



REVERSE WITH ME

ลำนวณสูตร

01. We Returned From Last Week

Part: Kliao Khluen

When we contemplate losing something that, one day, we might regain, what comes to mind?

Is it a loved one, a possession, or a pet that once went astray and was found again through a determined search?

Once, I experienced losing something as well. It was my 'right hand.' However, I got it back in an unbelievable way...

That is the main reason behind my pursuit of a field I had never envisaged for myself. It wasn't my initial aspiration or my passion but something that seemed entirely mismatched with my persona:

'Medicine'

Staring at my reflection in the mirror, I raise my hands, deftly twirling my hair into a ponytail. My lips clutch the ribbon I use to tie my hair. My eyes are filled with anxiety, signaling my impending tardiness. Although this time, when the sun is still slumbering and hasn't yet begun its duty of illuminating the world, might be considered early morning and ample for others, it is not the case for me. I must ensure I reach the ward in time for the morning rounds.

Someone named the attire for the sixth-year medical students 'the versatile coat', even though it's just a short gown with our names embroidered in

green thread on the chest. However, once worn, it becomes a symbol of being capable of everything, despite our ongoing studies.

During the last academic year, my shifts was extended until midnight at the latest. The summer break passed in the blink of an eye (with only a few days off for us). As soon as the new semester began, I assumed the role of an extern["] whose internship mirrors the duties of a doctor, as this marks my final year as a student.

For your information, sixth-year medical students like us are assigned to different wards for approximately four weeks each. What exactly is a 'ward'? A ward refers to in-patient accommodations, akin to various departments. For example, there's the Medicine ward, focusing on medication-based treatment; the Obstetrics- Gynecology ward, specializing in the female reproductive system; and the Pediatric ward, dedicated to the care of children.

Additionally, there's the Surgical ward, where a range of surgical procedures is performed, often mistakenly conflated with cosmetic surgery, However, the term 'surgery' encompasses a broader spectrum of treatments conducted through surgical operations.

Allow me to briefly outline the main wards for now, although in reality, as an extern, I'll have to rotate through several more wards eventually.

Anyway, at the moment, I'm getting dressed and packing the essentials into my tote bag, eager to hurry out. I quickly jump up and slip on my shoes by the dormitory door.

My roommate has been on night duty since last night. By now, she must have gone to get a caffeine boost to recharge her body before continuing to stay alert for the ward rounds, no doubt.

I feel like I've slipped out so many things without a proper self-introduction. Alright, let's get to know each other. I'll start with my name.

I'm '**Kliao Khluen**,' a medical student whose hair is often playfully tousled by my friends because I'm shorter than all of them. I just began my 6th year

a few weeks ago, unfortunately starting my first ward rounds in the tough Obstetrics and Gynecology ward... But could it be equally hard-knock everywhere?

I can't tell. Anyway, I encountered a very strict staff who constantly scrutinized me in the operating room. When I assisted in delivering a baby for a mother, the staff almost seemed like they were about to ride my neck and pounce on any mistake I might make, as if I would call some equipment incorrectly at any moment.

Assisting in delivering a baby tobooo-hoo safe and sound is an experience that I still find quite unsettling.

Nonetheless, at this point, I've just completed my rounds in the Obstetrics-Gynecology ward and have moved on to the Medicine ward, where the patient load is quite high.

"Kliao~"

The sweetly, teasing call rings out just as I step out of the dormitory. Before I can react, my neck feels heavy because I'm now enveloped in a hug by a big guy.

"Can I swap shifts with you? I've got a really important appointment tonight. If I miss it, I might be rejected forever."

He is 'Tree,' a male friend who secretly harbors a crush on a female singer. And as for that, well, I know without asking - he's going to follow her to the club where she'll be performing.

Although we only got to know each other in the 6th year when I moved to this hospital, I've heard that he's been doing this since his 4th year, but it seems like the singer can't remember him at all, so...

"No."

Therefore, I reject him and lightly hit his arm to stop him from leaning on me.

"I have the afternoon shift today."

"Yeah, right. If you have the afternoon shift, just take over my night shift right away. Then, when your shift is over, I'll take over for the next two shifts. Win-win."

"There's no win. I'm not okay with that. This is an ER shift, you know."

There are two types of shifts. One is the ward shift, which means staying in a specific ward. The other is ER shifts, which require being on duty in the emergency room. As for the latter one, who on Earth would want to take over it?

But to see and listen to that singer, Tree never gives in. He pleads with me all the way from my dormitory to the hospital. It's quite a short distance as it only takes a few minutes to bike there. That's why I moved to this dormitory in my 6th year (the male dorm is right next to it with a common area in between). Although it is pretty close, the guy in the same short gown keeps extolling the advantages of him taking shifts for me and even offers to treat me to a meal.

When I ask why he doesn't exchange shifts with someone else, he confesses that he has asked around in the LINE Chat, but no one was willing to accept the exchange offer.

"Come on, Kliao! I beg you! You're struggling today, but your life will be easier tomorrow because I'll be on duty for you."

I roll my eyes while chaining my bicycle wheel to a small pole provided in the courtyard.

"Well, I just want to relax today. I don't want to work the entire night shift and then have to drag myself for ward rounds."

"But this time, it's truly the last! After this, I really won't bother you anymore!"

Then, Tree follows me and begs me without stopping. For those who don't know us, this might be misunderstood as a flirtatious pursuit, but the truth is that he's pleading with me to exchange shifts because he's going to have fun in the club and deliver his sweet glances to that singer.

Meanwhile, I might be spinning my head in the emergency room. That doesn't sound like my cup of tea.

The hospital corridors in the morning are still bustling with people. Tree and I walk straight ahead, although we will have to part ways soon because we are assigned to different wards.

My destination is the General Medicine department, where the fourth and fifth-year residents may have completed their ward rounds.

The clock indicates that it's around 5 am, and I am the type who likes to find something to satisfy my hunger a bit beforehand as there's still some time left. I turn into one of the convenience stores in the hospital to find a piece of bread to munch on and have something for my stomach to digest.

Tree still follows me and nags incessantly. As if watching a lovey-dovey couple reconciling, this brings a smile to the cashier's face while she's calculating the bill.

Me and Tree, huh?

Impossible.

I already have someone in my heart.

The one whose name I recall with precision, but until now, I still haven't found **'her.'**

While I'm biting the bread and waiting for the elevator to go up to the upper floor, Tree's voice no longer reaches my ears. My eyes inadvertently glance at my reflection on the shiny silver door of the elevator.

My right hand reaches into the pocket of my short gown, holding it loosely to confirm that it's still there and hasn't disappeared anywhere.

Even though almost seven years have passed since that incident, there hasn't been a single day that I've forgotten the face of the woman I fell in love with...

The same person who saved my right hand.

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7 years ago

At that time, I was a Grade 11 student with average academic performance. I was uncertain about which major to pursue. Some friends were preparing to study engineering, while others were gearing up for medicine, aviation, nursing, business, law, and so on. Everyone seemed to have clear goals in life, whereas I had no dreams.

My parents never offered guidance on this matter. Whenever I attempted to raise the question,

'Mom, Dad, what do you think I should pursue as my major?'

Right after we finished eating together, my dad would casually respond.

'Why bother thinking about it? Honestly, as a girl, you don't have to study at university. What if you are studying at college and unexpectedly become pregnant? It could be a terrible situation. Just graduate from high school, find a simple job, and then marry a man with a decent status so that I won't worry about you.'

I don't know why the answers were always like that. Whenever I opened my mouth to protest, my mom would call me to go handle the dishwashing in the kitchen. Once the dishes were done, she believed that her 'daughter' like me should continue working on other household chores, while the 'son' could enjoy playing games on the sofa.

My younger brother's name is Fong-Samut. He is two years younger than me, and I swear that, since birth, I've seen him do household chores only

once. That was when he couldn't digest his food and wanted to move his body, so he grabbed a broom to sweep the floor.

Certainly, when our parents saw that, they praised him for being so diligent. Even though I did chores every day and did more than that, no one ever noticed or praised me for it.

Our family is somewhat considered middle-class, and they believe in the myth that women are born to be homemakers and mothers. There's an expectation that sons will be the pride, the future, and whatever else they may be proud of.

It's quite suffocating, but there's nothing I can do about it. At times, I found myself lingering at Khim's dormitory, a close friend I've known since high school. She's attractive, a school star, and comes from a fairly well-off family.

However, as her family lived in another province, she had to rent an apartment here. She often complained about feeling lonely, and whenever that happened, I packed a couple of school uniforms into my backpack and stayed overnight with her.

Just like that day, I knew it was going to be just as boring when my mom's older sister came to visit. Not that I minded them showing off their grandchildren since, luckily, my aunt was not that type.

I was just too bored to serve tea and sit through my parents' bragging about Fong-Samut's grades in front of her. Honestly, my younger brother's grades were not better than mine.

"Kliao, have you figured out which major you want to get into?"

Usually, when crashing at Khim's place, as she was playful and funny, our conversations were light-hearted and nonsensical. However, today, out of the blue, while the lights in the room were completely out, my friend blurted out a question that left me speechless.

"I don't know. I'll think about it in Grade 12."

"You can't! We're almost done with Grade 11, you know?"

"So, have you figured it out yet?"

"Yep."

"Which major?"

"Mozz-"

"If you answer Mozzarella cheese, I'll kick you off the bed!"

I stifled a laugh before Khim could burst out with a not-so-funny joke that could stress me out forever. She giggled a bit before adjusting her tone to be serious again.

"Mass Communication.

"Why Mass Communication?"

"I want to be a screenwriter."

It was quite unexpected, as everyone assumed that Khim, who actively participated in every activity and looked stunning enough to have won numerous competitions, would naturally aim for a career in the entertainment industry or something of that sort.

However, all alone together, she suddenly told me that her dream was to become a professional scriptwriter. She also mentioned that she engaged in various events because she wanted to gather experiences as material for her writing.

That night, I found it hard to sleep. While my peers had almost figured out their dreams, I still had no idea what I wanted to be when I grew up.

In the morning, my mom called as soon as the sun rose, asking where I was and why I hadn't come home. She explained that she wanted to take my aunt to make merit at the temple, as it was Buddhist Sabbath.

What my mom wanted was for me to hurry back and help with cooking, then return to open the stationery shop, even though it was a holiday and there wouldn't be many students from nearby schools coming in.

I didn't quite understand why she didn't ask Fong-Samut, especially on a Saturday when both my younger brother and I were free. After all this time, it was only me who handled it, and when I suggested getting him involved while I was away, my mom quickly dismissed the idea, insisting that I should hurry back.

At the end of the day, I took a deep breath, feeling disappointed about being unable to join Khim for breakfast.

"Why not come back in the evening?"

My best friend suggested as she escorted me out of her room. Khim lingered by the doorway, seemingly reluctant to see me leave. Then, with a mischievous glint in her eye, she added, "Let's binge- watch a drama series like a marathon!"

"What time are you free?"

"You know I'm free all the time."

"Alright, let's meet up at 7 PM."

My conversation partner smiled in agreement, looking forward to the evening ahead.

"Sure thing! I'll bake the popcorn ready for us!"

After our temporary parting, Khim and I were separated by a partitioned door. Khim's apartment had a reasonably high monthly rent, making everything from the walls, corridors, to even the front communal garden well-maintained by the housekeepers at all hours.

However, because it was still early, around six-something in the morning, there was no one strolling around to be seen, unlike during other times.

The corridor was incredibly quiet, and the patches of sky outside still held a hint of dusk, creating an eerie atmosphere. I hummed a tune to prevent myself from feeling too lonely. I rubbed my hands against the goosebumped arms to ward off the chill. My destination was the elevator located at the end of the hallway, beside the staircase.

Before I could take a step, I found myself standing in front of the metal transportation box. My body nearly stumbled forward due to a sudden impact. As I quickly noticed, it was a man in gray attire wearing a black mask that covered his face.

He hurried down the stairs from the upper floor and collided with me. On the other hand, he staggered a bit due to his larger frame.

He just paused for a moment when our eyes met, and that was it. Despite being the one who walked over nicely, I couldn't help but think that if I had been more vigilant, I could have avoided him.

"I'm sorry," I said, returning to regaining my balance and standing upright.

The involved parties regained composure. He didn't say anything. I could sense the fear and unease reflected in his eyes. Before his composure could fully be restored, he took long strides, hastening down the stairs as if reluctant to let anyone witness more.

Back then, I didn't think much except for a lingering curiosity about why he didn't use the elevator. However, as it wasn't a significant matter, I resumed humming the same tune and took a step towards the elevator to descend to the first floor.

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18.48

After spending almost the entire day cleaning the house as requested during my day off, I finally found some time to relax. My aunt hadn't returned yet

and wouldn't be back home until the next day. She also took the opportunity to delve into the past by digging up old albums from the storage room.

This, however, left me fuming as I had to sweep and clean the room anew since my father had entered and remarked on the disgrace of having a daughter living in such a mess. Wait! I couldn't understand either.

For Dad, having a daughter under the same roof meant she had to be a homemaker, didn't it? That would be the reason why he said something like that. Anyway, I escaped from that house, and then stood near Khim's apartment, waiting to cross the crosswalk near the residence.

[Where are you?]

The lively voice in the Bluetooth earphones asked for my location.

"I'm right at the Chic Pie Cafe."

I mentioned the name of the coffee shop on the opposite side, a noticeable point that indicated, I could definitely walk to my best friend's apartment in less than five minutes. This prompted an enthusiastic response, happier than before, from the other side.

[Okay, then I'm gonna make popcorn. You should be here in time for a perfect snack.]

"Roger that."

After that, we hung up. I then stood, observing the traffic signals that hadn't changed color yet. There were only about three or four people ready to cross at the same time. While the sky was darker than usual today, and my mind was as empty as ever, not yet finding any dreams, I stood there watching the traffic signal until it finally turned green for pedestrians.

I'm a small person, which means I'm short in stature and have to walk quickly and frequently enough to keep up with those with longer legs. This often leaves me trailing behind the others when walking at a normal pace.

However, since Khim was probably busy baking some popcorn or preparing some soda, I didn't feel the need to rush more than my usual walking speed.

At that moment, I wasn't preoccupied with daydreaming, talking on the phone, or listening to music.

Although I was confident that I had looked left and right thoroughly, what I considered an 'accident happened anyway.

A pickup truck suddenly accelerated, running the red light. It rushed towards me directly, and before I could react, my body bounced off from the impact, floating and colliding with the footpath.

Numb... That was the first thing I felt.

Numb all over, especially on the right side, where I felt nothing.

Finally, my consciousness faded away, along with the last blurred image I saw-the pickup truck continued gliding on the road without stopping.

People rushed in to help me, all with good intentions.

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It seemed to be the next morning.

No, it was the morning of several days later.

Many days had passed, but I didn't know how long... That's how I felt when I woke up.

The bright light that shone into my eyes took a few seconds to adjust to, and then I realized that the light was not the early morning sunlight but the white light of a hospital.

Dad, Mom, my younger brother, and a close friend like Khim were waiting for my awakening. It was a shared room, lacking privacy, unlike in dramas. I almost had no strength to sit up again, but I heard my worried mom saying that I had woken up in the ICU.

When my condition improved, the doctor moved me here, and I had been in that bed for about a week.

Well, I couldn't remember anything. However, if I tried to think hard enough, I kinda realized that, over the past week, I could barely get up, but my mom and Khim took turns caring of me. I was just silent, observing everyone's facial expressions.

Mom... Her expression revealed clear concern, with her voice trembling and appearing sorrowful.

Dad... His face remained composed, difficult to decipher his emotions.

Truth be told, he often looked at me with such a gaze, as I was not his favorite child from the beginning.

Fong-Samut... My younger brother had a peculiar expression when he looked at me. I wasn't sure what he was up to.

As for Khim... she cried, yes, cried as if I were about to die just like that, even though I'd just managed to sit up on my own.

I stayed silent like that for a while, until the nurse came in to check on me. I started to realize that I should say something to let them know that my brain was still perfectly fine. The first sentence that slipped out of my mouth was about my current sensation.

"My right arm badly hurts."

My voice was hoarse, like someone who was quite dehydrated, but that didn't seem to be as interesting as the reactions of the four people who heard it. Khim raised her hand to cover her mouth, and Mom paused for a moment. Dad furrowed his brows into a knot. As for my younger brother, who stood still between Mom and Dad, he seemed awkward, unsure of what to say. Eventually, Fong-Samut was the bravest one, uttering something that the other three dared not.

"Get a hold of yourself, please..."

His voice softly urged. "What are you trying to say?" I croaked, my throat dry.

"Over the past week, couldn't you feel anything unusual at all?"

"..."

"The doctor had to amputate your right arm. It's gone. How could you feel the pain?"

I was bewildered by what he said, as the heavy, throbbing sensation, almost like a tightly clenched grip, clearly lingered in my consciousness. I just couldn't lift it because it felt overwhelmingly burdensome. I furrowed my brows tighter than my father did, before slowly lowering my face and directing my gaze to where my right arm used to be.

But, it was gone.

None of the five fingers remained. My hand wasn't there either. All that was left was a bandaged wound wrapped tightly around the area starting from the elbow downward.

My heart was numb. The intense fear and shock provoked my anxiety.

How could it be? I still felt it. I could feel the presence of my clenched fist as well as the pain. But why did what I see contradict how I felt? At that moment, I thought that this must be a dream for sure. Soon, I'd probably wake up on my own.

However, things went on, serving as a reminder of reality.

My mother said it was a hit-and-run incident, and up till this point, over a week later, they still couldn't catch the culprit. Khim cried every time she visited. She blamed herself for encouraging me to stay with her, leading to the accident.

I couldn't say anything to them at all. It was all too overwhelming. The only sensation I had right then was the escalation of pain in my right arm. I kept

telling everyone who visited me about it until my father got so frustrated that he even said:

"How long are you going to keep that bullsh*t? Just accept the truth!"

Then, he walked away from my bedside, never visiting me again. It had been two days since he blurted that out.

I hardly slept. I often woke up around four in the morning, sitting on the edge of the bed, hugging my knees. I informed the doctor in the long white gown with short sleeves who came for the morning checkup that my arm was in pain.

They looked puzzled. Afterward, I learned they were fourth and fifth-year medical students who didn't know how to diagnose my condition.

Until then, before the fourth- and fifth-year students had examined every bed in the ward, a woman in a short-sleeved gown with green lettering on the left side appeared. She probably came to follow up after her juniors' rounds were completed.

Extern

Kaomaysa Narawattanawej

Those were threaded on the left side of her chest - the woman who appeared to be a sixth-year medical student. I could only recall her 'unique' first name. During that time, I was so consumed by the pain that I couldn't bring myself to look up or make eye contact with anyone.

The aforementioned extern asked me about the nature of the pain, with a junior student standing behind her.

"It hurts as if I am clenching my fist."

"You feel like you are clenching your fist?"

She was a woman with such a captivating husky voice.

I nodded, keeping my gaze down, eyes anchored to the floor.

"Yes, it feels like my hand is clenched tightly."

"On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate the pain?"

"8"

"Do you feel like your right hand is still there?"

"It's still there... I feel like it's still there."

The extern paused for a moment before turning to the two junior students standing a short distance away. She spoke with a voice laced with seriousness. Based on my brief observation, I could sense that this woman had a relatively calm and composed personality.

"Phantom Pain," she said.

"Then... what should we do next? Should I prescribe pain relievers?"

"I'll consult with the professor first.

From this angle, as she conversed with the two, I noted her tall stature. Yet, this fleeting observation could only distract me momentarily from the sharp pain suddenly coursing through my right hand, causing my expression to contort.

After a brief interval, the ward round expanded to include a larger group, consisting of medical students and the professor, who introduced himself as my surgeon. To summarize, they did prescribe painkillers for me. But believe me. I only felt slightly better. My hand still felt tight and clenched, with the contraction spanning from my arm to my shoulder.

I must've gone mad.

As time passed, it seemed that after that evening round, the extern named Kaomaysa disappeared for a while, only to return at midnight for a long

night shift in the ward. Around two in the morning, she noticed that I was still wide awake, unable to sleep.

So, she went to the medical staff room and returned with a brown paper bag. The tall figure approached my bed quietly before sitting down at the foot of the bed.

It was then that I truly noticed how attractive this sixth-year medical student was. She resembled a harmonious blend from a beautifully crafted painting, with perfect lines and shades. Her long, sleek black hair complemented the soft pink hue of her lips.

Her almond-shaped eyes, a characteristic of an Asian woman, paired with a husky voice that resonated with a Western tone. The seamless combination of her features was so enchanting that, for a moment, I forgot about the pain.

She handed the brown paper bag to me, her eyes conveying concern more deeply than her expression let on.

"My patient, please try putting your right hand into this and take out what's inside for me."

"... "

I blinked repeatedly as I looked at her. I didn't get it, but I agreed to use my left hand to reach out and hold the bag, slowly inserting my amputated right arm according to her instructions.

"Did you find anything?"

"No, I didn't."

Of course not. How could I find anything when I didn't have a hand to search for what she was talking about?

"That's right. Because I didn't put anything in there."

"Huh?"

"But don't remove your hand just yet."

She made eye contact with me and spoke in a soothing tone, "Do you now feel like you're clenching your fist?"

"Yes..."

"Now, close your eyes and try to slowly open the palm of your hand in your mind."

A subtle force seemed to infiltrate my consciousness, rendering me unable to resist her.

The person in front of me seemed to be handling things delicately for me, even though outwardly, she appeared to be someone who never cared about others. I closed my eyes, imagining that what was inside the bag was my right hand. Slowly, I began to open the palm of my hand in my imagination.

Something happened. It felt better than taking morphine to relieve my pain. I felt like the pain, caused by the thought of my hand clenching, gradually eased. Finally, it became lighter and looser, as if I no longer felt anything with that particular nerve.

"The...the pain is gone."

I spoke out, accompanied by tears of joy, as the torment of the past few days finally came to an end.

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02:25

The extern, Kaomaysa, returned to the medical staff room...

On the same night, even though I was relieved from the pain, I still couldn't sleep once again. I received a message from my mother saying that the family would be busy for the next three days because Fong-Samut, who was

in Grade 9, had to attend a scout camp. My parents were concerned because the school arranged the camp in a different province.

The two of them decided to follow, just to check on my younger brother, keeping a bit of distance without making a fuss. They were going to stay in a nearby hotel just in case my younger brother needed anything.

Mom and Dad really lived every second of their lives for Fong-Samut. Before, I was just a child who didn't hold any significance for them.

With the accident that led to my hospitalization and the loss of an arm... my parents probably viewed me as more of a burden to take care of.

The cumulative impact of all the negative emotions weighed heavily on my mind. I envisioned a future where my father looked at me with disdain when I struggled due to my one-handed clumsiness. I could imagine my mother calling me to do household chores while my younger brother sat idly by with complete limbs. This time, the tears of sorrow eventually rained down in silence as the clock ticked towards dawn.

I made a decision around five in the morning.

At that time, the 4th and 5th-year medical students were about to arrive at the ward. They usually arrived not long after that, as I noticed from the cases requiring wound cleaning, and there were quite a few patients as well.

As no one bustled around yet, I slowly pulled myself out of bed. My glance wandered towards the fire escape. With hesitant steps, I heard the heartbeat in my chest, a steady reminder that life still pulsed through me at that moment.

But there was no point in continuing to existing.

It wouldn't matter even after the departure of physical pain. Still, I would be worthless in the eyes of my parents.

I pulled myself up to the rooftop. The air in the chilly morning at this altitude could slash my skin. The thin blue patient gown couldn't provide

much protection.

Just like the slight fatigue from slowly walking up about two floors from the ward couldn't bring back my consciousness. I just believed that I had to disappear to end it all.

The wind blew through, colliding with my body. I stood on the edge of the parapet that prevented anyone from accidentally falling. Looking down from this angle, the people below seemed tiny, like ants at work. A middle-aged woman happened to look up and noticed me before waving her hands in the air, trying to draw attention to the fact that someone was about to jump off the building.

I was contemplating jumping off, but the fear of not dying instantly held me back, so I stood, gazing at the floor below with a complex feeling.

Suddenly, the sound of a door being forcefully opened echoed, along with the hurried footsteps of several lives rushing towards me, shouting and urging me to stop with a trembling voice.

"Don't do it! Please stay calm!"

"Please step back! Don't throw away your life!"

The voices of both doctors and nurses urged me not to rush into ending my life. There were about three different people. When I closed my eyes and listened, I guessed they must be the ward nurse and the 4th- and 5th-year medical students who often came to check on me in the morning, both male and female.

It was sad that, at a time like this, strangers cared more about me than my parents who were probably busily taking care of my younger brother.

I raised my hand, pressed it against my chest, and screamed out painfully. My eyes heated up as tears were about to flood.

"They never treated me like that!"

The emotions welled up again, with my voice getting louder.

"When I was in Grade 8, I got food poisoning at the school camp, but they didn't even bother to come pick me up!"

Screaming at the top of my lungs, my body almost bent in pain.

"When he childishly played with a knife and cut me, they comforted him even though my leg was severely bleeding!!"

With that kind of disability, no matter how hard I tried to find value in myself, things would have gone worse than ever before. I couldn't bear it anymore. I was also their child. Why did they treat me as if I was just a servant at home?

Why wasn't I born to be loved?

Why was I restricted from higher education? Why couldn't I become this or that?

Why was I born to do all the housework? Wasn't it something that everyone in the family had to help each other with?

In the split second as my foot was about to step out, a sudden loud noise rang up, bringing everything to a halt.

"Let them be!"

I remembered that extern. whose first name was Kaomaysa.

"Even if your parents don't love you as much as they should, it doesn't mean you shouldn't love yourself."

"Turn around and look into my eye, Kliao Khluen."

She didn't address me as 'my patient' anymore. Instead, she mentioned my name, probably because she remembered it from the medical records.

And the feeling of being enchanted would be like this. A moment ago, I was indifferent to everyone's voice. However, for this woman who helped me overcome the excruciating pain last night, my brain was obedient to her. I

then realized that my tummy felt hollow when I looked down at the ground. I slowly stepped back into the rooftop space.

As expected, there were the ward nurses as well as the fourth- and fifth-year medical students standing there beforehand. As for the newcomer who still had mild breathing difficulties, Kaomaysa stood close to me within a one-meter range.

She was vigilant, wondering if I would do anything reckless like throwing myself down. The young woman in the short gown raised her hand and made eye contact with mein silence.

"Give me your hand."

".... "

"Your future will disappear if you go down there."

"I have no future," I heard my trembling voice, "And I'm not thinking lightly... I've been thinking about it all night. "

Her jet-black eyes clearly showed that she was thoroughly considering my withering response from a moment ago. She closed her eyes in a blink, before opening them again with a faint smile.

"I saw you repeatedly glanced at the name written onmy gown. Do you want to know my nickname?"

Her nickname. That's right. What is her nickname?

It seemed like, at that time, we were not a doctor anda patient, but two people who only knew each other's first names. I slowly nodded due to the sudden curiosity deep within me, wondering what the nickname of the extern with this unusual first name was.

"Let's hold hands first, and then I'll tell you."

"..."

"Do you trust me?"

She had a charismatic tone and gesture that beckoned me to follow suit. Amidst everyone's silent agreement, I recognized that ending my life wasn't a thoroughly explored option. Khim who had been incessantly blaming herself would only burden her with misplaced guilt.

People in the hospital would get startled, and undoubtedly, I would miss the chance to watch a good drama series or listen to beautiful songs. I would forfeit the opportunity to savor countless delicious dishes in this world.

Kaomaysa's hand still waited for me to place my left hand on it. Some chemicals in my mind commanded me to abandon the plan of jumping off and, instead, hold hands with this 6th-year medical student.

However, as our hands were about to touch...

Bang!

A thunderous noise echoed across the sky, accompanied by a bullet that directly pierced through the air and struck my right shoulder with such force that I had no strength left to keep me standing.

Everyone on the rooftop turned to look at the unexpected source of this bullet, except for a person named Kaomaysa, whose eyes widened in shock because of the unbelievable event. She rushed towards me, attempting to grab my left hand as my body was falling under the impact of the gunshot.

The eyes of the young woman named Kaomaysa, who did not want to lose me... were more mesmerizing than anything else.

With her desperate attempt to grab my hand, our fingers touched for a split second.

Suddenly, the sky above changed its color. There wasn't a mass of clouds as expected. Rather, a large golden Roman numeral clock appeared with its gears as well as both short and long hands moving backward.

I was descending, about to crash into the ground with a gunshot wound, unaware of the culprit. It was something I had mentally prepared for, so I closed my eyes, accepting the inevitable pain that would soon lead me to oblivion.

....

The sensation of death felt like standing in a slightly chilling, pitch-dark space. Yet, my nervous system picked up some signals - the echoes of the surroundings, which caused me to furrow my brows in confusion. Just as I realized that I had my eyes closed, a familiar sound rang in my right ear.

[Where are you?]

I quickly opened my eyes, and the first thing I saw was the sign of the Chic Pie Cafe on the opposite side of the street, followed by people bustling along the footpath, traffic lights, and the crosswalk.

"Huh?"

I confusingly exclaimed. Then, the person on the other end of the phone, connected to my earphones, responded.

[I asked where on Earth you are, Kliao! I need to make popcorn while waiting for you.]

"Khim!"

[What? Why are you surprised?]

Am I dreaming?

People often say that when we're about to die, the brain automatically replays our life moments in a short span. But why was it replaying the scene just before I encountered the accident? I stood there on the roadside, looking foolish, while my best friend scolded me for my insanity.

At first, I thought I was dreaming. Then, when I tried to slap my own cheek, I felt the pain. Moreover, I could recall how the sky looked in the evening,

how the air felt, and... and I felt like I was still breathing.

I was alive, with blood and flesh. My right shoulder wasn't hurt from the gunshot, and my hand... I raised my right hand to see it clearly. Then, I discovered the unbelievable fact that it was still intact.

"My... My right hand is back!"

[Huh? What are you talking about? Your hand has to be with you. Who would take it away, airhead? Anyway, where are you? Are you almost here?]

"Wait a minute, Khim! You visited me at the hospital the other day, did you?"

[Dumbass! Yesterday, you slept over at my place! Why are you talking in your sleep so early?]

"No! No! No! A week ago, I got hit by a pickup truck! It was a hit-and-run!"

[What the heck? How did you get hit by a pickup a week ago? Otherwise, by now you'd be in the hospital. What nonsense are you talking about? Are you daydreaming or something?]

"Khim!"

[Just be here in a sec. That's it.]

I felt like I was going crazy. What? If standing at the same spot wasn't a dream, then what happened at the hospital must be real as well. The tips of my fingers could remember the moment when that woman tried to reach out to me.

I couldn't understand it at all. It was so bewildering.

Until the moment when the traffic light turned green for pedestrians to cross, I looked up and saw her - the woman who made my heart skip a beat with a mix of emotions. She stood on the other side of the road. That medical student...

Kaomaysa... No, as she's older, I should address her with the term 'Phi. With both physical and mental well-being, I didn't have to bear all the pain anymore. It was only now and then that I came to realize that fact.

The serene and beautiful face of the woman in the short gown standing on the opposite side, with her long legs gracefully carrying her over the crosswalk to my side. Our gazes refused to part for even a second until the moment when the extern stood right in front of me. That was when I realized that I was much shorter than her. She was 170-and-something centimeters tall, while I was just 159 centimeters tall.

I was speechless. Since my eyes probably reflected various emotions, the taller woman started to speak.

"Surprised?"

"The time was reversed..."

I spoke like someone who still didn't understand what was going on around me. My words were somewhat disjointed.

"I brought you back in time," she clarified with a calm expression.

"Only the two of us came back."

Does that mean that this woman can travel through time?!

How could it be possible? Something miraculous like that was hard to believe, wasn't it?

But it...did happen.

I stood there with a memory of falling from a building in a hospital. The car accident hadn't occurred, and the woman in front of me could confirm that.

Without saying anything else, her warm hand grabbed my right hand and held it tightly before helping me cross the crosswalk that had once destroyed my life. It was as if the whole world stopped spinning for us two. She only cared about my safety, and I only paid attention to her.

My legs followed those of the person before me. My eyes remained endlessly fixated on the back of the woman in her uniform - the short gown.

A swirl of emotions churned in my chest. The shock didn't dissipate, and I was still confused about how time had been reversed to the point before the unfortunate incident.

Nonetheless, everything was covered up, almost entirely, when the warmth from her hand passed through me. It seemed to flow straight to my heart.

Crossing the crosswalk felt like passing through a time warp. Before I realizing it, she helped me reach the safe point on the pavement.

The sixth-year medical student, tall and slender, turned around to face me. I didn't imagine it, but there was some kind of savage hidden in her eyes.

"Don't ever think about doing something like that again. Is that clear?"

See? Do you believe me now?

I nodded repeatedly, like a child listening to an adult. She sighed softly before lowering her voice to a normal tone.

"As for what happened last week, just forget about it."

"Wh... What do you mean by 'last week'?"

"When you were standing on the rooftop,"

She was referring to last week, where we returned from... It was the future for others, but only the two of us knew that it had already happened.

At that moment, memories flooded my mind. I quickly asked in a flash, even though my voice still trembled.

"Wh... What's your nickname?"

"Karan"

"P'Karan..."

"Yep," she acknowledged and then changed the subject.

"I won't help you again next time. You must love yourself more, understood?"

Before I could process it and respond, she raised her hand to gently pat my head before leaving, as if there were other matters to attend to. I stood there, feeling empty. The crowd gradually engulfed and swallowed her from my sight in the blink of an eye. While the word 'thank you,' which should have been said the most, remained unspoken.

I even couldn't remember that a moment ago... No, better called the period before our time reversal... During that time, which hospital was I admitted to? I couldn't ask anyone either.

I dashed out to find her as I had so many doubts to figure out, but no matter how much I tried to look up and down or around, it seemed like P'Karan had disappeared from this area. For me, our encounter was so short...

So short that I started to fear we might not be able to meet again for a long time, or perhaps forever... But there was one thing I was certain about.

In just a split second... It took me just a split second... to fall in love with the woman who went back in time from a week ago.

I stood in the spot where people passed by, confident that something called 'miracle' had just been created by a girl. A large golden Roman numeral clock, which had almost swallowed the entire sky when my body fell from the building, remained vivid in my memory.

I picked up my phone and dialed the number of my best friend. The familiar voice resonated in the Bluetooth earphone on the right side. After a short wait, the call was answered, and a voice filled in.

[What's up? Did you manage to regain your consciousness?]

"I got it, Khim! Now I know what I want to be."

[What? You changed the topic too quickly, Kliao.]

"I'm going to be a doctor."

[A doctor?]

"Yes, I'm going to be a doctor."

P'Karan was my sole inspiration.

And she didn't just bring back my right hand.

She also took my whole heart with her...

□□□□□

02.A Medical Student On a Deadly Shift

That briefly concludes the reason why I decided to study medicine-it was because of P'Karan. She is not only my role model but also the person with whom I fell in love.

Life has continued without the occurrence of any road accidents, and I remain puzzled over the mysterious bullet that hit me on the rooftop. Had I upset someone? Or was it a random event that someone aimed to hit a different target but accidentally injured me instead?

The latter seemed highly impossible. Nevertheless, I have proceeded with my life, now suspiciously devoid of any further life-threatening incidents.

There are so many things I wish to share with P'Karan, from expressing my gratitude to asking numerous questions, but we haven't crossed paths again. Ever since that day, I have spent all this time searching for her. I remember her first name clearly-'Kaomaysa,' but no one around me seemed familiar with it.

I tried looking up the list of staff in the hospital near Khim's apartment, but the results were negative. I even resorted to surveilling various hospitals after school, but I still couldn't find her.

After two fruitless months of searching, I ultimately decided to concentrate on preparing for college admissions in the field that had inspired me.

Time flew by, and I was successfully admitted to the College of Medicine. During my first year at the university, I kept asking around about her. I

wondered if anyone had heard of a person with that name or knew someone who could travel back in time.

Eventually, I earned a unique nickname - 'Weirdo Girl.'

My classmates during my pre-clinical studies began to call me that.

My parents strongly opposed my decision to attend this college. My father explicitly stated that women don't need higher education because, ultimately, they would have to resign and become housewives. I don't understand why my father wasn't happy but instead, scolded me.

Imagine if Fong-Samut had passed the medical entrance exam; my parents would likely have thrown a village-wide celebration and hung vinyl banners to proclaim his academic achievement. Meanwhile, as I toiled to stay awake and study for exams, what I received was an earful of a lecture about how I would be better off perfecting my ironing skills.

I decided to move into the university dormitory, believing that staying at home was detrimental to my mental health. Back then, it was an all-girls dormitory located near the lecture halls. I shared a room with three other girls: Jee-Ja, Bamboo, Meow, and myself. Initially, we clashed frequently because Jee-Ja would often stay out late with her boyfriend, jeopardizing our dormitory points to the brink of negativity.

Meow also had the habit of sleeping on the sofa instead of moving her ass back to her bed. Anyway, as we entered the second year and prepared for Lab Clink together, we grew closer and eventually formed a tight-knit group of cherished friends.

As for Khim, we've been friends since high school. She attends a different university, majoring in communication arts that she had dreamed of, and has become a university star. The two of us still keep in touch through LINE Chat, and whenever we have free time, we make plans to meet up and share our experiences.

Khim herself has moved into a dormitory at her university and has a roommate who has become her friend, although she continues to insist that I

am her number one best friend.

I almost forgot to mention that... when I was a freshman, I was invited to join a music band. It all started because I enjoyed singing while staying in the dormitory. I recorded some singing videos and never failed to announce the search for the woman named 'Kaomaysa' in all of them, hoping that if they became viral, perhaps that person... would realize that I miss her and that I'm looking for her.

That's why Jee-Ja took the videos and gave them to her friend who was forming a band. Soon after that, 'Belle' and 'Ne', a couple of close friends, invited me to be their lead singer.

Our band is called The Edge of the Universe with the theme of a vast cosmic space. Belle was curious about where the universe would end and what it would look like, and that's how the name was created. I think it's cool, unique, and distinct from others.

The members include Belle, who plays the guitar and takes on the role of the band leader. She has a cheerful personality, and her toothy smile is similar to a shark's. As for her close friend (who has unspoken romantic feelings for her), Nene, she is the talented left-handed bassist of the band.

Nene is someone who easily blends into any situation, carefree and nonchalant. But when looking at them from Earth to Mars, the glint in her eyes reveals just how much her feelings for Belle go beyond mere friendship.

These two study the same major, which is Accounting, and eventually, they become a couple after Belle has been deceiving herself for a long time.

Next is the person who appears to be the ultimate anti-socialite, Frang, our drummer. She is an orphan who has been through a lot, and her personality seems to be unfriendly to any human being.

The upside is her deep love for animals. She often takes in and temporarily shelters injured animals, providing them with care and seeking someone to

adopt them, even though she doesn't have much money and faces quite a few challenges. I truly admire Frang's compassion.

Our band became so popular that it became a trending topic on Twitter, all thanks to her request for us to play music to raise funds for injured animals. People started to film us and share their video clips on social media, making us viral.

It's not difficult to guess that Frang is studying veterinary medicine. Currently, she is still studying just like me because whether you want to be a human doctor or an animal doctor, you have to follow a six-year curriculum.

Frang's dedication to part-time work that contributes to our band has allowed her to have a sustainable income, I heard that she is planning to open a bakery business with her partner soon.

Next up, the one I'm not sure how to describe is Note. She's a Lady,' meaning others should address her by the title 'Lady' because she is a great-grandchild of the king. Note is our talented pianist who draws attention to our band.

Yes, the viral clips on social media gained popularity because people noticed that she was absolutely gorgeous, so they captured moments of her that seemed almost otherworldly.

Note is studying architecture, which means she has recently graduated because she pursued a 5-year program.

In our five-member band, I happen to be the shortest (though I've been the shortest anywhere I go). Note and Frang, in particular, are 175 centimeters tall. Nene and Belle are around 169 centimeters tall. So, all four of them enjoy rubbing my head every time we meet. Damn it! I need to carry a comb with me all times as part of the preparation for their playful teasing.

The fun during university life helps me to forget about my family. I focus on studying, the band, my circle of friends, and searching for P'Karan...

I can boldly say that I have no way of erasing her from my heart. The heartbeat at that moment is still engraved, just like her warm hand and the captivating voice that could endlessly enchant me. In addition... the fact that she took me back in time, beyond just feelings, she also left something behind with me.

It's been a while since I've experienced 'déjà vu.' Whenever I do something, there's a fleeting moment where it feels like I've done it before. I can understand that this is something common that happens to many people at times. But there is something peculiar...

They are dreams in which events unfold vividly, and then I realize that they are "futures" that will undoubtedly come to pass.

This might be the side effect of going back in time to fix things and avoid misfortune. As she possesses that unbelievable ability, she may not be affected or perhaps she already can see the future. Who knows? However, an ordinary person like me has experienced the aforementioned effect.

I knew Belle and Ne would end up together, aware of what the breaking news of the upcoming day would be about, or sometimes, I had various dreams, and within a few days, they indeed came true.

P'Karan... You left something within me. Do you realize it?

And the dream that woke me up with a pounding heart because of the worst fear occurred when I was in my fourth year of study.

Back then, I was in my clinical years.

One night, as I set my mind to sleep deeply, I jolted awake due to a vivid dream. Even within the blurry confines of slumber, I could recall it being a dimly lit warehouse. Someone had used their arms to pin me down, and their hand, holding a knife, was poised at the base of my neck, right on the major blood vessels. With a single thrust, I would be killed effortlessly.

In that dream, P'Karan stood on the opposite side. She made eye contact with the person intending to take my life. Her usually calm face was filled

with fear and the anticipation of loss once again.

'Put the knife down right now! Have you lost your mind? You're also a doctor!'

The shout was filled with anger, but instead of the figure behind me willing to listen, he or she burst into laughter before deciding to use the knife to end my hostage life in front of P'Karan.

The dream ended just like that, as I startled awake with a heart throbbing from fear, I wanted it to be just a nightmare, but deep down, I knew it was a dream about the future.

But when will it happen...?

As weeks turned into months and years, there was no sign of the aforementioned unsettling event. However, it was not a reassuring matter because I couldn't know when it would eventually happen. And if it did occur, how severe would the consequences be?

Every day, I tried to forget that nightmare and told myself that if it were to become a reality, it meant I would have to meet P'Karan first for sure. After all, she was also in the dream and had been helping me for the second time.

We are meant to meet again... Crystal clear, isn't it?

I willingly accept being the Weirdo Girl for others. I've been asking everyone throughout my medical student life if they know 'Kaomaysa.' However, the more I advance in my clinical years, the less time I have. I'm so occupied that I barely have enough time to sleep. In the end, the story of P'Karan remains in my heart without me actively seeking information from anyone, unlike in the early days.

Now, I have become an extern, or to put it more simply, a 6th-year medical student.

I've started my internship at a hospital in the suburbs, almost crossing over to a nearby province next to Bangkok. Fortunately, I managed to have

Meow as my roommate once again. For this reason, we don't feel too lonely and stay together in the medical staff's dormitory close to the hospital.

The rotation to the Medicine ward secretly made me desire to go back to the Obstetrics-Gynecology ward. Because Med (short for Medicine) requires me to wake up before the sun even rises.

Once I stepped into the OPD[], I encountered an overwhelming number of patients. When combined with being on duty, I sometimes felt like dragging a zombie body to the hospital.

Today, I got an afternoon shift, starting from 4 PM to midnight. I intended to take a short break, but Tree, the troublemaker, came to plead with me to take the night shift that begins from midnight to 8 am.

All day long, I pretended not to hear his request, but for some reason, in the end, at around one in the morning, I found myself sitting, sipping vegetable broth in the small, cramped pantry, not suited to the grandeur of this hospital, standing by for the ER.

Damn it! He disappeared without a trace with a message in the group chat claiming that the shift exchange with me was settled! How could I be inhumane enough to abandon the emergency room? Tonight, it's just me, some interns, and a resident.

When everyone in the ER saw the message in the LINE Chat in the evening that Tree exchanged his shift with me, they collectively took a deep breath, preparing themselves. Let me explain. Normally, when it comes to being on duty, they have a belief in the "lucky shift" and the "deadly shift."

Whenever those destined for a lucky shift are on duty, there won't be too many patients or a crisis. Of course, in contrast, those bringing in the deadly shift are doomed to face many patients and crises.

There's no need to guess; you got it right. Yes, I am the kind of person who was born with the deadly shift fate. The entire emergency room uniformly sighed when they saw the duty roster.

Especially P'Chai, the middle-aged nurse always intentionally takes a heavy breath and lets out "Sigh!" loudly whenever I walk into the ER department. All I often do is smile dryly and reply:

"Today probably won't be that busy."

But just half an hour later, something usually happens and makes the whole department chaotic-a coincidence that undoubtedly gets me into trouble.

Back to the present, the pantry's door opens. From being the only one sitting and sipping vegetable broth, I'm additionally accompanied by P'Aye, a second-year resident in the obstetrics department, and P'Beam, a youthful male intern who recently returned to continue his internship in Bangkok after working in the Northeastern region for a year.

Both of them went out to pick up the ordered food from the Grab service in front of the hospital. There is a belief here that ordering food to be eaten inside is prohibited, as it seems to be a way of bringing people into the emergency room. However, P'Aye and P'Beam cleverly handle it by walking out to pick up the food at the front door themselves. So simple, right?

"Here you go! Big Bro Choke's Roast Duck! It's the most delicious because it's the only roast duck shop around here that closes at the same time as the pub." P'Aye speaks with a cheerful tone and places a large food box in the middle of the table where I sit and wait for the late-night meal. The delightful aroma wafts into my nose, making me impatiently rub my hands together. I smile excitedly at the prospect of eating before getting up to help P'Beam grab plates, bowls, and spoons.

We save some portions for the older nurses. Once, we ordered food and went to call them, we ended up getting scolded by P'Chai, the middle-aged nurse who was the most disciplined. With a stern gaze and a firm tone, she said that if we wanted to eat, we should just go ahead and eat. If she had free time, she would come in herself. This made the other nurses hesitate to enter and eat until P'Chai came in.

There is a reason behind it. Several years ago, a small incident occurred. Someone mentioned that P'Chai was extremely hungry because she hadn't eaten anything since noon. So, she quietly went to enjoy chicken biryani in the pantry.

However, she was misunderstood by emergency patients who had abdominal pain. The incident led to a lengthy social media post criticizing her. Since then, she has become exceptionally strict in every aspect.

During lunch breaks, she briefly rests, and in the afternoon, she comes back to work. Especially when she's on duty, she just briefly comes to brew and drink coffee. She never stays for late-night meals, and when a senior nurse with such strict discipline sets that kind of standard, the younger nurses are obliged to follow suit.

Therefore, there are only two women and one man in this pantry right now—myself, P'Aye, and P'Beam—sitting and enjoying Big Bro Choke's Roast Duck while standing by for incoming patients.

We talk about spooky stories, starting with P'Aye sharing some ghost legends. Then, P'Beam waves his hand, asking for a change of topic because he is easily frightened and fears trouble sleeping.

"So, what do you want me to talk about? When it's work, you complain about stress. When it's ghosts, you are scared."

"How about the story you haven't finished earlier when we went to get things together?"

"We talked about a million things while walking."

"The story about that fellow."

"Ah~!"

At this point, you might get confused, so I'll summarize it for you. In medical school, the journey begins from Year 1 to Year 3, focusing on

fundamental theoretical courses. After that, clinical rotations start from Year 4 to Year 6. In the final year, students like me is referred to as an 'extern.'

However, the journey doesn't end here.

After completing the fundamental courses, we move on to become practicing physicians, known as 'interns,' like P'Beam, who is here enticing a change of topic through scholarships or skill enhancement programs.

Once the internship is completed, we now have the privilege to choose whether to become a general practitioner or pursue further specialization.

Our P'Aye is at this stage as well - she is a resident (which practically means she has to live mainly within the hospital setting). There are various specializations available, such as internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, forensic medicine, orthopedics, and others. The duration of study varies for each specialization. Some take 3 or 4 years, but others, for example, neurosurgery, may take 5 years. Due to these differences, the residents are divided by their respective years of study: Resident 1, Resident 2, Resident 3, Resident 4, and Resident 5.

The residents in the final year are the chief residents and are referred to as the 'chief residents.'

After achieving specialization, some of them become practitioners in that specific field. However, others continue to deepen their knowledge even further through fellowship.

We refer to those residents as 'fellows. Let me give you some examples: gastroenterology, ophthalmic plastic and reconstructive surgery, and again, other branches. Some fellowships may take 2 years, depending on the field. It's quite extensive indeed. Since I haven't finished my studies yet, let's leave this topic for the future.

As soon as they successfully complete all their studies, they become 'staff,' or to put it simply, 'professors.'

We've been away quite a bit. Now, let's get back to the intriguing stories of P'Aye and P'Beam. I'm also eagerly waiting to hear about who they are gossiping about. I've recently joined this hospital, and I've acquainted myself with almost all the externs and some of the residents. However, when it comes to fellows, I don't know anyone.

"Earlier, I saw her hastily getting out of the car. I think it's an on-call shift, and she got called."

The on-call shift means being available to come to work on short notice by just a call. No matter where they are sleeping or how deep their sleep is, if there's an emergency, the doctors on call will be urgently demanded to come to the hospital. Not answering the call can lead to serious consequences.

I chew the duck while continuing to listen.

"I don't really like her, but I have to admit that she is genuinely beautiful. Plus, she's continuing her education in CVT[]. Honestly, just completing surgery residency already wows me. How could she stand for hours in the operating room without getting tired? More importantly, it's quite rare to see a woman in that department."

"That's nonsense. So many women become surgeons, sis."

"How many of them do we have at our hospital?"

"Around three... or four?"

"Compared to guys, isn't the number too small, Beam?"

"That's right. Pretty small."

Beam agreed.

"So, why do you dislike her?"

"She's both beautiful and talented."

P'Aye shrugs her shoulders.

"Her car brand annoys me."

"What brand is it?"

I'm the one who asks a question this time.

"Aston Martin."

"Oh..." Rich indeed.

"P'Aye, you can't dislike someone because you envy them. The fire in your eyes is already lit."

"It's not just about cars! There are so many other reasons."

"Like what?"

P'Beam and I synchronize our voices.

The oldest person in this room hesitates for a moment before revealing a juicy story.

"Once, I was an assistant to the obstetrician delivering a patient with a heart condition. I had to contact the cardiologist just in case of an emergency because the patient insisted on giving birth. That's how I met her. She seemed arrogant and cold. When I tried to start a conversation, she responded as if someone with matters to attend to."

"Those CVT doctors are all busy."

P'Beem still doesn't seem convinced. I share the same thought, but I prefer to say nothing. I don't want her to feel like we are ganging up on her.

Soon enough, the young intern with a bright face continues his inquiry.

"What was your conversation with her about?"

"Just normal gossip."

"No wonder she didn't want to talk to you."

"Beam, you jerk!"

Our intern got hit on his arm, for annoying the senior.

I chuckle at the vivid scene in front of me. When I was in the obstetrics ward, P'Aye helped me with many things, so I know she's someone who gets angry easily but calms down quickly. A little grumpy for a moment, and then she would return to being the same 'Angel of Gossip.'

That's her nickname, as her mouth really explodes every day. Both big and small news, they always spread from her.

Once she's already satisfied with hitting her junior, P'Aye turns her attention directly to the roasted duck before her. In the meantime, P'Beam starts to suspect something.

"But why didn't she specialize in CVT right from the start? She could have completed it in 5 years, but she chose to study general surgery for 4 years first and then became a fellow for another 2 years, making it longer than usual."

"That's what I wanted to know, but my investigation failed."

"Your nosiness is contagious, you know? I'm infected."

"Just you wait!"

Definitely, they will keep fighting each other all night long.

After moderately fulfilling my stomach with the duck, I go to wash my hands and brush my teeth, preparing to lie down on the staff room bed to recharge my energy. From now on, there might be emergency cases coming in at any time until morning. Especially with someone on a deadly shift like me, it's better to rest and be ready to stand by if the nurse comes to call.

I'm not sure exactly what time I nodded off, but before I could dream anything, I was awakened by a call from a nurse at around five-thirty. When I hurriedly went out with P'Beam, I was greeted by the sight of a pickup truck accident involving another vehicle carrying steel rods.

There were three injured persons, and two of them were in critical condition. In addition, there was another female patient experiencing severe abdominal pain, and a fifty-six-year-old male patient with asthma, his pre-existing respiratory condition.

P'Aye, being the oldest and most experienced, heads to the most critical case, where a steel rod had pierced through the patient's abdomen. The patient's being transferred to the OR. Meanwhile, P'Beam is busy inserting a breathing tube for the male patient who was severely injured and unconscious.

