.”

“Yes, Ms. Sylvia.” The chauffeur quickly obliged.

Little did Eric know that the cold and aloof Sylvia had a warm and tender heart. He did not connect Sylvia with the renowned Williams Corp. in Salt City. He had only heard of his classmates mentioning Sylvia came from a well-off family during high school and assumed her family was only slightly above average.

Elly asked anxiously as soon as Eric returned. “Eric, that woman...”

She had witnessed how everything had unfolded, which was so satisfying.

Eric smiled wryly and replied, “Elly, she’s my former classmate in high school.”

“Alright.” Elly asked again, “Is the issue with Jasmine completely settled? I hope she doesn’t show up again.”

Eric shook his head. He knew Jasmine would never back down and would leverage David to get back at him. After nearly a decade of being together, he clearly understood Jasmine’s character and had finally seen her true colors.

Elly let out a sigh and remained silent. She could do nothing to help Eric when she was also struggling with her own family issues. Elly left the hospital after having a short conversation with their mother. She was a full-time housewife with two kids to take care of. As such, the only free time she had was when the kids were in school during the day.

Mr. Johnson was still unconscious as the sky darkened. Eric finished the two boxed meals he had ordered from DoorDash and returned to his mother to make sure she would take her pills.

“Eric, go home and rest. The doctor said your father won’t wake up soon. I’ll be here to keep him company, so focus on your work tomorrow.” Mrs. Johnson swallowed her pills and added, “Remember to repay the \$15,000 as soon as possible.”

After Mr. Johnson’s successful surgery, Mrs. Johnson was worried about Eric’s debt. \$15,000 was enough for Eric to settle down and start a family.

Tears welled up in Eric’s eyes as he glanced back at his elderly mother, her hair turning gray. He strode off quietly as tears began to roll down his cheeks.

According to the marriage agreement, he had to return to the house at the Rosewood Estate every night. Eric’s parents always had a strong bond and deep affection for each other. As such, Mrs. Johnson was not only reluctant to spend money staying in a hotel but also because she wanted to be by her husband’s side.

Meanwhile, the chauffeur approached Sylvia immediately when she emerged from a building.

“Ms. Sylvia, I have the information you want,” he said.

“Tell me,” Sylvia replied nonchalantly.

“Eric’s father, Blake Johnson, is hospitalized. He was severely injured in a car accident. The surgery was successful, but he is still unconscious. I’ve informed the hospital to transfer Blake Johnson to a private ward. Everything will be done by tomorrow,” said the chauffeur.

“Alright. Take me to the Rosewood Estate,” said Sylvia.

—

At the Rosewood Estate.

A man with a slicked-back hairstyle was peering intently at Sylvia’s house through a pair of binoculars. He was none other than Sylvia’s second elder brother, Brook Williams.

Sylvia had acquired a property in the Rosewood Estate recently for her marriage. Brook knew Sylvia would spend the night at her property after her marriage. He furrowed his brow as he saw her show up at the house alone.

‘Why is Sylvia alone? Where is her husband?’

Shortly after, Eric pulled up and entered the mansion.

Brook pulled out his phone and sent a voice message to his brothers in a new WhatsApp group.

“Sylvester, Connor! The eagle has entered the nest!”

Chapter 6

A user with a wolf head avatar responded to Brook’s voice message.

Sylvester: [Describe his physical appearance, Brooke!]

Brook was peering into the living room through the pair of binoculars.

Eric looked at Sylvia, who was sitting on the sofa in the living room. There was an awkward silence as Eric realized he had nothing to say to Sylvia.

It was Sylvia who broke the silence.

“Why are you home so early? Don’t you need to be with your family in the hospital? The agreement stated you need to get home before 9:00 p.m., but there are always exceptions when it comes to special circumstances. It’s important to take care of a sick family member,” said Sylvia.

“My mother is at the hospital taking care of things,” replied Eric.

He was still in shock.

After so many years living in Salt City, Eric knew the Rosewood Estate was a neighborhood where the city’s wealthy and elites lived.

The house was spacious, at least 200m², and estimated to be worth at least \$750,000. Eric finally came to realize why Sylvia was willing to give Jasmine \$13,000 to put an end to her harassment. She was wealthy!

Sylvia kept quiet upon hearing Eric’s response. She then rose to her feet and said, “Follow me.”