P'Aye, with her serious and clear voice, directs me to the bed of another woman involved in the car accident. Her leg was injured by shattered glass, and blood is flowing. Her blood pressure is normal, and her heart rate is slightly elevated, likely due to anxiety.

She makes a moaning sound, so I have to quickly attend to her.

But there's another female patient lying curled up in pain on the next bed... Her mother had personally brought her to the hospital. She seems extremely concerned about her daughter, who's in her early twenties and has been covering her tummy all the way here.

I'm interested in her case, not because she comes from a wealthy family, but because I have a strange feeling like she might be experiencing more severe symptoms than she lets on.

In the emergency room, we have the triage system. I found that the patient with the head injury has a wound on her head. There isn't visible bleeding, but if there's a significant impact on this area, we must be cautious about the possibility of intracranial bleeding.

It's pretty common where patients initially seem fine, like chatting normally without visible external injuries, but shortly afterward, they could pass away for that reason.

Therefore, the abdominal pain case has to wait in line.

The wound care for the patient has been done. While waiting for the CT scan results to determine if there's any intracranial bleeding, I quickly pay my attention to the young woman, who's curled up more than before.

As I approach, I can see her face more clearly and recall that she's a former contestant of a popular baking show on TV from several years ago. She became widely known as she won the competition. Back then, there was a minor issue between her and my friend '*Frang*.'

However, at this moment, I don't care about the past. I consider her one of my patients. As a doctor, I set aside any personal feelings and step forward to stand by her bedside.

With the memory of her face, I inquire about her symptoms, asking her to lie down and stretch while pressing on her abdomen to identify the specific area of pain. I also question her about the foods she has consumed recently. She hesitates with an uneasy expression before finally disclosing that she has a stomachache but she hasn't eaten anything unusual.

It seems like a non-acute condition, but for certainty, I think we should refer her for an X-ray.

"Do you also have diarrhea?"

"No... No diarrhea at all."

She replies weakly in a few words.

"If that's the case, it might be irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Nothing serious. Let me examine more closely, and I will prescribe medication for you to take."

""**Might be,** huh?"

Someone's voice rings from behind, startling my hand that's holding the patient's chart. Then, 'she,' the person who made the blaming sound, walks over to stand on the other side of the bed.

The moment I can see the face of the woman who just intentionally scolded me clearly, I feel like time is being paused.

P'Karan...

The more I scrutinize her face and every detail of the taller person, the wider my eyes open and the faster my heart beats.

The person I've been always looking for... is standing right before me now.

The kindhearted P'Karan is right here!

Is this a dream? I've been the Weirdo Girl to find her after all this time, and now she is standing right here in the most deadly chaotic emergency room shift in this hospital where I've only been assigned for a little over a month.

She, who appears to have aged from seven years ago, is dressed in a blue hospital gown. Her face, untouched by any adornments, looks like she was called for some urgent situation.

Even without any makeup, she remains a remarkably beautiful and captivating human being. Her almond eyes narrow down as if she's about to scold me more instead of being lenient.

"How did you dare to speak confidently and tell the patient the name of the disease? Where is the doctor in charge of the extern like you?"

"Well..."

"..."

"I'm about to refer her for an X-ray."

"And you made a diagnosis before that?"

I'm speechless. Being an extern, I often face criticisms during my shifts because there's still a lot for me to learn. However, the fact that she's standing in front of me, using that familiar husky voice that I have fallen in love with to scold me, makes my face almost shrink by two inches. I dare not say that P'Aye is the senior responsible for me, as she is busy with another emergency patient who needs urgent surgery.

"And you know only a few diseases, don't you? Since there's no pain on the right side, you concluded that it's not appendicitis but rather IBS, just like that."

I...don't know what to do, so I just keep my head down.

P'Karan used to hold my hand, help me cross the road, and touch my head on that day.

Now, she's a senior doctor who seems more ferocious than a honey bear and acts like she never knows me.

I can't believe that she has changed this much...

□□□□□

03. Like A New Leaf

I have been through a lot of deadly shifts. Sometimes, they involved groups of teenagers fighting, while other times, the incidents were caused by industrial errors. The most common scenarios, however, were accidents involving vehicles, especially during the late hours of the night.

Still, most cases are not as complex as that of the 23-year-old woman who was admitted with abdominal pain.

She doesn't have appendicitis, nor irritable bowel syndrome, and it isn't food poisoning either.

The X-ray results indicated some blockage in her intestines and stomach. I looked at it, astounded, unable to articulate what it might be. What I knew for sure is that it caused her intestines to swell as if they could explode at any moment.

P'Karan continued to pretend like she had never met me before. She furrows her brows while reading the results before making eye contact with the young patient who lay down dizzily as if she was about to lose consciousness.

The tall woman asks the nurse to close the curtain and then requests permission from the person on the bed. After that, she grasped the patient's hair, seemingly trying to prove something.

Then, our doctor in her sky-blue scrubs discovered that the young woman is wearing a wig. Carefully scrutinizing her, what makes me raise an eyebrow is her actual hair that doesn't fully cover her head but only some areas. The hair in the vacant areas seems to have been torn and pulled out.

The tall figure swiftly stepped back, turning to ask the nurse to contact the patient's relatives and coordinate with the OR team for urgent surgery. Then, she returns to me with those eyes that remained in the doctor's role.

"Extern."

"Yes, ma'am..."

"The patient experiences twisted abdominal pain, no bowel movements, no passing of gas, and occasionally vomits. The examination revealed some obstruction in the small intestine and stomach. What do you think it could be?"

"Is it food that may not have been chewed before swallowing?"

The older woman raises her right brow while looking at me.

"Could it be a lot to the point of causing obstruction?"

"Or is it because of... her hair?"

My eyes widened when I half-questioned, half-exclaimed. When the wig was removed earlier, noticed that the patient's head seemed to have strands of hair pulled out from several points.

However, when I tried to ask the patient about what she had eaten a moment ago, she denied having eaten anything strange. Or perhaps, she was too embarrassed to tell the truth...

"Rapunzel Syndrome," the senior doctor explained in a composed tone, matching her facial expression.

"It's a mental condition where one has the habit of eating their own hair, leading to intestinal blockage."

At this point, I could recall some memories from my fifth year when I skimmed through such cases that had occurred in other countries. It all started with symptoms of trichotillomania[*], but when the hair was

ingested and continued to accumulate in the stomach, it led to an intestinal blockage, immediately diagnosed as Rapunzel Syndrome.

With the results obtained, I couldn't imagine how long this young woman had been engaging in such behavior. However, if left untreated, the intestines would die, eventually turning into necrotic tissue. That's why P'Karan decided to perform the surgery herself instantly.

But is she a surgeon?

I didn't even have time to ask. The tall, agile woman had already walked out of the ER room with her wide, quick footsteps.

Although I wanted to follow and ask if she remembered that I was the one whom she turned back time to save and held hands to cross the road together, the scent of the medication wafting into my nostrils reminded me of where I am and what situation I am in.

I pursed my lips, reminding myself in silence that no matter what 'the person I fell in love with' is here; she is in the same hospital. Then, I divert my attention to matters that should take top priority in this room - saving lives.

"Ahhhh..."

The sound of a deep breath, forcefully exhaled, echoed from P'Chai, the one and only nurse who had just come in to brew coffee in the cramped, rectangular pantry of our department. Feeling weary, I rested my arms on the table, almost closing my eyes, and looked at the chubby figure of the middle-aged nurse who is probably sick of me.

P'Chai often put on this demeanor when starting her shift, but truth be told, she was a savior for externs like me in many ways...despite her somewhat authoritative personality and loud voice. That's how I knew the frequent sighs are just one particular form of expression. So, I still managed to mustera smile when she turns to look at me.

"Feeling sleepy? Go to the staff room, Kliao. The dining table is not a bed."

"I'll have my next shift soon."

Only 20 minutes left, and then I have to hurry for the next ward round.
Living in a life cycle of a deadly shift with my deadly body.

She lifts the coffee to drink, dark circles evident under her eyes.

"Good, luck."

"Thank you."

"No, not for you. I mean for me. Wish me good luck not to have the same shift with you every time. Otherwise, I'll surely die."

Am I supposed to feel hurt? But it's the biggest coincidence that I became an extern who often encounters shifts with loads of patients. Well, whatever, let it be a twist of fate. As far as I can remember, there was at least one time when I was on the ER shift, and that day, there were no critically ill patients at all.

Once P'Chai had finished her coffee with the speed of light, as if she doesn't want to stay in the room for long, she had casually left. At that moment, my drowsiness disappears as I just realized that I forgot to ask about the doctor named Kaomaysa... but it seems too late.

At the very same moment, P'Aye walked in, lazily stretching herself. She probably had just woke up from a fifteen-minute nap during the break. I wasn't sure if P'Beam quickly went into the restroom or went to sleep, but I could tell from her eyes that this resident doctor who had just walked in has something to share with us.

"Hey, she also visited the ER, didn't she?"

"She?" I echo the question with a puzzled tone.

"Well, remember the fellow that I mentioned, Kliao?"

Huh?

"You also got scolded by her, didn't you? Standing still, unable to speak up?"

I sit up straight, quickly blurting out.

"Is she the person you mentioned?"

"Yep. Didn't I tell you that her name is Karan?"

"You didn't tell me!"

In that case, does this mean she is a fellow at the CVT department, whom P'Aye hinted at being self-centered and arrogant?

"It seems like I enjoyed gossiping too much... but there's no need to make a fuss about it, right? You act like you know her."

And then she tilts her head.

"Well, do you perhaps know her?"

This time my voice lowers, "No, I don't..."

Judging from the way P'Karan calls me 'Extern' in front of others, as well as the way she acts like she doesn't know me...

What if I announced that when I was in high school, I somehow encountered her? P'Aye would question me in detail, and I would look like a liar because the other party seemed so distant and indifferent.

Or maybe she has forgotten... If I remind her, she might remember.

But who could forget such a thrilling reversal of time? My face hasn't changed at all. My hair bangs remain, and my body is still as short as before.

Or was it because of the emergency? Was that why she focused on the task at hand first?

I pushed aside those wild thoughts and concentrated as much as my brain can process on P'Karan's background.

At this point, I can finally address the question of whether she is a surgeon. Evidently, P'Karan must have already completed her surgical board or, in other words, she has successfully finished her specialization studies.

However, she is currently pursuing a further specialization in the field of thoracic surgery, commonly known to many as preparation for becoming a cardiovascular surgeon.

Instantly, I hurriedly search for her name on the internet, hoping to find something about her, and subtly probe P'Ayeas much as possible. Then, I discovered that P'Karun had used to be a general surgeon at a hospital in the northern region for a while before returning to Bangkok to continue her fellowship at this hospital.

Initially, Professor Dej, a medical staff member and the cardiovascular thoracic surgeon we all know, looked down on her because of his prejudice against female surgeons. Eventually, P'Karan somehow became a frequent assistant in surgeries, and he accepted her in the end. Whenever challenging cases arose, he often called her to assist as the assistant surgeon, or to put it simply, as the main assistant.

A thought popped up on the way to the general medicine ward for my morning round, and that is...

I want to join the surgical ward!

I want to join it right now!

But there are still several weeks left before my last day in the general medicine department. I blamed fate for why I wasn't lucky enough to be in the surgical ward first. By now, I probably would have encountered her, and our first meeting over the past seven years wouldn't have been awkward because of my clumsy diagnosis.

By the way, how is that young lady with abdominal pain due to hair entanglement doing? P'Karun might be in the OR performing surgery on her, or perhaps she has safely passed the danger zone and is now in the ICU.

I wanted to slap myself really hard for jumping to the conclusion that it's a symptom of irritable bowel syndrome. Even though I would have to call P'Aye to confirm anyway, the notion that it wasn't severe and didn't seem urgent almost made her...

This feels like P'Karan stepping in to help. According to the results we've got, her intestines couldn't wait any longer. Even though I got scolded and frozen by the older woman, I'm still impressed - as if I've fallen deeply in love with her, and I can't pull myself away.

That's right! I don't even know whether she has a boyfriend or not! It would be quite sad if I had to downgrade from secret admiration to a fleeting crush if she already has someone in her heart.

No choice! I have to urgently ask P'Aye to find this out!

"How was your shift last night~?"

Tree suddenly appears without warning and casually slings his arm around my shoulders as if he owns the place. He's ridiculously strong, like a buffalo, and since I'm so tiny, I feel overwhelmed that I have to wiggle out. As soon as I can stand on my own, I give him a stern glare.

"Deadly. You shouldn't doubt it."

"Come on! You'll have a break when I take over yours."

"Ha!"

Alongside my heavy retort, the elevator concurrently opens.

There was a familiar senior among the passengers. She's a celebrity here, well-known for her beauty and the friendliest smile ever.

'Ming' is her nickname. She's an anesthesiologist responsible for administering anesthesia or sedatives to patients in the operating room. I remember her well because when I was in the maternity ward, P'Ming was the kindest person around, while other staff in the OR always wanted to bite my head off.

"Hello, P'Ming!"

Both Tree and I raise our hands in a wai] gesture to greet the person in front of us. Tree, who is currently in the orthopedic department, must have met her as well. To put it simply, everyone knows each other.

P'Ming, the beautiful one, smiles at us before swiftly making her way out of the elevator as if she had urgent matters to attend to. This is a common sight for hospital staff.

Tree and I then take the elevator to continue our morning rounds after our juniors. We chat about trivial matters, and I learn that he hasn't caught the attention of that girl, as usual.

"By the way... Tree, do you know Kaomaysa?"

"Who's that? I bet the person was born on that day and was named straightforwardly by the parents."

"You didn't answer my question, but never mind. It seems like he really doesn't know her."

Actually, he plays a part in helping me meet P'Karan again. If I had finished my shift at midnight, there would have been no chance of seeing her there. But because I switched shifts to let Tree go and flirt with the girl, we happened to meet in the emergency room.

I feel kind of lucky that things turned out this way.

The general medicine ward regularly has a large number of admitted patients, and it's also normal for the OPD[] to have people coming in to receive medication or, otherwise, simply for new appointments. What I

know is that the numbers are never small. So, a day in the life of medical students like us goes on with our immune systems working at full throttle.

Although my mind is overwhelmed by curiosity and a strong desire to know more about P'Karan, there's no opportunity right in front of me.

After completing the evening round, I return to my dormitory at dusk. There, I foolishly collapse onto the bed after taking a shower. I pick up the phone and call P'Aye, expressing my eagerness to know more about the fellow. The resident teasingly says:

[It seems like my curiosity is contagious. Now, you've caught it from me.]

Sitting at the table and practicing leather stitching, Meow perks up amid the silence.

She seems to ponder something, probably thinking that her stitching isn't neat enough. Suddenly, I realize that my friend is currently in the surgical ward!

"Meow!"

"My ears are about to burst because of your shout! What's up?"

It seems like she is tired of practicing surgery. She turns her chair to talk with me. I sit up, legs crossed, and shout with a triumphant heart.

"You're in the surgical ward right now!"

"Yeah, I'm in the surgical ward now. Why act like you've never been in this ward during your 4th year?"

"Well, it's a different hospital."

"So what?"

"Last night was a deadly shift, and it's all because of this chaos that made me realize that the person I've been looking for is here in this hospital!"

This time, Meow sits still for a moment, reflecting on the memories, before shaping her mouth into an 'O' as if she vividly recalled how crazy I had been in searching for that woman. Then, we meet our eyes again.

"What's the name of the person you're looking for? Kaoganya?"

"It's Kaomaysa."

The roommate nods her head slowly,

"That CVT fellow, right?"

"Yes! Yes! yes!"

I answer quickly, eyes widened, and then the lingering questions flow like a river,

"Have you met her, Meow? Have you been in the OR together? Was she very serious during operations? Did she play relaxing music in there? What kind of music was it? Tell me everything, please, like her personality and... Well, does she have a partner?"

"Calm down. You're getting worked up like it's a rap battle."

"Okay, I'm listening."

My friend, known since our first year, raises her fingers to address the points.

"First, I've never been in the OR with her, and I pray I never have to. I'm not ready to face serious cases like heart surgeries or blood vessel explorations. Second, the surgical ward doesn't just have only one or two damn doctors, airhead! And you should know, that externs are more familiar with residents. Most of the fellows stick with the professors. Third, I don't know if she has a partner just like how I have no idea about the names of all the doctors in this hospital."

"...."

"If she's someone you really know, why don't you just go talk to her?"

I sigh and decide to open up, even though that might shake my own heart a bit.

"Well, she seems strangely cold..."

"Hmm, maybe she believed that it was an emergency time. You said it yourself, it's a deadly shift. Anyway, you've been looking for her for years. Tomorrow, just wait and catch her before she goes home. Greet her, that's it."

"How am I supposed to know when she is going home?"

"I'll check for you. Who am I? I'm Meow. I've got many eyes and ears."

"Got many eyes? Are you a pineapple?"

"Am I a watermelon? F*ck you, Kliao. Helping out, yet still bothering me."

"Just kidding," I smile after holding a gloomy face for a long time due to my nervousness about that woman.

Perhaps it's because I know that there will be friends to help me meet P'Karan under less chaotic circumstances. The emotional graph, therefore, loosens up, and hope emerges that in the next moment we talk, the woman I've fallen for will raise her hand and gently pat my head together, just like back then...

"Meow"

"What else?"

"Well, there must be a girl around twenty who needs intestinal surgery in your ward... I mean, I didn't intend to dig anything, but she arrived when I was on ER duty, so I just want to know if she was safe or not."

"Oh, the person P'Kaomaysa operated on last night, right? She's now in the ICU to monitor her condition, but the surgery went well."

We leave the details behind because I don't intend to talk about the patient. I just want to know if she's safe. Upon learning this, I feel relieved.

The evening slowly passes just like the way Meow drags her exhausted body to the top bunk. And I roll over, tossing and turning, wondering how the conversation with P'Karan would turn out if we didn't talk to each other in a critical situation.

Imagination fails me completely. All I know is that the lump in the middle, leaning towards the left, is throbbing and pulsating with excessive joy.

This is very exciting!

I raise my right hand to look at it and then smile when I think about the moment that I got it back, thanks to her magical ability to turn back time.

At the end of the day, I can't sleep all night. Rolling over, smiling sometimes, worrying at other times, alternating so much like I'm on the verge of going crazy. I only manage to doze off for a brief moment before the alarm clock's ring pierces my ears as a signal to get up, take a shower, and prepare to play the role of a doctor.

This morning, I leave the room with Meow, and we meet Tree, who's standing in the bike parking area. Meow intentionally lets out a sigh in an exaggerated manner as if she's so bored with this guy. Then, she pretends to ignore whether he's standing there with us or not.

There's something between these two, a small thing called annoyance. Meow likes Tree and has liked him since they met during their externship. But he's so oblivious and captivated by a celebrity that he can't see Meow's affections.

Even when Meow bought a gift wrapped with a pink bow, he couldn't figure it out. Meow gave him hearts on Instagram regularly, but they never caught his attention. Even going to the extent of posting a caption on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, like 'I love trees because I love Tree~,' he still didn't get the hint.

That's why whenever the three of us are together, I end up being pushed to stand in the middle because she's fed up with his foolish persistence.

'Wait until he stops being a celebrity enthusiast first, then maybe I'll flirt with him again. He's so annoying!'

That's what Meow said.

I just hope that if one day their love sparks, I won't end up being a dog interfering with them.

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A day in the life of a medical student revolves around preparing to become a full-fledged doctor.

I can't even check my phone messages. Even during lunchtime, I have to quickly eat and then head to the OPD in the afternoon. Everyone knows it; the whole world knows it-there are always a lot of outpatients in the general medicine department.

As evening falls, it's time for ward rounds again. During that journey, the phone in my pocket vibrates twice. I step forward with my short legs along the pathway while reaching into my pocket to check it.

My heart secretly hopes for a message from Meow, anything related to P'Karan. No, not really anything would do. Please be something good that would give me a chance to meet her and have a conversation with her.

Meoww, the Tree Lover:

Your P'Karan parked her car in the lot in front of Building XXX. But she's caught up in a case conference right now.

Kliao K:

It will take some time, right?

Meoww, the Tree Lover:

She just entered. It seems to be a challenging case. I saw many professors

going inside. They might come out in the evening. I'm not sure what P'Karan will do next, though.

Kliao K:

No worries. I'm good at waiting.

Meoww, the Tree Lover:

Sure. Based on the number of years you have been waiting, I believe you can wait patiently like a dog.

I found where she parked her car, but she's now stuck in a lengthy case conference. I feel like there's some force urging excitement, mingling with anxiety more than before, now that the waiting time is extended. But it's okay. We're separated by just a few buildings, and the workplace is still the same, albeit a bit spacious here.

I head to my evening round - my daily routine. Once I have finished, I leave everything behind and make my way to the parking lot as Meow instructed in the chat.

I remember that P'Aye mentioned her car brand as Aston Martin, and there it is, catching my eye at the very last spot, next to a black Mercedes-Benz. It seems like the doctors here are doing pretty well for themselves.

Someone once said that love is insane, and maybe they're right. I'm sitting here waiting on a bench in a walkway close to that parking lot, just because I want to catch a glimpse of her face.

I'm not sure when P'Karan will come out of the case conference, so I don't dare venture back to my dormitory or go find something to eat. It's like I've been waiting for years to see her face, so it's almost unbearable now. I want to talk to her today, not tomorrow.

5.00 PM...

6.00 PM...

And... another five minutes to 7 PM.

It seems so silly, especially when a friend texts me this message.

Meoww, the Tree Lover:

Kliao, where are you? Don't tell me you haven't stopped by the dorm yet. You'd be too foolish to sit there waiting for hours!

I'm about to type 'Umm, yes,' to accept my foolishness, but then the corner of my eye catches a tall figure, a silhouette ingrained in my memory. When I turn to look, full-on with both eyes, I find the woman wearing a dark shirt and black pants; indeed, she's the one I've been anxiously waiting for.

P'Karan walks straight towards me lifting her hand to massage her neck and relieve the fatigue. Initially, those narrow eyes didn't catch sight of me sitting at the connecting walkway until I quickly stood up, making her aware. Her feet clad in white- and-red sneakers hesitate for a moment.

Time seems to freeze again.

For a moment, we lock eyes from a distance of no more than five meters before I slightly lower my head, admitting guilt.

"I'm sorry for what happened in the emergency room last night. In the future, I won't make a diagnosis in front of the patients without thoroughly reviewing the X- ray results ever again."

As I address the work issue first, she appears slightly surprised, but her expression remains calm and composed like ice.

"Aha."

As her feet seem about to take another step, I hurriedly bridge the distance, getting closer than before, to say the things I've wanted to tell her for a long time.

"P'Karan... Thank you so much."

Silence is the response from the other side.

"Well... Can you remember me?"

The result remains the same. That makes my heart sink, and a bitter taste creeps up on my face. However, since the tall figure hasn't walked away, I muster the courage to offer a sweet smile, take the bull by the horns, and say again.

"I'm the one whom you traveled back in time to save on that day."

"What are you talking about?"

The older person cuts in with a cold and monotonous tone.

"Phantom Pain, do you remember?"

I refer to the phantom pain condition back then that she came to cure.

"You were the one who handed me the paper bag..."

"I don't understand what you're talking about."

"H... How could that be? At that time, you were an extern and..."

"Excuse me."

P'Karan concludes her words, averts her gaze, and swiftly walks past me. The sound of footsteps gradually fades, leaving me standing there still, unable to utter anything after receiving such a harsh response in her icy voice.

She really can't remember anything?

How could it be possible? When it comes to such significant matters, it's not easy to forget.

I don't know why our encounter has turned into this. The woman who once came to help and patted my head...

The woman who made sure I still had my right hand to take care of the patients...

The very same woman I sang songs to search for... She has now become an unfriendly and distant senior fellow who makes me feel heartbroken even before anything begins.

How should I feel about her now...?

□□□□□

🌿04. That Fellow's Magnetism🌿

At 8.30 PM, while I'm lying face down on the pillow in complete despair, the rhythmic beats of the ballad playing from Meow's phone can't do much to improve my mood.

"Is there some kind of curse in this room? Everyone living here seems to be heartbroken."

The roommate, sitting in the chair beside the bed and combing her hair, speaks up after listening to my story from the evening. She suggests that the reason both she and I fall in unrequited love might be due to a curse in this room, which honestly kind of makes sense.

"That's probably how it is."

"But don't be too discouraged. According to my investigation, P'Karan is still single."

"She's single, but she probably doesn't like me anyway."

"Is it that easy for you to give in? After the entire seven years searching for her?"

"...."

I have nothing to say. I just sigh into the very same pillow.

I actually have a night shift tonight, but Tree has compensated by taking my place because we exchanged shifts. This means I can have a lengthy sleep like a fool, heartbroken over how P'Karan coldly neglected me during the twilight hours.

I can still vividly remember her eyes! Damn it! The image is so clear in my mind that it secretly hurts my heart!

Rrrr Rrrr

Right then, my communication device vibrates. I'm not a social media addict, but being a medical student, I can't ignore the possibility that someone might have sent an important message. I reach for the phone charging next to my pillow and unlock the screen. P'Aye's LINE message pops up, along with the topic I asked her to investigate.

Do I still want to know it? I feel unexplainably discouraged. Imagine this - I've been searching for someone all along. I pursue medicine because of her, and thanks to her, I have a purpose in life.

I've been in love with her, and suddenly just like that, I got those reactions from her. It makes me feel like there's a hand piercing a needle into the bubble of my dreams, something like that.

AYE:

The new information is sure to shock you, Kliao.

Kliao K:

Can I refuse to know it?

AYE:

P'Karan has two mothers!

Kliao K:

I suppose her family matters must be complicated.

AYE:

Nahhh! It's not like her dad having a mistress.

AYE:

She doesn't have a father from the start. She has two mothers only!!

I don't need to know all the detailed intricacies anyway. After all, she probably sees me as just a random kid.

But... Can I truly get over her?

In the end, I just can't bring myself to ignore her!

Kliao K:

May I call you, P'Aye? I'm afraid the details might be missing if we type.

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The next day

My mom calls in the morning. Luckily, I have just finished my rounds, so I can spare a little time to take the call from home.

[Are you not planning to come back home at all? People around here keep asking about your disappearance. They all think you're pregnant and living with your husband!]

"Why don't you clarify the misunderstanding?"

[What can I do? It's your dad who believes so.]

"But you both know that I'm studying to be a doctor. I am busy every day. I used to go back home regularly during my first three years. Before entering the fourth year, I told you in advance that I would have to work in the hospital and have night shifts as well."

[That doesn't matter. If a daughter doesn't come home for a long time, who would look at it in a good light?]

"...."

[Dad even claimed having a daughter is like having a toilet in front of the house.]

"To the point of comparing me to a toilet?"

I feel a lump in my chest due to the tightness in my heart. I want to respond to this concern that makes me feel so bad, but words don't come out easily. Instead, I have to gulp them down because the one who said that is my father. My fists clench, and I force a smile to reassure myself, despite my shivering voice. Even if the other side can't see it, just smiling comforts me.

"If the person who passed the medical exam were Fong, would Mom and Dad say something like that? Or would you praise and please him because he is your beloved child after all? When Fong messes things up, do you ever see him as a toilet in front of the house?"

[What are you saying! It's just an old-fashioned analogy. If you behave well, you won't be a toilet. Learn to take care of your parent more! You're already 24, but you still don't have a boyfriend! Your dad's worried you might get pregnant before getting married or introducing your boyfriend to him beforehand. His words are just a bit too harsh.]

Mom and Dad are just biased and have disproportionate love for their daughter and son. There's no need to justify it.

[And you shouldn't bring up your younger sibling. I never taught you to envy your brother.]

"...."

The phrase 'parents love their children equally' doesn't apply to every family.

"That's enough. I have to go to the OPD now."

I don't want to hear it anymore. It makes me feel worthless.

I press the end call button and walk away, trying to think about something else to divert my thoughts. It's good that P'Karan's background can completely bury my family matters. Spending time analyzing that cold-hearted fellow is much more creatively engaging than that.

...Even if she gave me the cold shoulder, she's still the one who saved my right hand, gave me life goals, and kept my breath.

Last night, P'Aye called and mouthed off in detail about everything she had been investigating. The resident shared a story about someone else as if her life depended on gossiping. She enlightened me about the phrase 'having two mothers' too.

In summary, one of her mothers is a businesswoman, while the other is a public prosecutor. Both are Thai and in a same-sex relationship. They have acquired foreign citizenship because the businesswoman mother fulfilled the conditions to become a citizen of another country.

Then, they got married, holding dual citizenship of that country and Thailand. The key point is that in that country, same-sex marriage is allowed. Certainly, they registered their marriage, and then they went to a sperm bank to have children together. P'Karan is their first daughter.

I've heard some rumors that she has a sister. It seems her parents took turns to get pregnant. Whatever, P'Aye focused mainly on P'Karan in her investigation.

[So, her moms are lesbians who obtained foreign citizenship, got married, and had children. It appears that she was conceived with sperm from a Western donor, which might explain why her voice carries a distinct Western tone. But I'm not sure about the details of how they took turns and whose eggs were used. This part is too detailed; it'll take time to investigate.]

P'Aye took a sip of water before adding:

[It's interesting, isn't it? In this case, it means the child doesn't have a father. Is this family complete then?]

"What's wrong about that? She still has two mothers. Whether a family is complete or not doesn't depend on having both a mother and a father. I have both mother and father, but I feel a lack of warmth. Completeness isn't about having everyone; it's about a feeling that is fulfilled."

[Um... I'm sorry.]

"....."

[Sometimes I speak without thinking. Please don't take it seriously. Anyway, let's continue discussing her story.]

We talked all night long, allowing me to gather information about the woman I have fallen in love with. The idea of having two mothers might seem unusual, but I found it fascinating.

I don't think there's anything wrong with it. Perhaps it's because I myself like women and appreciate the laws in many countries that allow same-sex couples to marry. That's why I think it's cool instead of viewing it from the perspective P'Aye initially had.

Another point is that she is a highly skilled surgeon, to the extent that everyone believes she is destined to become a professor. However, she made the decision to further specialize, delving deep into the field by becoming a fellow in the CVT department. This is equivalent to a residency in this department during the fourth and fifth years.

In addition, there are minor findings. Her younger sister is a lawyer, while P'Karan herself entered university at the age of 17 and completed her medical degree in just six years at the age of 23. She also worked as a physician for two years, using that time to further hone her specialized skills.

She bought her Aston Martin in cash, and her family's wealth is so substantial that people secretly wonder why she chose the challenging path

of becoming a doctor. And, she's single...

Yes, P'Karan is single, confirmed by a well-informed source in the Obstetrics Ward.

Again, I would like to be happy, but when I think about her cold, distant voice, I realize that even if she were single, she probably wouldn't want to have anything to do with me.

She's a person with magnetic attraction, yet clearly attempting to ignore me.

Damn it! Just thinking about it hurts me as if someone is using an electric shock device to jab at me.

While walking along the corridor, I run into my extern friend who's about to go for an OPD examination. She's a woman I recently got to know when I moved to this hospital. We're not very close, but we used to work on the same ward before.

She comes over to greet me, even though we'll have to part ways soon as we're currently in different departments. I can confidently tell by the look in her eyes that she aims to scrutinize me about something.

"Do you like P'Karan?"

"What? How did you know? Who told you?"

"No one told me, but yesterday I passed by and saw you waiting for someone until it got dark. When I was walking back after looking for something to eat, I saw you talking to her in the hallway."

"Do you know P'Karan?"

"Of course, when I joined the Obstetrics ward, there was a Code Blue."

Okay, probably only me who has been searching for her recently found out by chance.

"But shouldn't externs like us befriend residents instead? The fellows are always with the professors during the day, and those in the surgical ward probably spend all day in the OR, wearing those green uniforms to the point it gets boring."

"Our hospital uses blue scrubs."

"Oh, well, they're similar. I just made a comparison."

She waves her hand dismissively.

It's just small talk to pass the time during the afternoon walk to work. She's not serious, but I am. And our topics keep changing because the other side keeps steering the conversation towards something not worth discussing, like how she found a cockroach in her wardrobe this morning.

I let it go with the flow because we're about to reach the outpatient examination room of the general medicine department.

While we're chatting, my eyes meet those of an older man. The chains on his ankles and the warden walking closely behind him catch everyone's attention with each step he takes. But for me, having seen the image of a convict in a hospital before, I don't want to stare directly at him to make him feel uncomfortable. So, I quickly avert my gaze as he passes by in the opposite direction. But only a few steps after we pass each other...

"You!"

A loud, abrupt voice echoes from behind, prompting both my friend and me and to automatically turn around with curiosity.

In that fleeting moment, before the guard can react, the convict's shoulder collides with him so forcefully that he staggers almost to the point of falling. I can't process anything in time, only aware that the enraged convict lunges forward, ignoring the risk of tripping himself. He swiftly uses his sturdy frame, to press me to the ground by my knees, before gripping my throat with his strong grip, making it impossible for me to breathe.

"I remember your face!"

“Ugh...”

It hurts. It hurts so much that, although the surroundings become chaotic, I have no idea what they are saying or doing. I can only attempt to pry the strong hand of another person away because the air is diminishing.

"You told that woman to handle me!!"

"Stop it!!"

The warden tries to pull him away and shouts for the assault to stop. That's the sound my nerves can comprehend most clearly at this moment.

The eyes of the man exerting pressure on my throat are filled with hostility and blame, as if my existence is the reason he became a convict.

While I remain clueless...

I have no idea what this madness is about.

□□□□□

🌿05.A Stubborn Woman🌿

[Are you okay?!]

The voice of my friend from the same music band, 'Belle,' erupts from the group video call. She's the hyper type. Whenever something startles her, she bursts out like a thunderbolt. So, it's not surprising that she reacts immediately after seeing my face.

"Um... I'm in my room now."

The faces of the other three - Nene, Frang, and Note - also look equally concerned. They know the convict who choked me at noon from the news that spread on both TV and the internet. This prompted our group call at this particular time.

Nene looks distressed for me, and her eyebrows are almost meeting.

[Your neck is all red. He's so vicious!]

[Do you want me to handle him for you? I can make him never gets out of jail and put his family in bankruptcy.]

Note is considering using her money to solve the problem legally, like hiring a lawyer or something, but I quickly shake my head, saying I don't want that kind of help.

I mean... I want to understand more about the whole story like what led to all this mess. Also, it seems like he's definitely going to face more charges after this anyway.

[Are you okay, Kliao?]

And it's Frang who asks me that as she notices something.

All four of them interrogate me together after seeing me remain silent.

I touch my neck, now red because of the assault, and sigh before responding to them.

"The warden who accompanied him already took him back to prison. Luckily, there were lots of people, so they helped me out. In the evening. I've also given my statement to the police."

[So, what the heck is this all about? Why did he attack you?] Note asks with a genuinely puzzled expression. [Is he insane? But in the clip, I heard him shouting that you told a woman to deal with him. Which woman? Or did he mistake you for someone else?]

"I don't know..."

My voice fades slightly, still shocked by the incident earlier in the day.

This alarming news reached the ears of almost all my friends and colleagues at the hospital. Even the staff expressed genuine concern during the evening ward rounds. Khim, my close friend since high school, called repeatedly in the evening to check on me, even though she's currently busy working on a script for a drama series.

Everyone assumes that the convict was out of his mind, but deep down, I can't help but connect this incident to the rooftop event in the past. At that time, I was reaching out to P'Karan, but then I was shot by a mysterious bullet and fell from the building. When I traveled back in time and returned to the crosswalk, I never encountered such an accident again.

These clues are quite puzzling.

Nobody would understand what I'm saying. No one knows that I once lost my limb and somehow got it back. If someone heard about this, they would likely think I was delusional, making up stories on my own.

But there's one person who knows... P'Karan.

She knows well that before she reversed time to fix things, various incidents happened to me, from the car crash to the bullet that was shot at me. Hypothetically, if someone was trying to take my life, and then suddenly, after time reversed to the crosswalk, my life miraculously returned to normal. This could be suggested as evidence that certain points in the timeline were altered.

And who could be responsible for these corrections, if not the time-traveling woman?

I keep these wild thoughts to myself as I focus on the phone screen where the four friends are waiting for a group conversation (with Belle and Nene sharing the same screen as they are together). They are extremely concerned about me, so I have to show them that everything is okay now.

The incident earlier did shock me, but it has since turned into curiosity and a quest for answers rather than anxiety and fear.

I don't know. Maybe because I've faced death twice before, this seems less daunting compared to those times.

[Are you sure it's nothing?]

Frang, my bandmate who loves cats more than anything else and is currently in the sixth year of veterinary faculty, worriedly asks as she notices my unusually quick recovery from fear.

[Would you like us to be with you?]

Nene seems to think that I might still be in shock.

I manage a faint smile.

"I'm fine, really. There's no need to go so far as staying over with me."

[Are you sure?]

Note repeats the question, with her voice pressing me to admit if I actually don't feel good inside.

[Sure!]

[You can speak out. Don't hold back, Kliao.]

This time, it's Belle again.

"Girls, I'm really okay. In fact, back in my fifth year, I once encountered people brawling in the emergency room. It was much scarier than this."

[Well, back then you weren't directly involved, right?]

Frang's still concerned.

"Enough! Enough! Enough! Let's stop talking about this! I'm fine. Right now, people at the ward are so worried that they are visiting me and crowding the dining room with food."

I know they all care about me, so I have to mention that the nurses and doctors have visited and brought some snacks for me. As soon as they hear my voice (trying to) reassure them, with my visible reluctance to discuss it further, all four of them agree not to talk about it anymore.

The five of us have been close since our freshmen year. At that time, our band wasn't even famous yet.

From about ten to now five hundred thousand followers, it's quite unbelievable even to me.

I still remember what happened in our first year at university. Nene had a crush on Belle all along, but Belle was too clueless to notice. Eventually, they started dating. Our band lost in a competition, but we gained popularity as Frang invited us to play music to raise funds for injured animals. A high school student filmed us and posted the video on social media, which became viral thanks to Note's beauty.

Yes, Note has the most outstanding appearance among us. Even girls like us would blush if we stared at her face for too long. But for her friends like us, not to mention her confident face, we are rather annoyed by her rich girl habits and nerve- wracking side.

She's in fact from a royal family, as her father is the king's grandson. Yet, she likes to wear aloha shirts just to annoy her father due to their conflicts.

By the second year of university, our band gradually gained more recognition. Our songs started to chart. And when we got into the third year, Frang found the right person for her, a girl named Klai-Duen. In the fourth year, Nene and Belle graduated.

Left behind, Frang and I continued pursuing our six-year program, and Note continued studying in her fifth year of the architecture program. Okay, not much happened in the fourth and fifth years, except that I finally experienced the clinical-level medicine program.

Nene went back to her hometown in Phetchaburi to reconsider whether to continue her graduate studies. Note still maintained her mischievous charm, causing a constant headache for her father. Time passed quickly, and Note graduated. Now, it's just Frang and me who still pursue our medical degrees; she's becoming a veterinarian, and I'm becoming a doctor.

Recently, the five of us hardly see each other in person. We mostly communicate through LINE, Facebook, or occasional phone calls. Our schedules rarely align. For example, Nene and Belle are busy with their master's degrees, Note, after graduating from architecture school, is dedicated to preparing for professional architect licensing exams.

Frang, who is studying veterinary medicine, also has clinical studies. As for me, you know how occupied I am with being an extern or sixth-year medical student. Basically, we have no time. I might have to move to a hospital in another region at some point too.

In summary, we haven't gathered to play music together like we used to in the first, second, and third years.

[So, I wanted to ask if you're free this Saturday. A senior that I know has invited us to play in his restaurant.]

The final topic for today is something Belle just remembered before ending the conversation. She intended to bring it up tonight, but the news about me

took priority, so she was concerned about that first.

She asked if we could meet in a few days at a relaxed spot owned by a senior she knows. Truth be told, another reason is that our fans often inquire on the band's fan page about when we will get together again. They miss us so badly.

Honestly, our individual Facebook and Twitter accounts have tens of thousands of followers. Especially for the hottie like M.R. Netapsorn, our Lady Note has a mixed fan base of both boys and girls, though it leans more towards female followers.

[I'm free this Saturday, as free as I want.]

That's being said by Note, the girl who enjoys nerve warfare with her father.

[If you want my availability, I'm available. But please, not too late at night. I'm worried about Duen.]

Frang, who is super devoted to her young girlfriend, says while turning to pat Klai-Duen's head. She is sitting next to her, diligently typing something with her laptop. Klai-Duen lifts her face and smiles, her cheeks almost obscuring her eyes.

That reminds me of the time when P'Karan gently patted my head...seven years ago.

[Only you're left now, Kliao. Because both Nene and I are definitely free.]

"This Saturday? Well... I'm free. Just need to go for a ward round in the morning and evening."

[Studying medicine is exhausting, right?]

Belle sympathizes, possibly referring to the incident when I was assaulted by the convict earlier today too.

We end the conversation around midnight. As soon as I finish showering and preparing for bed, the sound of the key turning in the lock echoes,

accompanied by the arrival of Meow. My roommate briskly enters the room after finishing her late afternoon shift.

She leans in beside me and asks how I am doing, bombarding me with series of questions. Despite being grateful for her concern, I start to feel exhausted from recounting the same story for the millionth time, with eyes longing for rest.

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The next day

My bike has a flat tire, and I am so gloomy that I am speechless. I know I've been postponing its inflation, but it doesn't have to be today for the vehicle to act up.

The truth is there's a bicycle pump in the storage room of the dormitory for us to use at times like this. However, since I needed to ask for the key, I decided it could wait until the evening. Meow also gave me a ride in the morning.

Arriving at the ward, I find out that yesterday's news has caught the public's attention. So, some reporters waited in ambush to interview my confused self. Fortunately, I didn't encounter them this morning.

It might be because I'm the lead singer of The Edge of the Universe too. They have been waiting for me even before 4 PM. I wouldn't have known about this if a stretcher bearer hadn't informed me.

To be honest, I find it emotionally challenging to discuss this topic publicly. I myself am still looking for detailed information, and they are likely to ask questions that can be twisted for sensational news. Last night, the hashtag #DrKliaoKhluen trended on Twitter.

My fan club rallied to encourage and comfort me. I also posted my thanks across all channels with a heartfelt message spanning more than ten lines.

Our fans didn't interfere or seek details from me, unlike some journalists who contacted me to appear on shows or video call interviews.

I wonder how I can get outside to find something to eat because it seems impossible to escape through any door. I think the only option might be to retreat to my room and order food to be delivered. It might be more expensive than the local curry shop near the hospital, but at least I won't have to deal with the numerous microphones and cameras they bring to ask questions.

Throughout the day, I almost split my brain into two parts-one for work and one for figuring out how to approach P'Karan about what she knows. I can't believe she genuinely forgot about it.

But deep down, I'm secretly worried that only I remember it so vividly, and she might not want to record it in her mind.

No, no way! If we could turn back time to help someone in such a serious event, we probably wouldn't easily forget it.

So, during the lunch break, I messaged Meow to find out when P'Karan would finish work tomorrow. She replied, 'You never learned, did you?' but agreed to check for me.

After finishing lunch around half past noon, I had enough time to rest before heading back to face the challenges in the afternoon. I went to the common room of the general medicine ward, where I found a female intern, crouched on the long sofa. Her purpose, same as mine, was to get a quick nap to recharge.

Then, I headed straight to the bunk beds and secured the bottom bunk, easing myself down and closing my heavy eyelids. Ever since entering medical school, I have become someone who can fall asleep easily-I mean... as long as there are no stressful thoughts, I can drift into slumber within minutes anywhere whether it's on a bed, a sofa, a mattress on the floor, in a car, blah blah blah.

I managed to take a short break for 20 minutes, and I could vividly remember what my dream was all about.

It was another round in the dream vortex, where I seemed to glimpse events in the future that have yet to occur. It was like a drizzle gradually starting and then intensifying. I don't know what day it is because the effects of P'Karan's time reversal seem to have a subtle impact, making it too blurry to identify.

Then, I woke up before the afternoon because I had set an alarm on my phone. I stretched myself a bit and got up fully awake. I took a moment to gather myself, then headed back into a medical student routine.

The nurses in the ward told me that the reporters who came to interview me were chasing after the hospital staff all over to gather information for the news. It escalated to the point where the director decided to hold a press conference and give interviews tomorrow.

Oh gosh! I never want this to be the talk of the town! If I had the power to turn back time, like some people in the CVT department, I would rewind time and make sure I never encountered that convict.

After completing the evening ward round, the final task of the day, considered the route that could take me to the dormitory without encountering any reporters. I remembered there is a narrow path between the buildings, slightly cramped but useful when we need to go back to my dormitory unnoticed.

"I'm leaving."

I tell everyone in the ward, tightening the tote bag on my shoulder.

"Alright, have a safe ride."

The elders in the ward convey their wishes for me to reach the dormitory safely, probably considering that I have faced something like that. They devote their time to respond despite being busy and even smile at me.

Even P'Ing, who is known for being a merciless nurse and respected by the doctors, cracks a brief smile before returning to her work.

I take the elevator as usual, but this time the journey back to the dormitory feels different because my flat-tire bicycle is parked in the dormitory's parking lot. On the bright side, I don't have to retrieve it and potentially encounter someone waiting to interview me.

As I walk and glance down at the path where a small crowd has gathered, I suddenly pause. My attention is drawn to a pair of sneakers, familiar yet of a different color than I remember seeing. It is an unavoidable stop. I lift my head to look at the person wearing those shoes, who has just halted her steps as well.

We just 'accidentally' meet each other. With her indifferent face, P'Karan doesn't show joy or displeasure.

"The way you're heading has some reporters waiting," she says calmly, making me tilt my head in suspicion of how she knew where I was heading.

"Huh?"

"But there's none on the way to the fountain pond."

That's another route connecting to my dormitory. It's a location where, during the holidays, medical students often go to take photos or vlog because the grass field is beautiful. However, on regular days, it's deserted as everyone is busy, and I, who rarely visit it, never thought of going there.

But... How did P'Karan know which paths had journalists waiting for me?

She doesn't wait for me to ask anything further. The taller woman dodges to continue walking with her long strides. I only manage to say:

"Wait a minute!"

I know she can hear it, but she just decides not to turn back or pay attention to me.

I don't get a chance to ask anything more than that.

What kind of person is she?

When destiny finally brought us together, I thought our relationship could be better than exchanging a few sentences or avoiding each other stubbornly like this.

I gaze at the back of the female fellow I've been searching for after all this time. As I take a gentle breath, I realize that the past seven years have become a dream of their own.

Standing clueless in the corridor probably wouldn't help. Going back to my dorm, either to rest or distract myself with the encouragement from the fans' messages on my phone, seems like a better idea. I tell myself, pull myself together, and move forward.

However, there is another problem to contemplate. I'm torn between following the path I originally intended or choosing the one that P'Karan suggested.

Someone as miraculous as her...would probably know better than me.

Alright, let's go to the fountain pond!

Rrrrrr!

The communication device in my pocket vibrates along with its distinctive ringtone. I take a step, trusting P'Karan's decision, and reach for my hand to check who's calling.

'Mom'

Oh... she must have just seen the news.

"Hello, Mom."

The sound of anxiety rises from the end of the line.

[I just saw the news, Kliao! Are you okay? And what did the police say?!]

I'm quite glad to know that my family is still worried about me. I thought they might only be interested in Fong-Samut who's in his fourth year of business major.

Alone, I smile while walking along the way.

"It's nothing. The police said that the convict was out of his mind."

Although it's quite suspicious, but I decide not to disclose that to anyone.

"Anyway, the director is now aware of the situation. My colleagues are also concerned and supportive-"

I haven't even finished my words when the phone on the other end is abruptly snatched away. In an instant, my heart startles as the concerned voice of my mother turns into the stern and harsh tone of my father.

[Think about your father and mother before doing anything. What will people think if you're involved with a convict? If you have a boyfriend, find a good one, won't you? It's so embarrassing to get involved in this kind of situation!]

"Dad, what are you talking about?"

My voice trembles with frustration. Every time I have a conversation with my father, it seems like there's no way for us to communicate smoothly. He seems to only want to belittle me.

[What else is there? If your boyfriend hadn't gotten involved with him, he wouldn't have retaliated and harmed you, right? Everyone thinks like that!]

"Who's saying that? Is it you who think and speak nonsense yourself?"

[Watch your mouth! Don't argue with me! How could a decent person walk into a hospital and get choked by a convict? The news also said that he's in prison for a murder case. How can I think of it as anything other than your boyfriend's enemy?]

"You've gone overboard! I don't even have a boyfriend yet!"

[How can you not have one? Then, why did you disappear without contacting us?]

"Like I said, the fourth to the sixth years of medical school is very busy. I have to wake up early and-"

[How busy could it be? I see doctors working so little. They're late for rounds, and patient examinations only take a few minutes. The remaining free time is probably spent rushing back home.]

That's what my dad believes. He never knows that a doctor must have a ward round before they come to examine patients in the OPD. Sometimes, there are case conferences, and there's plenty of work in the ward aside from that, not to mention night shifts and ER shifts or other medical procedures. There are also the surgical ward and duties in the OR!

He might have seen the minor tasks doctors perform, but that doesn't mean we have a lot of free time.

Although I want to argue vehemently, I continue walking forward, clenching my fists and suppressing my emotions. Then, I respond to the person on the line.

"Dad, it would be better not to speak about things you don't really fully understand."

The other party doesn't lower the tone of his voice even a bit.

[So, if you're really busy, where's your paycheck? Idiot! I've never seen a single baht from you!]

"I've already explained that medical students don't receive salaries. Dad, can't you remember anything?"

[If that's the case, don't talk back to me! You can't even make money on your own! Yet, you still bring up your studies as your excuse! How can you not have time to come back once a week? At least, you should come back

and help sell things or do the chores for your mom! You're a woman, but so lazy that I'm speechless!]

Over the years, wasn't it me who helped them sell things since I was a child? I've helped with housework and everything, while my little brother, Fong-Samut, just lies around playing games or riding his bike to hang out with friends. No one says anything to him!

Whatever I do, it's always not enough. But if I don't do anything, I'll be criticized with harsh words that make me feel bad.

The sky looks so gloomy as if it reflects my heart that can't find happiness right now.

"If... If Fong had a heavy workload and didn't have time to visit home, would you speak this way?"

[Are you jealous of your brother again? You're so annoying. Just learn to behave well as a woman should! Indeed, having a daughter is like having a toilet right in front of the house!]

"..."

I knew that he would say something like that.

But for some reason... it hurts deeply every time.

Again, I'm overwhelmed by the thought that maybel shouldn't have been born at all.

Dad continues to speak for several more sentences. It's clear they're just more negative criticisms, as usual. I don't want to take those words to heart, so I simply remain silent, removing the communication device from my ear without disconnecting the call. If Dad wants to say something, let him. After all, my attempts to explain never seem to matter to him.

After a while, he hangs up the call, leaving behind a lingering sense of negativity that clings to me, not easily shaken off.

I'm so exhausted, to the point where I don't even want to exert any more effort. Also, right in front of me is the fountain pond surrounded by lush green grass. My mind is blank, unable to come up with any thoughts, and the desire to abandon my body and soul leads me to sit down by the pond, gazing into its clear water, instead of rushing back to the dormitory.

It's just a moment of emotional vulnerability, and I don't want to bring this melancholy back to the room to avoid arousing Meow's suspicions. I don't mind talking to her at all, but I just don't want to reveal the truth that my family... makes me feel so terrible.

I stare at the water cascading from the statue, colliding with the water's surface. I sit with my arms wrapped around my knees, drawn up to my chest. No matter how hard I try, when my loved ones don't recognize it, the pain and suffering persist. It takes me back to my childhood when I received a birthday gift from a relative—a white dog-shaped lamp.

I was so happy when I unwrapped it, thinking I could use it to read books on the bed at night. However, Fong-Samut, who was sitting next to me, suddenly claimed he wanted it. At ten years old, he whined to take it from me, even though he didn't need it.

'Kliao, give it to your little brother.'

My mother looked at me that evening and calmly said, even though I clutched the lamp tightly and my expression clearly showed my refusal.

Seeing that I remained silent, my father, who was watching TV, furrowed his brow and turned to us, his tone irritated.

'Kliao, give it to your brother! Can't you see he's about to cry?'

I shook my head.

'No, I want to use the lamp for studying. The teacher said sixth-grade students should prepare for the middle school admission exams.'

"Nonsense! Why bother studying? When you grow up, you'll just get married and take care of your kids anyway!"

"...."