With Eric following behind her, Sylvia said, “Obviously, it’s impossible for us to share a room.” She pointed to one of the doors. “This is the master bedroom, my private living space, which is off-limits. On top of that, that study is off-limits as well.”

Then she turned around and pointed to another door. “That’s the second bedroom where you will be settling down. Likewise, I won’t step into your room without your permission. As a matter of fact, I’ll never even think about entering your room.

“The rest of the rooms are open for you to accommodate your friends and family whenever they visit. All you need to do is give me a heads-up, and I won’t show up when they are here. Apart from that, your parents aren’t allowed to move in temporarily. The house is yours after we divorce three years later, and you are free to do whatever you like.”

Sylvia looked at Eric as she finished speaking. She expected Eric’s eyes would light up after learning the house would belong to him three years later, only to discover he remained calm and nodded slightly. Sylvia was rather surprised.

Sylvia added, “Alright, I need to freshen up and rest. You should rest early too.”

Eric nodded and walked to the sofa. He raised his eyes when he discovered a book lying on the sofa—The Art of Marriage.

Had Sylvia prepared this book for him?

Eric took a seat and flipped through the book. Apparently, the book had been read for only a few pages.

“Ah!” A sudden cry echoed from the bathroom, accompanied by a loud thud.

Eric sprung to his feet and rushed to the bathroom.

“S-Sylvia, are you alright!?”

There was no response.

Eric grew anxious. ‘Did Sylvia fall and faint in the bathroom?’

He pushed the door, only to discover it would not budge at all.

Sylvia’s voice sounded at that moment.

“N-No, don’t come in! Ouch!” Sylvia inhaled sharply.

Eric could tell Sylvia had a hard fall.

“Call me if you need me.” Eric turned around and left after saying that.

He did not know what was happening inside, so he did not dare enter rashly. However, after taking a few steps, Sylvia called out, “E-Eric, wait!”

Eric stopped dead in his tracks and said, “I’m sorry. What did you say?”

Sylvia yelled, “Wait, Eric!” A second later, she added, “I can’t stand up. Try pushing hard against the door.”

Eric did as instructed, but the door would not open. Thinking Sylvia might have seriously injured herself, he took a few steps back, charged forward, and kicked the door.

The door flung open forcefully, and Eric was stunned to see Sylvia sitting on the floor of the bathroom, wrapped only in a bath towel. Her skin was as white as snow.

Eric felt his heart pounding hard against his chest. He instinctively gulped and rushed to her side.

“What’s wrong?” asked Eric.

“My ankle... I sprained my ankle.” Sylvia squirmed.

Eric looked at her ankle and discovered it was swollen. He was curious at the same time about how Sylvia had sprained her ankle in the bathroom.

“Give me your hand!” yelled Sylvia.

Eric reached out his hand hesitantly. He felt a surge of sensation running through his body when Sylvia grabbed his hand. However, it was different from when he got electrocuted in David’s office. Eric was dumbfounded.

“Ouch!” Sylvia inhaled sharply.

Meanwhile, Eric snapped back to his senses.

“What’s wrong?” Eric asked anxiously.

“I think I sprained both of my ankles...” Sylvia was rendered speechless.

What were the odds of spraining both ankles at the same time? And she had even sprained them in the bathroom. She would not be able to explain herself if Eric suspected her of feigning a fall.

Eric froze for a moment before asking, “W-What should we do?”

He was also at a loss. He wanted to carry Sylvia back to her room, but he did not even dare touch the ice queen, let alone carry her.

Sylvia looked up and glanced at Eric.

“What would you do if your girlfriend fell and injured herself?” asked Sylvia.

Eric pressed his lips together. “I’d carry her on my back. However, based on your condition, I’m afraid I need to carry you...”

Sylvia’s cheeks blushed upon hearing that. She tried to get on her feet a couple more times, but to no avail.

Sylvia instructed, “Squat down and close your eyes!”

Eric quietly obliged.

“Do not open your eyes. If you dare sneak a peep at me, we will get a divorce tomorrow!” she added.

Eric nodded without saying a word and squatted on the floor.

A wave of fragrance filled his nose as Sylvia wrapped her arms around his neck.

“Alright, carry me to my room and mind your hands.”