Dad has always believe that girls shouldn't study so hard because they're expected to become homemakers eventually. He also stigmatized me, saying I would have become pregnant before finishing high school because I often came home late, or sometimes not at all. I told him I stayed over at Khim's apartment, my close female friend, but he only grew more furious and skeptical.

Maybe I should just accept my family as they are. Why let them bring me down so much?

Yesterday evening, Fong-Samut also called. But I chose to ignore it and focused on preparing my clothes before taking a shower. As he noticed that I ignored two calls in a row, he sent some text messages instead.

Fong Sa:Sis

Fong Sa:I saw the news. Is everything okay?

I didn't reply. I didn't want to respond, so I just left it unread, even though I had completed every daily routine. Until late at night, he messaged me one more time.

Fong Sa:P'Kliao

Fong Sa:Are you okay?

And this morning, he sent some again.

Fong Sa:Sis

Fong Sa:Why did you respond to your fans' comments on Facebook but not to my messages?

Fong Somut has become a grown-up and is now a fourth-year university student. He doesn't whine and take things away from others like when we were kids, but for some reason, I just don't feel like getting involved with my younger brother.

It's like I want to keep some distance and avoid association unless he really needs help, then I would willingly assist as an older sister.

I can't help but at least do something for him because, no matter what, he's still my younger brother who hasn't done anything wrong... I guess.

He hasn't done anything wrong, but I still don't like him. I've been envious of him all my life, and maybe I'll continue to envy him.

Before realizing it, I find myself sitting cross-legged on the grass for about ten minutes. The sky is getting dark, and when I check the watch, it's almost six in the evening. Seriously? I haven't ordered anything to eat yet! I'll probably have to wait a while before food arrives.

So, I stand up, brushing off the dust from my skirt before tightening the tote bag on my right side. I walk back on the footpath once again, with my mind still unable to shake off the daze. With each step, my wandering resembles that of a young woman seeking her own space, yet unable to find it.

But then, at that moment, suddenly I can sense someone walking behind me because of the sound of light footsteps. I quickly turn around, thinking it might be an external friend or a journalist waiting to interview me about the case. However, I get the biggest surprise.

P'Karan...

The tall figure of the young woman who shouldn't be here makes me widen my eyes slightly. She maintains a calm expression while looking at me. She's no longer wearing a gown but is in a formal outfit, holding a blue umbrella in her hand.

I remember having numerous questions I wanted to ask her, but when it actually comes to being this close, just about a meter away, I find myself

unable to articulate those sentences. All I can do is exchange glances with the older woman.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

And 9...

It's an encounter with her dark eyes without any dialogue, lasting about nine seconds.

It may sound incredibly short, but it is a moment that stirs my dull heart to beat rapidly. It brings a flush to my cheeks, and my right hand tucked in the pocket is firmly gripped with a sensation that's about to melt away.

She opens the umbrella she holds, positioning it midway to shield me from getting wet if raindrops start to fall. Yet, the main point is that, at this moment, it hasn't started raining. It's true that the sky has been gloomy for a while, but there is no sign of rain at all- perhaps it will come later tonight, right?

But... the person standing right in front of me is not an ordinary person.

Tap! Tap!

The sound of water lightly taps against the back of the umbrella from a couple of drops. And within the blink of an eye, it transforms into a gentle drizzle, causing droplets to cling to the edge of the umbrella and cascade down onto the ground around us, two people standing beneath the same shelter.

I barely have time to process it; this woman is... beyond any expectation, more than just a miracle.

Still, opening an umbrella before it starts to rain is less astonishing than turning back time to hold my hand and help me cross the street that day.

"The distance is just this much. Why haven't you reached your dorm yet?"

That's her question.

"And what about you, P'Karan? How do you know exactly when the rain will fall?"

And here is the question that I utter while looking into those mysterious eyes that seem difficult to read.

□□□□□

📖❀06.Reversing Time with You❀📖

Part: Narrator

According to the dictionary, of American 'time' refers to a period of duration, ongoing or existing, commonly expressed in units such as moments, occasions, days, months, years, and so on.

In the realm of science, time is one of the crucial components of the universe.

However, for human beings who live on a planet that rotates on its axis and orbits the sun, time...is something intangible and invisible.

Yet, it possesses an immeasurable value that cannot be replaced or substituted by anything else.

One undeniable truth is that time only moves forward; no one can ever go back.

However, that statement is not universally applicable.

Because Karan is a person who transcends the constraints of time...

The intensely dark eyes of the young woman pierced through the loupes["], with the magnifying microscopic lens barrel enlarging the view for a highly detailed surgery. The focal point of her gaze was the patient's heart, laid bare through the open chest.

Karan stood on the opposite side of the professor, the team leader in this operation. It is undeniable that having a fellow like her as an assistant made everything much easier. That's why Prof. Dej, who had once doubted the

competence of a female surgeon, ended up swallowing his words. He even relied on her more than the CVT residents in their fourth or fifth year.

Despite being skilled and never losing focus in the operating room, she also had her own drawbacks.

The drawback was said to be her icy demeanor and the way she transformed the OR into an intimidating space, regardless of how soothing the background music could be.

The cardiothoracic surgeon, specializing in heart surgeries, cleared his throat. The eyes of the man in his fifties still looked through the magnifying lens attached to his glasses.

"Are you not in the mood for a chat? Soon, others might misunderstand that I've set strict rules in the operating room."

"No, not at all," she replied briefly, focusing straight ahead, in line with her nickname 'The Icy Fellow' - a title that everyone in the ward gave to her behind her back.

Therefore, the senior man needed to find a topic to start their conversation.

"That night, were you the one who removed a kilogram of hair from the stomach of the daughter of that famous department store's owner? I heard it's a psychological disorder where one eats their own hair, and it has been going on for several years. It's quite an interesting case."

"Professor, should we discuss the patient's case even though their family requested confidentiality?"

"...."

The atmosphere in the room was thick, extending from the surgical field to the entire space. The middle-aged anesthesiologist discreetly switched his gaze between Karan, the fellow, and Professor Chaidej.

This wasn't the first time Prof. Dej had been unsettled by a few sentences from this particular disciple. Initially, he would react with fury, almost

unable to tolerate it.

But on one fateful night, they seemed to collaborate on an emergency surgery case. That event completely changed Prof. Dej, who had previously held a high ego and bias against female surgeons. He even started designating Karan as the assistant surgeon quite frequently.

What happened that night remains a secret known only to those in the operating room.

Even if Chaidej was talked back to just a moment ago and the scrub nurse was worried that a dispute might arise here, it turned out that the older person harbored no resentment whatsoever, to the point where it was surprising. One couldn't help but wonder whether the rumors that spread widely a year ago were true.

The rumors claimed that Chaidej did not perform the surgery himself but rather it was the work of his disciple. There might be some truth to this claim.

However, how could it be possible when Karan was just a mere fellow? Why would a talented doctor like Chaidej pretend to be the primary surgeon?

Adding up the time since the anesthesiologist administered the anesthesia, the surgery had now entered its fourth hour.

Both doctors and nurses stood continuously under the soft music playing in the background, easing the tension. Accurately described, this was the third case of the day. For the first patient, they had spent just about nearly four hours.

However, with only brief breaks between cases, exhaustion was inevitable. That's why this case was expected to take approximately five hours to complete.

"I entrust the rest to you."

"Sure."

Professor Dej left the operating room in advance, leaving only the task of closing the wound. Karan, taking over the next phase of operation, not only excelled in surgical skills but also spent just a moment stitching the wound. It came out so neat that it was almost unbelievable.

Rrrrr!

The music playing to reduce stress in the operating room continued to resonate, but the faint vibration of a muted communication device, which was muted, was vibrating, caught the attention of the circulating nurse[*], prompting her to turn and look. Then, she spoke up when she realized it belonged to the fellow.

"Dr. Karan, there's a phone call for you."

"I'm not taking it."

The decisive voice momentarily made the scrub nurse next to her steal a glance at her. She couldn't help but secretly think to herself that she's already this cold as a fellow. How much colder would she become as a staff physician?

Not even knowing who was calling, she refused to answer without a second thought...

"....."

Finishing three consecutive surgeries, the tall, slender young woman in light blue scrubs finally returned to rest in the staff room around 4 PM. She sank onto the sofa, which could accommodate only two people.

Her hands gently massaged her slightly tense neck, resulting from the hard work in the operating room since morning. The young woman closed her eyes to rest her mind and weary eyes.

The screen of her slim phone remained unlit, indicating that she already knew in advance that this call was from whom and likely about nonsense. It

was from a high school friend who persistently insisted she join for drinks at a certain bar this Saturday.

Karan just...could see the future in the blink of an eye.

And she could...rewind time. That's all.

In this seemingly ordinary world, this might be the most absurd thing that any scientist would disagree with its existence if someone claimed they could do it. However, she was born with these two abilities.

Her mother, whom she called 'Mommy,' said it was a special trait passed down through the bloodline and kept secret within the family. Initially, she learned about this supernatural power when she was in junior high, and back then she secretly wondered if she was being deceived.

But that's it... After discovering that sometimes glimpses of events in the future would abruptly pop into her head, she came to realize that she wasn't just an ordinary girl. She also successfully turned back time to fix insignificant things in the past and prevented them from happening as seen in her visions when she was 13.

But such powers come with their limitations and rules. Moreover, each individual in the bloodline also has different limitations.

For Karan, first of all, there's no doubt that when she reverses time, only she remembers everything. Others have no way of recognizing it.

However, if she makes physical contact with someone, even just a fingertip, she will take that person back in time with her. Those people touched by Karan will remember what happened.

Similar to Kliao Khluen on that day, the girl confusingly wondered why she wasn't shot and killed in the tragic fall, but instead found herself standing at the point just before being hit by the car.

Secondly, if her body sustains wounds to the extent that blood flows, even a little, she cannot use her ability until the bleeding stops... Perhaps, this

might be the act of God to prevent her from achieving immortality.

Thirdly, she can rewind time to do anything she desires, as many times as she wants. However, she 'cannot rewind time for matters concerning saving lives, without exchanging it for something of equal value...

If she were to reverse time to alter the fate of someone on this planet from death to continued life, just like how she helped a young girl with desperate eyes on the rooftop seven years ago, the condition is that she must exchange it with her own 'time' as well.

One person returns to life... Karan's remaining lifespan decreases by ten years.

Thus, it can be implied that she can use it to rewind time for small matters or as she wishes, but she must refrain from interfering with someone's imminent death.

Karan leaned back against the sofa's backrest, closing her eyes briefly to rest them before heading back to her condominium to change clothes. But in that fleeting moment, a familiar figure suddenly appeared, causing her to furrow her brow.

That petite extern seemed to be avoiding the reporters by taking a different route back to the medical residence hall. However, she was caught and cornered before she could escape.

Her eyes, which had closed for only a few seconds, opened again.

She thought she wouldn't get involved... but in the end, she couldn't resist getting involved.

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Karan has two mothers. In fact, both of them are Thai.

One of the mothers invested in a business overseas and fulfilled the conditions to obtain citizenship in that country, where same-sex marriage is

legal. She then brought the other mother, who was a public prosecutor, to marry there. It was a beautiful wedding with the two stunning brides professing their love for each other.

After about a year had passed, they were able to access a sperm bank to have a child. The businesswoman mother carried the pregnancy, using the egg from the public prosecutor mother. After giving birth and waiting for almost two years, the public prosecutor mother then carried the younger sibling, using the egg from the businesswoman mother. It's like a switch between them.

So, they ended up having two daughters together. Karan, the eldest, and Mai-Tree, the younger one.

The origin of their nicknames came from the fact that the public prosecutor mother's name is '**Jattawa**'.

As for the businesswoman mother, her nickname is simply '**Four**,' while her real name is 'Seemaysa,' derived from her birth date, which is the fourth of April.

Hence, the real names of both children become 'Kaomaysa' and 'Song-Meena,' respectively, in line with their birth dates.

She and her younger sister call the businesswoman mother 'Mom' and the public prosecutor mother 'Mommy'.

This means Karan and her family hold dual citizenship. Everything seems to be peaceful and without any issues. Having two mothers who shower them with love and warmth makes them feel complete and content, lacking nothing and wanting nothing more.

However, it's a little disappointing that some countries refuse to acknowledge the same-sex marriage registry, refusing to accept that both of them are their mothers.

It's ironic, especially when both Karan and her sister don't feel they are lacking in warmth themselves. One Thai teacher pitied them because they

didn't have a father, while summarizing that a complete family must have a father, a mother, and a child.

It's likely a deeply ingrained cultural norm among some older adults for a long time, and it's hard to tell when this belief will fade away.

Sometimes, when a kid bullies another, it may be influenced by adults who hold such belief, which escalates into something more serious.

But Karan is too happy with both her mothers to care about those words. She doesn't think of herself as having a flaw. Why is having two loving mothers called a flaw? Why is not having a father called a flaw?

And what is the true meaning of 'flaw' anyway? Have we been confining ourselves in a thinking box? Are we limiting the definition of '*family*'?

Rather, it might be better to continue discussing Karan's extraordinary abilities, akin to miracles.

Mommy Jattawa confidently stated that the ability to control time comes from her bloodline. Therefore, only Karan would possess this power, while the members of Four's bloodline would not have such abilities.

Upon hearing this, Karan secretly thought it was fortunate that her younger sibling didn't have it. Because if she truly possessed the time-controlling power, the world would undoubtedly collapse into chaos.

But it's strange because, eventually, perhaps the bonds allowed Mai-Tree, the spoiled kid of the family, suddenly exhibited the ability to stop time, albeit with limitations like once-a-day use and 10 minutes per each round.

Even with just ten minutes of time stopped, that mischievous little brat still managed to create chaos everywhere she went...

Karan took long strides along the pathway signaled by the omen that Kliao Khluen would pass. Intentionally, she planned to make their encounter a mere coincidence, although she didn't need to take this roundabout route but head straight to the parking lot.

On the way, with her slender hand, Karan reached for her phone to return the call she had received in the operating room. With a calm voice, she asked the other side despite knowing everything from the omen.

Her high school friend responded eagerly, mentioning the gathering for drinks at a certain bar this Saturday. Also, she wanted to distribute wedding invitation cards to everyone at the gathering.

As Karan listened to her friend bragging about her husband on the phone, her gaze inadvertently shifted, catching a glimpse of a small figure emerging from the elevator right there.

"That's all for now. I gotta go to work."

She casually brushed off her friend with a lie before slipping her communication device into her bag and adjusting her walking pace as smooth as possible.

Let's make it just a pass.

Like unintentionally running into her by chance.

With her poker face, Karan directed Kliao Khluen to take a safer route away from the reporters. Swiftly, she strode out before the younger woman could ask questions.

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5:28 PM.

The sky gradually darkened. The weather forecast predicted a low chance of rain for today. However, judging from the thickening clouds moving in, it would be reversed. Nonetheless, the rain didn't seem to pour down from the sky anytime soon. It would probably be falling around 6 PM.

According to the traffic information, just a few hundred meters ahead, she would get into a heavily congested route, as indicated on her phone screen in red.

With her dark, keen eyes, Karan estimated how long it would take to reach her condominium, which wasn't far from the hospital. She anticipated arriving before the rain started, which would be nice because she wasn't a big fan of driving in the rain.

But the adverse effects of her divine power fired on her once again. In the blink of an eye, glimpses of the future flashed through her mind. It's peculiar that today they manifested twice, and even more strange that the person depicted was Kliao Khluen again and again.

Because of the girl, Karan, who was controlling her Aston Martin's steering wheel, furrowed her brows to the point they almost collided. In the omen, the young woman hadn't reached her medical dormitory yet, even though the time had long passed into the evening hours.

The sad, teary eyes of the petite figure mirrored those on the rooftop that day. And...now she had to walk through the rain, with the tears concealed by the downpour.

Although it was just a glimpse of the future, Karan's heart oddly twinged with pain.

Her gaze fixed on the road ahead, revealing nothing more than a desire to find a U-turn and return to the place she had just left not long ago.

'Why do you make me worried all the time...?'

It might have happened hundreds or thousands of times already. She didn't count, and the other party wouldn't be aware.

In the past, even in the operating room, no matter what happened, she always maintained her composure. When she was a new fellow, encountering an emergency situation like a patient with a heart attack for the first time, her hand remained steady as she aspirated fluid from the pericardial sac of the patient's heart. It was steadier than her emotions right now.

She didn't want Kliao Khluen to think of anything crazy again.

Only Karan knew the reason why she cared so much about that unfamiliar girl, but that reason wouldn't slip out of her mouth that easily...

She never allowed hesitation to linger for long. She quickly turned the car back to the hospital, parking hastily in a manner that almost clipped the curb. Snatching the navy umbrella from the car, she dashed towards the serene garden, as depicted in the backdrop.

It was less than a second, but Karan not only recognized the location from the vision but also precisely pinpointed the exact hour, minute, and second.

Kliao Khluen's tears would begin to flow at 17:57:28.

The rain would start to fall at 17:57:32.

That's why the fellow arrived on time, with her hand holding the umbrella. When she saw the small woman walking out of the garden towards the footpath, with drooping shoulders that looked completely desolate, Karan stopped walking at an appropriate distance.

She glanced at her Chopard watch, with gold Roman numeral dial, before taking a quick breath and hide the fatigue from sprinting over a long distance.

But there were less than 30 seconds left before the corners of Kliao Khluen's eyes couldn't hold back the warm tears any longer. Thus, the older woman hurriedly adjusted her breathing, before starting to walk again with steps neither too fast nor too slow.

It didn't take long for her to position herself behind the sixth-year medical student, who just realized that someone was following her from behind.

An eye contact of nine seconds... It could prevent the warm tears to flow out of Kliao Khluen's eyes.

Karan had turned her car back with an unusual speed and run from the parking lot at the same pace as she had run during a high school sports event so many years ago. She opened her umbrella just before the raindrops

from the sky could make the petite woman feel sad and soaked, all for the little things that mattered so much.

She was afraid of this girl getting wet...

Afraid that she might feel uncomfortable...

Worried that her heart might ache like the gathering storm clouds.

And...

'I can't stand seeing you cry in the rain like this... *my future bride.*'

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07. Can You See the Reflection in My Eyes?

"And what about you, P'Karan? How do you know exactly when the rain will fall?"

I know well that the person in front of me, the fellow of the CVT department, has unbelievable abilities like time control and probably future telling as well. But my mouth still asks as I can't stand this cold woman who pretends to forget what happened seven years ago.

"...."

"Why do you have to act distant like you've never met me before?"

"Extern, I'll let you borrow my umbrella."

The calm and composed tone, devoid of any emotion, prompts me to frown, not to mention the way she addressed me.

"You didn't answer my question, Fellow."

Here you go! If you want to address me with that title, I'll fire it back at you.

With such determination, I emphasize the term '**Fellow.**'

How deep is her personality? Beneath those beautiful eyes, what does she hide? She shows up and disappears at times she wishes, making her difficult to find.

"I just checked the weather forecast."

Now, P'Karan responds to my previous question, and no matter how I hear it, it sounds like an excuse.

"Did they say exactly when the rain would fall, like the exact minute and second?"

"I suppose so."

Damn it! How was that even possible? How could she say that with her poker face?

I want to give the older woman a stern glare. However, as I realize that, at this moment, we are alone together and have enough time to converse, I suddenly notice that I should ask about all the lingering doubts. So, I put aside the aggression toward her effortless excuse a while ago.

"That criminal is also related to the fact that you turned back time to save me, right?"

The pretty woman raises her eyebrow.

"Aren't we talking about the rain?"

"Since you're so stubborn about the rain, let's talk about this first... I feel stressed knowing nothing at all, even though he probably wants to kill me."

I'm a bit sensitive due to the argument with Dad on the phone, and I feel hurt because of the person in front of me. Therefore, I dare speak to her as if we won't have a chance like this again. I utter every word, trying to win the sound of rain hitting the umbrella.

"You know everything, so why are you doing this to me? You step into my life as you wish, and then disappear without notice. Now that we finally meet each other again, you give me the cold shoulder."

At this point, the listener's eyes seem to flicker slightly; her eyelids lower like they want to explain something.

Yet, she chooses to remain silent.

My voice fades when I complain to this awfully cruel sister.

"I... miss you so much. You know?"

A lump of emotion rises in my throat.

Various emotions are recklessly mixed within me. I've become sensitive because of my family issues combined with this matter. The only reason I could accept the unequal love within my family is my focus on re-encountering P'Karan, or 'Ms. Kaomaysa.' In my heart, she's the one who propels my life forward, giving it purpose, a smile, and the drive to successfully enter medical school.

She is the first person I think of whenever I feel hurt by my parents.

Feeling completely ignored, I can't help but want to ask why she pretended to forget everything about me.

Initially, I thought she would stay silent or simply run away like last time. However, she is still here, opening the umbrella to shield the vulnerable me. Then, she says something that confuses me to the utmost.

"Every time you have a déjà vu, that means we've spent time together."

W...What?

"I've been with you all along. You just can't remember it."

"Huh?"

Confused, unable to understand, and in need of further clarification. Right now, I feel all those three emotions at once. In the next second, the older woman looks elsewhere and easily brushes it off.

"Nothing."

"But earlier, you said..."

"Never mind. Forget about it."

"When we hear something with both ears, how can we easily forget it?"

"Well then, I'll help you forget it."

Before I ask 'What does that mean?', the golden hourglass with Roman numerals suddenly appears as a backdrop entering my field of vision. I widen my eyes because I remember that when I fell from the rooftop, I saw it at the moment when time was about to rewind. The beautiful hour hand slowly moves backward, unmistakably just like that day.

Before I can say anything to P'Karan, a sense of emptiness envelops me for a while. Time is being rewound. All the memories and actions in this world are spinning backward along with the clock's hands.

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"I'm leaving first."

My mouth announces to others in the ward, while I tighten the tote bag on my shoulder.

Wait a minute... It strangely feels like déjà vu.

It's as if I've experienced today's farewell with everyone in the ward before.

"Alright, have a safe ride."

One of the interns responds, and then other staff members, including doctors and nurses, all wish me a safe return to the nearby dormitory. Due to the incident with the mad prisoner, everyone has been concerned about my well-being over the past few days.

Even P'Ing, the nurse known for her strictness to the point that many doctors fear her, turns and cracks a brief smile before returning to her duties.

Hmm... It's like I've been through this situation before.

That déjà vu feeling again.

I take the elevator as usual, but this time, my departure is different from other times. My bike isn't here because of its flat tire and is instead parked in the courtyard right in front of the dorm. Perhaps, that's fortunate. Otherwise, I would have to go fetch it and possibly encounter the reporters again.

Hunched over while walking and looking at the ground on a pathway, where a small crowd is present, I stop abruptly when my eyes meet a pair of sneakers that look familiar, yet are of a different color than what I have seen before. It compels me to pause and lift my head to look at the person wearing them, who has just stopped walking as well.

P'Karan...

The CVT doctor's hand holds a navy-blue umbrella, neatly folded.

"The way you're heading has some reporters waiting."

She says, her voice carrying a hint of exhaustion, as if she has just run here. That makes me tilt my head in curiosity, wondering how she knew which way I would go.

"Huh?"

"But there's none on the way to the fountain pond," she continues, extending the navy-blue umbrella in her hand. Now, her breathing seems to have returned to normal.

I'm not sure if I should accept it or not, so I decide to ask, to avoid embarrassing myself.

"Are you lending it to me?"

"Yes."

"Thank you.."

I know that the sun disappeared faster than usual today, but the weather forecast predicted a very low chance of rain. I want to ask how she knew that the rain would fall, or perhaps inquire about what inspired her to lend it to me. However, as soon as I accept it, the tall figure doesn't give me a chance to ask anything. She takes a step forward and gracefully sheers away in the opposite direction.

The moment our shoulders draw close, suddenly the bloodstreams in my chest function better than average. My heart is beating fast without reason. There's a certain feeling as if something's stuck, even though nothing significant has happened beyond the fact that we have coincidentally met for the first time today.

Anyway... I have one question that just popped up and needs to be voiced.

"P'Karan"

The older person, who's walking past me, pauses her steps.

"Say it."

"Did we just meet a while ago?"

I can't explain why I asked such an odd question, but the words have already escaped my mouth.

P'Karan remains silent for a moment, not turning to face me. Soon after, a calm voice replies briefly.

"Nope."

That's right. That's how it should be.
I shouldn't have asked something non-sense like that...

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8:55 PM

Tonight is a night filled with mixed emotions, a chaotic blend that's hard to determine which feeling prevails.

The initial emotions are disappointment and a sense of worthlessness.

On the way back to my dorm, my mom called. She seemed genuinely concerned, but my dad, on the other hand, kept insisting that the prisoner who allegedly grabbed my throat must be an enemy of my boyfriend.

But I don't even have a boyfriend.

Dad seems confident that I'm not busy with school but getting involved in love matters. Even though I tried to explain that medical school is demanding, he still argued back with a blaming tone.

Simply put, Dad accused me of it being my fault that I got attacked by that criminal.

Our society has always been this tiring and burdensome.

Perhaps, it's easier for them to blame the victim, regardless of the situation.

And when I compared myself to Fong-Samut, saying if my younger brother were like this, would my parents react the same way towards him? Dad sharply responded with brutal words that hurt the listener's heart.

'You're so annoying! Indeed, Having a daughter is like having a toilet right at the front of the house!'

That made me feel so disheartened. I sat foolishly on the grass by the pond for more than ten minutes before I realized the sky had already darkened. As I began making my way back to the dorm, it started raining heavily. Luckily, someone had unbelievably lent me an umbrella.

I couldn't figure out the source of her confidence that it was going to rain today. The weather forecast had predicted a relatively low percentage. However, upon careful consideration, this woman seems to be beyond the

concept of time. It shouldn't be surprising (for her) to know about these small details.

And at least, I don't have to wet my body and soul with tears over my family's words.

The second wave of feelings consists of confusion and self-doubt.

Apart from dreaming about vague futures, what P'Karan left behind from that time reversal is the frequent occurrence of *déjà vu*. This feeling has happened very often from high school to the first three years of university.

But then, as soon as I entered the clinical-level program, the *déjà vu* rarely occurred. It just returned today.

I felt like I had met P'Karen once before today.

And then... my heart raced so fast when I was just walking past her. Again, it felt like I had already glanced at her up close before.

"My buddy Kliao, I won't be around this Saturday."

While I'm searching and reading news to gather more information about that male convict, Meow, who's combing her hair at the small mirror table, speaks up without turning this way. I divert my gaze from the phone screen to talk to my roommate.

"Where are you going?"

"Home. My cousins from another province are visiting us. My dad wanted to show off that his daughter is studying medicine, so he called me back. Once the evening round's done, I'll probably leave immediately. Then on Sunday, my dad will drive to drop me off early enough for the morning round."

"...."

"I'm so bored! Gosh! Why bother showing off? I haven't even completed my studies yet. What if I end up dropping out before the Oscar exams?"

We colloquially call it "Oscar" for fun, but its real name is Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE). OSCE is a practical examination where we have to examine patients or perform procedures. Before the exam, there are simulations and rehearsals that require some sort of dramatic acting, as if we are actors and actresses.

Moreover, the patients are simulated patients. That's why we call it Oscar.

Even though Meow spoke like that, I know she wouldn't simply quit.

By the way... Being a child that makes parents proud sounds enviable.

I smile at my friend, hiding my feelings, before bringing up some of my own matters.

"I won't be around on Saturday either."

She turns to me with curiosity.

"Don't tell me you're going home unexpectedly like me."

"Nope, I'm going to play music with the band, but I won't stay out too late."

"Until eight?"

"That's a bit too early. The bottles might not even have been cracked yet."

"What if you're too drunk to come back to dorm?"

"I'll probably end up staying at Note's condo like always."

I reply without thinking. Whether I'm playing music at a bar or just chilling, when I get too drunk to make sense, I usually crash at my friend Note's condominium, which has three bedrooms. Honestly, I should go back home instead because sometimes my house is closer than returning to the university dormitory (during the pre-clinical years) or even this dormitory.

But who knows? Once, I did go back half-dazed. I was still conscious, but my shirt reeked of alcohol. And then it was my mom and dad who came down to open the door.

'How can a girl behave like this?! Are you not ashamed of coming home so late? People might gossip about you roaming around like this! Do you even realize that others might believe you've lost your virginity!!!'

And because of the alcohol coursing through my body that night, although I have been reserved since I was little, I blurted out to my father,

'What about Fong coming back home at two or three in the morning?! Sometimes he's so drunk that Mom has to help him go upstairs. You never said anything about that.'

'How can you compare yourself to your brother? He's a boy! It's not a problem for him!'

'Is it only a problem because I'm a girl? Why don't you use the same standards? Fong roams around drinking just like I do, doesn't he?'

Guess what happened next.

I was scolded so loudly that the neighbors could hear it clearly...

The one who made people look down on me... was none other than my father, wasn't it?

So I... no longer want to expect anything from my own family.

On a typical day, I tend to focus on my studies, friends, my music band, the fan club that supports me, and the story of a woman named 'Kaomaysa'.

And now, there's another mystery to ponder: why does that man seek revenge on me?

Rrrr!

Belle, the leader of the band, sent a message to remind everyone in the group chat not to forget our appointment for this upcoming Saturday, Everyone acknowledged it, as we all happened to be free at that time, I was the last member to type in the chat before turning off my phone screen. Then, I changed from sitting upright on my bed to arranging pillows and preparing to sleep.

I thought this Saturday would probably be the usual routine of playing music and having some drinks afterward. There shouldn't be anything special happening.

I initially thought like that...

But it turns out not to be the case.

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08. This Shouldn't Be Called a Coincidence

On Saturday

Even though it's considered a day off, medical students still find themselves examining patients both in the morning and in the evening.

Just because it's Saturday or Sunday doesn't mean patients don't need a doctor.

After finishing my evening round, I return to my dorm to take a shower and change clothes, getting ready to meet up with my friends on time. Today, I chose to wear a light purple long-sleeved round-neck shirt with a pattern of fluffy white clouds and white trousers that are folded neatly at the ends... Well, they are a bit too long for me.

Our band started by forming to compete in university competitions. Initially, we covered others' songs, but at one point, Belle, our guitarist, composed a song called *Real Peter Pan*. That was actually our band's first single. Then, not long after, our bassist, Nene, composed the next one - *Forever Tinker Bell*. Believe me, those two composed songs for each other.

Then came the next song, ***Lullaby***, composed by Frang, our drummer; it became our third song. The inspiration behind it is that it was the song she composed for her girlfriend, Klai-Duen. Because they had been through a lot together, the song that helped them get into sweet dreams at night was born.

As for me and Note, well... We still don't feel like composing a song for someone yet.

Or perhaps I should try composing a song for P'Karan. Let's name the song in a way that complains about her iciness or something like that. Let's make it super sorrowful.

Lost in my wild thoughts, the bus arrives at my destination stop. But that doesn't simply mean this is the final stop. In reality, someone without a car like me has to transfer several more times. Luckily, my friend volunteered to pick me up. We had arranged our meeting at a café just a five-minute walk from here.

I come in just to order a bottle of water and find a small table for myself to wait for my friend. I can't choose items from the coffee menu or other drinks because they are beyond my budget. Let me share my monthly budget with you. My parents give me five thousand baht each month, never increasing nor decreasing. You might think it's a lot, but I let out a really deep sigh when I realized that my younger brother had been given seven thousand as soon as he entered the university.

And if I'm not mistaken, his allowance was recently increased to eight thousand baht when he got into his senior year.

I didn't ask for a reason because, anyway, we all know that the phrase 'every parent loves their child the same' isn't true for every family. So, I chose to stay silent instead. But one day, my mother tried to explain it to me. She said the reason my father gave him more money was because he had a girlfriend and needed to buy condoms for protection. Then I asked my mother back...

'So, does a woman like me not need to buy sanitary napkins? Menstruation is inevitable, and it lasts almost a week. I use several packs every month.'

Then my mother said I shouldn't bring up such dirty matters.

I was totally confused. How come menstruation has become such a dirty topic? Well, the blood that comes out of a woman's body every month is caused by the hormone's estrogen and progesterone, which make the uterine lining thick to prepare for embryo implantation. But if no fertilization occurs, that tissue sheds off regularly, or as we commonly call it 'period.'

The lingering question in my mind is:

'Why does my family consider it dirty?'

They understand Fong-Samut, but they don't understand me.

Anyway, let me tell you how I manage to live with this amount of money.

The answer is the establishment of my music band.

With The Edge of the Universe's rising fame and constant gigs, I've earned money from it, not to mention our chart-topping songs and the tens of millions of views on YouTube. Now, I have a decent amount of savings in my bank account, even though we're not playing live gigs so often these days.

Also, the reason why I need to save money is because once I complete my 6th-year studies, my parents wouldn't provide me pocket money anymore. I might have to fund my medical internship in the countryside. Although I'll get a salary (which will also be deducted to pay my study loans), shouldn't have emergency funds?

I sit quietly, sipping water alone in silence. Then, the glass door of the shop is open, and the familiar figure of a tall, slender woman walks in.

She wears a pair of top-tier branded sunglasses in tea-colored lenses. Her straight, jet-black hair is casually let down. The thin lips are adorned by cherry-red lipstick, complementing the striking beauty that captivates everyone's attention. But what caught everyone's attention the most is probably the aloha shirt she's wearing paired with the white slack trousers...

How long will you continue dressing up to annoy your dad, Note?

"The ultimate heroine drinks," she walks in to bother me with her universally- agreed, incredibly arrogant attitude (simply put, nerve-wracking for us, her bandmates).

"How could you arrive so early? I thought you only knew how to be late."

I teasingly mouth my words, "I should've arrived half an hour late."

As soon as I finish speaking, my tall friend's hand slams down on my head, messing up my hair in the way they all like to do because I'm the shortest one in the band. Hey! Gosh, my hair is all tangled up now. Fortunately, I have a comb with me, so I comb it neatly while sitting in my friend's luxurious car... Though I know that when I meet the other three, my hair will just get messy again.

The gathering spot is a restaurant near where we are going to play music. Belle, Nene, and Frang have been seated and about to make an order when we arrive. It's safe to say that Note and I made it on time. We sit opposite each other- three on one side and two on the other. Then, we all help each other choose dishes before sharing our joys and sorrows.

Belle mentioned she and Nene had already gone to the bar to place their guitar and bass under their care. As for Frang, she had just arrived before Note and I, so her drumsticks are still in her backpack.

"Is there a piano for Note to use at the bar?"

I ask while waiting for our food to be served, and ever-cheerful Belle responds:

"Yeah, they do. In fact, they have everything because they host a live band every night. It's just that Nene and I prefer to use our own instruments."

"But I brought mine too. It's in the back of my car," our noble friend speaks up as she takes off her glasses and tucks them into the collar of her aloha shirt. Hearing that, we all understand that everyone has come prepared with their own items.

The performance queue is scheduled for 9 PM. We've agreed to play all three songs from our band in chronological order.

"Are you really okay, Khluen? About that matter."

Frang is the only one who calls me differently from others. On the surface, she looks unfriendly, unwelcoming to anyone. Internally, she doesn't easily accept anyone either. She only cares about her friends and her girlfriend.

"From now on, don't go anywhere alone. If you're going out or running errands without a friend, just call anyone in the band at any time. We've all agreed to make ourselves available for you. Oh! Make our numbers your emergency contacts too."

"Especially me, who's always free and crazily rich," Note adds.

"Alright... Alright. You guys are worried like moms."

Perhaps even more than my mom.

"No worries. I think he probably went mad, and I just happened to walk past at the wrong time. Just an unfortunate coincidence."

That's a lie... In fact, that isn't the case. I'm sure he didn't mistake me for anyone. But I can't recall ever getting involved with this guy before.

"Let's change the topic. We rarely have time for each other."

"What else should we talk about? We're all worried about you!"

Frang looks more serious than usual.

"Come on, talking about it stresses me out. There's nothing more we can do about it anyway. He can't come out and harm me anymore. More importantly, I have some good stories to share too!"

"What's the matter?"

Four voices inquire simultaneously, rendering me unable to continue speaking. I just want to divert their attention, but I forget and think there's no good news coming from my end at all.

And then, in that moment, I think of what could possibly surprise all four of them.

"I found the person I've been looking for."

"Wait, what?"

Belle starts panicking.

"You mean...?"

I nod. "Yeah, it's 'Kaomaysa'."

"What!? Is she actually real?"

See? I told you my friends would be surprised.

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8:58 PM

The band regularly hired by the bar is about to finish their song. Once the timing is right, we can hit the stage.

I saw from the pictures on Twitter that fans of our band have come to show their support. However, due to the limited seating capacity, they could only reserve a few tables and get inside. Many of them couldn't join the concert.

Initially, they waited outside, but our cool Note tweeted and posted on Facebook, urging it would be better for those outside to go back home, as we are likely to continue hanging out. Moreover, it was getting dark, and we were concerned about their travel safety.

It was a brief post, but everyone took it seriously and went back home obediently. They even praised her thoughtfulness. Note basically enchants everyone. Once, I also posted asking our fans to go home, but they said,

'We want to see you, Baby Kliao. We'll wait no matter what.'

See? It's completely different from Note's case.

When we were having dinner together at the restaurant, everyone looked very surprised to learn that I had finally found P'Karan. They know all too well that ever since I entered university, I had been asking around about the woman named 'Kaomaysa.' I even slipped out about time traveling, making some people think I was insane.

All four of them really wanted to see her face. At first, I explained that there wasn't any because even the hospital website only posts pictures of some staff and medical specialists. There are no photos or names of fellows who are studying for their specialization. That's why they all started booing. Note suggested that if I really wanted them to believe, I should bring a photo.

When would I have had a chance to take a snapshot? Right now, we're in completely different wards. All we did was coincidentally walk past each other on a footpath...

By the way, even though she is so cold and distant, I secretly want to join the surgery ward as soon as possible. I can't explain why. Perhaps my heart might have fallen too deeply for her. Well, certainly, I wouldn't want to go there because I'm falling in love with the OR, right?

Thoughts keep swirling in a delightful haze until it's already nine at night. When the regular band passes the mic to the five of us, it's time for The Edge of the Universe to take the stage. Moderate screams and cheers signal that the audience is eagerly waiting. I think I can see a neon sign, and that sign has Note's name on it.

As the lead singer, I greet the customers in the restaurant. Some of them are watching us, while others are too immersed in their drinks and conversations. To avoid wasting time, I turn to my bandmate and nod as a signal that we are going to start our first song, *Real Peter Pan*. Frang, our drummer, nods in agreement, and then the performance begins.

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It's a little past ten at night. We're finally sitting in the VIP area of the bar.

P'Boat, the owner of the place who invited us, arranged it for us and generously offered free drinks because there were more customers than usual today due to the anticipation of our performance. However, even with that, he is quite stingy. The dishes are charged, and how could we skip the snacks when drinking? Plus, the prices aren't low either.

Bell's neck starts to droop, so she has to lean on her girlfriend, Nene, all the time. Note took just a sip and then ordered a soda because she knew she had to drive me home. And given the circumstances, she probably has to drop off Belle and Ne as well. As for Frang, she's already gone home. She's worried about her girlfriend who's alone at home. After jamming the music, she immediately disappeared due to her great love for Klai-Duen. Only the four of us are left sitting here.

If you ask whether I'm a strong drinker...

My answer is a big 'no.'

On the outside, I might appear unaffected or indifferent, unlike the people at the next table who are discussing the adventures of Little Pony. Inside, my mind and soul are swirling and disturbed.

Right now, there are countless things bubbling up, and they all get stirred together until I feel overwhelmed with sadness out of nowhere.

I've visited Nene and Bell's families in the countryside before. Even though Nene lives with her father and Belle lives with her mother, both of them seem happy because of the overflowing love they receive...

As for Frang, she's an orphan who has no family, but a few years ago she met her real father. Her father told her if she ever needed anything, he was ready to help, just a phone call away. Frang herself ultimately didn't want to get involved with him because of the pain he caused when he left her as a baby. She chose not to accept any help and instead decided to live with her cats and Klai-Duen, finding happiness in them.

Even Note, whose father is the king's grandchild, despite regular arguments and annoyance she caused to the elder, received a brief call at 10 PM. He

told her that the driver from the palace was available if she got too drunk. His worries clearly surpass everything else.

Am I the only one who feels like falling apart when thinking about her own family?

If I called my father and told him I'm too drunk to go home, he wouldn't be able to avoid picking me up. But what might follow is a loud reprimand, accusing me of being reckless and staying out late at night without listening to my reasons. He might give me an earful about the embarrassment I caused, and that would escalate to comparisons, saying having a daughter is like having a toilet in front of the house. My father and mother make me feel uncomfortable...

Since I was little, I've always felt that I'd be happier if I weren't at home.

Anyway, washing my face and eyes might make me feel better.

"I'm going to the restroom, guys."

"I'll go with you."

Note volunteers, starting to get up, but I raise my hand to stop her.

"No, it's fine. It is just nearby. Stay here"

"But you've drunk a lot."

"Come on~"

I reply in a high-pitched voice, smiling and waving my hand.

"I gotta go. You watch over Nene and Belle here. Look at them! They're getting drunk together."

"Alright then..."

The girl in the aloha shirt finally gives in when she notices that Nene's cheeks have turned red.

I grab my phone and wallet and then carry my body, feeling overwhelmed, to the private restroom for this zone. There are very few people, completely different from the ordinary zones.

I thought splashing water on my face would freshen up my mind and wash away the anxiety within, but when I lifted my face and met my own gaze in the mirror, I encountered the second wave of doubts.

Why... Why do parents pretend so much that they love their children equally?

People say that home is the warmest place, but why do I feel nervous every time I ring the doorbell and call for someone inside to open the door? I felt tremendously awful when I returned home after a week of exhausting clinical studies, only to be burdened with heavy household chores.

Just looking over and seeing Fong-Samut working on his university projects was enough to make me feel tense. Occasionally, whenever he stood up and volunteered to help me, my parents praised him for his diligence.

Throughout my entire life, I haven't received a single word of praise despite all that I've done.

Why do I have to wash everyone's clothes in the house after getting tired for the whole week? Can't each person do their own laundry? Why should I believe my mother when she says that women's clothes need to be washed separately from men's because women's items are dirtier?

Aren't we all human beings alike? And why... Why haven't I died since the moment I was shot and fell from the rooftop? Why did P'Karan rewind time to save me, yet when we met again, she acted so cold?

Before I know it, I'm huddled over the toilet, vomiting everything I ate in the evening, including what I had just consumed. I'm also sobbing uncontrollably because my chest is filled with heavy-heartedness.

I want to know what would happen if I disappeared...

"Ouch!"

My thoughts are interrupted when another wave of liquid hits the back of my throat. I nearly collapsed onto the ground. I must look utterly pathetic right now. I anticipate that my friends will soon come looking for me, wondering why I've been gone for so long. Then, I imagine Note will have to carry me into the car and drive me back to the dormitory, which is so far from this place.

The sound of footsteps grows louder, echoing into my nervous system. I think it must be Note for sure, but part of me secretly wonders why she would check on me this quickly. It's been less than 5 minutes.

The door to the room I'm in is left ajar because I don't have enough strength to close it properly. The nausea continues to creep up, making me retch again. Just glancing over, I see slender legs beneath black trousers. If I remember correctly, Note wears white sneakers...

My gaze gradually rises, and then I gasp in surprise. Standing there is a tall young woman, looking at me. Her eyes scan my face impassively, showing no emotion.

Even though I'm drunk and my eyes are watery, I never forget that face, that gaze, those shoulders, the demeanor, or her identity. All combined, from any distance, I can always recognize this woman.

She is P'Karan...

The tall woman gracefully lowers herself to sit at eye level with me. As she gets closer, I catch a glimpse that resembles an adult assessing a child through her eyes. Delicate fingers delve into her pocket before retrieving a clean, white handkerchief, extending it towards me.

"Whether you want to wipe your mouth or dry your tears, it's up to you."

Either way, it's quite embarrassing. I, who is drunk like a total mess and sobbing uncontrollably, is found by a senior fellow from the same hospital.

I involuntarily gasp again, unable to control myself, before words spill out of my mouth fueled by the influence of alcohol.

"You, mean girl, always seem to appear when I'm at the most difficult times."

Karan's eyes narrow slightly as soon as she hears that. Her distinctive husky voice utters loud enough for only the two of us to hear.

"That's right... I ***accidentally*** found you in a situation that I can't bear to watch once again."

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09. The Bride's Request

How did I end up here...?

The Aston Martin, beyond affordable, has been the hospital's ultimate attraction. Inside it, I'm sitting on the side next to the driver, tense and rigid. My gaze is fixed on the road ahead. In general, Note's car is already expensive, but compared to this, I dare not move or feel nauseous. I'm afraid of accidentally throwing up on the cushion.

With this level of wealth, why bother becoming a doctor? She could have been a successful entrepreneur.

By the way, I'm starting to sober somehow... ever since I realized that the young woman sitting behind the steering wheel is P'Karan.

The story isn't complicated. I was just so drunk that I ended up in the most embarrassing state in the bathroom. She just happened to be drinking with her high school friends there by chance, so we bumped into each other in a less-than-graceful state. P'Karan handed me a handkerchief to wipe my face. But I was so drunk that I could only stare at her face the whole time.

In the end, she calmly lowered her body to wipe my face and mouth and then took me to wash up with clean water from the sink. Then, she asked me in a short, straightforward manner as usual.

'Want to head back together? My condo is on the way to the hospital.'

'Are you inviting Kliao to stay at your condo?'

'It means we're going in the same direction.'

The owner of the alias '*The Icy Fellow*' corrected my drunken misunderstanding with her voice piercing through the teeth; it's like her desire of cute aggression to hit me a little.

It took my mind several minutes to process. Finally, I made a call to tell my friends that I would be heading back with a senior at the hospital whom I just ran into by pure chance.

Note was the most conscious person, so she followed us to make sure that I didn't make it up. And then she met P'Karan, who was supporting me to stand.

I couldn't remember what Note said to P'Karan. All I knew was that it took some time. She made a puzzled face, wondering who P'Karan was. They confirmed each other's identities for a while, and then my royal friend helped escort me to the parking lot.

Back to the present... The air is freaking cold. My body is tense and trembling subtly. I'm hesitant to turn and sneak at her facial expression. All I can manage is to blink my eyes and glance ahead.

Suddenly, the driver's left hand detaches from the steering wheel to adjust the temperature inside the car, making it warmer. I seize that moment to sneak a glance, wondering if those lightly colored lips have curved up or down.

However, I am confronted with the reality that her lips still maintain that straight line, not revealing any emotions as usual.

"Thank you..."

"Fourth."

"Uh... What does 'fourth' mean?"

"You've said that word for the fourth time since you got in the car."

I can't remember slipping out of that. I guess I'm really drunk.

But she is quite strange. When I approached her, she ignored me and lied that she couldn't remember me. Yet, in a situation like this, she extended her hand to help, offering to drop me off at the medical residence.

Even though she said we were going in the same direction, if someone didn't want to be bothered, why would they be willing to let someone sit like this?

"What did you say to my friend... just now?"

"...."

"Silent again..."

"Go to sleep. Even if I say anything, you'll forget everything when you're sober."

So, does that mean she will tell me tomorrow?

No, I think it would be easier to ask my friend. I'll just message Note and ask why you two had a long talk outside the car. She looked serious, and so did P'Karan.

I pull out my phone to unlock the screen, mistapping and mistouching the wrong and right spots due to the influence of alcohol. It takes several minutes to open LINE. Once I get into the green app, messages from someone that have been sent since midnight, make me feel like my heart is being squeezed even more.

Mom:

Kliao, can you come back and help me buy groceries on Tuesday evening?

Mom:

It's Fong's birthday. We're planning to celebrate with a hotpot. Come back before five in the evening.

On my birthday, there wasn't anything like that. No celebration, no gifts.

Worse, I was forgotten...

Unwilling to chat with anyone with my phone, I just read messages from my mom and choose not to reply. I switch off the screen and put it back into my bag. I sigh with a familiar sense of worthlessness before glancing outside the car window to let my blank gaze drift away.

One thought pops up in my head.

"I don't want to go back to my dorm."

"...."

Silence lingers between us until the cold woman finally asks.

"Why?"

"I don't want to be alone."

"Being drunk like this, you should fall asleep easily, shouldn't you?"

"Well, that's probably true. If I don't have to sleep in a room where my roommate is absent because she's spending time with her warm family."

Because Meow has parents who are proud of her, it makes me seriously desire something like that too. Not to mention our quiet room, I might end up crying in the bathroom like a while ago.

"I really don't want to be alone..."

My mouth blurts out almost subconsciously, murmuring the words like venting my sadness with her.

"...."

Once again, P'Karan leaves silence between us. Normally, being with someone reserved like her would make the atmosphere even colder than the air conditioning. However, when it's her.... When it's her, it feels better than being with my family.

It's warm and strangely familiar, as if my heart trusts her completely without any apparent reason to support it.

"Can I stay with you?"

My mouth babbles due to the influence.

"What are you talking about?"

As I anticipated, her response is laced with sarcasm.

I must have lost my senses to ask for something so foolish. I should have known better, especially since this woman had pretended not to remember anything from seven years ago, creating distance between us. Even when we were in the same hospital, she still insisted on calling me 'Extern.'

Damn it! Why did I expect to spend the night with her?

I inadvertently wished that she would cuddle me all night long.

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The soft, fluffy feeling...

I feel like I'm in a dream. The sunlight looks gentler and more soothing than usual. The atmosphere around me seems soft and predominantly filled with someone white. As I peer attentively, I realize that I am holding a bouquet of flowers in my hands, and wearing a clean, finely designed white dress.

A...wedding dress?

Yes, indeed. Both the floral pattern and the beauty of it. And there's a light veil covering my hair at the back.

Knock! Knock!

"Hey, enough looking at yourself in the mirror, Doc? The other bride has been waiting so long." Someone knocked on the door and playfully questioned me before stepping in to reveal herself.

It's Khim, who looks much grown-up now, dressed like a bridesmaid. My thoughts run wild confusingly, but my body processes the information and prompts me to respond.

"I'm not confident at all... Earlier, Frang took me to sneaka peek. P'Karan is truly beautiful."

P'Karan is beautiful?

Does that mean she is the 'other bride,' as Kim mentioned earlier?
I can't ponder for long, as my dear friend continues,

"Uh, she is also beautiful. But you look stunning today. It's a perfect match with two gorgeous brides."

"No sweet talk, please."

"It's not a sweet talk. You're really beautiful, Kliao.Be confident, or else P'Karan wouldn't have fallen for you from the beginning."

Khim walks in, grabbing my dress to double-check its neatness. Then, she pushes my back to encourage the nervously heart-throbbing me out of the dressing room.

"And... Where are Note and the others?"

"Your royal friend comes with a camera, walking around taking pictures. Belle checks over inside. Frang and Nene probably finished dealing with the reception. They must have been waiting in the ceremony room."

The bandmates are generally helpful and supportive,so it's not surprising that they are not attending as bridesmaids but are involved in various areas of the preparations.

This is a church. The wedding is Christia-style. I don't know why I find myself being here. It completely feels likea dream, and it's an event I've never dreamed of before. My heart is pounding fast, probably because every step is so exciting.

What's even more surprising is that my father is standing, waiting to escort me, dressed in a sleek and formal black suit. His face looks kinder than I've ever known him in my life. He smiles as if he has stopped loving his children unequally, and then he speaks with his sincere voice.

"You look absolutely beautiful, my dear."

His voice is so gentle that it's almost unbelievable...

"Thank you,"

I reply with a smile to the middle-aged man with the wrinkles of age on his face. He returns the smile, his eyes filled with admiration and pride for his daughter.

It seems like I am no longer the extern in the dream, probably much older than that, but it's pleasantly strange that he has stopped insulting me.

And at that moment, I remember something, so I turn to frown and warm my father.

"At the party tonight, you're strictly prohibited from drinking, understand?"

"Just a bit is not allowed?"

"Dad!"

My tone takes on a scolding note.

"You must take care of yourself. No alcohol, no cigarettes, and don't forget to take your medication. Clear?"

"Crystal. I was just kidding. My surgeon is also here. How could I dare to defy the doctor's orders?"

He laughs good-naturedly before gently taking my hand as if this pair of hands have performed surgery on him.

Oh? Could it be like that?

I'm completely puzzled; this dream is totally different from the previous ones.

Following behind, Khim comes to help me examine the dress once again. Then she pulls down the thin fabric to cover my face, in the same manner as those beautiful brides we've seen.

"Go get married to your P'Gaomaysa!"

"Alright."

With my left hand holding a beautiful bouquet and my right arm linked with my father's, it's time to step in. The orchestral music at the wedding resonates and penetrates my nervous system, and as I walk, I can't help but smile openly. Nene and Frang are seated on the left side according to the tradition of the bride's guests.