Eric was rendered speechless. Did Sylvia think he was a pervert?

With Sylvia in his arms, Eric said through his gritted teeth, “W-Why are you so heavy?”

Eric heard the sound of gnashing teeth as his voice fell. He felt embarrassed as he suddenly realized commenting on a woman’s weight was taboo. Eric opened his eyes as he tried to walk out of the bathroom.

“Close your eyes!” barked Sylvia.

Eric quickly closed his eyes. “Heavens! How am I supposed to take you to your room with my eyes closed? I’m new here!”

“I’ll guide you to my room, so follow my instructions,” said Sylvia.

Eric was rendered speechless again.

Meanwhile, Brook had witnessed everything in another building across the street through his binoculars. After Sylvia entered the bathroom, Eric followed suit and carried her out in his arms about a dozen minutes later.

“Oh my gosh! Is she really taking things this far!?” Brook could not believe his eyes.

Brook: [Sylvester, Connor! Guess what I just saw!?!]

Brook sent a voice message to his brothers via their new WhatsApp group.

Brook was in shock. He was well aware of Sylvia’s rather lacking romance experience. She never had a boyfriend, and he knew her motive for the flash marriage.

However, based on what he had witnessed, could he be wrong? Did Sylvia actually marry for love and not to extend her term as Williams Corp.’s CEO!?

Chapter 7

Brook was caught up in his thoughts when the wolf head avatar responded.

Sylvester: [What did you see, Brook? Stop keeping us hanging! Everyone is concerned about Sylvia’s marriage so spill the beans!]

Brook: [You’re absolutely not going to believe this!]

Brook laughed upon hearing Sylvester’s anxious voice and recounted what he had witnessed earlier.

Connor sent a Shocked emoticon.

A moment later, the wolf head avatar responded.

Sylvester: [Brook, continue observing them. Why didn't Sylvia introduce her husband to the family if they have come this far?]

Meanwhile, Eric had laid Sylvia on the bed under her guidance.

She quickly covered herself with a blanket and said, "If I remember it correctly, there is a black night gown in the wardrobe further to the left in the dressing room. Do not open the rest of the wardrobes. Also, bring me the makeup bag and the book on the sofa."

"Can I open my eyes now?" asked Eric.

Sylvia rolled her eyes and replied, "Are you capable of looking for them with your eyes closed?"

Eric smiled sheepishly and quickly fetched Sylvia her night gown, makeup bag, and book she had requested.

"Shouldn't we go to the hospital? You seemed to have sprained your ankles quite badly," said Eric.

"I'm fine. You may leave," she said.

Sylvia was back to her indifferent nature, leaving Eric puzzled.

"Call me if you need help," Eric said and left her room.

Sylvia picked up the book and read it when the door was closed. She glanced at her makeup bag after reading a few lines.

'He won't break into my room during the night, will he?'

Sylvia felt restless. She was fully aware of Eric's gaze and reaction in the bathroom. It seemed like he had inappropriate thoughts about her. She rolled to the side, occasionally glancing at the door, afraid that Eric might break into her room all of the sudden. She was injured and would not be able to defend herself after all. Sylvia took her makeup bag and pulled out a razor.

'Hmph! I'll slash you if you dare break into my room!' Sylvia said inwardly as she stared intently at the razor.

She felt slightly at ease after slipping the razor under her pillow.

Eric returned to the bathroom and realized Sylvia had slipped because she had spilled some shower gel on the floor. After washing up, he made sure the floor was not slippery anymore before he retired to his room. Sylvia's white and luscious skin flashed through his mind as he lay on bed.

The poor guy was still a virgin despite being in a relationship with Jasmine for nearly a decade. They had only held hands. Eric secretly wished Sylvia would call for him in the middle of the night. The night was peaceful and quiet but tormenting for both Sylvia and Eric.

Eric realized he barely slept as dawn broke but felt surprisingly energetic. Deprived of sleep, Sylvia had dark circles around her eyes.

Eric freshened up and entered the kitchen. He was shocked to see how spotlessly clean it was. He thought of making Sylvia breakfast. However, he walked toward Sylvia's room after giving it a second thought.

Eric knocked on Sylvia's door.

"Who is it!?" Sylvia quickly reached for the razor underneath her pillow.

"It's me, Eric."

Eric was somewhat speechless. Who else could it be since they were the only people in the house?

"What do you want to have for breakfast? There's nothing in the kitchen, so I'll go out and bring it back for you," said Eric.

Sylvia heaved a sigh of relief.

"That's unnecessary. Do what you need to do and don't worry about me."

"Are you really fine?" asked Eric.

"Yes, I'm just fine! My aunt will bring me breakfast and medicine shortly. She will be taking care of me, so just go on with your day," Sylvia replied hastily, staring intently at the door.

She retrieved her hand upon hearing Eric's footsteps fade away. She then let out a sigh while looking at her swollen ankles.

Sylvia took her phone, tagged the wolf head avatar, and sent a message in the family group chat.

Sylvia: [@Sylvester, I won't be in the office today as I'm feeling under the weather. Please handle the matters for me.]

She had lied about her situation because the Williams were pretty busy people. Moreover, she was worried they would inquire about Eric.

Her message caused a huge uproar among the Williams brothers.

"Good heavens!" Brook's eye twitched continuously.

Shortly after, his phone rang.

'Sylvester is calling!'

Brook's expression turned serious, and he answered the call hastily. "Sylvester!"

A magnetic voice replied, "It seems like there's no turning back now. Investigate Sylvia's husband. We can't just sit and do nothing if she refuses to tell us anything. Dad and Mom are still concerned, so keep Mom updated with your leads."

"Yes, sir!" replied Brook.

Eric left the house and wanted to head to the hospital at the beginning. However, Mrs. Johnson had called and said Blake was still unconscious. As such, Eric went to his workplace to settle some matters. He wanted to make sure to take all his personal belongings with him if he quit the job after finding out about the infidelity between Jasmine and David.

Eric was unaware that Brook was following him.

David had founded Westman Technology. When Eric arrived at the office, he realized the employees were looking at him differently.

"Psst! Psst!"

Eric's colleague, Andy, was behind a corner trying to catch his attention.

"Eric!" he eventually shouted his name and waved at him.

Eric approached Andy, perplexed.

"What's going on? Why are you acting so mysteriously?" asked Eric.

Andy scanned through his surroundings and looked at Eric. "Why did you show up!? David was here earlier. He threatened to make you pay until you dropped dead! Also, your girlfriend, Jasmine, showed up this morning!"

Eric frowned. How despicable of them!

"I'm done with Jasmine. We have nothing to do with each other anymore." Eric relaxed his brow.

Andy gave him the thumbs-up. "That's the way, my man! But what are you going to do? You crushed David's computer screen yesterday. That f*cking screen costs a few thousand bucks!"

"Let's see how things unfold," said Eric.

Would David have the audacity to ask Eric for compensation after his dirty secret was exposed?

Eric packed up his belongings in his cubicle and headed to David's office. He saw David groping Jasmine through the partially opened door, and she seemed to be enjoying it.

He feigned a cough, and Jasmine sprung to her feet in an instant.

Eric then knocked on the door. "David!"

A smile bloomed across David's face as he recognized Eric's voice.

"Eric? Come in. Great timing. We need to talk!"

Eric's heart sank. Was the douchebag really going to ask him for compensation?

Eric ignored Jasmine as he entered the office.

David smiled at Eric and said, “Eric, you’ve been a long-time employee and have joined the company since its establishment. We appreciate your effort. You’ve been with the company for seven long consecutive years, which proves how loyal you are.”

Eric was puzzled at the compliments he received.

Did David’s conscience suddenly kick in?

“So, I decided to commend you appropriately!” added David.

Then he picked up a gift under his office desk and pushed it toward Eric.

“Why don’t you open it?” said David.

Eric was still perplexed.

Seeing Eric frozen on the spot, David said with a smile, “Won’t you open it? There’s a surprise for you!”

Eric glanced at David and opened the gift.

His face turned sour as he saw the Seven Swords tarot card—the symbol of infidelity—lying in the box.

Chapter 8

Eric clenched his fists tightly as David had humiliated him. At the same time, David leaned forward and smiled mischievously at Eric.

“Isn’t it a wonderful surprise? Do you like it?” mocked David.

Jasmine could not help but laugh. Eric was not only poor but also a coward. He did not even dare retaliate after David had humiliated him. She was still angry about her encounter with Sylvia yesterday and wanted to vent her anger on Eric.