Accompanied by her expensive camera, Note is recording a video as I walk in with the bouquet in my hands. Belle, on the other hand, is the one with Bluetooth earphones, coordinating the staff around the church.

Mom and Fong-Samut are sitting in the front row. Today, my younger brother is wearing a sleek gray suit and sitting in the front. He turns to give me and Dad a big smile when we walk in. He lifts his phone to take a selfie from his angle. I smile back at him.

It feels strangely surreal. In reality, I hate him so much. How come our relationship turns over at this wedding...?

Before me, despite having a thin veil covering, I can still see a tall woman in her bride's dress with a different design. She doesn't have a veil and is standing next to the priest who is ready to perform his duties.

When my father and I move forward about halfway, she walks down the way and approaches me, as if she wants to take me to the ceremonial platform with her. The other bride stops in front of us, raising her hand to indicate that I should place mine on top.

Perhaps because we are not a heterosexual couple, the ceremony is different. She turns and bows slightly, thanking my father, when I place my hand on her warm hand.

P'Karan... Her touch remains unchanged, even in my dreams.

My cheeks are warming as we step forward together. The image of crossing the crosswalk flashes into my memory. This woman has always been the one I love.

Soon enough, we stand beside each other to receive the priest's statement. Holding P'Karan's arm, I keep pressing my lips tightly due to the excitement. There are a lot of guests at our wedding. Perhaps because both of us are doctors, we have friends from our school days and colleagues from the hospital, and even some former patients join the celebration.

During the moment when we turn to each other to confess our love, suddenly, the doors of the church swing open loudly. We, along with the guests, turn to look at what has caused the noise and find a woman in a dark-colored suit, wearing a cap and a black mask, standing and staring at us.

I don't have time to observe who she is, her silhouette, or any distinctive features, because she pulls out a gun in that split second, aims it at me, and pulls the trigger without hesitation.

Bang!

Bang!!

Two shots pierce into my right waist, causing searing pain and staining the wedding gown with an expanding red circle. The cries of the guests fill the air, some covering their ears, others crouching down.

The woman with the gun has vanished from the spot next to the door where she stood moments ago. P'Karan rushes in to cradle my body in shock and shouts at the nearest person to call an ambulance.

I clutch the area where the pain is radiating, and in the next second, I feel like I can't stand any longer. My knees give in, slowly descending until I'm in a half-lying position. P'Karan's still hugging me, still in shock, and almost going mad when looking at the spreading red stain. With her trembling left hand, she gently removes the light veil covering my face. Our eyes meet, and I notice that the edges of P'Karan's eyes are filled with tears.

The situation is chaotic. At the corner of my eye, I notice Belle talking on the phone. Frang and Nene, standing closest to the door, rush out, presumably to chase after the assailant.

As for Note, she's trying to manage the situation, preventing the guests from panicking and making sure no one rushes towards where I and P'Karan are.

At that moment, my ears are ringing, and the pain is spreading throughout my body. My blood-stained hand barely lifts, struggling to press against the warm cheek of P'Karan, whose arm still warmly supporting me.

I force a smile through the curtain of tears. Almost whispered tone, I plead

"Can we not turn back time anymore...?"

Upon hearing my words, P'Karan cannot hold back her tears anymore. The young woman, usually good at concealing her feelings, lets a glimpse of pain show on her face. She shakes her head slowly, signaling to me that she's unable to accept my request.

I try to make a sound to voice out the second plea,

"Please.... Don't give up your life span for me anymore."

Still, as I love this woman the most in this world, she also loves me the most

in the universe. She's still shaking her head with tears flowing down her cheeks. The woman who cradles my body leans in to let our foreheads touch. Her trembling voice can only be heard by the two of us.

"It's just a decade..."

"No, it's as much as a decade..."

"But I can't imagine the world without you."

That's the last sentence from her lips before I feel being pulled out from the dreamlike trance. It brings me to a sudden awakening, gasping for air in the steamy room.

I wake up, and here... It's the room in my medical dormitory.

It seems like I have dreamt about my death again.

It feels so real that I'm breathing heavily and my heart's pounding fast. My hand slides down to touch the right side of my waist, the same spot where, in the dream, two bullets pierced through. It's still safe and sound. Okay, there's no infinite bleeding.

I force myself to sit up, wiping the sweat off my damp back. The headache persists, along with the lingering fear from moments ago. I scan the room; the clock beside the bed indicates it's past two in the morning, and the other bride in my dream is also here.

But wait, this is mine and Meow's room! Why hasn't she gone back to her condo? Who said there was no way she would stay with me?

Putting my clothes into a laundry basket, P'Karan pauses her hands when our eyes meet. Her tall figure shifts from the crouched position to standing at her full height before she raises her brow, questioning why I have such a bewildered expression.

I know too well that she's cold and heartless, but now, I let the tears of fear flow freely. My lips crease up when I cry for her like a warmth-seeking little child.

"P'Karan... I had a nightmare."

"A nightmare...?"

Unexpected, the fellow who usually ignored me turns her attention away from everything else and walks over to squat at my eye level as I lie on the bed.

"Yes, it was about the wedding-"

"Shh, no need to say anything," she places her index finger on my lips.

The body language tells me there's no need to talk about heavy matters. Then, she sits on her knees and leans in to embrace me gently.

"It's okay... I'll make my baby forget about it. There's no need to remember such things."

The address sounds as gentle as in the dream. I'm not sure if she slipped or what, but her voice was tender, clearly showing that she was comforting me. I hug her back in response. The warmth from her body begins to bring my consciousness back. At that moment, I tilt my head in curiosity and ask.

"Phee Karan, what are you going to do? Turn back time?"

She then replies, making a promise that might sound insignificant but hold great value to my heart.

"Yes, I will turn back time before the nightmare. Then, I'll hug you tightly all night long."

□□□□□

📌❀10. Was it a dream?❀📌

5:40 AM

Rrrrrr

I wake up with a massive headache. The alarm has probably rung for the fourth time, but only just now that I can muster the strength to sit up and grab it from the drawer next to my bed. Once I flop back onto bed again because I haven't had enough sleep, the spirit of being the sixth-year medical student with two years of clinical rotations is screaming "Let's have the morning round. I thus force myself to open my eyes and reach for the noisy alarm clock to check the time.

Damn it! Damn it! Damn it!

Even though it's Sunday, I still have to attend the ward rounds!

I'm not a quick shower person, and I have to get changed and drag myself to the office. Although the bike has been inflated since Friday evening, it's necessary to Huny because the general medicine ward has a lot of patients.

I throw off the blanket, grab my towel, run into the bathroom, and then stand at the sink to splash my face, trying to alleviate the headache from last night's hangover.

Why does last night's sleep feel so different from the other times..??

At that moment, the memories from last night suddenly flash back. Wait! I was about to venit again and again. I cried in the bathroom in front of PKaran, who coincidentally went to the same bad?

To make matters worse, I kept blabbering about all those embarrassing things non-stop, I was venting emotions, not wanting to be alone. I even asked her to stay with me. However, she instantly rejected my request without a second thought Gosh! How embarrassing!

I lift my hands to cover my face in embarrassment, cheeks turning red. Nonetheless, I have to control my breath and tell myself to quickly take a shower and fulfill my external duties. I guess the fourth and fifth-year students must have already started their rotations.

After getting dressed and packing the necessary items into my bag, before leaving the room, I notice something unusual and have to turn back to take another look.

Huh?

It feels like everything has been tidied up neatly. The shoes that used to be scattered around are neatly arranged; the worn clothes that had been lying on the floor are now placed in the basket. Even the small trash bag by the door, which was previously full, seems to have been replaced with the new one as if someone had taken the old one away.

Hmmm?

Oh! Maybe Meow has returned. What made her clean up the room so diligently?

Successfully resolving my suspicion, I open the door and make sure to lock it firmly.

Taking short strides, I walk along the pathway, hurry to take the ward round before the staff arrive. Tree still has a cheerful face; he's waiting at the bike parking area as usual.

"Waking up late today?"

"Who asked you to wait?"

I frown as we ride our bikes to the hospital together. As for my boy friend, he's still in good spirits as always. Then, the fact that Tree had waited reminds me of something.

Does that imply he's ignoring Meow?

"Why didn't you go with Meow, Tree?"

"Meow? That's non-sense! Why would she come back?"

Huh? Didn't my roommate make over our messy room?

"She clearly said her father would drop her off at the hospital so that she could go straight to the ward. Some patients in the surgical ward need wound care, so she shouldn't stop by the dorm."

At this point, I become puzzled, almost riding my bike into the side of the road. I remember that Meow has mentioned it on Saturday morning, and I'm not the type who enjoys housework to the extent that I would do it when I was drunk.

Having been forced to do it since childhood, looking at Fong-Samut who's been sitting with his wiggling feet, I find myself extremely bored with this type of work. I'd rather undergo surgery to connect three intestines than doing lots of laundry.

Does that mean I had a daydream or what?

But then a vivid memory rushes in, widening my eyes.

Last night, I was carried back to my room by an extremely warm human, and I vomited all over the floor again. After that, the same person helped me to lie on my bed, wiping my face and mouth. Sleepiness began to overwhelm me. With half-closed eyes, I saw a tall woman let out a deep sigh before lowering her body to clean up my puke.

After about an hour of sleep, in the middle of the night, I felt a strange warmth in the room.

Processing what I saw, I realize that the woman who took me back home was P'Karan...

"F*ck!"

I blurt out for such a big mistake, and that startles Tree so much.

"What the f*ck is wrong with you?"

He asks why I make such a weird face as if I have done something insane. I also want to spill the beans and confess that I accidentally presented my most embarrassing state to my crush. The problem is, beneath her beautiful face, emotions are barely expressed, making it hard to know what she's thinking.

What if I ran into her again, in whatever way, how could I read her mind?

I shouldn't have done that.

But what about her? Who said she wouldn't stay with me? Why couldn't she drop me off at the door and leave me there? Let the one who was as drunk as me struggling to get inside on my own. That way, she wouldn't have to see anything like that, nor did she have to clean the room. By the way, how long had she been there?

Anyway, after thinking over it, who would want to take care of others until morning, especially when she is a cold person who rather keeps a distance and avoids me? Maybe, she felt so pity for me that she decided to clean up the mess before leaving right after that.

I park my bike and then use my both hands to slap my face repeatedly to punish myself. Whether she stayed for a big or a little while, it's still embarrassing!

And... I should go thank and apologize to her.

However, the 'Med' and 'Surg' are not close to each other at all. Moreover, is there any doctor who has enough free time to stroll around the hospital on a regular basis? Possibly, a CVT fellow like her might have to stay in the

operating room like when one patient leaves, another one comes in immediately. It might be difficult to find time to meet her easily.

I probably have to wait in ambush along the corridor before heading to the parking lot.

But, this time, will I be ignored again...? That's quite interesting to know.

I tie up the tangled thoughts when I step into the general medicine ward, where the junior medical students have been waiting in their short-sleeved yet long white gowns.

Personal problems have to be saved later. Even though I am an extern and I haven't completed my studies yet, I am still the primary supporter for these kids.

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We spent more time than usual during the morning round due to the late attendance of a fourth-year student. The professor punished him by describing the symptoms of the last patient and then asking him to diagnose what disease the patient had.

The male junior student, who still had his bed hair as if he had just woken up and hurriedly ridden his bike here, blinked his eyes rapidly. Eventually, standing beside the professor, I had to mouth some hints to tell him that the patient had acute hepatitis.

"Thank you, sis! I was almost eaten alive by the professor earlier."

"No problem," I give a slight smile to the junior student who's about ten centimeters taller than me.

We talk briefly about case presentations since he has just entered the fourth year and has so many questions. Ultimately, we part ways to fulfill our respective duties.

At that moment, as I'm about to take the elevator to find something to eat for breakfast that's already an hour late, I remember my plan to talk to Note last night as I'm curious about what P'Karan had seriously discussed with her.

No need to waste my time, I quickly press my phone to make a call to my royal friend. She must be very free because she answers right after two rings.

[What's up?]

"Last night..."

[You were totally drunk like a dog.]

She sounds like she's so tired of me and shaking her head.

"Okay, I admit. I remember some parts. But what did you say to my senior?"

[Are you referring to your P'Gaomaysa?]

"You know!?"

[Well, I had to know her, the person who would give my friend a ride, right? So, I asked who she was and where she came from, and then she introduced herself as Karan.]

"If she introduced herself by her nickname, how did you know she is Gaomaysa?"

[When I heard the name Karan, it didn't sound familiar, so I didn't trust her and didn't let her take you. But then she revealed her real name as Gaomaysa, along with showing her ID card.]

"...."

[It seems like she knew that you had been looking for her.]

This means that P'Karan noticed it every time I announced my search for her before each performance began. Ever since I've become part of The Edge of the Universe, I would speak into the microphone every time before each show began, hoping that she would know how much I wanted to meet her. If she knew well enough that I wanted to meet her, why did she pretend not to remember anything?

I don't understand her at all...

[Do you want me to dig for her background?]

"Are you so damn free, Note?"

[Yes, I'm kinda free.]

"Goshhh, you're so pathetic. Never mind. It's no big deal. I'll go ask her myself soon."

[Do you think she would answer you easily? She looks difficult to approach.]

It seems like, with just one encounter, Note could figure out her personality. In fact, P'Karan is more than just unapproachable; she's genuinely cold.

According to my regular investigation, even a fierce professor in the CVT department, who often gets mad at fellows, agrees to back down on her. I guess she has turned the operating room into a freezing point.

But when she held my hand and helped me cross the road, her hand felt really warm...

Suddenly, a good idea pops into my head.

P'Karan pretends not to remember if she has ever reversed time to save me. Moreover, she acts like knowing nothing about time controlling. No matter how I talk about it, she's unlikely to accept it. But what if I try to act it out this time?

Note, on the other end of the line, notices that I've been in silence for a while, so she decides to break it and says:

[It's been really quiet. Are you dead, Kliao? My question is 'Would P'Karan be willing to answer why she never contacted you although she knows you're looking for her?']

I grin as I can think of a good idea.

"I have a way to make her answer all the questions."

And it will require her to turn back time in front of me again.

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Part: Narrator

On Monday

Karan went to work as usual, along with arranging a sudden leave for tomorrow and swapping the afternoon shift with a friend. She exchanged the Friday shift with Fiat, a nightclub regular, who was more than willing to do so as it was the only way he could avoid the TGIF ward duty. He really appreciated it.

"But where are you going? You never take a day off."

"Personal business."

"That's short yet broad. Why pretend like we're not friends? I let you swap the shift with me. Don't you feel like you should say anything?"

The deep voice, playfully complaining, belonged to the fifth-year resident in the CVT department, who was currently assisting Karan in a surgery.

"Come on, spill the beans."

The young woman maintained her calm demeanor as she spoke,

"if the tumor in the patient's lung wasn't located in such a critical area, we wouldn't have to perform this open-chest surgery for tissue examination."

She was telling him that they should take this more seriously. Normally, there are several methods available for removing a tumor in the lung for cancer screening. However, in the case of this male patient lying on the surgery bed, the tumor was found in a dangerous area.

Both the professor and Karan herself agreed that this case might require an open-chest procedure for better examination.

"Alright... Let's discuss after the surgery then."

The young man said sheepishly, as he knew all too well that catching Karan after this would be more difficult than anything.

Lungs are organs located in the chest cavity. Even though Karan had been summoned by Prof. Dej to assist in cases related to hearts more frequently, she still had to deal with lung surgeries. There's a common misconception that thoracic surgeons deal only with breast augmentation surgeries, but that's not the case.

The thoracic cavity encompasses various organs such as the heart, aorta, thymus gland, esophagus, trachea, lungs, and many more. Surgeries involving these organs are intricate and delicate, often requiring the use of magnifying lenses attached to glasses.

Karan chose to customize the lenses that directly fit her eyesight, even though the hospital provided borrowed ones. For a CVT doctor, these glasses with attached lenses were indispensable. So, she kept them well in a box when they were not used.

However, why did she see a glimpse of her own glasses falling to the ground after Fiat stopped talking?

Was that unusual event connected to this particular patient or the surgical team in this room...?

The worried young woman shook off her distracting thoughts and refocused on what she could see through her lenses.

The young woman started to get nervous, her slender eyebrows knitting together. However, in the next instant, she shook off the tangled thoughts and refocused on what she could see through her lenses-her priority as a surgeon.

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On Tuesday

A sleek black Aston Martin drove out of the not less than ten-million-baht condominium designed by a renowned architect. The fellow, who took the day off and exchanged shifts with a colleague in her department, wore a white blouse with rolled- up sleeves and sleek black trousers, paired with Vans sneakers-her favorite brand just like her mother.

The destination was a certain prison. No gifts or money prepared, only pent- up anger had lingered in her heart forso many days that she clenched her fists tightly.

Honestly, she had wanted to visit that prisoner ever since the day he dared hurt **'her' Kliao Khluen.**

However, rushing to do so would raise suspicions. Karan's plan was to ensure that the wrongdoer had no idea that she was involved with Kliao Khluen in any way. Thus, it was necessary to wait for a suitable time.

Rrrrrrrr!

Her almond eyes glanced at the name of the person calling. The screen displayed the word 'Troublemaker, indicating that the mischievous girl of this world must have some troublesome matters to annoy her. As she had kept the Bluetooth connection ready, her slender fingers pressed down on the button of the steering wheel to answer.

Then, a familiar, little voice spoke up:

[I heard you took a day off. Aunt Vi just told me. Where are you going, sis?]

Aunt Vi is Mommy Jattawa's younger sister, and she can see glimpses into the future, similar to her. Supposedly, Mai-Tree may have bugged her about this.

"Just a little business."

[What business?]

"Why do you need to know?"

[Is it a secret? If it is something bad, I will tell Mom and Mommy. Anyway, never mind. I don't want to know. But after you've done, please lend me your Aston. Please~]

Karan continued to concentrate on the road while responding to the person on the other end.

"No. Last time, you drove my car into the footpath."

[Please! Please! Please! Let me borrow it. I want it. I need it. Today, I have an appointment to discuss a case with a big company. I want to show off by driving a luxurious car.]

"Is there anyone who judges a lawyer by her car brand? Besides, if they want you, it's because of your skills, right?"

[...]

"...."

Both remained silent. During that brief moment, Karan guessed what the next part of the conversation would be...

[Sissy...]

A sweet and pleading voice emerged from the mischievous one of the time-controlling family.

[Tree wants to drive P'Karan's car. Do you want to see my eyes? I'll do a video call now. Oh, you're driving, right? It's okay. I can wait for you to turn on the camera after you reach your destination.]

The older sibling slightly sighed for the spoiled kid. Finally, she gave in.

"Come get it at my condo."

[No, I would rather not wait for a car. Please drive it back home. Thank you so much!]

The younger sister ended the conversation and hung up casually, leaving Karan with a tiresome heart. After resolving the matter, she would have to go back home to lend her sister this car for the afternoon.

Mai-Tree is the youngest child. She has been second to none in terms of being self-willed and should have been disciplined. However, her mischievous side is only revealed to her family members and close friends.

As a lawyer, she can maintain a serious demeanor in front of her customers, during legal proceedings, or when social interactions are required. She can adapt well to different situations, transforming into a completely different person.

Her special ability is the power to stop time once a day for ten minutes, and her ability is reset at midnight. Very similar to Karan, her conditions include: first, when she touches someone and stops time, that person would become uncontrolled by the time.

However, only one person can be affected at a time. Second, if there is any bleeding from her body, she can't use her ability. Third, if she stops time to save someone's life, she has to exchange it with ten years of her own lifespan.

That's why her older sister didn't want to involve her into any matters...

Karan decided not to share this stressful concern to anyone.

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Karan arrived at the prison in the late morning, but due to the long waiting queue for visitors, she ended up getting inside around 11 o'clock. The tall woman was unfamiliar with the atmosphere there, and that was also her first visit. She secretly thought having a face-to-face conversation with the criminal was quite crazy. Fortunately, there was a clear glass partition separating them.

Karan, nevertheless, could do anything for Kliao Khluen.

"That girl asked you to deal with me, right?"

The eyes of the person on the other side of the transparent barrier were filled with resentment and anger when he spoke through the phone provided by the Department of Corrections to facilitate the communication between visitors and prisoners.

Hearing that, Karan sarcastically smiled with her beautiful lips.

"Which girl?"

She pretended to think for a moment, leaning back against her chair before displaying a look as if she had just recalled the news.

"Oh, do you mean the one you recently choked at the hospital? I've seen the news everywhere."

"B*tch!"

The man on other side of the glass lowered his voice.

"You're all the same."

"Who's the real son of a b*tch here?"

The CVT doctor clenched her hands tightly.

Who else forced her to give the cold shoulder to the girl she loved the most?

Karan tried not to show any suspicious behavior, silently reminding herself that she came here to put on a show. After taking some time to control her anger, she smiled.

"You seek revenge on everyone, don't you?"

"Don't play innocent! It's impossible that you don't know her!"

"I've always thought that I'm the only one who became a target because I reported you seven years ago."

"That day, she saw my face. If she didn't spill the beans to you, who else could it be?"

"Poor you. If someone else had seen you like this, I shouldn't have reported you promptly. I should've waited for the girl you choked at the hospital to do it."

"...."

"He stared with a murderous gaze, veins pulsing with extreme rage.

"But let it be. It's better this way. My close junior from the same faculty was killed. How could I stay silent and wait for someone else to report it?"

A close friend from the same faculty? In fact, Karan didn't know anything about the victim. She was just fabricating a story to make the malicious man in front of her believe that Kliaa Khluen was innocent. Blurting out as if she reported him for her underclassmate would be enough to make him believe in the motive.

The visit ended when Karan hung up the phone and gave him an intentionally annoying smile. She left the chair before the time was up. Then, she let the middle-aged man hide his face, recklessly glancing around and searching for answers within himself.

'How could it be? That girl knew nothing about...it at all?'

He pondered confusingly. Finally, he threw his anger toward Karan alone, believing in the body language that the young woman displayed. His pale lips slightly pursed with a tight jawline, his eyes gazing outside the glass barrier without focusing on any particular point. Yet, the deeply embedded thoughts in his heart suggested a strong determination to deal with someone who had just left.

'A Senior...huh? She herself is just like that scum. Very well! She should die and meet him in hell!'

He had no idea that...this is what the young woman had planned to make him take revenge on her solely.

Karan knew that the prisoner must have some sinister plan in mind. No matter what, she must find a way to cope with it.

The only thing she wanted was the safety and peaceful life of ***her future bride - Kliao Khluen.***

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🌿11. Scheming On Wednesday🌿

Something peculiar happened in the afternoon. The hospital director called me to meet in person, which made me anxious about what might have happened. Had an extern like me unintentionally done something wrong? Nonetheless, the regular nurse in our ward, P'Ing, reassured me out of the blue. She said it might be related to the incident where I was assaulted by the prisoner.

As expected, when I entered the air-conditioned workspace, our hospital director in his fifties gestured for me to sit on the sofa by his working desk. Then, he removed his reading glasses and got straight to the point.

"That incident-I'd like you not to spread it on the internet or give any interviews to the media. Can you comply with that?"

He probably knew me as the lead singer of The Edge of the Universe, which is quite famous, too. Over the past few weeks, I've updated my fan club about my well-being to ease their worries. The director, therefore, called me in to keep things under the carpet.

He wanted me to bury everything as if nothing had happened. He has made a statement and assured the hospital's safety. So, he wanted me to refrain from posting anything like 'Back to my dorm safely, everyone' or 'If there's any progress, I'll update you all soon' on social media.

However, I still can't find peace of mind because I'm still clueless about why that prisoner did that to me. I haven't received any additional information, and the hospital is trying to conceal the information as much as possible.

Only the insiders are talking about it. We are prohibited from sharing anything with the media. I don't want to be interviewed either, but it's quite impossible for me to erase the spiteful incident from my memories.

"You shouldn't make it a big deal. It's been a while already."

"...."

The truth is - it's been less than a month.

"At the announcement, I mentioned the safety of the staff, assuring that there's nothing to worry about from now on. You, as an extern here, should not discourage others."

"...."

I wasn't invited to the announcement, although I was the victim.

"So, please stop mentioning what has happened. Think of it as an unfortunate event that you ran into a madman."

Initially, this conversation with the authorities made me feel anxious as if I were being squeezed. However, once I understood his intention - merely attempting to maintain the hospital's reputation - it reminded me of the pressures I had been through all over my life.

Even within my own family, I have no right to voice out since childhood. As a teenager, my attempts to explain were often interpreted as defiance.

Now, at the age of 24, being a medical student, I have grown enough to respond when my family criticizes me (although I've never defeated them). In a situation like that, with an outsider, I had no hesitation in expressing my views.

"I strongly believe that he isn't mad. That's why I still can't rest assured."

"He's in prison now. He can't get out and harm you."

"He might not be able to harm me now, but wouldn't he make it someday...?"

The older man's lips twitched, as things didn't go as planned. It's clear that he tried to show off his calmness though he wouldn't have had it from the beginning. Perhaps, due to my fame, he was afraid of saying something wrong and getting attacked on social media.

"With that argument, what are you actually looking for?"

"All I want is safety, nothing more."

"If you want that much security, why did you choose to study medicine in the first place? You should know that it's not an easy profession. It comes with risks."

Then, he burst into sarcastic laughter like an adult mocking a child. "Did your parents force you? Maybe you believe it's a convenient path, am I correct?"

"No, sir."

I answered seriously, putting no effort to save his face as if the person before me wasn't the director everyone was afraid of. I held my pleated shirt tightly to encourage myself.

"I chose to be a doctor for some reason. Regarding the risks, I knew from the beginning what I would face and what kind of pressure I would encounter. If I were afraid of the actual risks in my work, I would have resigned a long time ago. But the safety I'm talking about is in the case of assaults. Even in public, he dares to lay hands. Then, how can I know whether my safety exists? You should be more concerned about the safety of all personnel, shouldn't you?"

The man sitting on the opposite side looked furious but managed not to explode. Perhaps it was because I was still a medical student and a singer with a great number of followers.

He didn't care about me; he just wanted to maintain the image and prevent me from posting anything. That's the reason why he chose to burst into laughter uncontrollably.

"Then, what should be done? The basic right of every prisoner is to receive medical treatment. Shall we refuse patients from prisons? It's not that simple."

"You misinterpreted it. I'm just trying to find out if he holds any personal grudge against me. As for social media, it's another channel that lets my followers know that I'm still safe and haven't disappeared. And if I ever need help, it's a crucial means to reach out during emergencies."

After the fight with my parents over the phone that day, I argued at length with an adult once again.

I found that no matter how boldly I expressed my feelings, in the end, when the conversation was over, sorrow rapidly seeped into my soul when I was alone.

The director seemed to notice that his attempt to persuade me had failed. So, he suggested that if that's the case, I should maintain his image and that of the hospital by not granting any interviews on this issue.

Posting anything related to the hospital is strictly prohibited. I reluctantly agreed, and our rather chilly conversation came to an end.

As I descended in the elevator, I couldn't help but wonder how I managed to talk back to him earlier.

Then, I got sad, wondering how long I had to continue meeting people who didn't see value in me. The director, concerned about the hospital's reputation, probably wished for me to transfer to another hospital soon.

It's always like this. Whenever I argue with someone, they finish their part, leaving me to overthink on my own...

The clock on the phone screen indicates that it is past five in the evening. I quickly sweep away the gray emotions that have lingered since earlier, as I remember that today I plan to prove something about someone. It is an idea that had crossed my mind when I was talking with Note several days ago, and I have intended to execute it on Monday.

However, unexpected complications arose in the ward, with an elderly patient experiencing a cardiac arrest. The plan had to be postponed to Tuesday. But on Tuesday, I had to provide consultation for a junior regarding a case presentation, so it got pushed again to Wednesday, which is today.

As the elevator doors open, I step out briskly with my short legs towards the building with the highest number of floors in the hospital, simply put, the tallest one.

P'Karan pretends not to know anything about time travel.

If that's the case, I will create a situation for her to turn back time in front of me once again.

If I had abilities like hers, I would probably use them to fix various things according to my preferences and to treat patients. So, I can't understand why this woman didn't acknowledge that she had helped me, which was such a good deed.

It is so good that the warmth of her hands still linger, and that even makes me fall in love with her so deeply...

As I reach the building, the elevator brings me up to the top floor. This means that to go any higher, I need to take the stairs. I walk leisurely, as it isn't a rushed mission.

Yesterday, I asked Meow to help me find P'Karan's phone number. Certainly, my roommate could obtain the number through medical student networks, as they have to contact their seniors or professors for medical consultations on a regular basis.

So, she found the number effortlessly since she had everyone's contacts in the surgery ward. Being on duty, when something happened, she would make a call for a consultation. She even had called P'Karan, the ice queen, once.

Therefore, my plan is to take an overhead photo from the rooftop, aiming the camera down to the floor, and then, send the picture message to the number of the cold-hearted woman who pretends not to know about the time reversal. Then, I'll wait and see if she would come up here.

It seems like a good plan.

However, while my brain's imagining the potential outcome and opening the rooftop door, I find myself a big failure as if my plan is crushed into pieces even before it begins.

P'Karan's tall figure leans against the rooftop railing. She wears a fine cream-colored round-neck t-shirt with ankle-cropped navy-blue jeans that accentuate her long legs. On top of that, she has a clean, white, long gown, with two pens neatly tucked into a pocket on the left chest of the gown.

With intentional poise, she stands facing the rooftop door, seemingly aware of how I would open it. When I realize that she might have known by her unique abilities, my face turns pale, but I manage to force a dry smile and greet the woman with narrowed, scrutinizing eyes.

"Hello... P'Karan."

"...."

She doesn't respond, but raises her hands to hug herself and looks at me as if waiting to see what I would do next in this situation.

Come on... What can I do when the plan has failed so miserably?

I put both hands into my short gown pockets and then walk towards the edge of the rooftop, pretending to admire the view from the tallest building in this hospital. I keep a distance of about three meters between us.

Since my scheme becomes unsuccessful, it seems like I have to find something to talk about instead.

The young woman shifts from her earlier intimidating stance to facing back towards the expansive evening sky that is turning orange. Her arms rest on the rooftop railing, but her face turns away as if avoiding any bonding with me.

It's like she doesn't want anyone to know that we are together, but deep down, she wants to be me.

What's wrong with her?

She's so complicated.

I intend to bring up the topic of Saturday night, asking if she was the one who took care of me and cleaned the room, but I know she won't admit it, even though it is so obvious. So, I change my approach to making short, straightforward sentences instead.

"Thank you for that night. P'Karan always takes good care of me."

"I had to go that direction anyway."

"That's right. You had to drop me off anyway. As for the umbrella... I'll return it to you."

"Keep it for yourself."

"No way. It's your thing, and it seems to be expensive. I'll give it back."

"Alright then."

Her tone sounds more like giving in than insulting. Her hair flutters in the breeze, creating an image that I find irresistibly beautiful. And even though P'Karn is acting like she is enjoying the view, her mouth invites further conversation,

"What are you doing up here?"

How should I respond? I glance around, searching for a quick excuse, then sneak at part of her profile and say,

"I come to see the sky. I have no shifts today. I wanted to watch the sunset as soon as my evening round was done."

"That's good."

"What else could it be? What else did you think I was going to do here?"

This time, I intentionally hint at the incident when I was shot and fell from the rooftop - the time when she turned back time to save my life. I quietly observe every single reaction of her. She doesn't express more than just a fleeting glance in my direction and then back to the clouds.

"Please don't tell anyone about our acquaintance, especially the doctors or nurses?"

"Huh!?"

I blurt out, losing self-control and unconsciously leaning closer to the taller woman.

"Does that mean you admitted that we met seven years ago?"

She exhales softly and then moves away to bring back the distance between us. Refusing to answer the question, she emphasizes her point,

"So, you agreed."

"Not really. I haven't agreed even a little bit,"

I hurriedly clarify, putting on the most serious face possible to convey my emotions,

"Until you explain everything. What was going on? The accident at the crosswalk, the bullet at the rooftop - all of them were committed by that prisoner who choked me, right? Why did he do it?"

"Why do you think I would know?"

"Because you know it. I'm confident that you know."

"But that's what happened to you, isn't it? What do I have to do with it?"

She turns this way with a cold, piercing gaze.

"What kind of fellows is interested in externs that much?"

Her concise words are sharp enough to cut deep into my heart. She's trying to say that I just imagined things. But I still remember the nightmare of being threatened with a knife by someone and P'Karan who didn't want to lose me. Also, my instinct is warning me that this woman...

This woman has a secret, and she's holding it for me. That's why I can't step back easily.

I swallow hard before uttering words that have been carefully composed for nearly a minute.

"If you don't care about me, just like you said, then why did you lend me the umbrella? Why did you turn back time to save my life? Why bother dropping me off at my dorm and showing up every time I need help? On that day too... You even looked after me and cleaned the room!"

"...."

"And the reason why you're here right now... Isn't it because of this extern?"

□□□□□

❖❖12. Jigsaw❖❖

I slipped out like that because I couldn't stand it any longer, not being able to know what happened although I was totally involved. It's quite frustrating, and I'm sending a plea through my eyes, hoping this cold-hearted woman might reveal something.

P'Karan purses her beautiful, slender lips as if she's considering something real hard. Finally, she reluctantly says it.

"If I admit that I can turn back time and see the future, like the reason I ended up here was because I knew you would send a picture message, knowing that, what would you do next?"

"Well..."

I never prepared myself and what to say next if she admitted it.

"I may just want to ask why you chose to save me or perhaps you've been helping all the patients."

"I can't remember what I was thinking when I helped you."

"That can't be possible..."

"Let's consider this an exchange. I answered your questions. Now, as for you, just act like we've never met. Don't tell anyone in the hospital about it, and stop thinking about scheming something like taking pictures as if you're about to commit suicide. It's not fun, you know?"

"It's not fun because it makes you worried, right?"

"...."

Damn it! She becomes silent again.

She just delivered the longest speech I'd heard so far. I shouldn't have asked her like that.

I apologetically put on a faint smile,

"Understood. I won't attempt anything strange again."

"Good."

Because P'Karan responds briefly and calmly, my frustration re-emerges. I can't help but pout and turn my face away. I intentionally whisper loud enough for her to hear.

"If you're this cold, you wouldn't intend to leave the side-effects behind, right?"

That sentence makes the fierce fellow furrow her brow.

"What do you mean?"

I'm a bit surprised that she didn't know about the traces of time travel she left behind. Still, I explain,

"Frequent déjà vus and dreams of future."

"So, you dreamed about the future again..."

She's mumbling to herself. I can't catch it well enough, but our conversation continues as the next question from the older woman is seriously asked.

"What did you dream about?"

"In fact, I could see only glimpses of the future. They aren't very long, but they often come true. There were only a few times when they didn't match exactly, but they were close. Maybe because I saw the future and decided to do something else, so the results turned out differently."

"It might be a side-effect... I didn't intend for it to affect you. I apologize."

"It's okay. You did that to save my life, but... Does this mean everyone you bring back in time end up like me?"

"Apart from you, I've never brought anyone back with me."

"Huh?"

"If I touch someone when I travel back in time, only that person remembers what happened."

At this point, I start to realize something.

It means that if P'Karan uses her ability without touching anyone, only she will be the one who knows that she has traveled back in time to fix or reset something. As for other living things, they will continue their lives as before, just like what happened in the previous timeline. However, if she touches someone when she uses her ability, the other party becomes aware of the time travel.

I remember... before falling from the rooftop, she tried to grab my hand, even though she could only touch my fingertips. Still, I remember everything.

Am I the only one that P'Karan has traveled through time with?

I have wishful thinking again, so I shake my head to get rid of thoughts that make my heart race. Then, I remind myself that while I might be the only one who has traveled back in time with her, she herself must have traveled back in time to help save the lives of other patients.

I....wouldn't matter that much to her.

At that moment, she would just pity me.

The more I think, the more my heart feels a bit hurt. So, I grin wryly just like every time I have too many things in my head. I divert conversations towards other topics that aren't related to her special powers.

"By the way, can you explain why we have to pretend not to know each other?"

"If you dreamed of the future, have you ever had a nightmare of having a knife at your throat?"

"What's wrong about that?"

Rrrrrr!

The sound of a communication device grows louder. Initially, I thought it was mine, as it carried the standard ringtone of the same brand. However, P'Karan retrieves her phone to check the screen.

I can see that it was a call from the ICU room. She answers and talks with person on the other end, probably a nurse or her junior doctor.

After listening quietly for less than ten seconds, she responds briefly.

"I'll be there in a moment."

When she puts down the communication device, her beautiful face turns towards me to continue our interrupted conversation. However, it's a warning, as if she's afraid that I might do something crazy.

"Extern, don't fool around. Don't scheme anything else."

Then, she uses her long legs to stride away. As she walks and then runs, leaving this rooftop.

I didn't hold her back because I know well that being called urgently means there is a serious matter requiring immediate treatment. So, I just stand here, staring at the closed door, connecting the dots.

'Put the knife down right now! Have you lost your mind? You're also a doctor!'

Does that mean someone who aimed to harm me was also a doctor just like us...?

That's probably why P'Karan pretended not to know me. But why? How could acting like strangers help in any way? What's really going on now and then? How much was that prisoner involved in all of this?

Everything is like jigsaw pieces scattered around the floor, too many to easily assemble into a clear picture. I'm confused about every single thing.

In the evening, I return to the dormitory and can't force myself to close my eyes because I can't tell who is eager to take my life. Is it that prisoner, or perhaps a doctor?

What if both are collaborating for some purpose?

Unable to sleep, I reluctantly pick up my phone and go online, searching as much as I can about the assailant who attacked me. The news is quite old, and the details are scarce, as the suspect still has to be referred to using a pseudonym. However, I learn that he went to jail for a murder case, with allegations of corpse concealment.

Concealment....?

Rrrrrrr!

While I'm about to access news from other websites, a call rings and disrupts my focus. It's my dear friend, Khim, calling at this hour. I quickly search for my Bluetooth earphones to connect before answering the call.

[I've got something to tell you. It's really important!]

She blurts out as if she's afraid I might hang up.

"Calm down, take it slow. What's going on?"

[Back in our Grade 11, I moved to a different apartment because someone next door committed suicide. Do you remember that, Kliao!?)

"Yeah, I remember. You told me about it, and I even helped you move out."

[Today, I happened to sign a contract for script writing at a film studio. I met a senior who used to work as my apartment manager but has now changed his job. He greeted me, and initially, I almost couldn't remember until he mentioned his name. While waiting in the lobby, we started talking, and he revealed the truth about the incident. Actually, it was different from what the landlady said!]

"And what's the truth?"

[He said it was a murder!]

"What!?"

[At dawn, the murderer broke into the room to kill the victim before carrying him to the rooftop and attempting to hide the corpse. But the landlady told me that someone had committed suicide. I quickly moved out before it became the talk of the town. I heard about it, but on the news, the apartment was given a fictional name. Also, I was too afraid of listening to that scary news, so I never realized it was my old apartment.]

"Wait, are you trying to tell me that the perpetrator is..."

[Yeah, he's the prisoner who attacked you!]

Khim's apartment... Khim's apartment...

Or was he the man who bumped into me before I entered the elevator!?

I get goosebumps on my arms and at the back of my neck. The image of that moment flashes back, though not vividly. That morning, he seemed hurried and startled after bumping into me. Then, he hastily ran down the staircase.

Connecting with that, the accident on the crosswalk and the gunshot on the rooftop can be deduced that he did all those things to kill me, the girl who witnessed his face.

I continue thinking... Because P'Karan traveled back in time to save me, he couldn't successfully silence the witness.

Apart from that, the sentence he uttered while strangling me comes to mind.

'You're the one who reported me to the police, right!?You told that woman to handle me!!'

The woman he referred to... Was she the one who managed to get him arrested and identified as the murderer?

When I try to connect the dots, I suddenly realize that someone has been watching out for me to save my life. That's why there was no road accident on that day and no bullet threatening my life. The murderer was sent to jail thanks to someone's intervention.

And that person might be 'P'Karan.'

Could it be her-the one who has been always helping me....?

□□□□□

13. A Restless Night Like This, Can You Fall Asleep?

Several days later, I noticed that I'd been LINE friends with P'Karan for a while because her number was saved in my phone. I realized it while waiting for my coffee at a small cafe in the hospital. My eyes widened like they had forgotten how much sleepy I was. I quickly checked her profile.

I saved her contact as 'P'Karan' in my phone, but her LINE username is actually 'Karan_K.*

The letter 'K' at the back, I suspect, might be the abbreviation for her real name, 'Kaomaysa.*

Gosh! Why do I wish it to be an abbreviation for Kliao Khluen'?

Based on her personality, it's unlikely that I would have room in her heart.

I bring a navy blue umbrella with me; it's the one belonging to a cold and mysterious fellow. Actually, I can ask Meow to return it to her, but I want to see her in person. It shouldn't be a problem since she only told me not to tell anyone that we've met each other before. Returning the umbrella wouldn't reveal anything.

I just want to see her face... And, to be honest, I also want to ask about that prisoner and whether it's her who has been protecting me all along.

After finishing my coffee, I put away my communication device, hold the priceless umbrella that's still folded in my hand, and walk towards the counter to pay the bill. Then, I grab the tall tumbler, prepare to walk out of the cafe, and head back to the ward. I didn't take a plastic straw with me to

avoid plastic waste. As I push the door open, my eyes pause at a man and a woman engaging in their conversation at the corridor corner.

P'Ming looks serious. She's talking with a thin young man holding a bag of lunchboxes in his hand.

"Why are you here? Didn't you say walking hurts?"

The young man, probably her younger brother, replies with a smile. "Well, I saw you rushing out and skipping your breakfast. I got worried, so I made this for you. If the morning surgery is done, you can eat it right away. No need to queue up to buy some anywhere."

"It's just a small matter. You don't need to come all the way here, Oab."

"It's alright, P'Ming. My salary would be deducted because of tardiness, but I'm more worried that you might run out of energy. My sister's health is the most important thing to me."

P'Ming's eyes show some weakness and pity. She lifts her hand lightly, brushing the cheek of the taller person with her fingertips. She doesn't scold him any further. Her voice softens as she tells him she will take him to the taxi stand. Right then, she supports the tall man, who seems perfectly fine, to walk. His legs look normal, which surprises me. However, I don't want to delve too deep into their story.

For a second, I saw the connection between the two siblings, who seemed close-knit, and I couldn't help but think of myself and Fong-Samut. It feels like the two of us can't get along...

As I continue walking, my phone in my pocket suddenly vibrates due to an incoming call. I gulp down my iced coffee before picking it up and checking who is calling me.

'Fong'

Gosh! Speak of the devil! I just talked to myself behind his back, and now he's calling me.

I hesitate to answer the call, but then he calls again just before I reach the elevator. Ultimately, I reluctantly swipe the green button to answer it.

[Why didn't you reply to messages?]

"Busy."

[But why did I see you reply to others' comments except mine?]

"Well, it was bedtime. Whatever. I need to go to work."

I cut off stubbornly to avoid a conversation with him, but the other end of the line quickly blurts out.

[Can we meet tonight? The coffee shop near the hospital where you work is fine.]

I actually want to avoid him, but I start to wonder why he wants to talk with me so badly. Since I've never replied to his chat, I sigh sneakily and tell him to meet me at five in the evening. Fong-Samut sounds pleased when he recognizes that we can meet today, but as for me, I don't really want to see him that much.

Anyway, I'll think of it as a brief chat between siblings. Once the drinks are finished, I'll excuse myself to do something else.

As Fong-Samut isn't that important to me, I don't feel excited about our meeting. I stop by P'Karan's ward to return her umbrella. I'm a bit disappointed as I couldn't find her. Half an hour ago, there was a case of a heart muscle infarction that required urgent surgery; therefore, she had to join the OR. I leave the umbrella in the staff room as well as a post-it with the "*Thank you!*" message written on it before heading back to my ward.

I linger in the staff common room for quite a long while, gathering information about P'Karan from the Chief Resident, who used to work with the CVT department. He told me stories for quite some time until it was past five o'clock in the evening. I don't feel rushed. That's why I'm opening the door of the coffee shop where we agreed to meet at 5:18 PM. I don't

care at all about the fact that my younger brother has been waiting at the corner table for more than ten minutes.

"Hello, sis!"

The young man in his student uniform greets me with a smile, as per his friendly nature. On the table is his cold fresh milk and another glass of kiwi frappe, which he probably remembers I like. Lately, I rarely order it because I need coffee to stimulate my body to go to work.

I nod in response to his greeting and sit on the chair opposite him. Then, I put my tote bag off my shoulder.

He continues trying to smile at me. In contrast, I remain indifferent, devoid of any reconnecting questions.

"I have something important to discuss. I think it would be better to meet you in person than to make a call or send LINE messages. So, I come here to see you.

"Let's get to the point."

"You just got here and you're exhausted. Please sip this first. The kiwi frappe hasn't melted yet. I luckily guessed you'd be tied up with work, so I ordered it for you at fifteen past five."

I glance down at the glass he pushes toward me. Then I pull out my wallet before asking, "How much?"

"What do you mean by 'how much'? It's my treat!"

"Dad aid you need lots of money for so many activities. I'd rather not bother."

"You're being sarcastic, aren't you?"

"..."

At least, he notices it.

I put a hundred-baht banknote onto the center of the table, even though my younger brother shows no willingness to take it. The faint smile vanishes from his lips. His face is full of guilt that has been accumulated.

"When I was young, I felt great that Mom and Dad loved me more. I didn't have to do housework. I never got tired. After school or on holidays, I could play games and hang out with friends. But now... I don't like it to be this way."

"If you don't like it, you should've asked Mom and Dad to reduce their prejudice."

"Do you think I never tried that?"

"..."

I don't know because going home feels suffocating.

"I've been talking to Dad about how this situation makes you feel bad. I also mentioned this when I talked to Dad last night."

"Is this what you wanted to tell me face to face? I don't want to know what you talked with Dad."

"No, it's not. Before Dad and I could finish our conversation, Dad suddenly had chest pain, so I had to take him upstairs to rest."

Honestly, I've always felt a bit resentful towards Mom and Dad since my childhood, but now that I know Dad is sick, I inevitably start to worry deep down inside. Maybe because, at the very least, he's been paying my tuition fees, even if he always criticizes me. It's like seeing him all my life, and knowing he's sick makes me feel dismayed. And I don't want to hear bad news.

My sarcastic tone from earlier is now transformed into a serious one.

"Why didn't you take him to see a doctor?"

"At first, Mom was about to call for an ambulance, but Dad forbade it. He said if they came to pick him up, he wouldn't go and would be mad at everyone. Dad mentioned that he's old and feels tired sometimes, and he's too lazy to go to the hospital because he thinks they wouldn't find anything."

"Dad's just afraid of the truth if there's something serious found during the examination. You've been able to convince him all along. This time, you have to ask him to go for the check-up."

"You should try persuading him too."

"You're his beloved son, but he still doesn't listen to you. What could I possibly say to convince him?"

"But you're a doctor. Please come up with some medical reasons to make him want to get checked."

Knowing Dad well makes me understand that if I bring up anything related to medicine, it's likely to lead to me getting scolded, even harsher than the threat of getting angry that Fong got from him. Dad hates hospitals from the beginning, and the only way to get him there would be to wait until he collapses and becomes unable to act wildly, but that has never happened.

Chest pain can imply many things. I can't tell just from hearing the symptoms. He could be simply tired or it was something more serious. So, I agree to try persuading Dad, even though I already know the outcome.

Once the conversation is over, I part ways with the person in front of me, not even considering picking up the kiwi frappe he ordered for me. But before I can step out of this area, his thick hand reaches out to my arm, forcing me to turn around and face him.

"Are you going to let it be like this between us? What's about our sibling relationship?"

I let out a heavy sigh.

"It's not your fault. I'm just not mature enough. I can't tell what's right or wrong. So, please, don't try to approach me again. Every time I see you smile, I can't help but wonder why I've been deprived of happiness in my life since I was young."

"But I..."

"And your hands, they're softer than mine. Congratulations on growing up so beautifully, using both your childhood and adolescence wisely."

I've always been reasonable and have a moral understanding of everything, whether it's related to work or studies-but not when it comes to my own family matters. His innocence reminds me of my childhood, a time when I wanted to go out and play but had to stay in the kitchen washing dishes. His smile vividly brings back memories of when I wanted to enjoy reading a book but was called away to help with chores.

He received praise throughout his life, while I never did.

When he made mistakes, I always became the one who made bigger mistakes.

Everything he became was exchanged for the happiness I never received.

So, this might be the only thing I wouldn't be mature enough to eliminate envy from my heart.

I pull my brother's hand away, ignoring his sorrowful gaze, and walk away without considering how he might feel.

There are no tears shed, maybe because when it comes to family matters, my tears have been dried for so long. Right now, all I want is to escape from this place.

Feeling slightly guilty for refusing to touch the kiwi frappe, I stop walking after pushing the door open. It takes me about two seconds of hesitation. Eventually, I didn't go back to him. I continue walking to the parking lot where the bike I rode from the hospital is parked.

At night, it is a little past nine when I finally have some free time. I step out onto the small balcony while dialing my mother's number. Truth be told, I have my father's number too, but I never call him because...we aren't close.

After a brief pause, my mother answers. She asks how I'd been doing before starting to talk about Dad's sudden chest pain. She anxiously asks if I have any idea what might be wrong with him. I explain that with the information I have, it's impossible to diagnose, and it would be best to take Dad to the hospital for a proper check-up.

[Can you talk to your dad about this? You know well that he's so stubborn.]

"I'll try talking to him," I reluctantly agree because my mother seems too cautious to dare speak up.

Soon enough, the phone number's owner walks over to fetch her partner, who is probably watching TV. I can hear both of them talking, although not clearly. But as soon as Dad realized it was his daughter calling, he took the phone and pressed it against his ear, his voice filling with hostility.

[You didn't even come back for your brother birthday. I don't know why you're so jealous of your only brother. By the way, why are you calling?]

"I've been very busy lately,"

I sincerely respond. I've been genuinely overwhelmed and distracted. Plus, I have never considered something like this important because, normally, there was only an extra dish added to the dinner on my birthday, nothing grand like the celebrations they usually arranged for Fong-Samut every year.

"I just found out last night that you had chest pain. How are you feeling now?"

[...]

The person on the other end pauses for a moment upon hearing my question, perhaps because he just scolded me heartlessly, while the words I

spoke in return actually showed concern for his health. [It's nothing. Getting older every day comes with fatigue. What about you? When will you come back home?]

"I'll make time to go back this Sunday. I'll take you for a check-up too."

[Ha! This family doesn't listen to me at all! I'm not going anywhere! You've been studying medicine for five or six years, haven't you? Can't you tell why I got the chest pain?]

In his statement, there's some contradiction. First, he said it's nothing, no need to check. But then he mentioned that I've been studying medicine for many years, implying that I should be able to diagnose him. It seems like he's just afraid of going to the hospital and knowing the results, so he wants me to try to figure out what might be causing these symptoms.

I've encountered so many patients who are afraid to come to the hospital because they fear knowing the results.

In this case, I still have to reaffirm my original statement that I cannot definitively say what this symptom might indicate because it's very broad when it comes to chest pain. However, considering Dad's age, I can't help but worry that it might be something related to... his heart. But I quickly push aside my anxiety and try to reassure him.

"Dad, you're getting older, and having a check-up won't hurt. Knowing early can lead to effective treatment. Plus, each disease has different stages, like 1, 2, 3, 4."

[Nonsense! You're just cursing me!]

"Cursing is about wanting someone to reach a bad end. But a calling like this shows concern. Ultimately, I just want you to be healthy, Dad...to stay with us and love us..., " though unfairly, "for a long, long time."

I hold back the words I want to say and keep them in my heart because the person on the other end might explode due to the reality he can't accept.

Then, the old man argues and continues complaining about my reluctance to home as usual. It's not hard to guess that my father will stubbornly refuse to go for a check-up. He's just pretending to be mad to conceal his fear.

I let out a sigh, determined that on Sunday morning! would go back home and try to talk to him with Fong-Samut one more time.

It is a most 22.00 by the time I hang up. Meow is curled up on the upper bunk, scrolling her iPad screen to relax by reading some mangas, but it seems to make her more anxious. I can tell from her scrunched-up face. I lay down on my bed below hers and slide my phone screen to read comments from the fans, giving myself some encouragement.

Now, apart from schoolwork, life-threatening issues, and love, I also have to think about the possibility that my father might be getting sick.

"How's your relationship with P'Karan?"