David spread his arms and shrugged.

“I just love seeing you employees who can’t stand me and can’t do anything about it. It’s pure pleasure,” David said as he took a cigarette out of his pocket, lit it, and placed it in his mouth. He looked at Eric, released a billowing cloud of smoke into the air, and added, “I cheated on you, so what are you going to do about it? Hit me?”

“David Westman!” Eric gnashed his teeth and punched David in the face. “I’m beating the hell out of you!”

Eric knocked David out of his chair and his cigarette out of his mouth. His nose was bleeding profusely when he got back to his feet.

“Eric, you son of a b*tch!” David pointed at Eric. “It’s over for you! How dare you hit me? You haven’t even compensated me for ruining my computer! Not only are you going to pay for it, but I’ll make sure you rot in prison as well!”

David never thought Eric would have the nerve to make a move on him. Even Jasmine was shocked by Eric’s sudden burst of anger. The man had a soft temperament and would never easily resort to violence.

Eric froze on the spot. He knew he was in deep trouble. He could justify his action for ruining David’s computer screen but punching David in the face just escalated the whole situation. David would never let him get away with this, and it would be difficult for him to resolve this issue. Alas, there was no point crying over spilled milk.

“David, you deserved it! You crossed the line!” Eric said through his gritted teeth.

David laughed scornfully. “You son of a b*tch. She seduced me in the first place! I’m taking you down today, Eric!”

David was going to call the cops on Eric. However, before he could call 911, his secretary barged into the office and said, “Mr. Westman! Somebody wants to meet you... H-He also said that...” The secretary hesitated.

“He also said what!?” David glared at his secretary.

“H-He said... Tell the *sshole to come down... Brook Williams wants to meet him,” the secretary stammered.

David was so shocked he dropped his phone.

“Hurry up!” cried David and shot out of his office, leaving Eric and Jasmine behind.

Eric was puzzled. He never thought the arrogant David Westman would be fearful of another man. He paid no attention to that matter as he needed to find a way to resolve the issue.

“Eric, I didn’t expect you to have the courage to punch David in the face. Do you have any clue of his past?” Jasmine snorted coldly.

Eric ignored Jasmine—he was disgusted to hear her voice.

Before David ventured into technology, he was involved in illegal activities. However, due to the intensive crackdown by the local forces in recent years, David had been forced to leave the streets and eventually started his own tech company.

Still, he kept in touch with the people from his old circle. As such, after much consideration, Eric decided to apologize to David when he returned to the office. He was not afraid of David but worried his conflict with David might inflict on his family.

Meanwhile, David had welcomed Brook Williams to the company.

“Brook, what brings you over today? You should have informed me you’re dropping by in advance so I could instruct all of my employees to greet you at the main entrance,” David said with flattery.

Brook waved his hand and said, “I heard that business is blooming for your company recently, so I decided to come and learn a thing or two from you.”

David chuckled and replied, “You must be joking, Brook. We are just a small growing company. How could we compare to your achievements?”

“David, what happened to your face? Nobody could do this to you when we were on the streets back in the old days. Who did this to you? Should I get the boys to get the job done?” asked Brook.

David’s expression darkened as he recounted what had happened to him.

“You got beat up by your employee?” Brook could not help but chuckle.

David said menacingly, “I’ll never let him get away with this!”

David and Brook arrived at the office shortly afterward, and Eric was still standing there.

David cursed, “The son of a b*tch is still here! Brook, it’s him!”

Brook was shocked inwardly to see Eric. He remained calm as he walked into David’s office because Eric did not know him.

David signaled for Jasmine to leave, so she left them alone.

Eric took a step forward, intending to apologize to David.

“Get out of my office now. I’ll get back to you later. Don’t even think of running away from me, Eric. I know your father is still in the hospital,” David said with a stern expression.

Eric clenched his fist but loosened it in the end. He knew he could not mess with David.

David poured Brook a glass of water.

The latter glanced at David and said, “You must have offended your employee, didn’t you?”

David snickered and told Brook about his affair with Jasmine.

Brook spat a mouthful of water when he learned of it.

“Take it easy, Brook!” David quickly fetched Brook a few tissues.