The person on the upper bunk probably just finished reading a chapter of a manga and invites conversation amid the silence in our room.

"Well..."

I'm about to answer but then hold back, swallowing my words when I remember that the older person has warned me not to talk about our acquaintance from seven years ago with anyone, especially doctors and nurses.

Does she include an extern like Meow?

"What? Are you going to keep secrets to me, your friend?"

"She's still as cold as ever. Acting like we've never met before. I start to wonder if it was me who imagined things."

"How come?"

My roommate leaves everything else aside and turns to me with a super curious expression.

"You've been looking for her all this time, and you're absolutely sure it's her, right?"

"You seem to give lots of attention to this."

"Oh, I just want to know. We've been friends for almost six years. We've shared it all, right?"

"...."

"What have I done to upset you?"

"Nothing, it's not like that."

"Then, why can't you tell me?"

"...."

"You seem genuinely troubled, Kliao."

"I'm sleepy now. Let's hit the sack. Sweet dreams, Meow."

"You're being annoying, you know. I won't help you about P'Karan anymore."

My Coommate grumbles half-heartedly but eventually surrenders back to focusing on her iPad.

After a while of reading comments, anxious and not in the mood to follow news on social media, I send a pink pig sticker waving to greet others in our The Edge of the Universe group chat, hoping that someone among the other four would be available. Luckily, Belle seems to have nothing on her plate. She replies.

T.K.B: What's up?

I sleep on my side and type my reply.

Kliao K: Can I have a hug?

Believe it or not, less than a minute later, Belle, Nene, Frang, and Note all send hug stickers into the group chat. There's a couple of human beings hugging each other, a dog hugging a cat, and other kinds of living things hugging one another, with the same purpose - to encourage me.

Nene: Just go to sleep.

Frang KY.: You might get sick tomorrow.

T.K.B: My baby.

Note: Are you playing some sort of singing game!?

Note:... Time will clarify everything~

You're the most mischievous one, Note! She complained, yet she couldn't help but continue typing the song lyrics.

I smile at the lyrics of the song "*Sleep now*" that my bandmates texted to reassure me.

I type 'Thank you' on the keyboard, click 'Send,' and turn off my phone screen. Then, I leave the phone on the bedside table. Tomorrow is Saturday. Once the morning rounds are done, I'll come back to rest in the room. It's worth spending time to sleep as much as I can because I'll probably have a big argument with my father on Sunday.

But I can't fall asleep, although Meow has turned off her iPad and come down to turn off the lights for us to go to bed.

Even if my friends were there to console me, today was just too heavy...

Finally, around midnight, I pick up my communication device again to reach out to someone.

Kliao K: P'Karan

Kliao K: Did you get the umbrella back?

Kllao K: Sorry for returning it late. I've been busy all week.

This is my first time messaging her... I can't tell if she would reply or not.

After sending the messages, I immediately turn off the screen because my heart is throbbing with anxiety. I wonder if it is a good idea to approach someone like her this way.

Should I cancel the messages? Then, she wouldn't notice that I messaged her.

Rrrr

Before I can think any further, my phone vibrates abruptly in the dimly lit room. I want to bite my lip and pray that she would reply, even though deep down I know it is unlikely to be her.

Would P'Karan message me back...?

It's probably just a chat from a friend or some other notification.

I try not to jump to conclusions as I pick up the phone to see who sent the message.

Karan_K: I got it.

Am I not dreaming or imagining it, right?

Karan_K: (Image Sent)

Just a few seconds apart, even before I could fully regain my senses, P'Karan sent a picture for me to see. As I click to view it, I furrow my brows due to some familiarity. I zoom in the picture and realize that it is a photo of my medical dormitory at midnight. It was vertically taken from the front, in a look-up manner.

Huh!? Could it be that she just took this photo right now?

My instinct prompts me to throw off the blanket, get up from bed, and walk barefoot to unlock the door of my room. I step out, looking down at the frontyard.

She is standing right there!

P'Karan looks like a doctor who has just finished her afternoon shift, with traces of fatigue evident on her face. She is casually dressed as if she just changed clothes-wearing a round-necked t-shirt, dark jeans, and color-matched Vans sneakers. On her left arm is a long sweater. The spot where she stands is perfectly illuminated by some ambient lighting.

In her hand is a half-folded piece of paper. As her almond eyes notice me who's standing on the third floor, she tilts her head slightly before unfolding the paper to reveal large letters written on it.

'Extern'

I blink repeatedly. Then, the older woman flips the paper to the other side, revealing a longer sentence written on it.

'Let's get some snacks.'

□□□□□

🌿14. Are You Lonely Too?🌿

We all need to play hard to get sometimes.

But the cold fellow has come all the way here. Of course, I won't refuse. I pretend to think for a minute to keep her waiting, yet I agree eventually.

She gives me a ride on her Aston Martin, leaving the medical dormitory in the hospital behind. At midnight like this, she turns the car and takes me somewhere that, if I were to guess, it would be a restaurant or anywhere with food. The afternoon shift that ends around midnight requires a lot of energy. I'm always hungry during those shifts. Well... I might be hungry every shift. Because I always have a deadly shift, so I have to eat to relieve myself and recharge my body.

I put on a long coat over my pajamas. In my hands, which are laid on my lap, are just my wallet and phone. That's all. There's about two thousand baht in my wallet, an ATM card with money earned from playing music with The Edge of the Universe, an organ donation card, an ID card, a student ID card, some discount coupons, etc.

The air in the car isn't too cold because, just now, P'Karan reaches out to adjust it for me. So, there's no need to hug myself while sitting.

"Are we going far from the hospital?"

"Not much."

"Is it a bakery?"

"Um."

I lower my head and lightly brush my thumb on the fabric wallet because I don't know what else to do. It is an automatic reaction, probably because I don't dare to ask anything more than that. I'm afraid of annoying her...

What's wrong with her? She invited me herself, didn't she? Why is she speaking so little?

More importantly, she had told me to pretend not to know her. But when I started to feel terrible, she showed up. Based on what she said, she's so ironic.

Both sides of the road are just closed shops due to the late hour. We ride in the luxurious Aston Martin for several minutes before she turns it into a narrow alley and parks near a crepe shop that looks nothing special. It looks like a grocery store during the day that changes the seller and brings out tables and equipment to sell crepes and pastries in the middle of the night.

I am slightly surprised because P'Karan's financial status seems very good. I don't expect her to know a roadside shop like this.

She indeed brought me to eat some snacks just like what she wrote.

I read the menu board and ponder for a while. Then, I order a Nutella crepe with banana, jelly, and chocolate lava. As for P'Karan, she orders a peanut butter vanilla crepe with some sweet egg floss, without any additional syrup because she prefers less sweetness.

While sitting and waiting on the bench by the crepe stall, I notice the older woman surveying the surroundings as if she's afraid of someone following us. But as soon as she can't find anyone else other than us, she seems relaxed.

Alright... Since neither of us is taking out our communication devices to play with, let's clear up the matter we can't agree on, shall we? I turn to look at her profile, as P'Karan is mindlessly looking towards another corner of the alley.

“Well.... P'Karan, until when will you stop calling me '*Extern*'?”

The other party narrows her eyes slightly when she turns to me.

"What else should I call you? You're not a doctor yet."

"How about my name? I have a name too! Seven years ago, you called me by my name."

This time, she turns to me with a slightly annoyed expression.

"I told you not to mention anything about seven years ago."

"But here isn't the hospital. How could other doctors or nurses hear us?"

I argue with all my might. That makes the older woman sitting next to me cross-legged turn to look straight into my eyes.

"What do you want?"

"Call me by my name, please."

"Kliao Khluen."

I frown immediately.

"I mean I want you to call me by name, not by the term Extern."

"When did we get close?"

"I don't know, maybe it all started when you took me back in time for the first time, when you held my hands to cross the road, or when you took me to the dormitory. Or should it be right now, as you brought me to eat snacks after having your shift?"

"...."

This time, P'Karan can't argue back but divert her gaze to another side of the alley, just like at the beginning when we started slouching down on this long bench. There is something about her silence this time, not the icy indifference, but something that seems like unavoidable acceptance.

I lower my gaze to the hand of the older woman, a few centimeters away from mine. I bite my lips. Should I take the risk...?

I shall take the risk of moving my hand closer to P'Karan's hand.

I take a deep breath before following what my heart demands. I move my hand closer to hers. Just being this close makes my heart beat faster and fills me with joy.

However...

Suddenly, the woman who isn't looking at me slides her hand over and gently holds mine. The warmth spreads directly to the center of my heart. I blink in surprise because, judging from her previous movement, I initially thought she might pull her hand away.

P'Karan's hand is slightly larger than mine, with slimmer fingers. I feel shy, without a clear reason. Everything is tangles in my mind. When I was invited to eat snacks with her, I was already so happy. And now, sitting here all alone with her, sharing this warmth, I feel even happier than before.

No one says anything. We don't even look at each other, yet our hands remain clasped together... We sit like that until the scent of vanilla tickles our noses, indicating that we are about to enjoy some delicious desserts very soon.

But then someone appears. It's a young man with short, spiky hair, wearing a tank top and football shorts. He looks like he is still in high school. He walks out of the grocery store, holding a half-eaten pastry in his hand. The goal of this young man, who is probably just a high school student, is to drag a plastic chair over to chat with the shopkeeper who is making crepes.

"Sis, have you had dinner? It's almost one o'clock."

He speaks with a mouthful, chewing on the large piece of bread.

"I'll eat later. What about you? When will you go to bed? You'll wake up late tomorrow."

"Waking up late isn't a big deal. But if you collapsed, the whole family would be in chaos."

"Do you see that broom over there? I'll smack you on the head with it!"

These two might be siblings, judging from how they annoy each other.

The high school-aged brother sits in front of the crepe shop, looking at his older sister or the person he called "Sis" working. He talks with his mouth full, munching on one of the products from the shop.

At first glance, there doesn't seem to be anything particularly interesting until the moment when P'Karan pulls my hand and places it on her warm lap. But then, the teenage boy coughs as if something is stuck in his throat, causing both of us to turn and look at him uniformly.

"Cough! cough!"

"New, what's wrong?!"

The older sister asks in shock.

Our intertwined hands instinctively release each other, guided by the doctor's sense of duty to attend to the boy who is coughing heavily and continuously. His hand clutches his own throat.

From my observation, this symptom can only mean one thing: food stuck in the throat. And the sound of his coughing indicates that it hasn't completely blocked the trachea yet. Thus, P'Karan sits down next to him, speaking to him with her calm voice.

"Don't worry. Stay calm. Try to cough harder."

The shopkeeper no longer cares about the crepes; her hands shake with worry for her teenage brother to the point of almost crying. I turn to her and reassure her not to worry because both of us are doctors. She understands and grabs my arm, asking for help for her brother, New. In this situation, I have to be the one to comfort her and keep her from losing her mind.

New starts to cough silently, unable to speak at this moment. It seems like food has completely obstructed his trachea. P'Karan decides not to ask him to cough anymore. She quickly stands up to perform the Heimlich Maneuver. First, she positions herself behind New, who is struggling to breathe.

Then, she wraps her arms around him, placing one fist just above his belly button and the other hand close to the epiglottis. She leans him slightly forward and upward and presses inward and upward on his abdomen to try to dislodge the obstruction.

P'Karan repeats the procedure about five times, and finally, the food lodged in New's throat pops out. He gasps for air, trying to fill his lungs with oxygen. Then, he collapses to the floor, placing his hand on his abdomen, still feeling the discomfort from the pressure applied earlier.

The shopkeeper is so worried that she runs towards her younger brother and is about to call an ambulance. But New raises his hand and says it is okay. The older sister, who was in shock, now feels relieved upon hearing his voice.

Airway obstruction incidents often happen to children, and even adults, too. It's a life-threatening situation if not properly managed. I had assisted a kid (using another method) in my fifth year. At first, the child's mother was hysterical, thinking the doctor would kill her child. However, the outcome surprised her when she realized her child had swallowed a toy.

I exhale a sigh of relief that New is okay now. Meanwhile, the shopkeeper goes to support her brother, who is now breathing normally.

Although this incident forced me and P'Karant to stop holding hands, I don't feel sad at all. Perhaps because of my six years of medical training, I instinctively feel more relieved to see he survived.

The shopkeeper repaid us by refusing to take any money, not even a single baht, for our crepes. She even gave us two extra bottles of water. Initially, P'Karan refused and took out her wallet, but the shopkeeper said she didn't know any first aid at all. If we weren't here, her brother would probably

have died because she had seen news of people choking on sticky snacks and dying.

In the end, we had to accept the shopkeeper's kindness. However, P'Karan herself also taught her how to perform the Heimlich Maneuver just in case of emergencies.

"Would you like to sit and eat here?"

I propose when I notice that the waiting bench is still vacant, but the taller woman grabs the car key with an embedded remote control from her pocket to unlock the car.

"We can eat in the car."

"The car might smell like food."

"It's okay."

With that arrangement, I find myself enjoying the delicious crepe in the car, while the fellow is steering the wheel. Her sweet egg floss vanilla crepe is kept untouched, not even a single bite taken. I sneak a glance and can't help but feel a bit embarrassed.

"S- Shall I feed you?"

"Just finish your food."

"But you just finished your shift. You must be really hungry."

"I'll have it later at my condo."

The older person rejects, as she turns the steering wheel to enter the second entrance of the hospital, which is closest to the medical residence.

I bite my crepe while sneaking at the young woman next to me, who isn't afraid that this luxurious car would have some smell of food. She doesn't feel like eating that much, so why did she invite me to go out and have some snacks together?

If I were to think objectively, it was probably a coincidence that she wanted to find a friend to eat crepes with.

But if I could be so full of myself, it would be because she knew I was stressed out, so she decided to take me out to find something sweet and delicious to eat.

I don't know what to believe anymore...

The private car with two seats is now parked in front of my dormitory. P'Karan's hand reaches out to unlock the door for me. I realize I shall thank her sincerely and get out of the car. But at that moment, her slender index finger presses a button to open the back hatch before she turns to me.

"The box in the back of the car, take it."

This vehicle looks luxurious but has no storage space in the front except for the umbrella in the backseat. So, the necessities larger than a regular bag must be stored under the rear hatch. I get out of the car to fetch the box, following the cold fellow's order, and then I find an elegant medium-sized cream-colored box.

Due to my curiosity, I walk over to the driver's side, intending to lightly tap the window to signal for her to come down a bit for a talk. But P'Karan lowers the window before I can even raise my hand again. Great, I'm so curious right now.

"Are you giving it to me?"

"It's just a buy-one-get-one deal, so I don't know who to give it to."

At least she thought of me, right? Smiling coyly, I reply, "Thank you so much." Then, I shift the crepe to my left hand, intending to tuck the box under my arm and open it. But the older woman frowns and quickly protests.

"Open it in your room."

Hmm, I thought she wanted to see my reaction when I opened it too. It's often customary to open gifts in front of the giver, isn't it? Even though she said it was a buy-one-get-one deal and she didn't know who to give it to, I guess this might be another time when I can't figure out what's on her mind.

"Sure," I obediently agree.

"Have a safe drive."

"Um."

She mutters in her throat, and then raises the window back up, implying a farewell. I want to stay and watch until her car disappears from sight, but it seems like she won't go anywhere until I safely enter the building.

Because it is late, I don't linger any longer. I'd wait about ten seconds after entering my room to sneak a peek. Once the decision is made, I head straight for the elevator to go up to my floor and my room with Meow. My eyes can't help but glance at the Aston Martin that hasn't taken off. My heart suddenly feels strangely warm, even though I don't know whether the woman inside that tinted car is watching over me.

I unlock the door, step inside, and close it behind me without taking off my shoes. Leaning against it, I rest my back for a moment.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

...9

I can't wait until the tenth second. Let's open it now. Holding the crepes and the cream-colored box, I open the door again. I just want to see her off, and as expected, she must have been waiting for me to get into my room. Because what I can see now is the sleek black car driving towards the exit door on the other side.

You always pretend when you're with me.

Why does this woman care so much about someone ordinary like me?

I keep looking at the car until it disappears, then I retreat into the dark room once again. It seems like Meow is in a deep sleep. Lucky me.

I lock the door, take off my shoes, and place them on the side shelf. Then, I walk straight to turn on the bedside lamp. Meow makes a slight murmuring noise and flips over, probably because the light bothers her. "Sorry," I look up and say that to the person sleeping at the top bunk of the bed.

"Mmm..." She responds and continues sleeping.

Turning my attention back to what is in front of me, I still care about the delicious crepe, so I place it on the bedside table and focus on the unexpected gift.

I eagerly want to know when I got from my crush. I can't wait until morning, so I open it, excited to see what is inside.

A pair of surgical room slippers appears before my eyes. They are a light pink color, beautifully designed with ventilation holes, and seem to be designed for long periods of standing. They look more expensive than the ones I owned or the ones lent by the hospital. They look like a brand-name item.

A post-it, the same color as the surgical slippers, is attached under the box's lid.

'Wear it when you join the surgical ward.'

I can't tell if it was really a buy-one-get-one-free deal or if P'Karan deliberately chose to buy it for me.

But right now, I want to hurry up and be in the same ward as her...

□□□□□

🐾15. Eyes Closed, Yet My Heart is Restless🐾

During my stay in the general medicine ward, I kept those surgical room slippers in extra care. In fact, they aren't just meant for wearing in the operating room; some offices may require employees to wear them on a regular basis, or we might use them to walk around. But the purpose P'Karn gave them to me to use is solely for wearing in the OR.

I don't know how she knew my shoe size, but when I try them on, they fit perfectly and are very comfortable.

And yeah, after several weeks in the general medicine ward, today I'll finally rotate to the surgical ward I've been longing for. The shadow in the mirror of the makeup table reflects that I'm smiling as I put up my hair.

"I'm going to 'Kids'! Oh my!"

Meow has been whining since morning. She's rotating to the pediatric department, aka the 'Kids' ward. My roommate can't get along with children, and she stresses out every time she has to put on a bright smile to keep them from being afraid of the doctor.

"Hang in there, buddy."

"You just become all happy because you're going to see P'Karan!" The girl sitting on another chair blows air out of her mouth before opening the LINE app. "Oh, Tree's going to the Kids too, huh? Okay, I love kids now."

Meow's mood improves in the blink of an eye as she reads the LINE group chat. There's no difference between her and me - we're both equally excited

to be in the same wards with our crushes, despite the heavy workload.

Let me tell you a little story about my dad. Several weeks ago, I went home to visit my family just like I promised over the phone, intending to persuade him to have a medical check-up at the hospital. In the end, all I got was a scolding for studying medicine for six years and still not being able to diagnose him myself.

I couldn't be bothered explaining that it requires equipment and specialist doctors. Eventually, feeling miserable about being at home, I walked out even though I'd only been there for less than an hour.

That day, I called Note and we went to watch a movie at the nearby department store. My damn friend chose a horror film. I got jumpscared in the dark theater and forgot all about my dad's complaints. That was enough for me.

As for now... I haven't talked to my family since that day.

It's better to focus on being an extern. Cheer up, Kliao Khluen!

The highlight of today, apart from being my first day as an extern in the surgical ward, is that it's one of the staff's birthdays. He's a kind-hearted surgeon in his late thirties. A resident told me he's the nicest guy in the ward (Wait! Does this mean the other staff members are so mean?). I noticed in the morning round that he seemed kind, but what surprised me was that he invited us all to dinner together tonight.

That's wonderful! Everyone smiled and agreed to go.

Of course, whoever is on duty has to stay behind. That's why some of the nurses and residents look a bit sad. But this staff member said he would buy some food as a treat tomorrow anyway.

I'm lucky that I'm not on duty today, so it's a great opportunity to join them. The Chief Resident of this ward said the professor planned to welcome the new externs and first-year residents to join the ward at this event.

I've mentally prepared myself for this ward. I know I'll have to stand for a long time when assisting in surgeries. I might even have to do the appendectomy myself with a staff member guiding me. Or I might just stand by quietly and observe my seniors perform surgeries. But one thing's for sure - I'll be wearing the shoes that P'Karan gave me.

I wonder if she knows how much I've missed her over the past few weeks every time I closed my eyes to sleep...

I ponder while waiting for my smoothie at the crowded hospital cafe. It's lunch break now. In about half an hour, I'll have to go to the outpatient department (OPD). From my perspective, I feel more relieved here than in Med. At the general medicine ward, when patients complain of headaches, body aches, or dizziness, it can be anything. But at the surgical ward, when patients come in with something, it's usually something more straightforward.

I'm now waiting for my icy smoothie to boost my spirits because I haven't seen P'Karan's face since morning. Suddenly, a woman in her thirties stands up from her table and walks over to me. She looks pale, her lips are dry, and her eyes seem tired as if she hasn't rested.

"Sorry, are you a doctor? Can I bother you with a quick question? It'll only take a moment,"

The mysterious woman asks politely for her interruption. I don't find it irritating at all, considering her facial expression and the worry in her eyes.

"I'm a sixth-year medical student, but feel free to ask anything. I'm happy to help."

Then I gesture towards the empty chair opposite me and mention that she can sit there. After that, we both sit facing each other. It seems like the other party has something bothering her enough to ask a doctor.

"My partner has had a kidney disease for a decade, and he's been undergoing treatment for a few years now. But his condition seems to be worsening. I read in the news that some people donated their kidneys to

their loved ones. I want to donate one of my kidneys, but the nurse said it's not allowed by law...Is that true? Can't I really donate, Doctor?"

"May I ask another question? You've been with your partner for ten years, but how many years have you been legally registered?"

Even though humans have two kidneys, they can live with only one. However, they need to take good care of their bodies and nutrition and have regular health checkups. Donating means giving up one's kidney to a patient. Still, according to the law, donating is allowed in some countries but not in Thailand. Here, the donor must be related by blood or legally married to the recipient for at least three years.

The woman, perhaps a patient relative, lowers her head in despair.

"We're...not legally registered."

"Then, what the nurse said is true. According to the laws of this country, you must be registered for at least three years to be able to donate."

"My partner... is a woman."

"...."

Tears start to flow from her eyes.

"We've wanted to register our marriage all along...but we couldn't. I never thought we'd have to face something like this."

A lump forms in my throat... That's the feeling I have when I hear what the woman sitting opposite me says.

Because the laws of this country stipulate that only heterosexual couples can register their marriage, it means that apart from sharing the same bloodline, only heterosexual couples who marry legally can donate organs to each other.

But for same-sex couples... Doesn't their love bloom equally beautifully?

Many people say, *'Why bother registering? If you truly love each other, that should be enough.'*

But do those who say such things realize how unequal it is for same-sex couples? What kind of consequences does it entail?

We're talking about the health aspect here, and we haven't even touched upon other rights.

As I listen to her stories, I can't help but feel miserable.

Given that I myself like women, I hold her hand and offer words of encouragement. I tell her to take good care of herself so that she can do so for her sick partner. After all, her name would have to be on the waiting list for organ donation.

She nods in tears and thanks me for comforting her instead of judging her for being in a relationship with another woman. Because both of their families only blame them for choosing to be together.

I feel extremely sorry for her, almost unable to control my sympathetic reactions even after we parted ways. But I need to remind myself that I'm going to the OPD with the senior students. The outpatients wouldn't want to see a doctor who can't manage her own emotions. So, I need to pull myself together.

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5.03 PM

Professor Pong is the one hosting our dinner tonight for his birthday, but he's still in the operating room performing emergency surgery on a teenager with a ruptured appendix. After the evening rounds are done, those who are free enough go back to their dormitories or homes to get changed, but since my dorm isn't far, I decide to stay and chat with the fifth-year Chief Resident of the neurosurgery department.

"By the way, is P'Karan...performing a surgery right now?"

"Yes, Kliao. Sge should be in the same operating room as Prof. Dej."

I nod in acknowledgment, but something is weird. Even though the CVT doctors are often known as cardiovascular surgeons, there are also cases involving other organs in the thoracic cavity. But from what I heard in the past ten minutes, it seems like P'Karan mostly deals with heart surgeries.

"Did she usually get only heart cases?"

"Not always, but very often." P'Petch explains, looking serious as if he wants me to believe him. "Prof. Dej is an expert in heart valves and often requests her to assist. Soon enough, Karan will become another expert in heart surgeries."

After that, we continue chatting because P'Petch also enjoys sharing stories.

Although this isn't a gossip, it's very detailed and includes some new information.

It seems like there was a rumor that Prof. Dej stopped discriminating against female doctors because one night in the operating room, P'Karan, instead of him, performed the surgery. But upon hearing this, I wonder why a fellow had to perform the surgery instead of the staff. I can't tell whether it is true or not.

At half-past five, Prof. Pong made a call, saying that he had left the operating room and would go home to shower and change clothes. We agreed to meet at the restaurant later. He sent the location in our group chat. Both the Chief Resident and I agreed to say goodbye.

But as we are descending in the elevator together, he seems to remember something.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you! Tonight, Karan should be there too. She must be dragged along by Fiat, her close friend."

"What?"

"Isn't that great? You seem to admire her a lot."

In my mind, I still focus on someone's name that just popped up.

"Is P'Fiat so important to P'Karan that she would agree to go?"

"These two are in the same department. They often have lunch together. I think that's considered close friends."

"Is P'Fiat...a woman or a man?"

"In our hospital's surgical ward, there are female doctors, but in the CVT department, there's only Karan who is a woman. Fiat is a male name, isn't it?"

So, it's a man... And they even have lunch together.

I don't need anything to reflect upon. I can guess that my eyes are saddened and my lips get into a flipped v-shape. What's going on? Why does that man have enough influence to drag her to a party? They've been in the same department for so long, consulting cases together in the OR, and... No, I don't want to overthink anymore!

Honestly, right now, I'm starting to feel a bit hurt, even though I'm still nothing to her....

□□□□□

❖16. How Long Will This Continue?❖

P'Karan in casual style looks as beautiful as her doctor version- absolutely the apple of my eye. She wears a milk tea-colored V-neck shirt topped with a long-sleeved denim jacket. Her dark pants fit her legs, and she wears sneakers from her favorite brand at the bottom.

The simple-looking clothes must be expensive, given that I notice they are from luxurious brands. Especially her wristwatch on the left, I can't even guess how much it cost. All of them combined might be higher than the amount of money I've saved in my account from singing gigs after all these years.

I secretly glance at the outstanding lady, feeling a bit envious as she's sitting beside P'Fiat. Then, the cheers divert my attention back to my table.

Prof. Pong reserved the whole place; therefore, the sign in front says 'Closed.' It's a semi-chill hangout spot, and it can bear a big crowd, suitable for the staff gathering from the entire ward. P'Petch privately tells me that this professor is very wealthy, not because he is a doctor, but because his family runs a molding business back home in another province. Whenever there is a special opportunity, he often volunteers to host or bring food to share.

To say that all the ward staff are here would be false because there are several doctors and nurses who can't make it. They might have kids or loved ones waiting at home. Or else, they might have important appointments, night shifts, or a pure intention to go back and rest to prepare for tomorrow's duties. This means the number of people attending isn't that big (but for me, this still feels like a lot).

Absolutely, if everyone were to come all at once, the place would surely explode. The surgical ward can be divided into multiple departments and as busy as the general medicine ward.

This event can be described as joyful, completely different from the working atmosphere at the hospital. A first-year resident and I are pushed out to sing on the small stage up front. But the male fresh resident is very shy. He just smiles and says,

"Please excuse me. Let's listen to our Extern. She's a singer too."

Then, everyone suddenly remembers that I am the lead singer of The Edge of the Universe, a popular band among teenagers. A nurse, in her light sweet dress, claps and calls my name in rhythms as if cheering me on to take the mic. Afterward, everyone follows suit, and within minutes, this Kliao Khluen girl has been pushed onto the stage for karaoke.

"Girl, just tell them the song you'd like to sing!"

A middle-aged woman at the table on the left shouts. I turn to look at the side of the small stage where the sound engineer controls the equipment. He returns his gaze, waiting for me to tell him a song title. He plans to play the instrumental music that provides the original tempo and melody.

I turn to look at the spot I have been staring at throughout the event. P'Karan is looking this way, ignoring whatever the young man, Fiat, is trying to say. But as we make eye contact for about three seconds, her beautiful face turns elsewhere and she starts arranging her food on her plate.

If that's the case... Tonight, I'll convey my feelings for her through my song.

I walk over to the male staff member who's waiting to cue the music, then I raise my hand to cover my mouth to whisper the song title to him, for only the two of us to hear.

"Insomnia by Ink Waruntorn, please."

Then I return to stand in the middle and adjust the mic level to match my small figure.

The intro melody begins, and at that moment everyone claps and cheers again, eager to hear my live singing. Some even take out their phones to record videos. However, right now, I only focus on P'Karan.

The truth is, she's been the only one on my mind all along.

But recently, she told me to act like we've never met. So, I shift my gaze to the bright, clean walls of the restaurant as I start to sing the lyrics.

'...The warm starlight, why does it feel colder the more I gaze?

The melody of old songs,

the more I listen, the more I think of someone.

The gentle breeze softly blows, where does it carry my heart?

Surrounded by many people...

Why do I feel lonelier the more I encounter.'

The feelings of seven years of searching for her are conveyed through a song that wants to reach her heart.

'I don't want to know anymore why I become like this.

But all I want to know is...'

And then I take the liberty to change some words in the hook, matching it with the story between 'us' as questions for the time that has passed.

'How do you feel while we've been apart?

Are you lonely like me?

On these cold, lonely nights, I endure it all alone.

But how about you?

On restless nights like this, I wonder if you can sleep.

Are you lonely too?

My eyes are closed, yet my heart is still restless.

How long will this continue? I don't want to be lonely anymore.'

Everyone seems to be immersed in the lyrics, listening attentively, and the entire room falls silent. I sweep my gaze around, and my heart races when I notice that P'Karan, the culprit, is also looking in the same direction. This time, our eyes meet for more than three seconds, and she shows no intention of looking away.

In the blink of an eye, the look in the eyes of the person I fall in love with seems to reveal a sense of guilt and pain.

I'm not sure if I'm mistaken, but when I look at her again, she returns to her unreadable state.

As the song ends, the applause grows louder and longer than when they asked me to go on the stage. Some cheer for an encore, but Prof. Pong's worried that I wouldn't have time to eat at all. Eventually, others take the stage. Some performances are beautiful, while some are messy, but they all add vibrancy to this dinner.

Around half past nine, people start to leave. Since Prof. Pong knows the owner, he tells them to send the bill to his house tomorrow. Then, he excuses him to leave early as his wife called him. It seems like very few seniors are still here, leaving only the younger ones.

I've had experiences where I've cried while drunk, so I only have a little beer and aim to quietly retreat to my medical dormitory.

Actually, the reason why I want to leave the restaurant is because I feel hurt whenever I see P'Karan and P'Fiat sitting together at the main table. She's the cice queen for everyone, but now she's talking to P'Fiat...

No!

I don't want to overthink anymore!

"I'm going back home. If I'm late for rounds and get slashed by the professor, I'll be in trouble."

I tell my seniors at the table like that. Someone tries to hold me back, but eventually they let me go. 'Slashing' here means being asked about patients' cases, like really intense questioning.

I push the glass door open. I guess I have to walk to the bus stop not far from the restaurant. But it's quite cold outside. So, I hug myself and rub my arms under my long-sleeved shirt.

There are people standing around waiting at the bus stop. Some wear uniforms or formal attire, probably office workers waiting for the bus to go home. Knowing I wouldn't be alone makes me feel relieved. I sit down and take out my phone to check social media.

The video of me singing earlier has been uploaded on Facebook and tagged with my name, filling up my timeline with comments from my followers. I decide to save it to watch before bed because people are pouring their thoughts and comments in like crazy.

At that moment, the bus I am going to take arrives just in time. I quickly put my communication device into the tote bag on my shoulder and get up to walk towards the bus, which has no air-conditioner and is parked at the bus stop.

The bus driver seems impatient, immediately pulling away when he sees no one else getting on. This leaves me standing in the middle of the aisle with a slight sway but not that hard to fall, perhaps thanks to my years of experience taking public transportation. A slight bump here and there make me aware that someone is following at a distance... And that someone is P'Karan.

"Hurry, find a seat."

The charming husky voice doesn't rush me but rather warn me. It's like she doesn't want to see me stumble again.

Perplexed, I look for the nearest available seat and quickly grab a spot by the window. Deep inside, I repeat a silent prayer wishing for her to join me. There are plenty of empty seats on the bus, so who knows? Maybe she would choose another spot.

But then, God grants me a small happiness.

P'Karan chooses to sit next to me, bringing in the sense of warmth, familiarity, and a gentle fragrance. Joy allows the adrenaline to course through my veins and make my heart race. My hands tremble, clenching the edge of my shirt. I dare not turn to look at the cold senior fellow, despite my strong desire to be close to her.

But calling her 'cold' would cause a misunderstanding. Because she once took me to get snacks in the middle of the night. It was so delicious.

The bus moves as night falls, the wind from outside mingling with our hair, which we aren't bothered to tidy up. Everyone else on board keep their heads down, focusing on their own rectangular screens. It is strange that neither of us reaches for our devices to pass the time. In my case, it is because I feel embarrassed and fidget, part of me keeps reminding that she is close to P'Fiat, so she probably wouldn't think anything of me...

I have no idea what she is thinking in her mind.

It has been silent for a while, and I have a question lingering since I glimpse her boarding the bus behind me. So, I just let everything go as it pleases, turn to the person next to me, and ask with a faint smile.

"Didn't you bring the car?"

She glances over before answering.

"It's parked at the hospital. I came with a friend this evening."

For a brief moment, my heart wavers until I blurt out softly,

"It must be P'Fiat..."

"Yes, but just a friend."

She clearly says, as if waiting to address this issue sooner or later. Her gaze turns to meet mine, which makes me unsure of what to say next.

"Well..."

"He's just a friend."

"Well, okay."

"Extern, do you understand the word "friend"?"

Why wouldn't I understand its meaning when you even said it three times?

It's just that I don't understand why she has to emphasize it as if she is afraid I'll misunderstand.

"You don't have to raise your voice."

"I'm not raising my voice. I just want to tell you..."

The voice of the woman in the denim jacket softens, and so does her gaze.

Even though I may not fully grasp her intentions, my heart feels so warm right now, and I find myself looking at P'Karan with a smile, feeling happy from the bottom of my heart.

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17. I Don't Want to Be Lonely

Moving to the same ward, even though I haven't intruded into her department, I've had some encounters with her. Every time, this female fellow keeps calling me 'Extern.' Well... She has been calling me that anyway.

But the point is, when we're in front of others, her voice tone becomes even more distant as if we've truly never known each other.

Nevertheless, I'm so glad to know she's single and just a friend of P'Fiat.

Nowadays, stress seems to only come from being wary of who might come to choke me again, and from trying to convince my father to go for a check-up. I have no idea how I should deal with these two matters.

Being in the surgical ward for several days helps me start to adapt myself. In my fourth year, I used to join the Major Ward (comprising Obstetrics, Surgery, Medicine, and Pediatrics), but today is the day I've felt the most conflicted.

There's a teenage boy who was in a car accident a week before I rotated to this ward. He's still admitted and has friends from school visiting him regularly. However, what caught my interest about him is... that the poor boy has one of his legs amputated.

Regarding physical appearance, I feel like I'm looking at myself from seven years ago when I was in grade 11. The difference lies in the fact that he has received strong encouragement from his family and friends. His mother is the one who regularly watches over him, while his father sometimes comes to take shifts for her so she can fully rest at home.

Everything seems to progress steadily. Therefore, once he shows signs of improvement, he'll probably be able to leave the hospital.

However, at night, when I'm on duty, a loud cry echoes throughout the male patient ward. It's like the beginning of a nightmare, and when I go to check, I find him experiencing the same excruciating pain that I had experienced before...

Morphine helps him a bit, but eventually, the pain becomes so intense that he can't sleep. Tears well in his eyes, as he insists he isn't lying. His mother, sitting beside him, is equally shocked and anxious.

I remember how P'Karan did it, but in this case, it's a leg that's been amputated. Even if I were to find a paper bag, it wouldn't quite give the same feeling.

So, I keep thinking at the staff common room about how to apply the same procedure. Meanwhile, an intern looks at me suspiciously, wondering what's wrong with me. Anyway, he is too exhausted from dealing with emergency patients all evening, so he finally dozes off on the top bunk. And in the middle of the night, I come up with a bright idea. I push the door open to sneak a peek at the boy, wondering if he is asleep. If he's still within the realm of dreams, I won't disturb him.

What greets my eyes is the sight of the patient still awake, leaning against the bed's headboard with a pained expression. His gaze is fixed on the amputated leg, still wrapped in bandages. His mother isn't there unlike usual. I guess she must have gone to the bathroom or downstairs to buy something.

I take a deep breath, mustering a smile to ease his mind. Then, I walk over to the high school student who has to deal with such a serious accident and pain.

"Not sleeping, huh?"

As he can see my scrub attire, he speaks up with his trembling voice as if he's about to cry, "Doctor, my leg hurts so much... It feels like it's still there.

I'm not lying, I promise."

"I understand that you're not lying,"

I say, using body language to tell him that I believe in what he said. "May I?" The boy doesn't understand why I'm covering half of his body with the hospital blanket. I don't explain anything. I just cover him from the waist down to the intact right foot, which only has the slightly peeled wound, and his remaining left leg that ends at his knee. "Now, try closing your eyes."

"What?"

"Close your eyes and don't think about anything at all. Please clear your mind."

The patient's face shows confusion, unable to grasp what I am about to do. However, perhaps because he sees me as a doctor, he reluctantly agrees. He slowly closes his eyes, and his furrowed brows start to relax. I count to five seconds before suggesting him to direct his attention to his left leg (the one that doesn't exist) and try to relax or stretch it.

According to my experience, the agonizing pain vanished miraculously.

However, when the young man in front of me opens his eyes once again, he slowly shakes his head. His eyes remain sorrowful,

"I don't feel any better, ma'am."

Why is it like this? Why can't the same method work?

I want to make a call and consult with P'Karan about this case, but the clock on the phone screen indicates that she's probably resting. So, I decide to talk to her about the patient tomorrow if we meet in the ward.

Then, I shake my head repeatedly, remembering that P'Karan has forbidden us from being too friendly with each other in front of others here. If that's the case, then I have to stick to the same plan, which is:

'Waiting in the hallway outside the parking lot.'

She might not be asleep at this hour, but I think it is too intrusive to call her now. So, I just tell the young man to relax and return to rest in the staff common room. My mind is preoccupied with the conversation I would have with P'Karan.

Deep into the night, I feel deeply concerned about that particular patient. But around 11 PM, my deadly shift has its manifestation again. The emergency room has a patient who needs immediate surgery.

Even though I am still an extern, I have to assist in the operating room because the Chief Resident called me in.

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The next day

5:25 PM

I'm sitting on the bench by the hallway once again.

Today, I saw her talking to a professor about a patient who had just been admitted to the hospital and found to have an enlarged heart. It seems like there are some complications as well, turning it into a stressful case. I didn't message her because I didn't want to disturb her.

Knowing that I'm going to meet the woman who cares for me so much that she insists she is nothing to P'Fiat, a small happiness blossoms in my heart. It's like the loneliness that has gripped my soul for the past seven years is slowly melting away.

I'm so lucky to be an extern in this hospital.

As I wait eagerly, I see a familiar figure walking out of the building. Seeing her somehow warms my heart, even though we are pretty much far away.

I smile openly as P'Karan walks closer. She slightly frowns, as if questioning why I'm here.

"What's up?"

This time she stops in front of me and starts the conversation.

I've already stood up, and I quickly get to the point,

"I want to consult about the case of the phantom pain."

"Why didn't you call for a consult?"

"Well, I don't know when you are available, and I don't dare approach you when you are in the ward because you told me not to..."

For a moment, her eyes softens, seeming pitying yet caring, but then she returns to her poker face. Her voice remains calm as she asks,

"So, what would you like to consult about?"

We slowly walk together along the almost deserted hallway. Walking like this allows us to talk for quite a while, as the beautiful Aston Martin is parked at the far end of the hallway. I start to explain briefly.

"There's a boy who was hit by a ten-wheeler truck in the ward. He lost one of his legs and had Phantom Pain symptoms yesterday. He was given medication, but he hasn't felt better."

"Um, I was on ER duty that night,"

Says the taller woman who nods slightly. This means that it's easier to explain because P'Karan was the doctor in the emergency room when the young man came to the hospital.

"I tried to apply your method. I covered his leg with a blanket and told him to close his eyes and imagine stretching his leg and relax, but he said it didn't help."

"The root cause of this symptom hasn't been clearly identified, and neither has the treatment. That method may not work for everyone."

"So, does he have to endure the pain?"

"The patient's doctor will decide whether to treat him with medication or something else."

"P'Karan... Can you turn back time to help him?"

".."

The person beside me stops abruptly, causing me to pause as well. She turns to look at me in a way that I can't avoid it. However, several seconds passed without her uttering a word, prompting me to muster up the courage to speak.

"That crazy symptom...is really tormenting. Patients with phantom pain have to endure things that don't even exist."

"That night, he wasn't the only one sent to the emergency room. He and his friend came together. He was the survivor, while his friend, the one riding with him. passed away in the ER."

"What are you trying to say?"

"You're suggesting that I go back in time to save a boy from losing his leg and another from dying."

I can't understand this woman at all.

"But you once saved me on the rooftop. When I was shot, I would also fall and die. Why did you decide to help me then?"

"Can you tell how many times I've used my time reversal ability to help patients ever since I started studying and working as a doctor?"

"About..twenty?"

I guess with my fading voice, and as soon as she hears my answer, the woman who has been staring at me, clearly responds.

"Only once."

"...."

"That was when I was an extern, a woman was shot and fell from the rooftop."

I still don't get her point.

I refuse to accept it so easily, my tone tinged with hidden frustration.

"If I had your abilities, I would have prevented all patients from suffering. Why did you manage to save me from dying but not the others?"

"Did you turn back time to save her?"

A small voice blurts from behind, interrupting us.

Startled, I quickly raise my hand to cover my mouth, thinking that a doctor or nurse might have overheard our conversation. My heart races with alarm, contrasting with P'Karan's calm demeanor as she just lets out a slight sigh.

The owner of the voice walks over and stands not far from us. She's a bit taller than me, with large round eyes, a snub nose, and peach-colored lips. These features make her look cute, with a touch of mischief and naughtiness. She dresses up formally yet modestly, meaning she likely holds a professional position.

The newcomer turns to P'Karan as if she's picking a fight.

"Didn't you warn me to be careful with my abilities? Yet you did that?"

I blink repeatedly, feeling puzzled about who this person is. Why did she turn this way with such an angry expression after saying that? Then, she returns to P'Karan, making a serious and displeased face openly.

"“Let's talk about it later.”"

"Why can't we talk about it here? Didn't she already know everything?"

"...."

Upon noticing that the older person remains silent, the younger one seems to grow more agitated. Her small but anxious voice seems to call out for P'Karan to come to his senses. She looks frustrated and extremely angry; her face turns red with rage.

"You know your own limits, don't you? Meddling in others' deaths could decrease your life expectancy by ten years! Why did you exchange your life expectancy for just a girl like that?!!"

What?

Did she just...say that P'Karan's life expectancy could decrease?

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❖18. Listen to Your Heart❖

8.42 PM

What happened in the evening made me realize many things.

First, the petite and adorable-looking woman in the formal attire is P'Karan's younger sister.

Her name is Mai-tree. She is two years younger than her sister and works as a lawyer, often handling cases for celebrities or corporations. Today, she came to borrow her older sister's Aston Martin, and she had been waiting for her sister to pick it up in the evening.

Seeing that it had been quite some time, she decided to look for her sister, but she ended up running into P'Karan and me who were having a conversation. Second, the time-controlling abilities have their own conditions...

The younger sister tightly grabbed P'Karan's arm. She frowns like a determined rabbit ready to bite.

'Don't think about turning back time to cover up! Try it now, and I'll also remember!'

At that moment, P'Karan looked hopeless; she seemed to have hard time thinking before looking at me. For an instant, it seemed like she wanted to 'turn back time to cover up,' just as her younger sister had hinted. However, she let out a sigh, as if realizing that perhaps, at this point, she shouldn't hide it anymore. Then, she tried to grasp Mai-Tree's wrist and take her away.

But the stubborn voice persisted, making it clear to me that if P'Karan had to meddle in someone's death just once, she would lose ten years of her life. That made me unable to move, mouth open wide, looking at the tall woman dragging her sister towards the parked car, as if she didn't want anything to slip out more than this.

And at 8 PM, being alone in this quiet room because my roommate had the ER duty, I found myself sitting on the edge of the bed, full of conflicting emotions.

Shock and guilt...for telling her earlier to help every patient, even though what she has to exchange is a decade of her life.

I feel grateful yet I can't understand why...seven years ago she chose to help me. I didn't have anything special, not even a little.

And then the apologetic feelings...

When I reached the two words mentioned above, tears streamed down my face uncontrollably. They dropped onto the pillow in small circles. My trembling hand rested beside me. The thought that my return to life with my thirty-two organs had to be exchanged with ten years of her life lingered in my mind.

P'Karan said that she had used her power to help someone only once, and that someone was me... Why? Why did she go back in time? Why did she go back to hold my hand and help me safely cross the road?

My chest feels so tight that I have to raise my left hand to press it down. The lump in my throat makes my shoulders shake. I'm the worst. Why did I say those things to her? If going back in time to save a life required such conditions, no one would ever want to use that power. Seven years ago, it was even more than just a good act. It was a sacrifice far too great.

As I cry until my throat feels constricted, I realize that P'Karan was the one who made the sacrifice yet I'm crying like a fool.

I pick up my phone and enter the LINE app to message her. I sniff, while my heart is filled with remorse and self-blame. But then I notice that she sent me some messages five minutes ago, while I was crying uncontrollably.

Karan_K: Let's chat tomorrow during lunch break. Meet me at the fire exit staircase after finishing your lunch. Don't let anyone see you.

Karan_K: As for tonight, get some rest.

It's like she could see that tomorrow I'd wake up with puffy eyes. I use the back of my hand to wipe away the tears streaming down my cheeks before typing a reply in the chat.

Kliao K: No matter how hard I try, I just don't get it.

I send her just one sentence. Before I can type anything else, she replies.

Karan_K: Let's talk more tomorrow. Don't be stubborn.

'Don't be stubborn,' huh?

It sounds like she's talking to a child. Isn't that word too cute for scolding?

Damn it!

I smile through my tears. My face probably looks weird. I can't even tell what I'm feeling right now.

Tonight, I reluctantly surrender, collapsing onto the bed with stinging eyes. It might be a bit too hard to sleep with all these thoughts running through my head, but at least I know that tomorrow P'Karan would probably open up about everything and its origin.

Thank you very much...my one and only sunshine.

I mutter those words before finally delving into the depths of sleep.

As the morning sun rises, my eyes become puffy as expected. Tree startles when he sees me, thinking I must have had some fight with a bug. But then, as we ride our bikes together, my friend thinks of something else. He speaks confidently, like it must be because of this.

"Or did you cry? You cried, didn't you, Kliao? What happened!?"

"Uh... T-The female lead in the series was so pitiful."

I lie awkwardly, but it seems like he believes me without a doubt.

"I thought something was wrong. But you just got so emotional. Ha!"

"Ahem."

I chuckle dryly, pretending to laugh as I lock my bike.

The two of us go to buy breakfast at the convenience store, and then we part ways at the intersection of our respective wards. I eat a steamed bun while standing alone in the elevator, still feeling a sense of guilt lingering around me when I realize once again that I survived safely because of P'Karan's sacrifice.

But even now, I still don't understand why she helped me...

It isn't exactly a smooth morning. Briefly, I was bombarded with questions during rounds because I spaced out and ended up standing there with a blank mind. Then, I got kicked out of the surgery field because I accidentally adjusted the light for the professor, although in reality, he asked the nurse to do it. That means I got my hand dirty by myself and had to retreat to a corner instead.

Finally, the lunch break arrives, although it was delayed by several minutes. I hurry straight to the same convenience store as this morning to grab something easy to eat. I get a box of fish burger and a carton of orange juice. I quickly rest in the ward common room and gather my courage to walk towards the fire escape stairs.

As I walk, I glance left and right, almost seamlessly, to see if anyone is watching or paying attention this way. And the fact that I didn't look straight ahead makes me collide with someone, causing me to stumble while the other person remains firmly grounded. My lips blurt out, "Sorry!" before I turn to see and face P'Fiat of the CVT department.

"It's okay, kiddo."

The young man in his long gown, with a dark polo shirt inside, says. A smile shows at the corners of his mouth before he bends down to pick up the scattered documents on the floor.

Seeing this, I bend down too, acknowledging my mistake.

"Let me help."

After gathering the somewhat disheveled documents into the fellow's thick hands, we both stand up again, making it clear just how much taller he is compared to me. P'Fiat looks at me with a smile and then teases me in the way that I get goosebumped instantly.

"Where are you heading to? You're looking left and right like you're afraid someone's following you."

"!"

"Just kidding! Look at your scared face!" He bursts into laughter before excusing himself and walking past as if in a hurry. I turn to see a larger figure heading towards the elevator. He doesn't seem to care much about my presence, but it still feels strange being noticed that I've been unsmooth.

This time, I adjust my stride, refraining from glancing left and right recklessly, until finally pushing the fire escape door without anyone focusing on my every move.

P'Karan is already waiting ahead. She leans against the brick wall, checking something on her phone. As she sneaks a glance, seeing me open the door, she swiftly locks her screen and tucks it into her pocket, her arms turning

into a crossed posture. We stand in silence until I finally step down to stand beside the taller woman. Then, she's the one to break the silence.

"Yesterday, that was my little sister. You already heard from that sharp-mouthed brat."

She says and then introduces her sister once again.

"Her name is Mai-Tree. She is about five years older than you."

"Uh... okay. Well, is it true? Everything that P'Mai-Tree said..."

"...."

"Saving someone's life by turning back time left you with a trade-off of ten years of your life. So, why did you save someone like me?"

I lower my head, trying to swallow the lump of guilt that has been pounding inside me. I don't want to break down in front of her again.

"I'm sorry for always asking P'Karan to help every patient...even though I don't know anything. And I'm sorry for being such a troublemaker."

"...."

"P'Karan is the one who helped me from that prisoner. You sacrificed ten years of your life to turn back time and save a fool like me. When I think about it, I feel very terrible about myself."

Even though tears don't flow out because I cried myself dry last night, the pain resurfaces in my chest, making me raise my hand to press lightly against it.

Silence envelopes the area for a moment before her charming husky voice breaks through.

"Let's find somewhere to talk this Sunday."

"Huh?"

Confused, I turn to look at the side profile of the fellow.

"It's not convenient here, and time is short."

"Didn't you call me here for a chat?"

"No."

The young woman shifts from leaning against the wall to standing straight, facing me. Her arms which were crossed before now hang by her sides. In a split second, I notice her hand twitching as if she's restraining herself. Suddenly, her voice makes me to raise my head and meet her gaze.

"I called you here to invite you..."

My heart beats fast because her lips seem to form the sound 'da,' but then she hesitates and changes it into a long sentence. "Let's go somewhere else together this Sunday so that we can talk more comfortably,"

"Everything's more complicated than Kliao assumed, isn't it..."

She nods slowly, her face remaining calm and composed as usual. "Let's meet at the XXX furniture store, at ten o'clock." She mentions the name of the store which is about two bus stops away from our hospital.

This means at today's noon, we just meet to make an appointment. Actually, texting should be enough, but she chose to meet in person. I'm not sure why. But if I were to be a bit full of myself, due to my lingering guilt and prolonged apology, P'Karan didn't want to put an end to our conversation briefly, but she wanted to... What should I call it? Broaden my view maybe? She might want to tell me everything in detail. It seems like she decided to let me know more than I already did.

But that's just my speculation. How can I tell you what the cold-hearted fellow feels deep inside?

"Okay, Sunday at ten o'clock."

I take a deep breath, imprinting the day and time in my mind once again.

Then, something unexpected happens. She stops trying to control her hand and lets it move according to her heart. I wonder what lifting it is meant for. And I feel warmth spreading in my heart when P'Karan chooses to lay her warm hand gently on my head and strokes it lightly.

"No need to cry anymore. Get it?"

It feels... so warm.

"I didn't turn back time to save your life just to see you sad like this."

"P'Karn..."

It seems like I can't find the right words. In the end, all I can manage is what has been on my mind all night.

"Thank you."

"Um, see you then. Don't forget to let your friend take care of the evening round for you."

Then, the older woman withdraws her hand and walks away, leaving only me on this fire escape staircase, along with the warmth in my heart that heals all the pain. I touch my hair when some sense of connection still lingers; it feels familiar as if this has happened more than twice.

I want...

I want to marry P'Karan.

My goodness! I suddenly have such a thought, and it makes my face feel hot. I have to slap myself on both cheeks to pull myself again.

She just invited me outside to talk. She didn't ask for a date or anything. Why do I have to get flustered like this? It's probably just a normal conversation about important matters, isn't it?

But deep down, I secretly hope our relationship will develop further than that....

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🌿19. The Reason Why It's Her On Sunday🌿

In the morning, I wake up and head to the ward round. Then, I ask my extern friend to take care of my evening round; in turn, I will take his shift tomorrow. After that, I return to my dorm to change into my best outfit. Meow is on her bed, eating some snacks, and looks at me spinning in front of the mirror attached inside the wardrobe.

She teases with a playful tone,

"You already look gorgeous, honey."

While she crunches on the original-flavored potato chip, she says,

"So, where are you off to?"

"Anywhere, I'm a grown-up."

"Hey, you little brat!"

My roommate then scolds me a bit about me having a secret with her lately. I really can't disclose to her that I'm going to meet with P'Karan. She told me to keep it confidential, and I think it's because she's suspecting someone in the hospital. So, it seems necessary to include the medical students in the list too....

Now, I'm wearing a flowy dress I purchased with money saved from gigs with the band. It even cost over a thousand baht. It is soft pink, perfectly matched with my white-and-cream espadrilles. I admit that everything I wear is solely for P'Karna. Though I enjoy buying cute clothes, I rarely have a chance to wear them unless I am performing somewhere.

With the remaining time, I enthusiastically walk out of the dormitory. After a short walk, I arrive at the renowned furniture store.

The phone screen displays 9:55 AM, indicating that I'm not late. However, my attention is caught by a luxurious Aston Martin parked within my view. It is parked in the store's parking lot. Just as I'm about to pick up my phone to message the owner, a familiar figure emerges behind the store's automatic sliding door. P'Karan walks out carrying two cardboard boxes in different sizes.

Realizing that, I quickly put my communication device into my shoulder bag and sprint with my short legs towards her,

"Let me help you carry them."

"No need."

She speaks with a calm voice. With just a few strides, she reaches her car and places the items in the trunk.

The reason why we met here might be because she wanted to buy something. To keep her privacy, I don't ask about what she bought.

Her fashion style remains cool and true to herself. She wears a white round-neck T-shirt with blue English letters printed on it, paired with a cream-colored cardigan. The lower half consists of dark-colored long pants, but her height makes them automatically cropped, turning them into a fashion statement, especially when paired with her trendy sneakers.

We both dress in contrasting styles, but I find our chemistry oddly fitting. I wonder if I'm the only one who thinks so.

Once she finishes packing her items, she opens the door for me to sit inside before quickly heading to the driver's side. Whenever this luxurious car is around, I can't help but feel a bit nervous.

"Have you had breakfast?"

"Not yet. I'll eat around noon."

"That's not good for your health."

As she moves the car out of the parking lot, her almond eyes focus on the rearview mirror. Even from this angle, she looks stunning.

At 10.20 AM, we stopped at a restaurant that wasn't crowded. Initially, I reassured her that I was fine since I only had to wait several more hours. However, the person sitting behind the steering wheel frowned slightly, as if implying that I was being stubborn to her.

Eventually, we end up sitting here, eating at this à la carte restaurant, where an elderly couple works diligently.

One might assume that with her apparent wealth, P'Karan might prefer expensive cuisine. Yet, she seems to enjoy a good home-cooked restaurant like everyone else. I have noticed this since our previous crepe outing.

Food and water are served promptly. She ordered crab fried rice, while mine is dry suki. We start to eat, unable to resist the tempting aroma that has been teasing our noses. I have to suppress a smile when I lift my chopsticks and find P'Karan discreetly placing a mound of sliced cucumbers on the edge of her plate.

"You don't like it? You can give it to me if you want."

"....."

P'Karan remains silent, but her ears seem slightly red, like she got embarrassed. Able to control her emotions, she scoops up some of the cucumbers and places them on my plate.

"Please enjoy,"

There no need for such formality. It seems like she has some preferences after all.

"What's our destination?"

"Quite far from here."

"Why did you answer so broadly? How am I supposed to guess then?"

"I just thought of several places. But if you want to go somewhere, just suggest it, and I'll drive there."

What's wrong with her? Will she take me wherever I want? Don't make me so full of myself!

"I'll let you choose. I don't really know where to go. Besides, this isn't a date, right? We're just having a business talk." I intentionally emphasize the word 'date' to indicate that what we are doing looks like one.

"That's right," gosh, the beautiful woman casually agrees.

I really want to bite her!

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P'Karn was the one paying the bill for this late breakfast. It was because I took out my wallet too slowly. The shopkeeper auntie took her purple banknote first, and even though I tried to pay P'Karn back in the car, the cold CVT doctor simply replied:

"Just pay me back next time."

That could mean many things. First, it could be a casual remark. Second, it could be an invitation for just the two of us to hang out together again.

However, it seemed impossible for this little extern can defeat her senior fellow in that argument. So, I reluctantly agreed, secretly hoping that we could spend more time together.

I hope for more encounters in the future...

The car sets off towards another province, steadily progressing along the road which is less congested than before.

Having been on trips with friends before, I'm not particularly captivated by the surrounding scenery. I am more curious about where she's taking us.

She intermittently asks me if I need to use the restroom or stop at a gas station. I keep declining, yet noticing that under her poker face is delicacy and caring.

Exiting the provincial city center, we passed several mountains, crooked roads, numerous resorts, and several farms. There are also some long cycling lanes. Finally, I realize where P'Karn is taking me to.

It is a waterfall. For us who mainly work in the hospital, the kind of scenery and the natural scent are rare. P'Karn parks the car in a shaded spot, allowing me to step outside and breathe in the refreshing air as if my lungs are being rejuvenated. I'm not exaggerating, as this place is really filled with vibrant greenery and genuine natural wonders

"It seems like you read my mind."

"Perhaps."

She replies with her husky voice, then she locks the car.

Since we are still full from our previous meal, we don't stop for food before entering the waterfall area. We only bought smoothies and snacks each for lunch. We just need to dispose of them in the prepared trash bins because bringing them in is allowed.

My mind has been in chaos since P'Karn held my hand to help me walk through the rocky paths. We are about to ascend to the upper levels of the waterfall where the crowd begins to thin out. Of course, it's because the uphill path is challenging without stairs. Most tourists prefer staying on the lower levels.

And then, after spending several minutes slowly climbing up, the two of us finally settle on a sturdy rock that allows us to look at the lower tiers of the waterfall conveniently. With the addition of the refreshing fruit smoothies in

our hands, this is such a rare atmosphere for a medical student who's been destined with deadly shifts like me.

"Thank you for bringing me here."

The young woman beside me doesn't respond to my words. She simply gazes at the cascading water while savoring the taste of her drink. I sneak a glance at her, contemplating the depth of her gaze, which seems to hold numerous untold stories, leaving her unsure of what to say next. I divert my attention to the stream below, sipping my kiwi smoothie while wiggling my feet to kill time.

"It might sound strange, but my bloodline has the ability to control time. However, the conditions vary."

"...."

"My mom can freeze time and rewind it for ten minutes once a day. Her powers reset at midnight. As for my aunt, she has glimpses of the future, like in a blink."

"So, your abilities include... turning back time and seeing the future?"

She nods. "Yep, I can see visions in a blink and rewind time without limits, but there are conditions."

Her husky voice sounds softer than usual, while she explains the three limitations. First, touching someone while rewinding time enables them to remember every moment. Second, if she's bleeding, she can't use her ability. And third, if she rewinds time to save someone's life, she has to exchange it with ten years of her lifespan.

"Mai-Tree has the power to stop time for ten minutes a day. That kid has conditions similar to mine."

"Can you automatically sense it when your lifespan decreases?"

"I can."

At this point, I feel even more guilty, and my heart aches.

"I'm truly sorry..."

"It's not your fault."

"Indeed, it is..."

I mumble hollowly, but then she continues.

"When you were shot and fell from the rooftop, I was so shocked. My mind stopped thinking. I tried to grab you, so our fingers touched. It was only then that I realized I should've turned back time, so I accidentally made you remember everything. This might be the reason why you frequently dream about the future."

"I see..."

"In fact, I went back in time to hurry to the crosswalk. There, I found a suspicious pickup truck parked as if it had been watching over someone. Fortunately, I remembered the truck color and license plate, so I knew it was the one that would hit you and then flee. So, I dealt with that first before...helping you cross the road."

"H...How did you deal with him?"

"I called the police from the nearby station and had him arrested."

"But wait? At that time, you shouldn't have known if he did anything wrong."

"That's the only way to keep you safe. And if my suspicions are correct, would an innocent person be trying to kill to shut others' mouths? So, he must be a perpetrator trying to destroy evidence."

"That's true. He was a murderer attempting to conceal a body that morning. But fate led me to bump into him just before he could get out of the building."

She didn't just rewind time to take my hand and cross the road together. She's also been behind the scenes to ensure my safety... The more I think about it, the more I realize its magnitude and incomparability.

Back then... I was just a high school kid. Why did she have to sacrifice so much?

Shortly after I fell into deep thoughts, her voice brought me back to reality.

"I'm not sure if the person who held a knife at your carotid arteries["] in my vision had anything to do with the man or not. But I believe it was a doctor."

"In my dreams, I heard you said something like that too."

"That's why we shouldn't appear too close in front of anyone. The target could be either you or me."

"The target shouldn't be you, because in my dream, the culprit tried to kill me."

"You might be the hostage."

"If that's the case, then I must be very important to you, right?"

"...."

"Why did you have to rewind time to save the life of an ordinary girl like Kliao?"

Twenty minutes past thirteen o'clock on Sunday, she didn't give me an answer.

She turns her face back to focus on the same old scenery. No conversation, just the sound of the wind rustling through the leaves and the cascading waterfall, descending layer by layer. There's no one here but us, and the moderately humid air makes me slightly shiver. Yet, I feel strangely warm under this weather, perhaps because her hand has slid over to hold mine as we were talking but I can't recall when.

This is a moment to rest our eyes, admiring the greenery of the trees and the natural hue of the water that makes the smoothie in our glasses disappear in no time. At 15.30, the older woman suggests it is time to leave. Deep down, I secretly can't get over it. But I don't want to seem clingy either, so I get up to dispose of the garbage in the bins provided for tourists.

To be honest, it is a shame to leave behind the breathtaking view, the pristine air, and the warm hands that used to hold mine.

When we walk back to the parking lot, we find several kids sneaking around P'Karn's Aston Martin. She doesn't seem annoyed or displeased; she just presses the remote to unlock the car, making the lights flicker. That's enough to startle the primary school kids, who are probably the grandchildren of the nearby merchants, and scare them away.

"We won't reach Bangkok too late, right?"

"It might be dusk."

Her plain voice replies as she steers the expensive car along the winding road.

I don't quite understand why she said that. It is only three in the afternoon right now. We hadn't been traveling for long before we reached our destination. Since the hospital is located in a suburb of Bangkok, the traffic might be there but not so heavy that the wheels barely move.

Anyway, let's see how it goes. After all, we haven't left the mountainous area yet.

On the way here, I was captivated by the breathtaking scenery of the mountains, even though when I could see the other side filled with resorts and various establishments, I became uninterested. However, on the return trip, I suddenly notice that the other side is equally captivating. I find myself glued to the window like a child, gazing at the cute sculptures and promotional signs with sparkling eyes.

And then, I tilt my head, becoming more curious, when P'Karan, who has been driving, suddenly makes a turn signal. I turn to look at the older woman beside me. She doesn't say anything but steers the wheel toward a place with cute animal sculptures and a stretch of flower fields swaying beautifully in the wind.

I get it now why she said we might not reach Bangkok until dusk. We are going straight back home, but we are making a stop along the way.

"Are you hungry?"

When we get out of the car, the older woman asks. Her beautiful face turns toward the small glasshouse-looking building, which is the restaurant of this place. It is decorated to offer a view while dining, which is very interesting because there is a picture of a dory fish steak in the Japanese-style vinyl flag. But my stomach hasn't finished digesting the breakfast and the kiwi smoothie from noon.

"I'm not quite hungry yet, but if you're hungry, I'll accompany you."

"I'm not hungry either. Let's walk around then."

Regarding the entrance fee here, if you travel around by the tram that resembles a university tram, it costs twenty baht per person. However, if you walk, there's no charge. I guess the fee's probably included in the food prices because I sneakily noticed that the prices on the sign are quite high. But that's fair enough.

These flowers are so beautiful. The plot we chose to admire is in light purple. I don't care what type of flowers they are because I'm not into botany, and I forgot to read the sign at the entrance.

As we walk together at a leisurely pace, it is a suitable moment for conversation.

"Do you want to walk to that big tree over there? I want to take a picture of the flower field."

"Sure."

I want to pick up my phone and take a selfie, but part of me wants to admire the scenery with my own eyes first. This kind of scenery shouldn't just be a backdrop. I'm not sure if I'm the only one who thinks this way, but P'Karan doesn't reach for her communication device either. She just continues walking with me, wandering her eyes at the things I point or call her to take a look.

When we're close to the big tree, the clouds coincidentally move to shade us from the sun, making it cool and comfortable. I'm about to turn around and tell her how happy I am that there's nobody else here now, just the two of us, sharing this field like this. But then, her carming husky voice interrupts.

"Kliao Khluen"

Because she looks serious, and she even stops walking, I pause and turn to face her.

"Yes, P'Karan?"

Her lips, tinted with delicate pink, gently utters.

"Earlier, when you asked why I had to turn back time to save your life..."

My heart beats faster than usual. I know one day she'll resolve that doubt. So, I hadn't forced her to answer. Yet, I didn't expect her to tell me less than an hour later.

"It's because you're my sunshine."

"What do you mean...?"

I don't understand, and the older woman, seemingly decisive and determined, just stares back and speaks with a firm voice.

"When I was in high school, even if Mom and Mommy didn't force me to do anything special, their jobs made me stress out so much that it affected my health. I read books till my nose bled and I always had severe

headaches. I didn't know which major to choose. I didn't know what I wanted to be in the future... And then you came along. You're the woman I saw every morning in my visions."

"...."

"Sometimes, you hurriedly got up to answer the phone because you were called into the room called OR."

I could only look into her gaze, which is now free from its cold shell, revealing her tender self deep inside.

"There were also the times you woke up early with a thick book in your arms like you'd been hugging it all night."

Words fail to come out...at this moment.

"Every time I felt terrible because of whatever reason, your image came to my mind. It's you who made me want to keep going, waiting for the day we can live our lives together."

"Your smile is the most radiant thing in this world."

"Your eyes are the most beautiful."

"Your voice is the most soothing."

"You're the reason I chose to become a doctor."

What's going on? I chose this career path because of her, seeing her as a warm sun, but now the woman in front of me is telling me that I make her feel the same way...

I give a puzzled glance to the older woman. Meanwhile, the tall figure says nothing but walks closer to me. As the background, the wind still gently sways the beautiful flowers, providing the breathtaking scene. But this time, I'm only interested in her dark eyes.

And at that moment, our instincts lead our hearts, she leans down, tilting her head, and then our lips touch. Our eyelids slowly close to savor the sweet taste lingering on our tongues.

Long and satisfying, the kiss fulfills our hearts with a warmth I have never known, making me want to stay like this forever, regardless of what's surrounding us.

Several seconds later, P'Karan slowly withdraws her lips before saying something for only us two to hear.

“So, my answer to your question is...I have fallen in love with you after all this time. It has been a long-lasting love. I cannot live a long life without you by my side.”

□□□□□

20. Things to Be Cautious About



Apart from hanging out with my bandmates, I've rarely been into exploration.

That's why when P'Karan took me to the waterfall and the flower field last Sunday, I felt so fresh to the fullest and more encouraged.

It's a shame that a day typically passes by so quickly, as now I'm back to another Monday working in the surgical ward.

I woke up early before the alarm clock could even scream. I also had a radiant face when waiting for the steamed bun in the convenience store.

Happiness overflowed as I reminisced about the sweet kiss from yesterday.

The words she spoke almost felt like a proposal to me. I never imagined that P'Karan would feel this way all along. I just learned that she's been in love with me longer than I have with her.

So, it's been more than ten years...

Tree and Meow call me crazy, but I don't care anymore. My forever crush just revealed her feelings toward me! Can anyone understand how I feel right now? It's like my life has been unlocked!

Rrrrrr!

I part ways with my two friends who are heading to their wards. Suddenly, the phone rings, and an unfamiliar number shows on the screen, making me furrow my brows. I take a bite of my pastry, trying to suppress the nerves,

then slide my thumb to answer and put the phone to my ear, waiting to hear the caller's voice.

[Hey, can you come to see me today?] It's the voice of a woman who seems self-centered, and what she said sounds like an order, isn't it?

"Who is this?"

[Mai-Tree]

As soon as I hear her name, I immediately remember her. She's a woman slightly taller than me - the woman who stormed in and made a scene that day. But even so, my carefulness makes me choose to confirm it first. Meeting a stranger because she called me sounds a bit foolish.

"How can I make sure that you're truly P'Karan's sister?"

[Ha! So, you don't recognize my voice at all, do you?]

"The voice over the phone can be different from real life, you know."

[Gosh!]

Her small voice retorts.

[Alright, I'll go find you. What time do you finish work?]

"Actually, 4 PM, but I have evening rounds too, so I can't tell exactly when I'll be done."

[You're really annoying! If that's the case, let's meet at noon. Just tell me where you want to meet.]

"I can't. P'Karan prohibited me from letting anyone know that I'm her acquaintance. If I go to see you, they'll start to suspect."

[....]

"...."

Because of that, we needed to find a way to meet. P'Mai-Tree said she would come to pick me up at the back entrance of the hospital around 7 PM. She wanted to talk about something important. I asked her to send me a photo of herself to confirm it was really her. She added me on LINE and sent it as requested, but I wasn't so sure. I was afraid someone might pretend to be her and sent me the photo. So, I typed:

Kliao K: P'Mai-Tree, can you take a photo of yourself with four fingers raised and placed on your right cheek? Also, turn your face to the right.

MT: Are you insane?! I'm not playing around!

Kliao K: Then, I can't trust that it's really you.

MT: Hey! I'm much older than you!!

MT: (Image Sent)

Even though she seemed annoyed, she eventually sent her photo. I chuckled alone in the elevator. I didn't mean to tease her like that; it just seemed like it would be fun to mess with her nerves a bit.

Kliao K: Thank you. I believe it's really you. See you at 7 PM.

I still wonder if she has lost her temper.

I try to guess what P'Mai-Tree might want to talk about. It must be related to P'Karan and their family's extraordinary abilities. But part of me is worried about the idea that my relationship with the (seemingly) cold fellow would get blocked.

However, on second thought, it would be better if I didn't get involved with her because that meant she wouldn't sacrifice herself for me anymore.

I feel like a mess.

My head is throbbing.

By 7 PM, the time arrives. A silver BMW is waiting as appointed. I change into a more casual outfit and sling my tote bag over my right shoulder. Then, I text to P'Mai-tree to confirm if it's her car parked in front of me. The lawyer doesn't respond but lowers the window for clear visibility.

Soon after, I get into the passenger seat beside the driver, the spoiled young woman drives her car to the main road before speaking up.

"Let's get straight to the point. I don't want you to be too involved with P'Karan."

"Well..."

"You made my sister lose ten years of life. That's a lot to bear! Imagine if she only has 70 years left if her original life expectancy was 80."

"I feel so guilty about that too."

"If you feel guilty, then move to another hospital!"

"It's not easy to just move like that. Besides, I'm still a medical student."

"So, you have to stop getting involved with P'Karan then."

The small voice insists, pressuring me to step back.

"I don't know how important you are, but from what I've heard, you seem to have been the talk of the town getting assaulted by a mad prisoner. That solidly confirms you'll bring trouble to my sister again. I...just don't want to see her life shortened."

"I'm sorry..."

The young woman, dressed politely and modestly for her work that requires a lawyer robe, exhales heavily and loud enough to hit me. At this point, I feel squeezed into inches. The air-conditioner in P'Mai-tree's car makes me feel cold, especially when coupled with her straightforward words.

"I'm currently investigating that criminal. It seems there are some ins and outs about him more than what the news has revealed. So until I know the whole story, please watch out. P'Karan shouldn't have to suffer because of her mad love again."

"What did you just say?"

"I won't repeat it. Today, I already argued a lot with that b*tchy public prosecutor in the courtroom. My throat is sore."

Not only that, the adorable-looking woman, who has been focusing on the road, also grabs the glass next to her and sips the drink. Judging from its color, it looks like honey lemonade. She seems to be mad with that female public prosecutor on a certain level.

"I don't really understand the purpose of this conversation."

"Geezzz, why are you such a fool?"

She makes the 'Geez' sound in displeasure.

"I don't like you, but I can't just stop my sister from falling in love with you. Since she's so crazy about you, I just want you to remember not to make P'Karan go back in time again to save you."

In summary, P'Mai-Tree called me because she wanted to scold me and warn me to stay alert and alive so that P'Karan wouldn't get in trouble again. Do I understand it correctly?

I don't know since when this BMW has returned to be parked in the same spot where we met at 7 PM. I blink repeatedly, about to ask why she returned here. The lawyer unlocks the passenger door and says:

"What? You didn't think I was going to treat you to dinner with my money, did you? I just drove around, that's all."

I feel embarrassed, perhaps because I'm used to how P'Karan takes me out and treats me to snacks or helps me relax. I have forgotten that the person

beside me is P'Mai-Tree, not P'Karan. She dislikes me and isn't kind to me at all.

Furthermore, she even looks at me as if asking '*Why don't you get out of my car?*'

So, I end up standing outside and watching the BMW drive away confusingly. Now, I realize that our business is truly finished.

This family is all the same, huh? Important matters must be discussed face to face; no phone calls or texts are allowed.

I slightly shake my head at the quick visit of the cute yet spoiled lawyer. Then, my stomach grumbles in protest, reminding me that I haven't had dinner yet. Luckily, I have my tote bag with me-I'm the type who always carries a tote bag everywhere. I only carry a brand-name bag when I dress up for a special occasion.

Turning my feet toward the hospital door, I aim for the dumpling noodle shop whose menu sign alone already makes me crave it. As I reach the shop, the alluring aroma of soup drifts my way, intensifying my hunger.

“Bro, I want a bowl of dumpling noodles.”

"Please have a seat!"

The shop owner picks some noodles to blanch and tells me to find a seat enthusiastically.

Once I get a suitable seat, a teenager who serves water walks over and asks what kind of drinks I want. I answer 'plain water' without hesitation, although normally I might order some fruit juice. Why? Well, because the sweetness of P'Karan's kiss still lingers.

Thinking about it, my heart skips a beat. What? A cold woman? No, there's only P'Karan - the sweetest fellow in this world.

Rrrr! Rrrr!!

Khimmy: Kliao

Khimmy: Where are you?

My dear friend sends me two consecutive messages via LINE. I open and read them while waiting for my food. I'm about to respond, but Khim seems impatient. She calls me even before I can type a single word, prompting me to switch to answering the call instead.

"What's up, Khim? Anything urgent? I'm just about to reply to you."

[Yes, urgent! Where are you!?!]

"I'm out looking for something to eat at the back of the hospital."

[Don't you know about the news!? They're sharing it all over the internet now!]

"What news?"

[About that prisoner! The one who recently attacked you...]

My heart races with a sudden surge of fear when Khim mentions him with such intensity. Suddenly, I feel a chill run down my spine while waiting for her to continue, and as the person on the other end unfolds the next sentence, I feel like the world has come crashing down before me.

[He's escaped from prison!]

□□□□

🌿21. A Safe Space🌿

The news of that criminal's prison break makes me unable to sit around eating noodles anymore. A sense of unease and fear creeps over me. Just when the young waiter walks past me, I get startled. I decide to get up and tell the shop owner that I need to hurry back to my dormitory and apologize for canceling my order midway through.

Luckily, he's kind enough and remembers that I used to come here often, so despite having blanched the noodles, he doesn't make a fuss.

Every step feels like someone's always chasing me from behind. I still let Khim hold the line as my companion, scanning left and right throughout the walk back to my nearby dormitory, which seems miles away today.

Even when I enter the elevator, the anxiety persists.

[Calm down, Kliao. Take a deep breath.]

On the other end, Khim can hear my frequent and heavy breaths, so she tries to reassure me, though her voice also trembles.

Once I get inside the room, I immediately feel relieved and breathe fully again, perhaps because of the familiarity and the solidly locked door that reassured me. However, when I turn around to discuss this with Meow inside the room, it turns out that the room is empty and the lights haven't been switched on yet.

I suddenly frown, switching the lights on, and only then notice the yellow sticky note sticks on the dressing table.

'My auntie comes back from overseas. I have to pick her up at the airport, so I won't come back tonight.'

Those words indicate that Meow probably wouldn't be my companion on this thrilling night.

"Khim..."

[How's it going? You reached the room, right?]

"Yeah, but I'm even more scared than before. It's like... tonight I'll have to be alone."

[What!?!]

She exclaims; her voice tinged with concern. [What can we do? Right now, I'm in Lampang. Damn! I shouldn't join this trip!]

"It's okay..."

It is more of a self-reassurance. Because at a time like this, I can't pretend I'm fine. A convict who had threatened me ran away. How could I possibly sleep peacefully?

Rrrrrrr!

Before Khim can say anything further, my phone is interrupted by another call. I pull it away from my ear to see who's calling. The name on the screen surprises and comforts me at the same time.

'P'Karan'

I don't answer immediately but tell Khim beforehand that I will call back in a moment because a senior called in. Khim seems concerned and tells me to hold the line, so I agree before answering the call from P'Karan.

[I just got back from OR... I just saw the news.]

"You should be tired. Did you have dinner ye-"

[Your friend isn't there, right? Pack your stuff and wait for me downstairs. I'll get changed and pick you up soon.]

Huh?

The older woman hangs up like she's in a hurry, and I'm left puzzled. We only talk for a few seconds, but it seems like tonight, I'll be staying at her condo. Is that right? Do I understand it correctly? Or am I imagining it?

When I return to Khim, I become speechless out of the blue. She asks what happened, and I just exclaim 'Huh?' several times. It takes a moment for me to process the story and explain to her that P'Karan told me to pack up my things and wait downstairs.

[Can you really trust her?]

Khim doubts. She seems to be concerned for me. But my answer is... P'Karan is the most trustworthy person in the world.

"Yeah. She's the one who keeps me alive, after all."

I reply to Khim who stays on the line. My right-hand sweeps all the necessary items into my favorite tote bag, getting ready to go downstairs.

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Last Sunday, when we went out together, P'Karan told me she didn't want to meet me if it was still dusk, fearing someone might notice her. But now, those words she said have been completely canceled when the news of the escaped convict spread on the internet.

The Aston Martin comes to pick me up without worry if anyone sees us. When I step in, I feel a million times safer than being alone.

"I haven't eaten," says the pretty woman as the car moves away from the hospital entrance.

"Huh?"

"The question you asked on the phone earlier."

"Oh..."

My question about whether she had dinner yet.

"Am I disturbing you?"

"I'm not on duty today. An emergency case came in this evening, so I had to stay for surgery."

"I see. But actually, I meant you have to come pick me up and let me stay with you overnight, so I feel worried..."

"Don't worry too much. It isn't a big deal."

She speaks while her eyes focus on the bustling street with heavy traffic. She acts as if my staying over isn't an exciting prospect at all. However, I can sharply notice a rhythmic twitch of her index finger on the steering wheel. I can't tell if it is a tiny burst of excitement or not, but my cheeks flush anyway because I feel warm like having my own personal sun right now.

It's nice to be together...

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Belle and Nene video-called me to tell me about the escaped convict. They had just learned about the news when they returned to their apartment. I thanked them and told them that I was traveling to a safe place. Then, Frang called me, after I hang up on both of them, for the same topic. Then, Note called in afterward. Normally, she was very free, but coincidentally, she went back to the palace and just found out about the news, and then she called me.

In summary, I told everyone that there was nothing to worry about right now. I would contact them again via the group chat later.

They, including Khim, were still concerned. They told me to send them the location once I arrived.

P'Karan's condo isn't far from the hospital. However, due to a slight traffic jam, it took longer than it should have. At first glance, when I lifted my face, I could tell by the architecture that this accommodation must be very expensive. It is similar to Note's luxury condo. Moreover, it has good security guards. There were only five or six cars parked in the underground parking lot (and they were all luxurious). But what surprised me was the limited parking spaces. There were only about twenty.

The tall woman leads me to the elevator before tapping the key card. Then, the screen displays the sixth floor. The modernly designed elevator takes us up silently. Meanwhile, hugging my tote bag, I can't help but muster the courage to ask.

"How many rooms are there here?"

"Twelve, the same number as the floors."

"Oh!"

Does this mean each floor belongs to one owner? Being the owner of a room here means buying the entire floor?!

The 'Ding!' sound indicates that we have arrived. The door slides open, revealing a corridor that, with just a glance, I can tell that the materials used are costly, yet everything is designed in a simple and harmonious color palette. The corridor isn't very long, as the entire room has been used up.

The young woman taps her key card to open the door, and what I see inside make me blink in astonishment. It is spacious and beautiful like a house. P'Karan's unit has two floors. Upon entering the first floor, you will encounter the guest area, followed by a partition wall separating the living area, which has a large sofa set and a giant TV.

Then, there is the kitchen area, separated by another partition. Additionally, there is a wide and long balcony area. The curved staircase inside leads up to three different rooms upstairs. I dare say that it feels very much like a real house.

"Starting from the right-hand side, the first room is mine. You can choose one of the other two rooms. Feel free to take a look."

I want to sleep with you. If I said that, would she think I'm insane?

The host walks to the kitchen area and begins to check what is left in the fridge. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude and walk upstairs hesitantly to choose which room to sleep in. I start with the middle room. When I peek inside, I find it is fully furnished and decorated, more spacious than any room I have ever slept in. It has a peach-colored tone and a neatly arranged bed. It looks comfortable and clean.

Next is the room on the far left. It is decorated similarly to the others but with a mint and white color scheme. Everything is well-organized, just like the others. This is the first time I feel equally drawn to both options as if P'Karan knew exactly what's my type so that she decorated the rooms this way.

Well, if I were to be full of myself, that sounded possible because she would have learned from the future...

Some of the items look brand new like they have just been purchased and arranged. This makes me think back to the day when P'Karan bought so many things at the furniture store and loaded them into the car. Maybe she bought them to assemble later for me to use when I come to stay over...

Impossible! I shake off my thoughts. Who would care so much about me?

I take a long time to decide, like minutes, and the conclusion is I prefer the middle one. The reason is simple; it is closer to P'Karan.

After laying out the tote bag, which has some clothes for changing inside, on the bed, I grab my phone and go back to the kitchen area. There, I find

P'Karan wearing a black apron over her original outfit. It is only now that I realize I have taken so much time exploring the rooms that P'Karan has already finished preparing the ingredients for cooking.

"Can I help with anything?"

"Just sit and wait."

She says and turns towards the dining table, which can accommodate up to six people. Then, she returns to pay attention at the chicken breasts on the plastic tray.

I pout.

"I just want to repay you."

"You can't cook."

"How did your omens tell you everything about me?"

"It's because you're my b—"

The sentence is cut short, and then P'Karan looks up and stares directly at me.

"So, could you please charge the phone for me?"

Her hurried tone sounds like she is trying to cover up something.

I squint before reluctantly stepping away from the cooking counter to fulfill her request. I ask where the phone and charger are located, then plug it into the socket near the kitchen area, making it easily accessible in case there are any messages or calls for her. Once done, I return to my original place.

"Earlier, you said 'b—'."

"Bad Extern."

"Calling me that again?"

I make a sulky face. It is hard to believe I can see a glimpse of a slight smile on the face of the fellow, who's busily carving the chicken.

A smile...?

Is it a smile of amusement... Or is it a smile for me?

I wish I could sit in her mind for a moment.

Just to understand everything better.

Living with P'Karan makes me feel safe, to the point that I momentarily forget about the worries that the criminal roams around outside. When that thought crosses my mind, I climb onto the nearby bar stool, grab my phone, and send the location of my whereabouts to my friends.

As I stand by, waiting to support P'Karan with whatever she needs, I keep up with the news.

Combining information from the internet with what Khim and my The Edge of the Universe bandmates shared, I learned that his real name is Avatch. He is in his thirties and has no relatives outside of prison because his parents had passed away when he was young. Also, his wife and son had died in an accident eight years ago.

"At that time..."

The period is closely tied to when he chose to murder Khim's next-door college student, but the accident appeared to have happened a year before.

After the deaths of his wife and son, a year later, he began his criminal journey. There must be something behind the scenes.

As I furrow my brows, absorbing the new information my friends sent, I suddenly notice a whiff of delicious aroma wafting towards my nose. Lifting my face from the phone screen, I see P'Karan preparing a bowl of braised chicken in sweet gravy. It looks delicious, and the rising smoke rising indicates how rich and savory the dark brown gravy soup is.

"It's quite late already. I only made one dish."

"I'm not a big eater anyway. Just one curry with rice is enough."

Despite arguing like that, when I try the meal P'Karan prepared, it turns out I end up having two heaping plates of rice. The braised chicken in sweet gravy is incredibly delicious. Even though chicken breast is usually bland, P'Karan managed to cook the curry so perfectly. It is flavorful and aromatic, and the eggs are soft-boiled just the way I like.

I savor each mouthful of rice, feeling grateful in my heart for the generous portion she served.

"The security system here is top-notch. You can rely on them."

"A key card is also required to access your own floorby elevator, right?"

"That's right."

The young woman, having finished her meal, sits quietly for a while, then she looks at me.

"You can come and stay with me for a while."

"Cough! Cough!"

Upon hearing that, while lifting my glass to drink, I suddenly choke. P'Karan quickly hands me a tissue. I swallow, pull myself together, and try to breathe normally. I wipe my wet chin and look at the older woman with my widened eyes.

"Why did you ask me that so casually? Who said we should act like we don't know each other?"

"That's true."

"Your speech is so short once again. Your kiss is even longer."

My complaint makes the older woman's ears turn red, even though she tries to control her poker face. She must be shy too because both of us pretended like our lips never landed on each other ever since we returned from the Sunday's date. Neither of us mentioned it because that touch made us both feel a flutter in our hearts. But just now, I blurt it out.

"I should let you know everything and hide nothing from you as of now. "Is there still something I don't know about?"

"...."

"Please, I beg of you..."

It seems like my pleading tone might have an effect, as it causes her to sigh slightly.

She glances down at the table before starting to share something I have yet to know.

□□□□□

❀22. Kaomaysa❀

The water from the shower, with adjusted temperature by the water heater, touches my bare skin, a reminder that I am not at the medical residence anymore.

Just a moment ago, at the dining table... P'Karan finally revealed everything.

Every time I dream of the future, it means she herself has seen or is about to see that vision too.

She explained that she was worried about the doctor who had threatened me with a knife, as it could be connected to Avatch's case. Therefore, she planned to distance herself from me, pretending not to know me. She made up a story to deceive that guy, telling him that she reported him to the police because the victim seven years ago was her close underclassmate.

She was trying to involve herself to protect me from the danger, deliberately diverting the culprit's anger towards herself. Now, it seems like Avatch might be targeting P'Karan rather than me. The reason why she wants it to be this way is because someone who can turn back time like her can manage to survive. She just needs to avoid getting hurt enough to bleed out...

I don't agree with that point at all.

However, she argued that she couldn't rely on anything else since I might still be a target. Due to the twisted circumstances, she planned to take a break before visiting him in prison again to agitate him by confirming that she was the one who sent him to jail and I didn't get involved at all, which is obviously a lie.

So, is she planning to make herself the sole target like that? Isn't that risky? Why did she sacrifice herself...for me again?

And Avatch 's vendetta is even more than we expected. He's floundering around out there, although the police are chasing him and every news channel is broadcasting his face.

P'Karan honestly confessed that it was a difficult decision to weigh the danger posed by the doctor holding a knife in the vision or Avatch walking freely outside.

'When I left the OR and found out the news, I didn't care anymore about deceiving any doctor around. I just wanted to see your face right then. I needed to make sure you could sleep safe and sound.'

That's what she said to me before telling us to both go take a shower and then meet again in the living area.

P'Karan must know that if I were aware of everything she's dealing with, I would feel incredibly guilty. I feel like I've become a huge burden in her life-my Dr. CVT, who should be focusing only on her specialization studies. It's no wonder P'Mai- Tree doesn't seem to like me much. Not only has P'Karan's lifespan decreased by ten years, but she also has to protect me from this level of danger.

Receiving her love is so precious; it is something I've always wanted from P'Karan. But if she has to sacrifice to the extent of bearing the prisoner's vendetta for me, then maybe I'm not her sunshine, but rather a problem, a burden, or something she should avoid.

After taking the shower and changing into pajamas I brought in my bag, I open the door to head downstairs to the living area as Phee Karan has suggested. She is sitting on the sofa, watching the news report on the TV, which is all about Avatch.

Just looking at P'Karan's back makes me feel guilty, especially when I sit down beside her who also had a shower and changed into her comfortable clothes. All I can think of is saying 'I'm sorry.'

"You often blame yourself."

The young woman glances at the large TV screen in front of her, yet she's speaking to me.

"That's why I don't want to know."

"It all happened because of me. How can I not think that I'm the troublemaker?"

Her brows furrow as she turns to me, as if trying to make me understand something,

"It's not you but him. And I was the one who called the police to catch him for real."

"But you did that to protect me from being killed and silenced. I'm the culprit!"

My existence makes you suffer, doesn't it?

"I remember what you said when we were in the flower field, but I can't help but feel really bad about it."

"Kliao Khluen"

This time, P'Karan addresses me by my name, accompanied by a serious look and a spell that keeps me from looking away.

"I'm glad to protect you, no matter what."

"P'Karan..."

"Because I want to have you in my life."

She says straightforwardly. Hearing her words like this makes my heart skip a beat, not to mention those dark eyes that are gazing at me so firmly.

"So, there's no need to apologize or feel guilty anymore. Get it?"

"I... I got it." My face fully turns red. My heart feels warm, as if it is being held and embraced by her gentle hands. I lower my head, trying to hide my shyness. I can't afford to show my reactions. It won't look good for sure, especially in this tense and stressful situation. Shouldn't I be more afraid of the dangers around me than feeling excited by her promise to protect me?

"Thank you, P'Karan. Then...what can I do to repay you?"

"What will you do?"

"I have no idea."

The older woman smiles for a brief moment before turning back to the TV screen which is still broadcasting the news.

"Let's finish this mess first."

"Okay," I reply lightly. Then, I can think of something that I have to ask her, and this time it must be successful, "Phee Karan?"

"Say it."

"Could you please stop calling me 'Extern'? Can you call me by my name instead? I don't call you 'Fellow' either."

She turns to me with her beautiful face,

"You feel hurt?"

"Well...yes."

She doesn't reply. We just sit there together, watching the news that has changed to another topic.

I feel shy sitting here like this. P'Kaomaysa, whom I've been chasing after all this time, just confessed her love to me like that. I'm over the moon now. I want to retreat to my room, bury my face in the pillow, and scream into it while kicking my legs. But I also want to stay by her side at the same time.

In fact, I want to stay by her side all night.

The air conditioner in this high-ceilinged living room isn't too cool, almost as if it's been adjusted for someone like me who always gets cold easily. A piece of cloth is folded on the table next to the sofa. As I wear short pants, I ask for her permission to cover myself with it. The older person nods and mumbles like she prepared it for this purpose.

"Your condo is very tidy. Do you hire someone to clean it?"

I start the conversation out of curiosity, thinking that being a doctor might keep her busy, so she probably has a maid.

"No, I do it myself."

"Oh, but it's very spacious here, with multiple rooms."

"I enjoy doing housework. I think less when I do some exercises."

It's quite surprising to me. However, when I recall the image of her wearing the apron and confidently handling the braised chicken in sweet gravy, she looked so gorgeous and cool. I can imagine when she puts her mind to something, she's serious and focused.

If it's organizing the house, she would do it systematically and thoroughly. Or if it's cleaning, she would double-check everything to see whether there's still a particle of dust left.

I'm the complete opposite because I hate housework to the core. That's probably because I've been forced to do it since I was a kid.

I've always wanted to see what P'Karan is like when she's in the OR. I've never been in the same room with her before. I want to know what she is like when she focuses on her work.

I've been thinking about the person next to me for quite some time, although my eyes are fixated on the TV.

Time passes by slowly, and I lose track of myself. I don't even know when sleepiness overwhelms me to the point of drifting off. Because when I wake up again, I find myself curled up on the sofa. The room is dark, and the TV is still on, airing a news program where two parties are debating. It's only then that I realize I'm lying on something soft and warm, and it is someone's lap.

As I glance up, I see P'Karan asleep, her head resting against her arm on the sofa's armrest. Her other arm rests on her lap as if she doesn't want to take advantage of this situation.

How long have I made her sit here asleep like this...?

The feeling of guilt prompts me to get up. But just as I lift my head slightly, a charming husky voice interrupts,

"You can stay like this."

Then, her eyelids slowly open, revealing the possibility of two things: if P'Karan isn't asleep, then maybe she's just resting her eyes.

"Nah, you'll get tired."

"I'm not tired."

"But I'm afraid that..."

"Let's stay like this a little bit longer."

"..."

I feel like I can hear some gentleness in her voice.

"Your head is warm..."

I...I can't take it anymore. My heart feels light and soft. I can't even count how many times I've blushed today from being so close to her. I just know it's an overwhelming and wonderful feeling. But I have to turn away, hiding my flushed cheeks from P'Karan, afraid she might see how warm they've

become. I pull the blanket covering me up to my face and nestle into her lap, just as she wants.

I hear a soft chuckle in her throat, accompanied by her hand gently sliding through my hair.

Once I regain my composure, I peek half of my face out of the blanket, using my gaze to admire her beautiful face illuminated by the TV light. I secretly question myself why I've fallen for her so deeply like this. Whatever she does, she's always the love blooming in my heart. These feelings have never faded since seven years ago.

We held hands, kissed, and became so close.

If I hope for more than this, will I get it? I just want to get deeper into the beauty of intimacy with her even more.

"P'Karan..."

She lowers her head, waiting for me to say what I want to say. I've been hesitant for a long time. There's something in my heart that I want to express, but I'm afraid it might not look good. But the desire for more than just a gentle pat on my head supports me to find my voice.

"At the flower field... I really like your kiss."

"Um," She responds softly, leaving me anxious if my articulation is inadequate, so I airily repeat it.

"I really like your kiss a lot..."

As I say, my face turns red. I must look ridiculous when trying to flirt like this.

A brief silence falls over us before P'Karan speaks without taking her eyes off the TV.

"I don't want to exploit tonight."

"It won't be exploitation."

This time, the older woman lowers her gaze to look into my eyes.

"Aren't you afraid?"

"Being with you, I'm not afraid of anything."

Then, I get up and sit at eye level with her before offering a sweet smile to the person whose face remains unreadable.

I don't know what's going on inside the mind of the universally accepted cold-hearted woman, but she's no longer interested in the TV. Those eyes turn to meet mine, and there's a spark emanating from within.

My heartbeat echoes loudly and faster than usual, hoping her face would draw closer, praying her warm nose would touch my cheek, wishing her lips would press down gently as they did at the flower field.

My senses are overwhelmed by everything that comes from P'Karan. The faint TV sound, barely audible, can't even penetrate between us. My heart feels like it's pulsating more forcefully than ever. In that moment, my hand instinctively grasps my own shirt tightly, while she moves her face closer, doing exactly what I hoped she would.

We kiss, fervently and passionately, more intense than the first time. Her soft, flexible tongue gently probes into my mouth, warm and inviting. With my lack of experience compared to her, I fumble and do things awkwardly. My hand wanders aimlessly, just wanting to find a place to hold onto. In this enchanting moment, I simply close my eyes and surrender to what the other side has bestowed upon me.

It takes an eternity to savor the taste from her lips. When we finally part, I feel like all desires haven't been satisfied yet. It's like I just feel getting hot and it can get even hotter. I wrap both arms around P'Karan's neck, pulling her close for another kiss. Our breaths mingle, and it is a continuous kiss that lasts longer than before.

"More than just kisses... is okay."

I whisper to the older woman with a deliberately inviting tone, and I'm confident that she can understand exactly what I mean.

Believe me, the sparkle in her eyes says it all again. Even though not a single word slips from her lips, it's clear that we both want to take it further.

I never imagined how or where my first sex would happen, because during those seven years of infatuation, all I did was dream about her as if it were just a fantasy. But as I lay down on the fine sofa with P'Karan on top of me, I suddenly get shy and become weak.

"Wanna stop it?"

Her husky voice asks. Probably sensing my extremely hot face, she's quite concerned about my readiness.

"No, please don't stop."

"Kliao Khluen"

"I want to be yours."

The corners of the listener's mouth lift into a smile. If I were to be full of myself, it would seem like a smile of tenderness. Yet, if not, it might be a smirk of appreciation. Before I can dwell on the matter, I have to bite my lip as her warm hands slide on my belly beneath my shirt. Just a gentle touch from her, my thoughts go wild.

Nevertheless, they trail along with every emotion until eventually, after just a few breaths, both she and I put off our clothes, laying them bare on the floor. There's nothing on our bodies because it is irrelevant in this moment of intimacy.

I never imagined that every inch of her body would be so seductive, almost driving me to the brink of madness.

Just her breath alone makes it worthwhile for me to be right here.

"Ah..."

I accidentally let out a moan as her delicate, slender finger, with the neatly trimmed nail, lightly brushes against the top of my right chest, teasingly circling around the sweet peak to make me shiver. Then, she trails down over my belly to the lower rose petals, still not slipping any fingers in, but teasingly brushing against the clitoris as a preliminary arousal. That causes me to twist my body and unintentionally let out a soft, embarrassed whimper.

The lower part of my body feels wet, stimulated from within. P'Karan's body presses against mine, while she's still teasing my happy button. Her lips gently kiss my belly several times, subtly but clearly indicating desire. I can only breathe through my mouth, feeling my temperature rise. My hands fumble around due to the lack of experience.

As I realize how much I'm struggling under her body, I notice that now she who is on top has to spread her legs begrudgingly because my thighs are touching her...sensitive area. She is flushed with heat, and her face shows how much my unintentional action has stirred her emotions.

But P'Karan doesn't seem to consider complaining or anything of the sort. There are only soft, suppressed moans that slip through. Those teasingly circling fingers then begin to slide down, aiming to enter my body.

"Ah...Uh"

Another moan slips out, and I feel immensely embarrassed that I can't stop my own voice. I let everything unfold as it may.

With warm lips pressing softly against the peak of my chest, and a gentle teasing with a soft tongue, every nerve seems to converge at the point where her touch lingers, whether it be below or above. She controls my desires, steadily heightening them without reservation. All I can do is tense my toes and let out loud, unfamiliar moans like never before.

P'Karan is about to lead me to reach the climax.

With a heart full of happiness and a body tensed from the movement of two fingers sliding in and out, when these two things happen simultaneously, it doesn't take long for me to come. I release sweet nectar on her hand, making it all wet. I take a deep breath, fill my lungs with air, and then exhale slowly after being tense all over,

I feel... so good.

P'Karan notices my reaction and immediately understands that she has taken me to that point. Her slender fingers slowly withdraw, and her eyes glance briefly at my naked body lying on the sofa before averting them to suppress her desires.

"I'll go to the bathroom."

Refusing to let her go, I quickly grab her arm. At this moment, we both see every curve and edge of each other. As we have heard moans that are not meant to be heard by anyone else, I don't hesitate to say this embarrassing sentence anymore:

"I'll do it for you. No need for you to go help yourself."

This might be one of the few things I can see clearly. Just a moment ago, my thigh had been rubbing against her sensitive part, but she didn't intend to pressure me or make a demand.

"You've never done it."

Her voice falters, not hiding any sort of insult. It's just filled with a reluctance to pressure me to abruptly take this training course. Still...

"I've been waiting to spend this moment with you."

I hug her arm.

"You said I'm the sun, but in reality, you've been the sun for me all along."

"...."

"Let me help you, okay?"

The young woman with her alluring body is conflicted by her inner emotions stirred but not yet reaching their peak. Just three seconds after my request, her throat emits a sound.

"Mm."

I've never been intimate with anyone, even though I understand how two women can engage in sex. But still, I fumble, without knowing that my actions only increase the older woman's desire every moment. Her desires surge like a tide. My fingers, slipping into her warm, tight body, move slowly in and out, while she hugs my waist and bites her lips to suppress the torment. She then softly mutters:

"Faster...please."

With those words ended, P'Karan lowers her head to the crook of my neck, sucking it due to her heightened emotions. I hasten the movement of both my index and middle fingers. Her warm and rapid breaths become hotter and faster, yet there's no audible moan, perhaps because she suppresses it.

P'Karan's lips still linger near my left shoulder. At this close range, I can hear the sexy whisper of her breath into my nerves, along with the enticing gentle scent of her body, which distracts my senses. Though I'm truly helping her, I also want to kiss her.

I guess I can't resist the temptation of her touch.

In the middle of the night, after bringing P'Karan to the point of ecstasy, we both feel good. We kiss as if seeking each other from the depths of our souls. My body bears marks of her passionate kisses, left in various places, though they can be concealed under the covers.

Before, I wished to sleep in the same room with her, and now my wish is granted.

When our love activities on the comfortable sofa come to an end, P'Karan doesn't allow me to go to bed alone. The lingering emotions from moments ago make our fellow, who's getting sleepy, utter some words that seem to cling to me tenderly.

"Hmm, my bed is very spacious."

She not only murmurs but also embraces me from behind. She kisses my right shoulder lightly, pleading softly.

In the end, I drift off to sleep, enveloped in the warm embrace of P'Karan, just as I have dreamed of all along.

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❀23. Her Feelings❀

The next day

I discover that P'Karan woke up early when I finally open my eyes on her king-sized bed. The wall clock indicates that it is just past four in the morning, but the owner of the room seems to have left a while ago.

Last night, we...

Gosh, just thinking about the deep and intimate moments between us in the living room, I blush so hard that my face practically disappears under the soft blanket. However, despite my embarrassment, the unique scent of P'Karan still lingers on the sheets, reminding me vividly about what happened last night. And once I realize I've been lying totally naked, I can't bring myself to get up.

But after a while, I regain some composure, and my eyes catch sight of a piece of clothing laid at the end of the bed. Wrapping myself with the blankie, I get up to grab it. It seems to be the outfit I have left in the living room last night. I guess P'Karan must have brought it in for me to wear on my way to the adjacent room where I laid out my bag and clothes for going back to hospital.

It takes longer than usual to shower, as I have to blink repeatedly at my reflection in the mirror. When I notice the red marks on my shoulders, chest, belly, waist, and even my thighs, on one hand, I feel grateful that P'Karan chose to leave the marks only on the areas that my short gown can effectively cover them, but on the other hand, I wonder if I have made her want it this much.

I turn completely red... Damn you, P'Karan!

After attempting to shake off my wild thoughts and dressing myself in a short gown and pleated skirt, with minimal makeup and hair neatly done, I pack everything into my tote bag and open the door to leave the room and descend the stairs to the lower floor. The aromatic smell of food wafts into my nose, stirring my hungry stomach.

When I turn, I find the young woman from the CVT department, who is wearing an apron over her professional attire and spooning some curry into a bowl.

No way! Would I dare make eye contact with her?

Or should I just rush right away? I can call a taxi to the hospital by myself.

"Let's have breakfast together first."

As if sensing my thoughts, P'Karan calls out without lifting her face from the food she's preparing. I swallow hard, not knowing if turning to face her would make me blush to death, but I respond casually,

"Sure."

This morning's meal consists of stir-fried red curry prawn and pork blood soup. I can't help but wonder how this woman, despite spending so much time studying to become a doctor, acquired her cooking skills. I'm so impressed, so I want to ask. But as I sneak at her who's now sitting on the other side of the dining table, I notice she refuses to meet my gaze from the moment she starts eating.

What's wrong? Is it because she did her best to please me, but I failed to do for her? Is that why she looks indifferent? She doesn't even look into my eyes.

During this incredibly delicious breakfast, I feel anxious like a mouse on a spinning wheel. I want to initiate a conversation about last night so badly, but I can't find the right moment. Plus, my mouth feels so awkward. Back then, emotions were running high, but now it's just the time for the two of us to go back to our regular duties.

Maybe I should start a conversation about something to break the silence. It shouldn't be this quiet. How about talking about the menu she prepared so early in the morning?