“His girlfriend? Which girlfriend?!” Brook asked as he wiped off the water he had accidentally spat.

Was his brother-in-law, who had just married Sylvia, two-timing her?

“The woman that left the office earlier. Ex-girlfriend, to be precise. Jasmine said they broke up yesterday,” said David.

Brook nodded. He was furious inwardly, thinking Eric had cheated on Sylvia.

“You scoundrel,” said Brook. “You could have pursued any woman, but you had to go after your employee’s girlfriend. You really are twisted.”

David chuckled.

“Let’s not resort to violence anymore now that you’re off the streets. Spare him for now,” said Brook.

David nodded in agreement. He did not think of resorting to violence to settle the issue after all.

Meanwhile, Eric had received a call from his mother while waiting for Brook to leave the office, so he could apologize to David. After a day and a night, Blake had regained consciousness.

Eric left the company in a rush. There was nothing more important than his father's life. Brook quickly caught up to Eric before he could hail a taxi.

"Hey buddy, did you drop your phone?" asked Brook.

Eric furrowed his brow as he turned over and realized Brook was talking to him.

"Did David send you?" asked Eric.

"David?" Brook chuckled and said, "I don't answer to him."

Eric felt a sense of relief. Based on David's demeanor toward Brook, he knew David had no influence over Brook.

"If the phone is not yours, I'll hand it to the cops later." Brook put the phone into his pocket and added, "You hit David. How are you going to settle it? He used to run the streets and will never let you off the hook."

Eric shook his head and remained silent. He refused to reveal anything to a total stranger.

Brook smiled mischievously and said, "I have an idea that will guarantee that David will treat you with respect. Are you interested to hear it?"

Eric stared at Brook, trying to figure him out. He was concerned about the possibility of Brook conspiring with David to set him up. However, he had no significant value for Brook to plot against him. As such, Eric nodded.

"David's wife is his kryptonite," said Brook.

Chapter 9

"His wife?" Eric looked puzzled.

"Yes." Brook said. "David's wife henpecks him because she owns half of the company. His wife will be livid if she finds out David is messing around with his employee's girlfriend. All you need is evidence of his debauchery."

“Thanks for the tip-off,” said Eric. “Why are you helping me, though?” he asked.

Brook smiled and said, “Why? I’m just simply a kind-hearted person.”

“Thank you! I need to attend to an urgent matter now. I owe you a meal.”

Eric hailed a taxi and left.

Brook slapped his forehead as he said inwardly, ‘Why am I helping him if he’s cheating on Sylvia? But Sylvia is very protective of her people. If she finds out her husband is in trouble and I didn’t help him out, she will turn on me as well! Sigh.’

Brook was in a dilemma. He was thinking if he should inform Sylvester that Eric had cheated on Sylvia. He quickly dismissed the thought after realizing the dreaded aftermath it would ensue. The situation would not be in favor of him if either of his siblings found out about Eric’s infidelity. As such, he might as well keep it a secret for now.

Back in David’s office, Jasmine was sitting on David’s lap.

“Who was that guy, babe?”

“That’s Brook. He’s a bigshot on the streets of Salt City. The whole city will tremble if he’s pissed off. That’s how influential he is,” said David.

“Really!?” Jasmine was genuinely shocked.

David glanced at Jasmine and said, “Don’t even think of seducing him. He’s in a different league. Your ex-boyfriend punched me in the face today, so you better compensate me properly.” David groped Jasmine as he spoke.

“Oh, babe!” Jasmine leaned onto David. “Have I ever left you unsatisfied?”

David felt a boner upon hearing her sweet and tender voice.

“Hold on. I’ll come back for you after I whoop Eric’s *ss.”

He realized Eric had left as he was nowhere to be seen in the company.

David returned to his office, narrowed his eyes, and muttered, “I won’t let you off easily, Eric.”

Jasmine sat on David’s lap and asked, “Babe, what are you going to do with him?”

“Hmph! That’s easy. With his father being hospitalized, I’ll use my connections to make things difficult for him. However... I’ll deal with you first!”

Blake was transferred to the general ward after his condition was stabilized in the hospital.

“Eric, you should get back to work. I’ll be staying in the hospital with your father, so don’t worry.” Mrs. Johnson was worried about Eric, who was in debt.

“Mom, I’ve applied for a few days of leave from the company to take care of Dad,” said Eric.

He no longer wanted to stay in the company and would settle the animosity he had with David when the latter confronted him. Eric had made contact with Andy to plot against David. His colleague was more excited to get hold of David’s incriminating evidence. He also had been fed up with David for a long time.

“Aren’t they going to deduct your salary?” asked Mrs. Johnson.

Eric shook his head. “Mom, it’s a paid leave.”

Mrs. Johnson felt relieved. “Your boss is a good man. Your father’s company would have deducted his salary in this case.”

Eric smiled bitterly.

Blake might have regained consciousness, but he needed someone to take care of him. Elly could not handle the task with two children in need of her care. Mrs. Johnson was getting older and had health issues, so Eric decided to take this opportunity to ease her burden of taking care of Blake.

Eric did not expect David would show up so soon. The b*stard had shown up with Jasmine wrapped around his arm.

“I thought you escaped.” David sneered at Eric.

“David! Please leave my family alone,” Eric said monotonously.

“It’s too late, Eric. I’ll teach you a lesson not to mess with me!” The corner of his mouth twitched.

“What do you want from me?!” Eric said through his gritted teeth. He knew David would never let him off easily.

“Eric, who is he?” Mrs. Johnson felt a tense atmosphere when David showed up.

David smiled and said, “Mrs. Johnson, did Eric not mention me before? I’m his boss.” He pointed at his cheek. “Look at what your son did. Did you not teach him it’s inappropriate to hit someone?”

“Eric!” Mrs. Johnson looked at Eric.

She was unaware that the woman holding David's arm was Eric's ex-girlfriend, Jasmine. All she could think of was that Eric was in trouble for hitting his boss. How would Eric pay off his debt for his rash actions if he lost his job?

"Mrs. Johnson, please don't blame Eric. As a magnanimous person, I've forgiven him," David said pretentiously.

"Thank you, Mr. David." Mrs. Johnson pulled Eric's sleeve and said, "Eric, quickly thank your boss!"

Eric remained indifferent. He knew something was amiss and was right about it.

A doctor entered the ward and nodded at David before asking, "Blake Johnson's family?"

Eric replied, "Yes, doc?"

The doctor adjusted his glasses and took out a stack of bills.

"It's time to clear the outstanding bills. You'll have to pay at least \$7,000, or else we'll have to stop his medication in the afternoon."

Eric's heart sank to the bottom. He never expected the doctor to bring up money as an issue. He only had a few hundred bucks, which were set aside for Mrs. Johnson's medical expenses, let alone \$7,000.

Chapter 10

Eric said, "There must be a mistake, doc! I just paid \$15,000 yesterday!"

Eric was embarrassed to ask Sylvia for money again.

"A mistake? This is the bill, according to the billing system. We didn't expect the patient's condition to be so serious, and your account has run out of money."

Eric looked at the bill only to realize that they had spent all \$15,000 and owed the hospital a few hundred bucks.

David was delighted to see Eric panic.

“Eric, weren’t you bold enough to hit me? Show us how bold you are and punch the doctor in the face, and I’ll settle the rest of the outstanding bill for you!” David taunted Eric.

Eric clenched his fists tightly. David must be behind this, so he tried hard to avoid punching David in the face again.

“I demand to check the account! There must be a mistake!” said Eric.

He wondered if David had conspired with the doctor and handed him a fake bill. The truth would be revealed by going through the account.

The doctor smiled and said, “You’re free to do so. However, before you review the account, we will have to cut your father’s medication due to outstanding bills.”

Eric panicked. His father’s life was on the line, after all.

“Eric!” Mrs. Johnson stepped forward and handed Eric some money. “Take this and settle the bills quickly!”

“Mom!” Eric looked at his mother. He knew the money was meant for her medication expenses.

“No, I can’t.” Eric shook his head and looked at David.

“D-David!” Eric lowered his head and said, “I’m so sorry!”

The cruel and harsh reality compelled him to lower his pride and apologize to David. Unfortunately, he had underestimated David.

David burst into laughter and said, “Eric, your apologies are worthless. You must pay for your misdeeds!”

David felt a great sense of satisfaction. He was addicted to the exhilaration of controlling one’s destiny.

Eric gnashed his teeth and walked up to David.