"You're really talented."

At that moment, the person who has been fidgeting all along seems to freeze. Her ears turn red, and her eyes shift to the left, avoiding my direct gaze. Then, her mouth replies with a half-hearted tone,

"Why did you bring that up while we're still eating?"

Huh!? Why can't I mention about the food while we're eating?

Wait, does she mean our late-night sex?

Don't tell me that she acts coldly because she's still thinking about last night?

I blink repeatedly because what I intended to talk about is actually the food and her cooking skills. But she seems to think I discussed something 18 in the morning. Doesn't that mean she herself has been thinking about it all the time? The color of her ears suggests she is shy, and that leaves me speechless about what to say next.

It seems like I've found a pretender...

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Today's breakfast is more satisfying and delicious than usual. I ride in the luxurious Aston Martin to work, with the young woman I've been in love with for seven full years sitting beside me. She looks like a real sweet dream. At first, she was still reserved, barely speaking. However, as we approach the hospital and stop at the final red light before reaching it, I decide to break the silence.

"Did you feel uncomfortable?"

I turn my gaze away from the crowded road and glance at the profile of the woman sitting behind the steering wheel.

"What do you mean?"

She turns to me, furrowing her brows as if to say '*that one and only issue*,' but I don't wait for her to open her mouth. I quickly continue.

"This morning, when I was talking about your cooking skills, you also mistook it for something else."

"Well-"

Her words halt, and that's the moment she realizes we were talking about different things this morning. Suddenly, P'Karan's face seems to tense up as if she's scolding herself inside.

"I'm sorry..."

Her husky voice comes out in regret.

Of course, I have to smile and accept her apology.

Upon seeing that, she continues to explain.

"What I meant is about last night. I was afraid that I made you feel bad or something."

I smile broadly.

"I feel really good."

Because I always wanted to do it with you.

I don't say the latter part out loud because I'm also a bit shy.

"Is that so?"

P'Karan responds shortly, then turns back to face forward.

As the traffic light still shows two digits, we still have to talk. I muster my courage, clenching my skirt tightly, and ask back without daring turn to look directly at her.

“And...and what about you? Did I make you feel bad?”

The owner of the beautiful eyes glances at me through the rearview mirror and says without hesitation,

"I like it all when it comes from you."

Although she remains composed, those words soften my heart for real.

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That's why I can work happily, and many nurses even asked what made me look so happy, as if I were in love. I smiled instead of answering because that's true.

While I was still having a ward round with the professor, Meow called. Since I had to clean the wounds of the patient, I couldn't answer her call. I chose to call her back after I finished my grand round. Our conversation wasn't lengthy. Early this dark morning, her father dropped her off around five o'clock.

When my friend went into the room and couldn't find me, she was surprised why I left earlier than usual. She wondered if something happened, so I told her about the news of the prisoner - Avatch. That shocked her a lot, and she apologized for leaving me alone without knowing anything.

I replied that it wasn't her fault. Meow had to pick up her relative at the airport anyway. However, I didn't tell her that I stayed with P'Karan. I don't know, I just thought that until the matter with Avatch is resolved and we find out if he knows the doctor here or not, I can't trust anyone.

I'm worried it might affect P'Karan...

In the late afternoon, I went to assist a resident in appendicitis surgery. I listened to his complaint about how he shouldn't have chosen surgery as his specialization because he ended up dealing with so many urgent situations, like he must be able to tell if the patients developed any complications, know when and how to operate, or even when not to operate.

I just smiled and continued listening, but secretly I was wondering, what about me? What kind of doctor should I be?

But it's still a long way to go. However, my extern life hasn't reached even halfway yet, and there's still the internship period waiting ahead.

After coming out of the operating room, I intended to have a cup of coffee because I had the afternoon shift today, which meant I had to stay until midnight. So, refilling my caffeine wouldn't hurt.

With that in mind, I'm now humming the song 'Best Part' by Daniel Caesar as I walk down the hallway.

When I enter my regular café, where I usually order at the counter, I catch a glimpse of the female adult who had asked me about her girlfriend's kidney disease sitting at a table. In front of her is a drink that doesn't seem to have been touched much.

I immediately approach her without hesitation, before trying to smile in a way that might make her feel relieved.

"Excuse me, may I join you?"

The woman, looking tired both physically and mentally, turns to look at the source of the noise. When she sees that it's me, whom she has talked to before, she quickly invites me to sit. Despite her dry and cracked lips, she manages a smile.

"Hello, Doctor."

Her voice sounds emptier than before. Even her eyes seem devoid of hope.

During this second encounter, we learn each other's names. Her name is Ink. She's in her early thirties, working as a librarian. Her girlfriend, who has kidney disease, used to work in a company but had to resign to take care of herself at home.

The reason why she became sick so early in age is that she had been working to support herself and her studies since she was young. Therefore, she often experienced back pain, and bought a drug set on a regular basis since then.

"I met Mo when we started working. At that time, Mo didn't work as a blue-collar worker anymore, so she already stopped taking those pills. But a few years later, she started getting sick. I couldn't help but cry, wondering why all the misfortunes had to fall on us. Even my own kidney, I couldn't give it to her because despite being in love, we're not legally recognized."

Listening to this, I understand why 'drug sets' are something doctors never recommend to patients. They may be cheap, but they contain unknown substances. They might be overdosed, mixed, or even contain substandard drugs. So, one should not buy and consume them informally. It's better to consult a doctor or pharmacist about your symptoms before buying any medicine.

This information may not be widely accessible, and from what I've heard, Miss Ink's girlfriend probably didn't know its dangers. She probably only knew that it was a cheap and effective way to relieve pain.

I don't emphasize it because, at this moment, the person in front of me and her girlfriend probably already knew about it.

"...I felt bad because someone called yesterday. They said Mo's turn had come."

"Isn't that good news that she's going to get a kidney transplant?"

"But the next day, they called again to say there was a mistake in the queue. The truth is, Mo's turn is next."

"...."

"It's like...we received good news from heaven, and then the next day the messenger told us it was just a mistake."

Ing cries, her body trembling. I grip your hand tightly, understanding her pain and deep despair. In that moment of contemplation, I can't help but secretly wonder if someone is using their power to manipulate the order...

"Miss Ink... Everything will be better soon."

I try to reassure her. But my emotions sink with hers into the abyss. There's no more conversation. I just get up to fetch my drink and return to sit next to her, as a friend. I listen to the sobbing of someone whose family doesn't understand her, much like me. I pick up my phone quietly and send a text message to ask my extern friend to cover my evening round for today. I can't leave the person in front of me in distress, and my own mental state isn't ready either.

She said her family repeatedly blamed her for choosing a wrong partner, and yes...here I am. I also have a family that never understands me, so I know how she feels and the causes of her besetting problems from the very core.

A prospective doctor and a relative of a patient with kidney disease... There's an unbelievable connection that makes me sit in front of the drink without touching it. At that moment, I catch a glimpse of a familiar figure outside the shop window.

She simply walks past while still talking to P'Fiat. But those eyes briefly glance in my direction for a second. However, after they both disappear for a while, my phone on the table begins to vibrate.

Karan_K: Can we talk for a bit at 5:30? Same place, the fire escape stairs.

Earlier, she seemed indifferent, but suddenly she sent a message asking to talk. I can't tell what she wanted to discuss.

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The atmosphere now is different from that of her condo or her car this morning. Perhaps it's because of the serious and sensitive topic we're about to discuss. We lean against the concrete wall, standing side by side. However, even if she doesn't turn to look at me, her posture indicates that she's called me here to warn me.

"You shouldn't feel down about it like this."

See? And she doesn't even turn to look this way.

"And what else can we do to help her as doctors?"

"...."

"P'Karan?"

"...."

"Even if it seems suspicious like this?"

"...."

That evening, she didn't reply back. Those beautiful eyes of her stared straight ahead, though nothing special about the staircase they were fixed on. Silence blanketed the area, and I couldn't help but wonder why she was so cold.

But three days later, in the afternoon, I, who had previously exchanged contact details with Ink, received a message:

1-Ink: Doctor

1-Ing: Just a moment ago, out of the blue, I received an apology. They said that Mo is indeed the person who will undergo kidney transplant surgery, which was confirmed by the first call.

At the same time, in the evening, there was news that the director of a hospital had been arrested with evidence of manipulating the staff to prioritize organ donations for influential individuals ahead of others, even before their turn. This was a serious violation of ethics.

I'm not sure which hospital it was because everything seems peaceful here. But one thing I'm certain of is that P'Karan is definitely involved behind the scenes in this matter.

Is it...because of what I said at the fire escape?

I was about to reach out to her after the evening round, but she messaged me first.

Karan_K: Do you have an afternoon shift today?

Kliao K: Yes.

I answered her question first before proceeding to ask mine.

Kliao K: May I ask a question?

Kliao K: Regarding that director's queue-jumping issue on the news, were you the one handling that?

Karan_K: No.

Kliao K: I don't believe you.

Karan_K: It's Mommy who's handling it. She used to work as a public prosecutor in Thailand.

I remember that P'Karan has two mothers. And when she referred to one of them as 'Mommy,' even if it was through text, I couldn't help but feel a bit shy when imagining her charming husky voice said that word. Is this her adorable side? She usually acted cool.

Upon reading that, I smiled at the screen. I then realized that my words had some influence on her as she had been pulling the wires to address the

issue. I took the opportunity to dig deeper into who P'Karan's mothers were.

I found out that one was a businesswoman whose company was growing internationally, while the other used to be a quite famous public prosecutor in Thailand. However, both of them are no longer here because they have obtained citizenship in a country where same-sex marriage is legally recognized.

This means P'Karan didn't use dark powers like the director did to manipulate the organ donation queue. Instead, she used legal authority. It might have been a bit complicated, but in the end, it resulted in Miss Ink's partner getting a kidney transplant soon.

One part of me feels happy about it, while another part feels guilty for making P'Karan go through another unnecessary trouble. Even if she told me that she let her mommy handle it, but dealing with various surgical cases and other assignments should have already been a lot for her today.

Kliao K: Thank you so much. I've made you in trouble again.

I take a break until I finish washing my hands and walk out of the bathroom. Then, a message pops up, but it seems like it's a sudden change of subject.

Karan_K: What are you up to? Are you free?

Kliao K: I'm about to go request to observe a surgery with Prof. Pong. I want to see an appendicitis case again.

Karan_K: Actually, you can come to OR 2. There's an interesting case.

Kliao K: Are you in that room??

Karan_K: I'll be there in 20 minutes.

She mentioned an interesting case and told me to visit Operating Room 2 where she's going to perform surgery. That sounds like she intentionally invited me to spend time together. As I walk along the path with bustling

people, I debate with myself whether this is just another way for a fellow to encourage an extern like me to study.

Well, the operating room atmosphere is usually tense. Despite playing music, it doesn't mean it is chill or romantic at all. All the doctors and nurses mainly pay attention to their duties.

Or perhaps...she is concerned about me to the extent that she wants me in her sight all the time. Everything seems suspicious these days.

Hmm, I don't know. I can't read P'Karan's mind at all.

So, in the end, I head towards OR 2 as invited, with an unconcealable subtle smile on my face.

□□□□□

❖❖24. Showing Up❖❖

9.35 PM

"What was going on this afternoon? Why didn't Dr. Karan freeze the entire OR?"

Two nurses who had been in Operating Room 2 earlier in the afternoon were discussing. One of them is brewing coffee in the common room. Because she mentioned someone's name, my ears are open, and my head tilts slightly as I pretend to read a book on the sofa, standing by for the ward round.

"She must be in a good mood, She's a bit more talkative than usual."

Good mood? Hold on! I was in that room too, and I didn't see her smile or do anything that indicated a change in her mood graph. P'Karan remained composed and calm as usual. Her eyes looked through the magnifying lens attached to her glasses to focus on the tiny blood vessels that required precision.

Her hands moved swiftly and deftly. She spoke occasionally to explain things to me and engage me in small talk, perhaps to alleviate the tense atmosphere.

Was there anything special? Or was she normally silent, saying nothing irrelevant to surgery?

The two nurses changed topics faster than the speed of light. After failing to figure out why this particular CVT doctor acted strangely, they switched to discussing their mothers-in-law instead. I lost interest because this time it had nothing to do with me, so I went back to read the book about blood

vesselsI borrowed from the hospital library. Shortly after, both nurses left the room.

Right now, the room only has me and a resident, who sleeps soundly and breathes steadily on the bed at the back. Everything looks peaceful, but my deadly shift effect makes me anxious about any other emergency cases that might be transferred from the ER like earlier in the evening.

The air in the room is a bit chilly, but I dare not adjust the temperature higher because the aforementioned resident gets hot easily. So, I slouch and continue to focus on reading the book to review the theories I've studied and to add some new information to my brain.

After a while, the door opens. I think it might be P'Petch who had been to the OR with an urgent case since 7 PM. But when I turn to look, I'm almost startled.

Luckily, I manage to stifle myself.

The tall figure of P'Karan in her light blue scrubs enters the room. Why wouldn't I be surprised? Her CVT department has its own designated common room. Most people who come here are general surgeons, medical students, interns, and general surgery residents.

"Oh, you're on the afternoon shift today as well?"

"I switched it with Fiat,"

She replies briefly, then she goes straight to brew coffee at a corner of the room.

"Well..."

I'm speechless, not knowing what to say exactly. The young woman finishes preparing her hot drink and brings it over to the sofa opposite me. Her almond eyes glance at the resident, who is still asleep as if she is observing whether he is secretly listening or peeking.

When she is sure he is deeply asleep, she lifts the cup to take a sip of coffee, which must be quite bitter since she didn't add any sugar, with a slightly less guarded posture.

That's great. Now is the time for me to express what's on my mind.

"P'Karan, everything you've done, from allowing me to join the operating room to visiting here... It's because you're worried about me, isn't it?"

"...."

"How should I put it? It's scary to think that the prisoner hasn't been caught yet. But it's okay. There are plenty of people here. If you're too concerned, it might look suspicious."

"I've told you. I don't care if any doctor knows who he is. This already goes beyond control."

Her dark eyes stare deeply into mine.

"And I just don't want you out of my sight."

Then, she lowers her gaze, paying attention to her strong coffee, as if she has never said anything to make anyone blush. My face flushes entirely. When she acts all cold, she can be so distant and unapproachable like when we first met. But when she cares, she becomes a calm guardian who constantly watches over me through her actions.

Once I manage to contain my shyness, I smile until my cheeks almost cover my eyes.

"Thank you."

She doesn't say anything, just sipping her coffee. Judging by her posture, she must have just left the operating room. Some certain aura surrounding her hints that she had been standing for hours.

Speaking of which, at noon, I also wore the shoes she bought for me, and now I notice that we have the same brand, just different colors. Hers are

neat and white. Well, her buy-1-get-1-free deal sounds believable. However, I have done some research. Their prices are relatively high, and there isn't any store generous enough to offer that kind of promotion.

So, the conclusion is that the fellow was a bit stubborn that night she handed them to me.

When I think about it, I can't help but smile and lift the book to cover my mouth. Nonetheless, I can't escape the sharp gaze of the CVT doctor. She places her coffee cup on the table in front of her and asks me with her eyes, *'What's with that smile?'*

But I don't answer; I just chuckle a bit, showing my playful side to bother her.

P'Karan raises her eyebrow. She stands up and walks over to sit next to me. She might aim to interrogate me in her own way like glaring or making sharp noises, but for me, I see it nothing but her cold acting.

Her proximity makes my cheeks hot like steamed buns. The warmth from her body refrains me from moving away. I keep the book half-opened to cover my face and look at her innocently as if asking, *'What's wrong?'*

At that moment, her nose almost touches my earlobe. She pauses like a dysfunctional gear in a working machine. Even though it is just a milli-second, I notice it makes P'Karan's expression shift from wanting to tease me to a tense, wary look.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing"

The young woman stands up abruptly, perhaps forgetting that her coffee is still hot and has been slightly sipped. Her attention seems to drift away, thinking about something only she knows. When she is about to leave the room, I instinctively grab her warm arm, causing her to halt and turn back.

Maybe she saw something in her vision...

"Let's deal with it together!" I look into her eyes, hoping she understands that I don't want her to strive alone again.

"I'm already part of the problem, so I don't want you to bear all this by yourself."

"I want you to stay here. Right now, I can't tell if it's targeting you or me."

"No, I can't just sit idly here." I insist, this time holding onto her arm as if begging her not to leave. My gaze is determined. "You mentioned seeing a vision of yourself waking up in the morning and finding you sleeping next to me. If I'm part of your future, then I want to be part of your journey too."

"It's dangerous."

"That's exactly why I'm worried about you too."

The older woman's face bears the weight of concern. Silence envelopes us, and only the sounds of the clock ticking and the air conditioner working can be heard. I know P'Karan is still considering, but no matter what, I refuse to be shielded from danger and let her sacrifice herself again.

Finally, the pair of beautiful eyes softens.

"It's a vision..."

The hoarse voice murmurs, prompting me to stand up to converse. My hands still firmly hold onto P'Karan's left arm, waiting for her to yield and open up. However, the words from those lips make my heart startle.

"I saw that criminal at this hospital ... at 10.10 PM."

"T... today!?"

"Mm."

I turn to look at the clock on the wall.

It is exactly 10 PM now.

□□□□

❀❀25. Decision❀❀

This is a sudden and alarming matter to the extent that I feel my eyes widen, and the pumplike organ in my chest races with fear. Every movement of the clock's hands seems to warn that it's almost time for that guy to show up for whatever purpose, which definitely isn't for something good.

Rrrr!

Someone's phone in the room buzzes with a short notification sound. Instantly, P'Karan reaches into her shirt pocket and retrieves her communication device. The screen displays a message from an unknown number, and the message I quickly scanned makes me tremble.

Unknown: I'm waiting for you in parking lot Q. You have no more than ten minutes from now. Come to the black pickup truck near the exit. Otherwise, someone in the hospital will die awfully in your place.

Unknown: And don't inform the police or tell anyone.

His hostility is aimed at P'Karan!

"...."

She doesn't say anything, but she locks the screen, ready to leave the room. However, I rush to block the path of the taller figure, looking at her with my serious gaze.

"I know that you're trying to divert attention to yourself to protect me, but I still insist on what I said that I will go through it with you."

"...."

"Tell me your plan, please. We'll do it together."

I believe that, under her calm demeanor, she must be weighing her options in her mind. However, she must have also realized that no matter what I will insist on helping, so she exhales a breath of resignation before revealing what she's about to do.

"Let's go to the surveillance control room."

10.06 PM

Six minutes later, the person suspected to be the man sends another message to P'Karan.

Currently, both of us, dressed in identical scrub suits, are in the surveillance control room where the hospital security guard is stationed. Initially, he didn't allow us to intrude, but as we are hospital staff and informed him of the urgency, he reluctantly allowed us to review the footage,

"Do you think he's armed, P'Karan?"

My voice still sounds breathless and tired from the run.

Unlike me, P'Karan, who always appears physically fit, replies,

"Seven years ago, on the rooftop, I vaguely remember that it was a rather heavy firearm. He might know a merchant in the black market. It wouldn't be difficult for him to obtain one while he was running away."

Her charming husky voice echoes as she watches the footage, scrolling back to 10 PM. However, her slender eyebrows furrow when noticing that the aforementioned truck has been parked much longer than that.

"Could it be...a trap?"

She murmurs.

"He might've been waiting for quite some time?"

"If that's the case, it shouldn't be more than half an hour. Otherwise, it would seem too suspicious."

The young woman pointedly rewinds the footage approximately thirty minutes earlier and we discover that the truck arrived at that time as expected.

This implies that Avatch has been observing for a while before sending a message to P'Karan. She zooms in to get a clearer view, but it only leads to both of us furrowing our brows in frustration as the truck is heavily tinted and the driver shows no intention of revealing his face to anyone.

Supposedly, if P'Karan actually walked up to the truck as instructed, there would be almost nothing suspicious observed on the surveillance cameras. The unfamiliar number would barely provide any clues as to who it might be, leaving us with no idea about the potential dangers.

As time continues to tick away, the deadline he set is getting closer.

"I want to make sure first that it's really him in the truck, not a trap. If we call the police and it turns out to be someone else hired to do this, it would only make matters worse and more dangerous than before."

Given her voice, she seems quite mad with this Avatch guy. Perhaps it's because he shot me seven years ago or something.

She withdraws her beautiful hand from the mouse and prepares to leave the room. But once again, I stand up to block the path of the older person.

"No, you can't confront him alone!"

"Do you forget what I can do?"

"But the second condition..."

I don't finish my sentence because just making eye contact, the other side seems to understand that I talk about the fact that she can't use her powers if she's bleeding.

I sneak at the old security guard sitting in the corner of the room. He appears engrossed in his phone. Although our conversation might not be clear enough for him to understand, I can't fully trust him.

"I'll just go to see his face and confirm that it's him. Then, I'll rewind the time to when we were in the common room."

"Why does it have to be in the common room? Can't we go back a bit earlier than that? We would have had more time to plan."

"Before going to find you, I was operating on a patient. I could go back to the time before I entered the OR or when I were inside, but if I focused on my own problem and accidentally rushed and missed some details, I would become a selfish doctor. The patient already survived, and the wound has been closed. So, the farthest I can rewind in this timeline is when I walked out of the operating room."

Her firm voice makes me realize.

That's true.

Upon hearing her explanation, I realized that if I were in her shoes, I would made the same decision. Taking responsibility for a patient's life is crucial. There's no way I would carry that level of worry into the surgical field, risking complications or rush decisions.

"I got it..."

And as I contemplate it thoroughly, it means I won't remember everything because she doesn't allow me to physically touch her when going back in time... I'm afraid... I'm afraid that she won't tell me about it.

"Anyway, please promise me that you won't handle this problem alone?"

Her beautiful face nods slowly.

"Yes, I promise."

I don't want to let go of her hand even a bit because this is the minute of life and death. But her delicate hand gently pats my head, reassuringly, as if saying 'It's okay.' Her eyes soften, and the moment I become speechless, she takes this opportunity to release my hand and rushes out of the room.

"Stay safe....please."

My fading voice comes out as her back leaves my sight.

No, Kliao Khluen. Stay focused.

I can't be so worried that I become a burden. Somehow, I have to be another support for P'Karan.

After encouraging myself, I realize I should observe the black pickup truck to see if the prisoner is about to take any action, for example, if he steps out, I can call P'Karan to confirm his identity.

Therefore, I keep an eye on every camera P'Karan passes. Her movements are swift and agile as if she used to be an athlete. More importantly, the parking lot is just behind this building; she'll reach it in time without the need for time reversal for such a short distance.

Now, there are only two minutes left until the deadline. My heart is anxious. P'Karan is determined to prove that the phone number belongs to Avatch, and she asks me to stay in this CCTV control room and even lock the door. The security guard seems puzzled by what's happening and doesn't understand the situation.

He inquires with a troubled look on his face about what we're doing and why we haven't notified the police if something is wrong. I just smile dryly and move to sit where P'Karan was sitting earlier.

Exactly at 10 PM, I can feel my heart beating faster. At that very moment, P'Karan reaches the suspicious pickup truck in time.

The tall woman stands on the driver's side, but Avatch doesn't seem willing to lower the window to let anyone outside see him. I furrow my brows,

zoom in, and stare at the screen. Even the security guard leans in with a curious expression.

Suddenly, P'Karan picks up her phone; it seems like she received a message because the screen lights up. She quickly reads it, her face remaining composed, but she presses the phone off before stepping away from the truck. Then, she walks to the other side and opens the door to get in.

After that, many minutes pass.

"What's going on?"

Even the security guard exclaims confusingly.

If I were to guess... Avatch must have sent a threatening message to P'Karan, demanding her to shut off her communication device and get into the truck. From now on, we just need to wait until she can prove that it's him, and then everything will be reversed to fix the situation.

Once we're back in the room, P'Karan will tell me this story, and I'll have to notify the police to arrest him. That would be the first option for sure.

What's beyond my prediction is the moment I thought P'Karan would be about to turn back time, the truck suddenly moves away from where it had been parked for half an hour. Both the security guard and I are even more confused, as she's already switched off her phone and can't be reached anymore.

What is going on?

I don't know why she decided to leave with the criminal. She said she would rewind time as soon as she could confirm his identity. What is really her plan?

My hands tremble so much that I have to hold onto the edge of my shirt to control myself. I look at everything through the surveillance cameras. The black pickup truck casually drives out of the gate as if the criminal isn't

behind the wheel. I want to grab the phone and call the police right now. I'm afraid that she might be bleeding and unable to control the situation.

At 10.19 PM, I'm about to reach for my phone.

But in a fleeting moment, in the blink of an eye, darkness envelops my senses and sensations.

The surrounding sounds suddenly hush as if being sucked into a void, which transforms into the ocean of emptiness. The cold brushes against my skin. After that, my memories seem to rewind along with the clock's hands that are moving backward.

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Hmm...

I'm reading a book about blood vessels on the sofa in the staff common room after the two nurses had left. They gossiped about P'Karan's good mood during the afternoon surgery, which I hadn't noticed at all. Good mood? Hold on! I was in that room too, and I didn't see her smile or do anything that indicated a change in her mood graph. P'Karan remained composed and calm as usual.

Her eyes looked through the magnifying lens attached to her glasses to focus on the tiny blood vessels that required precision. Her hands moved swiftly and deftly. She spoke occasionally to explain things to me and engage me in small talk, perhaps to alleviate the tense atmosphere.

Was there anything special? Or...was she normally silent, saying nothing irrelevant to surgery?

Just as I am thinking about her, suddenly I feel a déjà vu with the page of the book before my eyes, as if I had sat here before, reading it in the same way.

Déjà vu, huh?

I close the book and place it on my lap, starting to ponder over this strange feeling that has arisen. The room is slightly chilly, and there's a resident sleeping soundly on the bed at the back.

I feel like the atmosphere is reminiscent of something recently happened. If I were in the past, I might have thought of it as the brain's workings that would make me have a false imagination of a prior experience. However, after learning more about P'Karan and getting in touch with her who could control time, I can sense that this isn't a normal feeling.

I'm worried about her for no reason. It's like I baselessly fear that she might fall into some sort of danger.

I don't know what it is about, but I grab my phone and stand up, leaving the room to head towards the CVT department. However, before I can step out of my department territory, I have to pause when I see the person I want to see the most a few meters away. She also stops walking when she notices me here.

Her eyes are always difficult to read, but now I can immediately tell that there is a sense of tension, despite her attempts to maintain her composure. My subconsciousness warns me that she is aware of something.

Thoroughly considering the situation, the only matter we're so anxious about right now would be the fact that the criminal is roaming freely outside of prison.

What if she just came back in time from a dangerous situation? Well... if we didn't make physical contact, I wouldn't remember anything that had happened.

"P'Karan... where are you going?"

Deep down, I just hope that P'Karan wouldn't handle everything on her own again.

□□□□□

🌿26. At 10 PM🌿

"P'Karan... Where are you going?"

I don't know why I asked her like that even though it isn't weird for the fellow to walk around the ward. However, the words came out as demanded by my inner part. Also, I hope for an answer from those slender lips that would...reveal something, perhaps, and help me regain my memory.

Hold on!

I haven't forgotten anything. I'm just an extern on the afternoon shift, standing by for my duties. I had been reading a book since around 8 PM after assisting with a critically ill patient. My memory... There's nothing wrong with it, isn't it?

The young woman in the light blue scrub closes her eyes for a moment.

Then, a few seconds later, she opens them again and says:

"I was going to find you."

Sometimes, people can't make sense of their own minds.

When I heard what P'Karan said, I was confused but felt glad that she chose to do this...even though I didn't quite understand what was happening.

9.45 PM

P'Karan said that she...had just traveled back in time.

She recounted everything at our regular meeting point - the fire escape. My heart raced with anxiety after she neatly recalled the whole timeline. Right

now, Avatch is really hiding in this car in the parking lot Q, and he will wait until 10 PM to send a threatening message that will force P'Karan to go find him and forbid her from telling anyone or notifying the police.

"He's holding a gun in his hand and there are ropes, knives, and a sack on the back seat. He must have prepared to kill me tonight."

As the young woman speaks, her face looks tense and anxious.

"If we notify the police now, considering the nearest station, they should arrive on time."

"If he hears the siren of a police car, will he flee or take someone nearby hostage?"

"That's possible. I tell them to turn off the siren when they're close to the hospital."

The taller woman picks up the phone and dials 191. Then, she turns on the speaker for me to hear too.

Up to this point, I have to raise one hand to press it against my chest, hoping to keep my heart from trembling any more than this.

The call is answered. P'Karan provides all the information, notifying them that the fugitive mentioned in the arrest warrant is at our hospital. She even remembers the license plate and the car model. She also mentions that if he hears the siren, he will surely flee. The young woman concludes by requesting the fastest response.

The other end acknowledges the information. This case has recently instilled tremendous fear in society. It's trending and making headlines. We expect the police will come immediately since the police station isn't far from the hospital.

After hanging up the call, I finally feel relieved, knowing that P'Karan wouldn't have to face the criminal alone

"...Thank you for keeping your promise."

I sincerely express my gratitude that she didn't carry everything alone anymore. I'm genuinely glad that the woman in front of me didn't break the promise, even though I couldn't remember anything. Even if she lied, no one would know.

P'Karan reveals a smile at the corner of her mouth, though her eyes still hold some anxiety.

"I have never broken a promise to you."

In that fleeting moment when our eyes meet, some flashbacks of faint images and sounds seem to run into my head.

'P'Karan, I am going to be a medical student! I passed the medical school entrance exam~'

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'Mom and Dad forgot my birthday again. Probably only you remember it...'

'P'Karan, let's go to the movies tomorrow!'

.

'P'Karan, you keep your promises!'

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What are those memories...?

"Do you have a headache?"

Because of the concerned tone in P'Karan's voice, I then realize that I have placed one hand on my head. The beautiful face of the CVT doctor overlaps with the vague images that just flashed in my memory. I'm not having a headache, just feeling confused about what is real and what is a dream.

"Kliao Khluen"

"No, I'm alright," I reply, lowering my hand.

"Now, where should we wait? Or should we observe him from the CCTV control room?"

"The common room is fine. We can stand by in case any cases come up."

She says, sounding like a typical doctor on duty, but I can sense there is something more to it. However, she doesn't say anything else.

As we walk side by side, with hers holding my hand, I feel like the images that popped up in my mind a moment ago had happened before, yet they also made me feel like they hadn't for whatever reason.

What's that? She hadn't spent time with me...and turned back time, had she?

We return to the same common room where I had been reading for a long while. The resident already disappeared, even though P'Karan had said that, in the previous timeline, he had been sleeping soundly until 10 PM. That puzzles me, so I turn to the tall woman with a wondering gaze.

"Sometimes, even if one thing slightly changes, it can have a ripple effect on others."

Her beautiful husky voice explains briefly as she walks to make coffee. I go back to sit on the sofa in the same position and contemplate what she said.

Then, I realize that it is linked to the Butterfly Effect - the theory of a butterfly flapping its wings. Let me explain it in simple terms. Imagine some variables have ripple effects on other events, potentially causing significant consequences, like a storm that starts from something as small as a butterfly flapping its wings.

In this case, for instance, the variables that could change the events around us might be P'Karan and me.

What she mentioned earlier is essentially saying that if events were to be slightly altered, it could have repercussions on everything. Upon

considering that, I can imagine a drowsy resident who continued his sleep safe and sound because he saw another doctor in the room.

However, if he saw that he was alone, it might prompt him to wake himself up for some reason, for example, leaving this room to ask the nurse where other doctors have been, or he might simply go to the bathroom or grab a snack instead.

My concern isn't about the resident disappearing from the room, but rather about the potential danger from that fugitive. I'm afraid he might harm anyone, and I'm also worried that someone could be my P'Karan.

The older woman, who can manipulate time, places a hot cup of coffee on the table and sits beside me as if she knows I want her to stay by my side.

I feel thankful that she chose to sit next to me instead of going to the other side of the table.

"I just don't understand why he would irrationally seek revenge on others like this."

The other takes a sip of her caffeinated drink. She lowers her gaze and speaks with her barely audible voice in this room with just the two of us.

"Last time, I stayed in his car for a while, and I learned about his reason."

"What!?"

Now I know that P'Karan chose to be with the criminal for a while to gather this information.

"What is his reason?"

"...It's more complicated than a murder case reported in the news."

I only learned that Avatch tried to kill a student in the apartment and attempted to conceal the body, but beyond that, no one has revealed the motives or deeper information. All of this finally comes from P'Karan, who recently confronted him.

As she recounts, her eyes reflect two emotions. First is the lingering anger and vengeance towards the criminal who has attempted to harm me to the point of death in a car accident and subsequent shooting. The second feeling is sympathy towards his background. The two moods clash so much that P'Karan herself said she couldn't tell how she truly felt.

It all happened eight years ago, during the late evening hours. A mother and her child were heading home on their moderately old motorbike. The young son, still in his primary school years, sat behind his mother, who followed traffic rules, riding at the designated speed and wearing safety helmets for herself and her son. Though it was stated that there were two passengers, the truth was that the woman was pregnant with another child.

Every day after school, the boy would go to his friend's house near the school, and when his mother finished work, she would come to pick him up. They usually bought some food and arrived home around 8.30 PM.

Her husband didn't want his wife to go through this hardship. However, he had to work late to earn money for the family. He was determined that if his wife gave birth to another child, he wouldn't let her work anymore. He wanted her to stay home and take care of the children, as he didn't want her to be tired from work anymore.

Thus, he reluctantly agreed to work overtime regularly so that when the little one came into the world, they would have enough money to sustain themselves.

And then the dream shattered abruptly that night...

On a night when nothing unusual should have happened, a fancy navy blue sports car sped down the road as if its destination might run away. It swerved, lost control, and collided with the right side of another sedan.

However, the damage didn't stop at just the two cars. It also involved a motorbike - a vehicle known as a piece of human-shielded metal.

Both mother and son... No, three of them, including the unborn child in the mother's womb, were tragically killed in that accident, a scene too

gruesome to behold.

While the tragedy unfolded, the husband was still diligently working overtime to support his family.

He was unaware of the news until a late-night phone call.

And the heartbroken man was...

Avatch.

Here's the statement of the young man who drove the sports car:

'It was my turn to reverse a table at the pub that night, so I was in a hurry than usual. I never thought it would turn into such a mess.'

It made headlines for a while, but due to being the son of a prominent businessman with a well-known surname, the news quickly faded away into obscurity.

"The case had been around for a year, but in the end, the boy driving the sports car didn't have to go to jail," P'Karan continued.

Now I understand almost the entire story.

"So, the boy driving that car was the student who was murdered by Avatch...right?"

"Yes, because it had been a year since he lost his children and wife, but justice hadn't been served. It made him feel like he had nothing to lose and led him to kill the irresponsible human on that dawn."

And after everything was done, he coincidentally collided with me. He was scared that there would be witnesses pointing fingers at him, turning it into an attempt to silence me. But now, Avatch's current target is P'Karan because she protected me by fabricating a story that the young man he murdered was her close friend.

This made Avatch even more enraged, thinking that she was just a drinking buddy who had no remorse for the lives lost.

Damn it... This is too much to handle straightforwardly.

Avatch is wrong, undoubtedly. He's wrong for hurting people. But he also has another side, as both a husband and a father who lost everything because of someone's lack of conscience. This is what makes P'Karan have conflicting emotions. I also can't even tell what state of mind I'm in right now.

P'Karn must have had sufficient techniques to extract information from him in just a few minutes. I respect her for that, even though she doesn't seem to talk much.

"He is filled with nothing but anger and hatred towards me. Initially, we talked normally even though there was a hint of resentment in his tone. But once we got into the car, he exploded like he was releasing pent-up frustration."

"Why do you think he told you everything?"

"Because I acted innocent and tried to deceive him into talking in rage. But he didn't spill everything, mainly talking about his revenge. So, I reversed time and called Mai-Tree. Luckily, Mai-tree was already investigating the case. When she knew it was an emergency situation, she stopped time and rushed to gather as much information as possible. Then, she called me to reveal what's behind the incident from eight years ago, along with Avatch's testimony from seven years ago that no media dared to report it."

I see. P'Mai-Tree once told me she would try to uncover the truth about this. So, we gained a profound understanding of the story because of her.

"I can't explain how I'm feeling right now. On one hand, I understand him, but on the other hand, I believe taking someone's life is wrong."

"I can't easily forgive him."

"Why not?"

"Because besides targeting those he resented, he also intends to harm innocent people. If I hadn't turned back time to help you, you might have been shot and..."

She hesitates to use the words 'dead' or 'deceased' as if she doesn't want to associate them with me.

"Even though you didn't know anything."

Once again, I want to say 'I'm sorry', but P'Karn has told me not to feel guilty anymore. So, I stay strong and ask about the equipment Avatch has prepared on the backseat instead. P'Karn has an excellent memory, and she pays attention to details.

Even though it was a short period, she managed to scrutinize everything out of fear of being caught. She remembers it all and speculates that perhaps his murder plan isn't any different from the previous one, which is a murder followed by concealment of death.

As 10 PM approaches, I nervously wonder if the police are close by. P'Karn doesn't talk much anymore. She glances around the room as if searching for something before stopping her stare at one of the white wireless earbuds on the table next to the bunk bed.

She doesn't ask whose they are, but I tell her,

"They belong to the resident, who had been sleeping here earlier."

The fellow, with her inscrutable expression, reaches for them and holds them in her hand before returning to sit beside me as before. She connects them to her own phone and opens a music streaming app.

I watch her actions in confusion, as the clean white earbuds are offered to me, filling my nerves with an English song.

My eyebrows furrow, and I am about to remove them from my ears. However, P'Karn's hands lift them up to my ears, pressing them in as if to

drown out the outside noise.

I can only hear the random song she selected as I glance into her mesmerizing dark eyes. With her hands enclosing the earbuds, I reluctantly admit that I have no intention of resisting.

Still, I can't help but wonder why she decided to play music suddenly in this situation.

Then, the next moment brings a sudden jolt of shock together with a sound that would have been deafening had it not been for the music playing in my ears. P'Karan's hands press against the earbuds, as if to protect me and alleviate the shock. That's why the 'gunshot-like' sounds can't pierce through enough to make me startle or scream.

Bang!

"P'Karan"

Bang! Bang!

"Outside..."

Bang!!

"What's happening?"

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🌿27. The Second Condition🌿

Exactly at 10 PM of that day...

Instead of the threatening messages from Avatch being sent to P'Karan's phone, a call which was made to the police, providing them with the precise coordinates. This caused the situation to escalate into four gunshots echoing through the air, as a confrontation erupted between armed assailants and officers.

With earbuds on and P'Karn's hands providing an extra layer of protection, I am oblivious to the chaos and shockwaves reverberating through the ward.

However, just minutes later, the ward becomes in turmoil as they receive word from the ER that one officer got injured in the arm and the suspect was also severely shot; they both were scheduled for urgent surgery.

"Gunshots in our hospital earlier!? That's terrifying!"

A nurse exclaims, her eyes widening upon learning what happened from the resident who has just returned from buying some drinks downstairs.

Not only are the doctors and nurses alarmed, but also the patients.

Indeed, the earbuds and music are the shield to guard me from those shocking noises.

Human resources in the surgical ward at this late hour is quite scarce too. Many doctors are tied up with other surgeries, making it inevitable that I would be called in to help. P'Karan, who is a general surgery graduate and also on duty, takes on Avatch's case. He has been shot in the shoulder and two more bullets in his chest.

When Avatch, covered in blood, is brought up and wheeled past me, I can sense that his chance of survival is very low.

Nevertheless, P'Karan still performs her duty.

Despite he being an unforgiven villain who had tried to kill her.

I know well that P'Karan is someone who can separate personal feelings from professional duties. So, after walking into the operating room, she becomes the doctor in charge of the patient, not the angry woman towards Avatch.

As for me, I go to the OR to assist in the case of the police officer who has been shot in the shoulder.

This patient's condition isn't as severe as the unconscious criminal. A resident is leading the team. I can't help but feel slightly worried, as I haven't encountered cases like this often during emergencies. Nonetheless, I try to maintain composure as I wash my hands with Betadine surgical scrub, imagining leaving all the worries outside the room.

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The outcome isn't far from what I expected.

The police officer survived because his injuries weren't critical, while the assailant, who was shot multiple times in vital areas and had underlying heart conditions (probably the reason why he was brought to the hospital in custody last time), was pronounced dead in the early hours of the morning after hours of attempts by the surgical team to save him.

The story of the shootout between the escaped prisoner and the swiftly responding police officers is presented in the morning news with CCTV footage, causing me, who is preparing to have ward rounds with the fourth- and fifth-year students, to stop walking and listen to the reports on the hanging TV screen.

Avatch didn't care if he was within the hospital premises or not. He lowered the pickup truck's window to open fire when surrounded by several police cars. However, after a bullet was fired from one of the police rifles, he was shot back three times, as we all know. Some parts of the clip were blurred and cut out.

I don't know what emotions I should be feeling. I should feel nice that I don't have to be anxious about someone seeking revenge against me and P'Karan. But knowing the reasons behind his resentment makes me sympathize with Avatch's loss of his family. He spent years in prison and ultimately died as a fugitive, receiving even more curses and condemnations from people on social media.

They say this world has many aspects and many dimensions. I now understand those phrases I've read in books before.

But what's important is, no matter what, he shouldn't have harmed innocent people after killing the culprit, right?

I exhale deeply and stop paying attention to the TV because I can always find time later to watch the replay. I continue walking ahead to the ward and help the fourth-year student who seems to have issues with the patient chart.

My phone is almost overheating from the numerous messages I received from friends. Only my close friend like Khim and the members of The Edge of the Universe made some calls. As I've been in the OPD for half the morning, I couldn't answer or return any calls. I cleared the missed calls and responded to them all during lunch break to reassure everyone that I was safe.

My fans and followers also instantly noticed that Avatch was the one who had once choked me. My name trended on Twitter with overflowing encouragement, so before returning to work, I had to post on social media, both Facebook and Twitter, to thank everyone along with a picture of me raising two fingers.

Rrrr!

Karan_K: See you at the usual spot after the evening round.

While the elevator going up to the ward, I receive a message from the woman who holds a special place in my heart.

It's a brief appointment, but we both know where it is the hospital - the same fire exit. After a morning full of mixed emotions, I finally smile. I reply to her.

Kliao K: Sure! See you in the evening, P'Karan.

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Part: Narrator

At 16.50, Kliao Khleun just finished her afternoon ward round and advised on her juniors' case presentations. A petite figure in a short gown stopped by the bathroom to fix her ponytail neatly before diving into her bag to grab a light lipstick to touch up her lips.

She felt she shouldn't appear too messy in front of Karan, and the intrusive thoughts about Avatch made her drink so little that her mouth went dry.

The small woman couldn't exactly be described as being in good spirits, having just gone through a harrowing experience last night. However, years of medical training, including shifts in the ER and encounters with critically ill patients, had desensitized her to the sight of blood and the inevitable outcomes of failed life- saving attempts.

And it was indubitable that Avatch's departure relieved her from worrying about potential harm or fearing that he would do something to Karan. While sympathizing with the man who had lost his family, if it wasn't him who met his end last night, it could have been her or Karan that met its demise instead.

As others debated this issue endlessly throughout the day, she didn't talk about it with anyone in the ward. Kliao Khleun just wished his soul to find

peace.

Shortly after leaving the bathroom, she reached the fire escape door. Glancing around, she saw no one watching and opened it to go find the older woman, who must have been waiting.

Karan, wearing a long gown over her formal attire, is leaning against the wall as expected. Last night's surgery case with Avatch had kept her busy till dawn. She went back to her condo a bit and came back to work in the morning. Her eyes were filled with exhaust. Kliao Klhuen could even notice that with the naked eye.

The younger woman stepped down to stand beside Karan. Neither made eye contact as the taller one kept her gaze fixed on the ground, perhaps even looking at her own sneakers.

"I really... did my best."

"I know. When you were in the operating room, you were the doctor, not someone who held any grudge against him."

Hearing that, Karan smiled in relief. She had been drown in the gray emotions throughout the day.

It was the ultimate truth that, back then, she had done her best and with utmost skill. However, severe blood loss and his underlying condition made Avatch a challenging case - the first DOT for Karan.

Kliao Khleun moved closer to the tall figure. Their arms touched, even though Karan wore a long gown. Knowing that someone was standing beside them was more comforting than anything else.

"And... should we continue hiding our relationship after this? Now that it's all over..."

"I'm not sure."

Because Karan had seen glimpses of her own wedding with the petite girl. A mysterious woman had entered the ceremony with a gun and deliberately

aimed at Kliao Khleun. But when their eyes met and Kliao Khleun's innocent eyes gazed at her in wonder, Karan swallowed all the stress instead.

Karan was thinking that sometimes carrying everything might not be a good thing. It might only make it more painful later when Kliao Khleun realized that she had sacrificed herself. So, she remained silent for a moment before confessing.

"But it's really better when we went through it together."

"Does that mean you'll tell me about every problem from now on?"

"Yeah."

There was hidden joy in the eyes of the small woman.

"Thank you! If anything happens in the future, I will support you more."

"It's better if there's no next time."

"True..."

The final-year medical student immediately felt deflated when she realized that this kind of situation shouldn't happen again.

"It would be best if you don't get involved in such matters."

Karan smirked discreetly for a second when she saw the younger one looked so concerned; Kliao Khleun looked akin to a small adorable mouse worrying. Then, she continued speaking with her poker face as usual,

"You don't have to worry about me that much."

"I do have to."

"I can make time go backward."

"That's right, but even if you can rewind time, you still have the second condition. You can't do that when you bleed, so how can I not worry?"

The fellow didn't argue, knowing that facing a criminal in person was really dangerous. Earlier, it was inevitable to face Avatch. She didn't want innocent people to get involved, so she agreed to meet Avatch at the parking lot. And even though the other party had a gun, she wanted to know the reasons that led to such intense revenge from someone.

Karan felt it was worth the risk. She did her best, both as someone who wanted to protect Kliao Khleun and as a surgeon. But it was hard to feel helpless when she couldn't help him in the operating room.

When she returned to the condo in the early morning, she had to manage their downhearted mood by repeatedly reminding herself that she had done her best. Everyone in the surgical team wanted him to survive, even if he was a villain.

However, diving into the abyss of emotions was difficult to overcome. It clung to her psyche all day long. But when she talked to Kliao Khleun, she felt like this little extern was like a healing angel for her soul. It was true that the other doctors and nurses knew she did her best, but it was Kliao Khleun who spoke out and said,

'I know. When you were in the operating room, you were the doctor, not someone who held any grudge against him.'

Thinking that her future bride might be someone like this little extern, Karan felt like she was the happiest person in the world.

Finally, what she had been suppressing beneath her composed facade overwhelmed her. Her hand lifted uncontrollably, her heart unable to resist, before gently resting on Kliao Khleun's soft hair and caressing it affectionately. Then, she leaned down to kiss the other's lips quickly before pulling away.

This action left the small woman stunned, cheeks flushing slightly as she looked up at the taller figure. Her warning about the limitation on her

abilities was swallowed up, as the younger one loved to indulge in gentle touches and wanted to hold onto these feelings.

While the two were in their own world, there was another young woman in a medical gown standing on the next floor's fire escape stairs. Actually, she had to come this way due to a slight issue with the elevator, but coincidentally overheard Karan and Kliao Khleun's conversation. Pausing, she eavesdropped on their dialogue from the beginning.

'If she bleeds... then her abilities won't work, right?'

The sweet lips, colored with dark pink lipstick, revealed a coy smile as she contemplated.

'Finally, I know your weakness.'

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28. Let's Go Through It Together



Part: Kliao Khluen

The next day

My friends visited me at my dormitory in the evening. Even though they came at different times, the sequence went like this:

Frang came first to check if all my thirty-two organs were still intact. Then, just a few more ten minutes later, Note and her luxurious car arrived; she spun me around looking for any marks. Belle and Nene came together, equally anxious as the first two, almost trying to find bruises on me.

"There's nothing! I already told you I'm fine!"

I said that firmly, but the arrival of another friend subjected me to another round of examination. It was Khim, who finally emerged from her cave of happiness to see for herself that I was indeed unharmed.

You might wonder about Meow and Tree. Let me tell you that those two already had this kind of reaction yesterday evening, as they had just seen the mid- day news.

Now, with half a dozen people all together like this, I have to suggest we go eat something outside to relieve the tension. A restaurant near the hospital, not far from walking distance, is chosen as our destination. We sit at the main table, and while ordering our food, I introduce Khim to everyone in the band.

The messages from Fong-Samut keep coming incessantly. I glance and realize it isn't urgent. He asked if I was safe and requested a callback, but because I don't want to respond, I ignore it.

At times like this, my family isn't my safe haven at all.

The matter concerning Avatch has concluded. His body was quietly taken away for a simple ceremony since there were no relatives to contact.

This incident made big headlines, especially because he once caused a scene by choking me. That's why the media has spun various theories; many suggested that he escaped to this hospital to come after me definitely. Then they speculated endlessly on various reasons why this man would hold a grudge against me.

The director asked me to join the press conference tomorrow afternoon.

They sent me the script to read, but all I could do was frown and wonder why they wanted me to say things like I had no clue about it or genuinely felt sorry for what happened.

Doesn't he know that some people are speculating that I have a relationship with that man on the internet? Even though my fans and band members are earnestly trying to correct the news, some pages that enjoy stirring up drama are still fueling the rumor.

And then the next day, the D-Day, arrives swiftly, even though I haven't mentally prepared myself.

Meow and Tree invite me to have lunch together. Both of them take me to a nearby restaurant in front of the hospital, intending to treat me to a meal. It is clear that they are both trying to comfort me. At this moment, I realize that even though I don't have to be cautious about my life anymore, I still have to deal with people's words on social media.

While sitting across from Meow and Tree, I suddenly feel that there is some faint chemistry starting to float in the air between these two. Their arms brush against each other, and there is a subtle static electricity between them.

that makes them both slightly jolt. Then, they both turn away from each other, like two people who understand each other but don't speak it out loud.

Okay, I get it. I can immediately tell that Tree has just realized that Meow has always liked him. No wonder why the atmosphere was strangely silent when they rode to the hospital this morning.

I don't know what expression to put on my face as I sit here. I just sigh and shake my head for this couple, before taking out my communication device to open the chat app and start messaging someone.

Kliao K:

Have you had lunch yet?

In less than a minute, I receive a reply from the other end.

Karan_K:

Not yet. Just left the OR.

Kliao K:

Then, plz don't forget to find something to eat.

Before I can send some cute stickers, she sends another message on a different topic.

Karan_K:

Today, you have to say it.

Kliao K:

Say about what?

Karan_K:

Tell them in the press conference that Avatch tried to silence you, the witness.

When I'm about to reply, *'But the director ordered me to read the script provided,'* P'Karan sends another message before that.

Karan K:

Don't worry. The director will be transferred soon.

I even type in surprise, asking her if she saw the future like that, but she seems too preoccupied to respond. The timing is perfect for the food we ordered to be served, so I end up eating the spicy noodle soup while glancing at my phone on the side throughout lunch.

When lunch break is over, I am escorted to the back of the press room. I sneakily look around to see if there are many reporters. Then, I discover that the number looks equally the same when a celebrity caused a stir and promptly set up the podium for the press conference.

They seem to be here not just for the crime news but also because of my status as the lead singer of The Edge of the Universe.

Damn it! The script the director forced me to follow didn't leave much room for reporters to ask questions, but it could be used as an accusation against me for Avatch's motive to assault me.

With that in mind, at 1.30 PM, when it's time for the press conference, I just ignore the instructions from the higher-ups and believe in what P'Karan said. When it is my turn to speak, I will say it all with full determination.

She might be working right now.

Either way, I have to face these issues on my own. Relying on her all the time would be too much of a bother.

The camera lights flicker, and questions from reporters pour in, asking the director who has been sitting in the middle. I'm a bit pressured because some media are broadcasting live streams on Facebook. My palms become increasingly so chilly that I have to coordinate them on my lap.

I don't like the current situation at all. The microphones on the table are all occupied by various media outlets.

The announcement has been there for more than ten minutes, and the director finally passes the mic to me to answer some questions.

The camera lights start flashing intensely, almost blinding me, and numerous questions clamor for my attention, hoping! would choose theirs to answer first until their voices become inaudible. When I turn to my right, I can see the director gesturing for me to respond as instructed.

But suddenly, the large door of the nearby room where the press conference is held swung open, revealing the figure of a woman in a dark shirt and long trousers, adorned with a long medical gown on top. She catches my attention perfectly, causing everyone in the room to turn and look at her.