“David, hit me if you need to vent your anger. I’ll continue to work for you until the compensation for your monitor is fully paid.”

“I’m sorry.” David waved his hand and said, “My conscience forbids me to lay a finger on my employees. Compensation is a must. I’ve spent thousands on it, after all. However, how are you going to continue working if you are already being fired?”

Eric was in despair.

“However! I’ll give you a chance to redeem yourself,” said David.

“What do you want, David?” Eric said solemnly.

He was willing to sacrifice anything for the sake of his parents’ lives.

David sneered and said, “It’s very simple. Just get on your hands and knees and bark three times, and I’ll let things slide.”

“What!?” Eric looked up and stared David straight in the eyes.

He was reminded of how David had humiliated him with Jasmine previously.

“Why are you staring at me?” David sneered. “Trying to act pitiful with your puppy eyes?”

“Go to h*ll, David!” Eric scowled and punched David in the face again.

He had come to realize that David would never stop harassing and threatening him, even if he obliged. David would keep coming up with fresh ideas to torment him.

David stumbled to the ground, pointed at Eric, and yelled, “Doctor Anderson, cut his father’s medication immediately and let him die!”

David was fuming.

The doctor adjusted his glasses and replied, “Alright. I’ll order the nurse to cut his medication.”

David burst into a fit of laughter. “Eric, it’s all your fault your father is going to die!”

David wanted Eric to live with regret for the rest of his life.

“Doctor! Mr. David!”

Mrs. Johnson knelt on the ground.

“Mom, what are you doing!?” Eric tried to lift his mother up hastily, but she pushed him away.

“Please, don’t cut his medication! I apologize on behalf of my son! Please, don’t do this, I beg you!” Mrs. Johnson pleaded with the doctor. “It’s all my fault! I failed as a mother! Please accept my apologies!”

“Mom!” Eric was in shock. Tears began to well up in his eyes.

“Mom, please get up!” Eric tried lifting his mother again. “You don’t have to beg them. I can handle this!”

Eric decided to swallow his pride and ask Sylvia for money. He did not want his elderly mother to kneel and beg David, that *sshole.

“Eric!” Tears rolled down Mrs. Johnson’s cheeks. “We are deep in debt! Who else is willing to lend us money?”

Before Eric could respond, a voice suddenly echoed.

“What’s with all this commotion in here? How is the patient going to rest?”

“Director!” Dr. Anderson ran up to Dr. Gray, the director of the hospital, but he was no match for Mrs. Johnson’s speed.

“Director!” Mrs. Johnson wanted to kneel before him, but Dr. Gray stopped her.

“Ma’am, what are you doing?” asked Dr. Gray.

“They are going to cut my husband’s medication! Director, please don’t do it! I beg you!” Mrs. Johnson sobbed.

“Cut his medication?” Dr. Gray looked puzzled. “Ma’am, what is your husband’s name? Who gave permission to cut his medication?”

“My husband’s name is Blake Johnson. Dr. Anderson said to cut his medication!” Mrs. Johnson replied hastily.

Dr. Gray’s expression darkened.

“Mrs. Johnson, please stop crying.” Dr. Gray consoled Mrs. Johnson. “It’s the duty of the hospital to save lives and provide care for their patients. So it’s impossible for us to cut off a patient’s medication!”

“R-Really?” Mrs. Johnson stared at Dr. Gray eagerly as if he were a life-saver.

“Yes, you have my word.” Dr. Gray nodded. “I am the hospital director!”

At the end of his words, Dr. Gray glared at Dr. Anderson.

“You almost got us into a disaster, Anderson! Thank God I was here in time! Disciplinary actions will be taken against you, so scram!”

“D-Director!” Dr. Anderson was shocked.

“Enough is enough, Anderson!” barked Dr. Gray. “Mr. Johnson is supposed to be transferred to a private ward for special care, and you wanted to cut his medication? How dare you!”

“T-The private ward!?” Dr. Anderson was shocked.

Only wealthy and influential people had access to the private ward.

At the same time, David, Jasmine, and Eric were all in shock.

Then Sylvia’s image flashed in Eric’s mind in an instant.

Sylvia must have arranged with the hospital to transfer his father to the private ward while she was there yesterday—that was the only explanation that made sense.

‘Thank you, Sylvia...’