"Hello, I'm Dr. Kaomaysa Narawattanawej, the surgeon who operated on the fugitive two days ago."

She introduces herself with a calm, composed voice and an expressionless face. Instantly, all the reporters shift their attention to her, and in the blink of an eye, P'Karan becomes the focal point in the midst of camera flashes.

My heart races because of her presence too... And it is a moment that unexpectedly turns out to be good for my feelings.

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7.55 PM

During the twilight hours of the same day, I sit propped up on my bed pillow, scrolling through the livestream from the afternoon press conference that happened at 1.30 PM. I skim through the comments from the public, expressing their opinions.

I admit that when P'Karan opened the door and walked in, I was relieved not to be alone. Then, I start to wonder as I ponder our previous chat messages. She didn't explicitly say she wouldn't join the press conference.

Her sudden appearance caught the director off guard, making him appear awkward.

Another staff member, who had no relevance to the matter, hastily left his seat due to the overwhelming pressure from the reporters. Furthermore, when the attractive woman took the stage and began speaking after discussing the events of that night and the disclosed information, she gave me the opportunity to mention the 'cause' that brought Avatch here.

'I've talked about the surgery, now I'd like to give some space for this medical student who was almost a victim of this case to speak.'

For others, it might seem like a female doctor looking at an extern, but deep down in her eyes at that moment, I knew there was much more hidden behind it. P'Karan wanted me to correct the news for my own peace of mind, and she wouldn't leave my side.

In the end, during the press conference, I completely ignored the order from the director and narrated the entire backstory through the live stream.

I told them that I was physically assaulted by being choked for some unknown reason until later when I figured out that I ran into him seven years ago. He had a grudge against me because he believed I was the one who reported him for murder and concealment of death.

I didn't mention P'Karan's intervention because I didn't want to cause a controversy that she operated on him despite knowing him. We all knew P'Karan did everything she could to save Avatch's life, but society may have diverse opinions. Would they understand her as I did?

After the press conference, the director attempted to put on a smile, but behind the scenes, when the reporters had all left, he was about to scold me with a stern face. However, P'Karan stepped in first.

'Sorry for the intrusion, but as the surgeon who operated on him, I thought it was appropriate to answer the media's questions myself.'

In the end, she became the one to absorb the director's harsh emotions instead of me.

This has made me feel guilty for the rest of the day and even at this twilight hour; I'm still unable to shake off those feelings.

"Why didn't you ever tell me about this?"

Sitting in front of the dressing table, combing her hair, Meow pouts because she learned everything from the live stream instead of directly from me.

"Aren't we friends? How many years have we known each other?"

"Don't be upset. I just didn't want anyone around me to get stressed out."

My roommate continues to pout stubbornly. I then put my phone down and approach her from behind to hug her, apologizing for not sharing the details earlier. With Avatch's case resolves and the necessity for keeping various secrets dissipating, including the relationship between P'Karan and me, perhaps I can express myself more freely now.

My friend shoots an angry stare through the mirror in front of us.

"Then, spill it all out. Otherwise, I'll keep pouting until next year."

"Alright, alright."

I finally surrender, raising both hands in defeat. I then drag a chair from the desk to sit beside her. Then, I start to tell her about the untold aspects of our relationship. Of course, I have to leave out P'Karan's time-traveling abilities.

Pouring out one's heart like this always takes a while. Apart from the significant matters, it tends to extend into trivialities. For example, regarding Tree, I just learned that after his favorite singer got a boyfriend, it broke his fan-boy heart. In his spare time, he would endlessly scroll through social media.

Only recently did he stumble upon my friend's old posts. That's when he found out that my friend secretly liked him all along. He messaged her directly, and she was brave enough to confess her feelings.

"But even though I'm good at chatting, when I meet face to face, I'm speechless! I'm too shy!"

She says, and that's the origin of their reaction I saw at noon.

Soon enough, the clock indicates that it's almost 10 PM. Meow glances at the clock while speaking and then gestures for the end of our conversation.

"Alright, let's continue the chat tomorrow then. I'm going to find something to eat before my shift starts."

"Huh?"

"Why are you surprised? Today, I have the night shift."

"Oh, really?"

"Yeah."

"But the night shift starts at midnight."

"I already said I'm going to find something to eat before then. Remember that new place that just opened? The one with the rave reviews online but super slow service? That's the one. I'm going there."

"Uh-huh."

I nod and then realize that I would have to sleep alone tonight.

Though I feel a bit empty because I haven't slept alone for a while, I am not too worried because all the cases have just been resolved. I wish Meow a peaceful night shift, and my roommate shrugs and says she has always been in the lucky shifts, unlike someone else nearby (which is me).

In fact, since the dormitory is part of the hospital, there's no need to worry about travel time. However, the only nearby option for food is the newly opened restaurant, which closes exactly at midnight. Although there's no long queue, each dish takes quite a while. So, she dresses up and leaves the room at 10 PM, calculating that by the time she finishes eating, it'll be time for her shift.

My roommate waves goodbye and closes the door, leaving me sitting alone in this rectangular room. My mind hasn't yet processed what to do next. Then, my phone slightly vibrates with a chat message from someone important.

Karan_K: I saw you're not sleeping.

Huh? Why is that? I wonder and reply to P'Karan.

Kliao K: What? How can you tell? We're in different places. Plus, I haven't slept yet.

Karan K: I saw it in the vision.

Oh, I see. I shake my head at my underestimation.

Kliao K: I forgot that you are not an ordinary woman.

Karan_K: So, do you want to sleep or not?

Kliao K: Do you have a way to help me?

It shows that she has read it, but then she disappears for quite a few minutes. I remain focused, waiting for her to come back with a recommendation. However, when a new chat message pops up, what I receive exceeds my expectations.

Karan_K: My condo has a very soft bed.

Karan_K: If you're interested, I can go pick you up.

Wait... Is this an invitation to stay over?

I secretly smile when I understand the implication conveyed through those short sentences.

Oh my goodness! This cold-hearted fellow, whom everyone jokes she could freeze the entire operating room, is inviting this extern to stay over at her place for the second time.

□□□□□

🌿29. Snuggle🌿

It's undeniable that I couldn't resist the invitation that appears indirectly and enchantingly at the same time.

So, at 10.50 PM tonight, I found myself in the spacious, safe, and warm condo of P'Karan.

Honestly, the definitions of safe and warmth maybe being with this woman.

She must have guessed that I had already had dinner, so there was no need for her to enter the kitchen to cook. It's a bit surprising that the older person opened the cabinet in front of the counter to take out various bags of cookies and other snacks. However, sitting on the tall chair, I don't ask anything because there is something important I want to talk about.

"P'Karan, you look very cool today."

"Really?" She briefly replies.

"Thank you so much. It turns out to be you who were scolded..."

"Never mind. It's something I should do anyway."

"Anyway? You didn't have to be there from the beginning!"

"I wouldn't let the person I love face it alone."

"Huh?"

"Go take a shower. I'll take it too."

The older person cuts it short with a stern face, then she walks towards the staircase. I can only stare at her back, captivated by the words I have heard. Wait, did I hear it wrong? Didn't she just say 'the person I love' with her alluring husky voice?

"Wait, P'Karan!"

Pulling myself back to reality, I get off the bar stool and hurriedly follow the older woman upstairs. However, the speedy figure has already disappeared into her room. What's going on? She left a pink smoke bomb behind and fled to take a shower. I can't stand this! I stand frowning in front of her bedroom door before uttering 'Geez' and walking to the next room, which seems to have been designated as mine.

Despite saying that, I stayed in the same room with P'Karan last time. This room seems to be only used for taking a shower and changing clothes.

As I enter and walk towards the bed, an automatic response escapes from my throat, "Huh?" because something neatly folded has been placed on top.

As I reach out to pick it up, I find myself a set of pajamas, both a shirt and pants, in a cute carrot print, all in orange. The scent of fabric softener gently lingers, as if they have just been washed today.

Furthermore, at the foot of the bed, there are matching slippers of the same color. At that moment, I realize that P'Karan must have prepared all of this for me by herself, as we have talked about housekeeping before, and she has mentioned doing everything herself without hiring anyone.

She's so attentive...

She's a skilled doctor, cooks delicious food, keeps the rooms neat and tidy. and even launders the clothes with a pleasant fragrance.

Can we skip the dating stage and get married tomorrow morning?

My thoughts run wild for a while. My smile almost makes my cheeks explode. Eventually, I manage to pull myself into the shower. Using the

same scented body lotion as P'Karan is another thing that makes me happy throughout the cleansing process. It both smells good and reminds me of being close to her.

A sense of comfort emerges, and suddenly, I have the idea that maybe I should write a song for her. A new single for The Edge of the Universe, why not?

Realizing it, I spend a longer time than necessary in the shower.

I dress in the adorable pajamas she has prepared for me, slipping into the slippers. Exiting the room, I stop at the top of the stairs and see P'Karan setting up the movie area downstairs. She is wearing an orange cloud-patterned shirt with light green pants and bear slippers. It seems like a deliberately coordinated set to match me.

I can't help but smile. I want to see her pick them out. No... I actually want to pick them out altogether with her.

I glance from the second floor for less than a minute. Then, her sharp gaze catches mine, and she turns to look. Her eyes soften slightly as she sees me in the pajamas.

"You look adorable in it."

She compliments straightforwardly, then turns to grab a pillow to hold in her arms. She may not realize how those few short words make me feel hot. It is a straightforward sentence that leaves no doubt as to what it means; it's not the outfit that looks adorable but me, the person who wears it.

I blush as I walk down the stairs to meet someone older. In my mind, I wonder why she's so good at complimenting. Will she know that I've become so shy?

The TV is on the main screen of the Netflix app, waiting for us. Our movie time starts at around 11 PM.

Both of us agree to sit on the floor. Sometimes, our arms almost touch when we slightly move. There are many packets of cookies on the nearby coffee table.

I grab a packet of chocolate chip cookies and open it when the older woman is busy choosing what to watch. Suddenly, she turns to me and asks if there is anything I want to watch. I reply that I don't have any preference. Normally, I let my friends choose what to watch. As she hears that, she frowns, seriously looking for a movie or series.

"You don't have to be so serious."

"Um," She replies in that nonchalant tone, but she still carefully reads the movie synopsis on the screen.

Seeing that, I give her a dry smile and say, "This one's fine." Because at this moment, it doesn't matter at all. Having P'Karan beside me this close is already a miracle.

But because I wasn't interested in the movie's plot, it turned out that instead of watching a relaxing movie, it was a horror sci-fi film with strange creatures screaming "Groannn!" piercingly while chasing the protagonist. Every time it appeared from the dark corners, I would flinch at its sharp teeth and running posture, so I had to move closer to the person beside me.

If I were to compare, I looked like a startled animal, unlike the older person who was very focused on figuring out why the strange creature was chasing only the protagonist.

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The movie continued for almost two hours. In the end, we learned that the protagonist's DNA was what the scientists wanted, and when her blood was shed, it attracted the hungry beasts... That's what I guess. I didn't really understand much because I had been hiding behind the woman next to me every time the monster opened its mouth throughout the movie.

The black screen finally appears, followed by small white texts showing the credits for the actors and crews. P'Karan's gaze shifts from the widescreen to me.

"You chose it yourself."

"Y...yes," I reply, sitting up straight again, and then nod apologetically as I actually chose this movie myself. "But you seem to like it."

"I can watch anything. I do enjoy thrillers."

"I tend to like romance genres. Like, no matter how long one side has to wait, in the end, both sides end up together."

"Because of me?"

Oh... It seems like I accidentally spilled out my love for romance movies, allowing P'Karan to catch onto my story.

That's right. The reason I like the 'waiting and being hopeful' genre is because I've been searching and waiting for her for many years to the point it started to feel hopeless. When I felt like all hope was gone, watching a romance movie where two people, no matter how far apart they were, finally confessed their love gave me strength and hope that one day I would meet her.

I shouldn't let it slip out like that. I nervously scratch my head.

"Well, I... For the past seven years, I've been hoping that we'll meet again in the end and our hearts will align."

"I'm sorry."

"Why are you apologizing?"

Her beautiful eyes drop in guilt before lifting to meet mine again.

"I shouldn't be cold to you."

"It's okay now that you're not cold to me."

But it would be better if we could address each other in a more intimate manner.

"There's no way I'll be cold to you again, Kliao Khleun."

She tucks a strand of hair behind my ear, her finger brushing against it.

"And I hope everything will be okay..."

"Huh? But Avatch was already dead."

"My dreams once showed me a doctor was threatening your neck with a knife, along with another scene where you were shot by a woman...at a wedding." Her face tightens visibly. "If the woman in my visions was hired by Avatch, his death might have removed those events. But if it turns out she wasn't involved, then we have another big problem on our hands, and my intuition tells me it's more likely the latter."

"I dreamed about having a knife at my neck once, but I'm not familiar with a wedding. In P'Karan's vision, whose wedding was I shot in?"

"....."

"P'Karan?"

"The night we met at the bar, you dreamed about it. I rewound time so you wouldn't have to fear about its reminisce."

So, we were really together that night...?

I want to talk about the night when I felt like I was hugged, but now there's something more alarming.

"And do you remember what that woman looked like?"

"No. If the vision isn't blurred, she would have her face obscured by a veil."

"This isn't good..."

I murmur as we might be facing a new problem that could be bigger than before.

"And...why do you think the woman in the vision might not be related to Avatch?"

"When he was still in prison, I felt like someone was watching me."

As her sentence ends, a fleeting memory rushes into my mind like a flash of light, demanding my hand to raise and cover my head. It feels like it has already happened, but I can't remember being in that situation.

'What's wrong, P'Karan?'

'I feel like someone has been following us since earlier.'

'Really? But on Saturday like this, I think it's normal to have a lot of people coming to watch movies.'

'Kliao Khluen'

'What?'

'After today, I will turn back time.'

"... "

'Just to be safe.'

'How far back will you go?'

'Just...before we met today.'

I remember it now.

Those scenes replay in my head, and her voice echoes within my nervous system.

Now, I'm back in the present where P'Karan holds my face with both hands and asks with concern what's wrong with me. I can't help but raise my head to look into those eyes, feeling more confident that what flashed through a moment ago was real.

"It's nothing. Just a slight headache."

I reply with a fake smile. Since that night we faced Avatch, strange memories have gradually surfaced like jigsaw pieces.

"It's quite late now. Let's rest."

She says, reaching for the remote control to turn off the TV and preparing to escort me to the bedroom.

However, because the headache doesn't really exist but is just an excuse, I tell her it's okay and I'll go up the stairs myself. Yet, the tall woman walks closely beside me, as if afraid I would get hurt or something with any step.

I'll try to remember everything...

We sleep in the same room again.

The king-sized bed is still soft and smells invitingly comforting. P'Karan turns off the lights while I nestle into the blanket, only emerging halfway up to my face. The tall figure in the darkness cautiously walks to pick up the phone and places it on the bedside table before lying on the bed.

"Goodnight, P'Karan."

"Mm, goodnight."

It wouldn't mean much if it were just a simple exchange of goodnights. But the owner of that charming husky voice leans in closer, her breath warming my cheek before those lips playfully bite against my earlobe softly, and then she lies down next to me as if nothing happened.

You're so mean, P'Karan...

Why do you have to make me want to get married so badly? I've already imagined it countless times today!

□□□□□

📖❀30. Kliao Khluen's Bargaining❀📖

It seems like... By now, everyone in the surgical ward already knows that P'Karan and I are more than just a fellow and an extern.

It all started one lunchtime. Meow, curious about where I disappeared to sleep at night (she didn't find me when she returned), finally mustered the courage to ask. So, I reluctantly admitted that I went to stay at P'Karan's condo.

Even though we were only three people chatting, with me, Meow, and Tree, we didn't realize that an intern, sitting at the next table in the same ward, heard everything. He then shared the story with nurses and doctors. Eventually, everyone in the general surgical ward's LINE group, which was specifically created for senseless chatter, got wind of my and P'Karan's affair.

The point is that everyone in this chat uses pseudonyms.

Gossip Bird:

No wonder why that day the extern joined in, she stopped freezing the whole room.

Meowing Cat:

Is that so? I almost thought Dr. Karan was emotionless.

Yuri Boy:

How cute! I like seeing women in love with each other.

PopJa:

So, the doctor likes women just like her two moms, right?

Surg Ward Beauty:
Yep!

Wait! Wait! Wait!

Did everyone forget the extern is also in this group too?!

I'm not mad about it because everyone in the conversation was basically surprised and shocked or even found it astonishing. However, isn't it quite uncomfortable? Because if I go to work at the ward tomorrow, it's like being under the spotlight. So, I can't stand reading the chat anymore. I turn off the notifications, and I'll just read them altogether after I don't feel shy no more.

The phone screen says it's already 7 PM. I run my hand through my just-washed hair, wondering why my roommate hasn't returned to our room yet. She doesn't have a shift today. This curiosity prompts me to pick up my communication device again to ask.

Kliao K:
Hey, why haven't you returned?

About five minutes later, my friend replies, and I tilt my head when I notice she has changed her chat name.

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Meow is dating a tree:
What's up? I've been back since five. I left a post-it note on the table. Did you not see it?

After finishing reading, I suddenly furrow my brows. I get up and go to the work table. There's a small rectangular piece of pastel-colored paper stuck on it with a message that says:

'Kliao, today I'm going on a date with Tree. Hehe, I'm dating him now. I might come back late because the movie we booked starts at 9 PM.'

And today has arrived. The day when my two friends are dating, and I'm sitting alone here!

I secretly scoff at the sweetness I can feel through those words. No wonder why even Tree himself doesn't seem to be talking much these days. He's probably shy because it took him so long to realize it. But it's good that they end up together. At least Tree probably won't come to exchange shifts with me because he wants to go see his favorite singer anymore.

The loneliness makes me feel like this room is a bit too quiet. Even though I've got music playing, I still feel like I want to chat with someone. Normally, I'd talk to friends, like Khim or a member of The Edge of the Universe, especially Note, whom I often message because she's always free.

But lately, I don't want to bother them because everyone seems busy, especially at times like these. Although our cool royal lady acts all rich day by day, she's also preparing to take the professional architectural practice exam.

Alright then, let's go chat with...this person.

Kliao K:

What are you doing, P'Karan?

.

I guess she might take a few minutes to reply, but to my surprise, it only takes a few seconds.

Karan_K:

I'm deciding whether to go back to my condo because I swapped night shifts with a friend.

.

She has got night shifts herself, and right now, being at the hospital, she is torn between going to rest up or waiting for her shift. And my thoughts run

quickly. My mouth is tight, but I type another message to her, demanding what my heart desires.

Kliao K:

So, shall we get some snacks and eat at my place?

.

.

8.20 PM

We're in my room.

Around midnight, P'Karan came to pick me up to buy crepes from our usual spot together. On the way back, neither of us had touched the sweet-smelling treats yet.

Probably because P'Karan was driving and couldn't reach for them. As for me, I wanted to wait and eat together with her in this room.

Can you believe that after inviting P'Karan like that in the chat, I almost lost my mind because of her simple acceptance? I jumped up and ran to tidy up the mess like crazy. I didn't want her to see the embarrassing state of my room. I panicked, spun around like a crazy mouse, squeaking while running around.

I invited her myself, yet here I am, all flustered.

"Wait a minute please."

I say, dragging the Japanese table to set it up. As she sees me struggling, she quickly comes over to help with her right hand. Meanwhile, her left hand still holds both her crepe and mine. Basically, she ends up assisting me, the room's owner, once again.

"Sorry, it's a bit cramped."

I apologize; compared to her condominium, it is much smaller.

"It's okay,"

She replies with her husky voice, placing the snacks we bought together on the table before asking to use the bathroom to wash her hands. Luckily, no matter how messy the room is, I always kept the bathroom clean, so there is nothing to worry about.

Once the older woman came back, it's my turn to wash my hands too. Then, we both return to sit in the middle of the room, with the low table between us.

My crepe is filled with fragrant banana and topped with chocolate chips and chocolate sauce, while hers is filled with peanut butter and sprinkled with almonds. Two bottles of cold water are placed in front of us. However, neither of us starts eating,

After thinking it through thoroughly, perhaps inviting her to get dessert together since early evening like this might just be an excuse to spend time with her...

As the older lady looks around, the towel that has covered the clothing basket has inadvertently fallen down, revealing my neatly washed clothes that I have yet to fold and properly put in the drawer or my wardrobe. It is terribly embarrassing. almost causing me to lose my mind.

P'Karan turns her gaze back to me before continuing speaking with a smile,

"Shall I fold the clothes for you?"

"N...no!"

Who would invite their crush into their room just to have them fold clothes for them?!

Housework had been something I have been doing since I was a child, and I have been suffocated by it. When I moved to the dorm, I finally found some relief after constant pressure of the duty. The words 'Let's do it later' and 'I'll

do it when I have time' have been ingrained in my mind so much that eventuallyl stop folding clothes altogether and stop keeping my room tidy.

When someone like me lives with a young lady who has been spoiled by her father like Khim, our room becomes a nest of two hamsters...

In contrast, P'Karan's condominium, including every room in it, is immaculately organized. Her domestic skills are exceptional, and she is a great cook. Her expertise extends beyond household chores, as evidenced by her stories and experiences assisting in surgeries. She is perfect in every way.

But, it must be said, the time we went on a date to the flower field, she admitted that she had felt pressured due to her mom's and mommy's professions, leading her to strive to achieve goals, which had taken a toll on her body. Thinking about it, it can be inferred that before becoming the person she is now, she must have gone through rigorous trials and tribulations.

I must have let my thoughts wander a bit too much because when I look up, the person sitting across from me stares back with eyes that are not easy to read. She narrows her eyes a bit, yet the closeness between us allows me to discern that there is something 'tricky' within those beautiful eyes.

"P'Karan, don't you want any dessert?"

"I don't know. Being together like this... I feel like you look more appetizing."

See? I'm mistaken after all.

My cheeks blush hot like newly baked steamed buns, especially when the crepe in the middle of the table is neglected, and she deliberately moves closer to sit next to me.

I don't move away because I've been craving the warmth from this woman's body since I don't know when. Even if it is just our thighs touching through the fabric of our pants, I have no intention of retreating even a little.

I'm not that innocent that I wouldn't understand what 'appetizing' meant in this context, so I remain silent, feeling embarrassed that this invitation to my room is... well...considered like that.

I lower my gaze to sneak a peek at myself sitting here with my neatly trimmed nails prepared in case of anything. Then, I suddenly remember that after our first sex that night, I would usually cover up and plug in my earphones to watch some lesbian porns for educational purposes. This means if such activities were to happen again...I would feel a little less clumsy.

The dirty thoughts linger in my mind for minutes, and finally I lift my head and look directly at the older woman who has been waiting with her determined gaze.

"No dessert for you."

Upon hearing that, the older woman's eyes seem down. She slightly moves away as if she doesn't want to pressure me. I don't want her to misunderstand for too long, so I hurriedly continue, my voice somewhat stuttering.

"U-Unless...you agree to negotiate."

"What would you like in exchange, babe?"

Wow! So sweet! Her tone and the sweet ending almost invites every single ant to invade this room. She tilts my head slightly, waiting eagerly for my response.

She intentionally teases me. This CVT doctor is playing with my heart!

I keep my composure as best I could, clenching my shorts tightly. This is something I have wanted to ask for a long time, but I have never dared speak up. Yet, the more I think about the fleeting memories flashing in occasionally, the more I want to say it all out loud. And I think right now is a good opportunity to...

"I want you to change the way you address us."

"...."

"...."

Inside the room, silence falls, and I don't even dare to lift my head to see what the other side is feeling. She might be displeased, or perhaps she might think it sounds stupid. I have no idea because silence could mean many things.

"I don't have problems with the way you use 'I' and 'you'. But..."

I just want to be a little more special than anyone else. I want us to be addressed in the same direction. I want... I wanted it all, but I didn't dare say it. All I did is keep it inside, but now I wait for her to break the silence that has been lingering for so long.

I want to hear her call herself, 'Big Sis.'

I want her to call me 'Kliao.'

"So..."

"..."

As we wait for the other person to say something, my hands clench tighter than before in excitement.

What would be the result of speaking out?

P'Karan leans in closer, bringing her lips close to my ear to the utmost. Her sexy husky voice then begs in the way that my heart can't help but race and my cheeks instantly blush.

"Can I have Kliao tonight before dessert?"

□□□□□

❀31. The Matters of Status❀

My bottom bunk bed isn't as soft as her sofa, but the second that heat in our chests have been ignited, neither she nor I care about such trivial matters. We only know that clothes are no longer worn on our bodies. They lay piled at the foot of the bed, seemingly about to fall to the floor. Forget about it. Because right now, all I feel is the desire to indulge in the moment when her lips meet mine.

When lying flat with her right above me like this, with our bare chests touching, I feel like I'm slowly awakened every time her fingertips brush against mine. Although this time I want to help both of us to reach the climax together, in this situation, I don't know what to do as my senses are on edge.

All I can do is try to hug the person above me tightly, letting every inch of my body sink into the taste of her kiss that seems to steal my breath away

"Um..."

My voice escapes involuntarily, as if unable to contain itself. The fingers of the other woman trace back and forth across my rose petals teasingly, and I am pretty sure it is intentional. When her lips finally part from mine, I can see a small satisfied smile gracing her lips.

You're so mean and badass, P'Karan!

At this breathing in and out moment, I still feel shy because of the intense gaze directed at me. But I manage to regain my composure. I clench my jaw tightly, using all the strength I have to turn P'Karan into the one who has to be underneath and dominated. However, if it's not because she agreed to

submit to my desires, my formidable force probably wouldn't be able to subdue her in one go.

"What are you going to do, hmm?"

Her voice drags as if waiting to see if I would play some kind of trick.

"I've studied."

"You mean this kind of thing?"

Ah... My heart skips a beat when I heard the (former) coldhearted P'Karan's sweet voice.

I nod, feeling my cheeks flush, "Yes"

She doesn't say anything else. She just gives me a faint smile. Now, I am sitting in a vulnerable position, with my sensitive part touching... just right against... that part of P'Karan. With the slippery liquid that slightly emerged due to the stirred emotions just now, it doesn't only wet me but also her, making me feel even more embarrassed that I'm also easily ignited.

The person who agreed to be at the bottom gets up but still lets me cover her lower half. Then, her warm hand hugs my waist, while the other side squeezes my chest until I can't resist letting out a moan.

P'Karan kisses and sucks all over my body, aggressively leaving the red marks like before. I am lost in the rhythm of her movements, and when I realize that I should use what I have studied to respond to the touch she gave to me, I insert my fingers into the lower area where both of us are intimately close, before pushing into her warm and tight body.

"Mmm..."

She moans satisfactorily. So, I hasten to move in and out, slowly and then quickly.

The time our waters mingle. I feel great to make out with her.

My fingers move in and out faster. Finally, she reaches the peak while she's still kissing the top of my chest. One thing I just realize now is that the woman in front of me is good at suppressing her voice. She doesn't moan loudly as I do, but her charmingly husky voice rather leaks out slightly.

I am proud of my work as her loving waters coated my two fingers. But before I can boast about anything, I am pushed back again and exclaim in surprise. In that split second, I feel a spasm as her warm tongue licks my clitoris, causing me to tremble.

In fact... I might be too inexperienced in this aspect compared to her because just that touch alone makes my brain feel like it is flying far away.

"P-P'Karan, uh..."

I can't tell if it is because the air conditioner in the room isn't working well or because our sex is too intense. Both hers and my sweat ooze out, evidence of our combined physical and emotional exertion. In this activity, P'Karan chooses to use her tongue to deliver pleasure delicately and precisely. She seems to know my body so well that I cry without being able to form words. I spread my legs apart like that to make it easy for her to do everything.

It is so embarrassing, but I am happy with her touching and licking, dragging her tongue through my soft flesh buttons.

We lay together on the narrow lower bed after I reached the orgasm and became too exhausted to move. P'Karan, the naughty one, hugs me from behind, sharing the warmth from her body. However, I secretly grumble at the way she made red marks on my body as she pleased, so I grab the blanket for myself, leaving her to shiver in the cold.

Even though the marks could be covered, she seemed to enjoy creating the red marks all over my body.

Time has already passed 10 PM, but I have no intention of moving even slightly because I enjoy being hugged by her. She, on the other hand, raises

her head to look at the wall clock before bending down as if she wants to say something, but her pointy nose lands on my cheek first.

If there is something strange, it would probably be her awkward gestures and hesitant words.

"What time will your friend...be back?"

"...."

I don't respond, but I'm about to get mad upon hearing that.

"Kliao Khluen"

"Tsk" This time I intentionally make a noise to express annoyance.

Can you see it? How could she dare ask for sex so sweetly and then return to her cold fellow self right after we happily finished it? I won't concede. I'm not angry or upset about anything else, but this issue makes me pout in a flipped V-shape once again.

"...."

P'Karan quietly glances at my profile, lost in thought.

Certainly, she knows well why I'm annoyed this time. Before, she asked for the 18 thing, and we let our desire lead us away. But now that everything's back to neutral, it feels strange to everyone involved. Even I want to pinch myself for daring to offer her that trade-off.

Earlier, she must have been shy. I can tell from her slightly stuttering voice and somewhat awkward phrases. She would never address other doctors, juniors, or any medical students casually, perhaps only with her sister, P'Mai-Tree. And that sudden change probably makes the lips of the person who enjoys freezing the OR stiffen.

But in the end, I'm the one who's above everything else to her.

"What time will your friend be back...babe? I'd like to know until what time I can cuddle my baby Kliao."

Because she turns red while speaking, she makes me blush so much that I have to cover my face with both hands.

"Ma...maybe around 11 PM, P'Karan."

Meow... Please don't rush back yet. Go travel the world with Tree. I want P'Karan to cuddle me all night now.

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The next day

The three of us, consisting of me, Meow, and Tree, look somewhat hungover as we ride our bicycles to the hospital. We must look crazy to anyone who sees us. There is no conversation whatsoever. Meow rides behind me and keeps glancing at her Tree throughout the way.

Surely, they must have had some cute moments together last night, causing my roommate to shyly twist and turn and almost knock me off my bike by accident. Even Tree is smiling to himself, his cheeks almost exploding. He looks at Meow shyly, but he still keeps stealing glances at her. What's up with these two?

I can't say much either because I am quietly enjoying what happened last night. P'Karan stayed with me until Meow texted that she almost arrived at the dorm. That made the CVT doctor hurriedly get up from our bed and quickly put her clothes back on. I sat there with a blanket covering me, trying to suppress my laughter.

In summary, we still ate the crepes together. P'Karan took hers back to deal with it in the medical staff room during her night shift.

I didn't tell this story to my friend, so Meow didn't know that someone had visited. When she returned, she saw me sitting there, biting into the crepe at

the Japanese table. She held a large popcorn tub in one hand and slid into the seat opposite me to tell me how happy she was to go on a date with her crush.

This morning, after buying our stuff at the convenience store, we had to split up. Obviously, Tree and Meow, as a couple, headed to the ward together, so I followed suit. As for me, I took my first bite of a croissant as I was about to head to my surgical ward.

Arriving at the elevator, where no one is waiting to go up because it is still very early, I press the open button and walk inside.

But just as the doors are about to close, I notice a tall woman hurrying towards me. So, I quickly press the door open button to let her. It is none other than the naughty P'Karan, who made me red entirely under my blanket last night.

We enter and stand together with only the two of us. The tall woman's breathing is slightly fast, perhaps from running. I discreetly glance at the woman in the black shirt and white trousers. As soon as the elevator reaches the third floor, she looks relieved from her exhaustion. I guess she exercises regularly.

"...."

It is so quiet in here. Last night, our voices were still mingling together.

I scratch my neck slightly in discomfort before deciding to break the silence. I remember that she was on duty last night. She must have stopped by here to grab something to eat, while no patients were coming to the ward.

"Were you called in, P'Karan?"

This morning's unexpected attack is when P'Karan turns to smile at me slightly and responds straightforwardly without any hesitation.

"No, I rushed to catch up with you, Kliao. I want to see your face."

She must have enjoyed seeing my reaction so much that I couldn't even speak. I'm sure of it!

"Um... uh..."

The voice comes out as a stutter at first, then disappears because I forgot what I was going to say.

Then, there is a 'hmpf' sound, a throaty laugh from the CVT doctor beside me. She seems pleased, which confirms how much she enjoys seeing me in such a state.

Even though I want to bite her smooth, delicate neck because of the cute aggression reaction, right now I can only pull myself together. And after a while, I think I made it through. If she's going to attack my heart again, I can definitely handle it now.

All right, let's get it!

"Are you free this Sunday? I want to meet your family."

But it seems like I have to furrow my brows this time.

"Why do you want to meet them?"

"To introduce myself to them."

Don't be shy this time, Kliao Khluen.

"In what...status?"

She never talked about this before, so my questioning tone slightly faded in concern.

"My... girlfriend?"

Then, the firm and confident response from P'Karan, along with her steady gaze, makes my heart feel like it dropped to the ground.

"No."

"..."

"Not your girlfriend."

"..."

I feel sulky in advance, and my chest feels tense and hollow.

Until the real key point of this morning is uttered, and it completely changes my previous mood.

"You're definitely my future bride, Kliao."

□□□□□

❖❖32. Intersection❖❖

P'Karan didn't want to call me her 'girlfriend' because the ice queen, titled by everyone who knows her, wanted me to be her 'bride-to-be' instead. As she has seen us being together in her visions, she wants to skip the 'girlfriend' stage to the 'bride- to-be' stage.

Does that mean if I've become a bride, I'll become a wife soon?

P'Karan is so naughty.

She's taking a shortcut!

On that day, every time I was free from work, my mind always drifted away to her. Moreover, in the afternoon, there was a rumor that nurses in the CVT department were all goosebumps because a usually cold doctor suddenly smiled in joy.

Okay, no need to guess, I know who's that.

It was a very sweet story that made my heart full. But on that same night, as I pondered further, I realized that if P'Karan went to meet my father on Sunday, the situation would be so tense undoubtedly.

My father is one of those conservative types who often discriminate and look down on same-sex partners.

Ever since I can remember, if there's news like this on TV, like a female celebrity revealing she likes women, my father would make a disgusted face at the screen and quickly change the channel.

I'm so worried. I don't want her to meet him at all.

I tossed and turned all night, unable to fall asleep until dawn. By the time I finally entered the realm of sleep, it was already past four in the morning.

Then, at 2.42 PM, today's afternoon, I found myself in the surgical field with P'Karan...

Believe me, there wasn't any romantic atmosphere between us at that moment. On the operating table lay a patient who had been anesthetized and was about to undergo chest surgery. The seriousness of the situation filled the room, and only the circulating nurse[] initially glanced at the two of us alternately but then returned to focus on her duties.

As an extern like me, I was definitely not the main assistant. We had a resident from her department as the assistant surgeon. Truth be told, a sixth-year medical student like me wouldn't contribute much. I was rather there to learn from challenging cases.

But... Because of the late-night overthinking, there was a moment when I accidentally seemed to nod off while standing. Despite trying to straighten my neck and blink away the drowsiness that engulfed me, I found P'Karan's hand suddenly halting all action. She raised her head, peering through her glasses directly at me, causing both the resident and the nurses to follow suit.

"Get out."

She commanded firmly. I, the one at fault, had to withdraw from the surgical field and apologize in regret.

"My apologies, ma'am."

"I mean, leave the OR now. If you're not ready, don't ever come in."

"Yes... Understood."

Knowing that it was completely my fault, I lowered my head to accept her reprimand. I didn't feel angry or resentful about the matter at all. After

removing the gloves and gown I had worn specifically for the procedure, I stepped out of the tense OR.

Sometimes, this might be better for both myself and the patient than standing inside... As I walked back to the common room, my mind floated aimlessly.

That afternoon, in the ward's common room, I dreamed of an event.

It was a dream about my own wedding with P'Karan. Khim entered the dressing room to tell me to get ready, and before I walked onto the red carpet, I found my father in his suit waiting to escort me.

It was strange that in this dream, neither I nor my father seemed indebted to each other. I warned my father not to drink alcohol and reminded him not to forget to take his medication.

Could this be the nightmare that made P'Karan turn back time and hug me all night long?

However, the dream realm came to an end when P'Karan, in a beautiful bride's dress matching her pretty face, walked over to take me to the ceremony stand. A first-year resident suddenly shook me violently to wake me up, his hand almost slipping off my neck.

"What!?"

"Emergency Code, monitor lizard!"

"We don't have that code in our hospital!"

"I came up with a code myself! A monitor lizard is attacking our ward!"

So, after I have crouched down for just a moment, I'm now collectively panicked by the unexpected arrival of a monitor lizard which seemed to have made it to this floor somehow.

It's not like I am scared of it or anything, but its presence in the ward could cause a commotion among the patients.

It takes some time to regain control of the situation, and until the staff can catch the troublemaker, let's just say I don't need caffeine to shake off my drowsiness. Dealing with this incident is enough to keep me wide awake until the evening round.

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7.24 PM

With a cheerful mood, perhaps due to her relationship with Tree, Meow said she wanted to treat me to a meal and then ordered food to be delivered to the dormitory. It was fried chicken from a famous restaurant that took up to thirty minutes to deliver, meaning we were starving while waiting for it, though the taste was worth the wait. We set up the Japanese table and started eating. Then, we began to chat, as my roommate pleased.

"You know!? Tree is so cute. His cheeks turned as red as an apple after kissing."

I can guess that when the two of them are already dating, who would be the bolder one, so it isn't surprising when my friend revealed that she had been making moves on her red-cheeked boyfriend.

"Not only that-"

Meow continues her story because she and her boyfriend are both in the pediatric ward. This makes their whole day filled with sweet moments, unlike my situation. It wouldn't do any good to talk about the fact that the surgical ward had a visit from some monitor lizard with patients screaming and running around, while nurses and doctors jumped onto tables.

But when she finishes her stories, my roommate makes a face like saying 'Well, well,' and then changes the subject.

"So, how about you and P'Karan? Are you dating or not?"

"Well..."

"Being hesitant like this means you're not on the clear terms."

"Our status isn't exactly girlfriends..."

Meow grabs the coke provided in the combo set and prepares to drink.

"Difficult to explain?"

"But the status of brides-to-be."

Splash!

Then, she sprays water out. Luckily, she turns to the other side, not straight ahead, so the food is safe. My fellow extern coughes, and then turns this way with widening eyes.

"Are you kidding me?"

"No, she said the other day...that we're not just girlfriends but future brides."

"Does that mean getting married on paper or just having a wedding?"

"I don't know."

"It must be the former for sure. She has dual citizenship. The other citizenship supports same-sex marriage registration."

Upon hearing and contemplating, it makes me blush and act awkwardly. Combined with the dream in the afternoon, I can only smile and respond briefly, "Um," even though in my heart, I almost feel like I have sprouted wings, ready to fly to the moon, when imagining that pleasant moment.

"Kliao, are you sure you're okay with marrying a woman? I mean....it's not like I'm being homophobic or anything, but I've just never seen you open up to any guys before. When we were in the pre-clinical program, whenever someone tried to hit on you, you rejected them all because you'd been chasing after P'Karan all along. But perhaps guys could fulfill you better."

"Do you have to prove it by opening up to guys?"

"Yeah, otherwise, how would you know?"

"Why does being a lesbian have to be questioned if she's tried opening up to guys or not? What's the point? Why isn't any heterosexual couple asked if they've 'opened up to the same sex yet' too?"

"Um... well..."

"Have you ever tried opening up to women before you think you like Tree? You might not prefer guys eventually. Try proving it first. Women might fulfill you better."

"I'm sorry..."

Those words, spoken back and forth, make my friend have known since the first year lower her head in regret.

To be honest, I'm quite mad with Meow's thoughts, but reflecting on it, our mindset has been shaped by society since childhood that same-sex love is wrong. People in this country, especially adults, always look at lesbian relationships as unstable. Those adults have been passing down such strange beliefs for many decades.

Meow herself isn't rotten or irrational. She is just socialized by this society to consider heterosexual couples as the only normal kind of relationship.

There's some error in the moral structure from the beginning. Blaming her alone wouldn't be fair because the girl sitting right before me had already apologized and reflected. If she continued to enforce conservatism, then I would truly get mad because that behavior would be considered a mental illness at the individual level.

Seeing that the atmosphere of our gathering today is getting tense, I accept her apology with a smile and change the subject.

"Today, I fell asleep standing in the OR and got kicked out."

Meow notices that I have forgiven her. Though she seems a bit awkward at first, she quickly offers me her favorite spicy chicken, and then swiftly

responds to my invitation to talk about the operating room.

After spending some time, we return to laughing together as roommates, and at one point, Meow seizes the opportunity to clear the paper plates and says:

"Kliao, I'm really sorry for my narrow mind. I won't speak like that again."

"It's okay. Most kids across the country are taught that normal couples include only heterosexuals. We've all been indoctrinated. But if our generation can think more progressively, then the next generations won't have to be confined like us, right?"

She nods in agreement before letting out a deep breath.

"Thanks for not being angry at me. I thought that my biases would ruin our friendship. I feel so relieved now."

Rrrrr!

My communication device rings loudly. As I glance to see, it shows P'Karan is calling. Meow notices her name on it too, since my phone is placed on the Japanese table.

"You go talk to her. I'll take out the trash myself."

"It's okay. I'll take it out."

"It's okay. I'm bad-mouthing today. Please forgive me."

Says Meow before sweeping up the paper utensils provided by the restaurant. She tosses them into the bin with a black trash bag. Then, she stands up, grabs the bag, and heads downstairs, leaving me private space to answer someone's call freely.

"Hello, P'Karan."

I answer immediately after pressing the green button and pressing the device against my ear. It is already dusk, and she isn't on duty, so she must

be at her condominium.

[What are you doing?]

"Just finished dinner. Have you eaten?"

[Yeah, I have.]

Then, I remember the incident with the monitor lizard invading our ward in the afternoon. I intend to tell her about it, but before I can, she interrupts.

"Today-"

[I'm sorry about today.]

What she said confuses me.

"What?"

[I'm sorry for chasing you out of the OR.]

Ah, that's what she meant.

[I'm quite serious when dealing with patients' lives. When I saw you sleepy and fell asleep while standing, I didn't want a doctor who wasn't ready in the operating room.]

"I understand. I'm not angry at all. It's my fault. It's not something to be upset about. The patients' lives are more important than personal matters. Actually, I should apologize again."

[I thought you might be angry]

Her husky voice fades as if she's still concerned that I might feel bad about what happened.

So, I smile mischievously, though the other party can't see it, before revealing my thoughts with a teasing tone.

"When it comes to your work, your voice turns cold and serious, but..."

"...."

"That's so sexy!"

[What!?!]

"With just your voice, whether it's serious, cold, or sweet, I can't help but be enchanted."

[!!!]

That's my revenge for that moment in the elevator she made me blush.

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22.05

I feel so happy after being able to tease P'Karan and make her shy in the evening. She became all awkward when she heard me say that so straightforwardly.

But all that I said was the truth. I've always liked her husky voice; it's so charming and undeniably sexy. It's her unique trait that blends perfectly with her beautiful, serene face and inviting eyes.

I only chatted with her briefly over the phone, but I now end up lying awake until late at night, thinking about her.

The lights are switched off in the bedroom, but I am still wide awake, so I pick up my phone and browse through various apps, lying on my side. I scroll through messages of encouragement from my fans on social media and then move on to see how my friends are doing.

But I frown as soon as I see a friend, who's an extern in another hospital, shared a post from a page called 'Let's Share Pretty Doctors.'

It is a photo of P'Karan in her long medical gown walking in our hospital. Although it is a candid shot, she looks stunning. Her meticulously sculpted features blend well with her serious demeanor, making her look both cool and elegant at the same time. Even though it isn't clear if she is naturally serious, the post received a massive number of likes and shares, which makes me happy for her.

Happy... really?

Here, she's known for her OR-freezing ability, her silence, and her limited smile. Those elements turn her good looks into a topic discussed in the vein of unapproachable beauty. Further elevated by the prestigious car brand she drives, she is far beyond reach.

But once it's posted on the page, they have no idea whether she actually freezes the OR or not. P'Karan is the epitome of many people's ideals, and the comments often veer towards wanting to be her partner. Both men and women admire her.

My lips curl into a flipped V-shape again.

I'm not happy at all. They can praise P'Karan, but P'Karan is... mine.

She probably won't see this post anyway. Her Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts are merely for showing her profiles. Still, it's like I'm jealous of her because of ten thousand people.

Jealous to the extreme.

No! No! I mustn't stay up late again tonight!

I try to keep my mind from wandering by telling myself that P'Karan belongs to me, and she never shows any interest or shares her feelings with anyone else.

... Yet, there's this strange bitterness in my heart, lingering there.

Rrrr!

Karan_K:
Good Night

And because I receive a message from her in that instant, my lips, once curved into a flipped V-shape, gradually straighten. Then, finally, a smile appears on my face when P'Karan sends a picture of her dark, eerie room, illuminated only by a faint light from a moon-shaped lamp held in her slender hand.

Without hesitation, I quickly reply.

Kliao K:
So beautiful.

She reads it promptly.

Karan_K:
Mom used this kind of lamp to woo my mommy.

Kliao K:
Your mom and mommy are so romantic.

Karan_K:
But I won't buy one for Kliao.

Kliao K:
Oh...

Karan_K: If you want one, come live with me, because what's mine is yours...

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P'Karan, you're...

Karan_K:
Including myself, I belong to Kliao.

This really brings back my blush in full force. It's as if my blood gathers in my cheeks, making them red and hot. I can't help but smile; my eyes are almost closed. In fact, I'm still jealous of those comments, but in the end, I'm the only one who gets to experience this.

With that, I feel a lot more at ease.

Kliao K:

If you like me, ask your mom and mommy to propose.

Kliao K:

Sweet dreams, P'Karan.

Kliao K:

(A Sticker of A Hamster Wrapped in a Blanket Sent)

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It seems like jealousy isn't a problem anymore.

I glance at the time from the top corner of the screen. It's now creeping towards half past ten at night. The silence invites numerous thoughts to churn in my mind.

Meow is still scrolling her iPad screen on the top bunk in the dark, eerie room. As for me, I won't bother anymore. Staying up later than this will only have negative consequences. P'Karan's warmth helps me push aside family matters and everything else stressful for now. My focus is just to rest enough for work tomorrow.

The reason why I managed to push it out of my mind is the encouragement from P'Karan before she hung up around dusk. She mentioned that introducing herself wasn't about seeking permission but merely about letting them know. If my father refuses to accept us, we'll just love each other anyway.

Knowing so, I'm quite relieved.

Moreover, as she messaged me to wish me goodnight,I no longer feel envious of others on social media.

And soon enough, I slip into the realm of dreams effortlessly...

However, I find myself dreaming similar dreams to the one I had in the afternoon once again. The major difference lies in the fact that, at the wedding in this dream, it wasn't my father who escorted me, the bride, into the ceremony. It was me, walking towards another bride myself.

In this dream, I was genuinely happy. Surrounded by friends from high school and university, as well as my colleagues such as nurses and doctors. Even P'Mai-Tree came, and my P'Karan was still gentle and warm like a sun. Furthermore, her mom and mommy also flew to join the event.

It was a profoundly loving atmosphere.

I wake up to the sound of the alarm clock ringing in the morning. When I open my eyes, I realize I must have just dreamt of the future.

But...why is that? Why did my dreams about weddings have two different scenarios?

In the first dream, my father and I seemed close.

As for the second one, it seems like I no longer contacted anyone in the family and did not even invite them to the event.

Is this a case of the butterfly effect? Perhaps, this Sunday, with P'Karan's self-introduction, someone's action might affect my family relationship in the future...

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33. The Cold Woman Getting Jealous

Sunday arrives soon enough, but as I'm an extern, I still have to wake up early as usual, have a ward round, and then return to my dormitory. Meow doesn't ask where I'm going today because she already has a boyfriend and is going to watch a movie at a shopping mall. So, it turns into the two of us helping each other check if we both have dressed up and styled our hair nicely.

As for the evening round, I leave it to my extern friend in the same ward because I don't think I'll be back in time.

I have an appointment with P'Karan at 4 PM, but the reason why I have to go out since late in the morning is because I have another appointment with a friend. It isn't difficult to guess who that friend is. Khim can't be available because she's busy writing a script for the new series.

Nene has to do research, and Belle has an interview as the leader of The Edge of the Universe for a certain program. Frang helps her girlfriend, Klai-Duen, run a bakery.

Of course, the one who's so damn free and wealthy is Note. The royal woman who drives a brand-new luxury car with a red license plate coming to pick me up is enough to catch everyone's attention, but it's even convertible!

"Can you close the roof? It's too open."

"Nobody thinks we're a couple anyway."

"The whole hospital already knows that I like girls. If they see us, they'll probably think I'm catching two fish with two hands! Shut it!"

"Um, alright."

My friend in the green and light green leaf-patterned aloha shirt finally listens to me. She gracefully takes off her expensive sunglasses and uses her long slender fingers to press the button to close the roof of the luxurious gray car we are sitting in.

Well, that's it.

And before the car taking off, Note did something that she was never able to resist which was reaching over to play with my hair so aggressively that my head almost turned into a crispy Thai omelet.

Fortunately, I always have a tiny comb ready with me. You silly friend!

We both agreed to go find something to eat for breakfast (even though we were a bit late) because I had only eaten a single mantou before the round, not enough to fill me up.

"When I pass the architect exam, I won't be able to float around like this."

"Are you a balloon? Floating around?"

"Shut up!"

"Boo!"

I stuck my tongue out and roll my eyes at my friend before switching back to serious mode.

"Hope you pass your exam. I have to pass the Oscar exam before graduating too."

"Are you going to be a doctor or an actress with that Oscar?"

"It's a nickname for OSCE!"

Since everyone in The Edge of the Universe has been close since our first year in university, our conversations usually get serious for just a moment and then veer off into nonsense.

But it seems like today there's something that Her Grace can't let slip by. Note takes on the role of both driver and interrogator, asking about my relationship with P'Karan, curious to know what's really going on. I'm not one to hide, so I spill the beans, causing her to raise her eyebrow in suspicion.

When we arrive at the Japanese restaurant in a shopping mall and wait for the server to bring our food, my pretty friend asks straightforwardly.

"What kind of person lets you hang in limbo for seven years?"

"Maybe... She's always been around me."

I say softly, reminiscing about the strange misty memories that have surfaced, although they've never occurred.

"How? That sounds confusing. Elaborate."

"It's like... She's always been around."

"Then you must've known."

"That's right..."

But P'Karan can rewind time.

I can't tell her the latter part.

"Alright, come on. Judging from my conversation with her that night and the fact that she appeared to help you at the press conference, she must be serious about you."

If Note knew that she gave me the bride-to-be status, she would probably think it's too early and get upset. For outsiders, P'Karan and I look like we

haven't known each other for long. But both of us know deeply how profound and binding our relationship is.

About thirteen years ago, she saw me in her visions, giving her encouragement and goals. She fell in love with me in the blink of an eye.

Seven years ago, she rewound time for me, losing ten years of her life to guide me across the road. And now, we've been through dangers and various emotions together.

And perhaps... During those seven years that I had been blank, she might have been with me all along. It's just that the time reversal makes me unable to remember.

I keep everything to myself. Who would believe in the ability to rewind time and see the future? It sounds too fantasy; even I who experienced it first-hand got confused at first.

The food is served just at the right moment, interrupting our serious conversation. I try to steer the conversation towards other topics, including asking why she is driving a new car with a red license plate to pick me up today. Note then tells me that her father is playing a prank on her.

He gave her a luxurious car as a gift and said if she passed the Architect Professional Practice Examination, she could keep it, but if not, he would take the keys back. Looking at their relationship, they are like Tom and Jerry.

I forgot to mention that Prince Napasdol and his youngest daughter don't get along well. She irritated her father by joining our music band, acting busy, and moving out to live in a condominium. She always wears an aloha shirt on her casual days and even at the parties, despite being a member of the royal house.

It is a way to provoke her father's nerves, and yes, now that she's finished studying and is preparing to take the architect license exam, they are still fighting.

'I'm a bit stubborn, so we're arguing about nonsense,'

Note dismissed it like that.

I secretly believe she might have other problems with her family. Well... I don't really know. However, because I also have some family issues, I'm able to tell that Note also has things she's never talked about before, and she doesn't want to talk about them either.

After having the brunch, we still have some time left, so we walk around the mall, killing time floor by floor. Note now knows that today I need to go back home to tell my parents about my love life. I wander around, chatting with my tall friend, and when it is 16 o'clock, Note takes me to the underground coffee shop where P'Karan is waiting.

Wow! Now, I feel like a hobbit.

Both of them are over 170 centimeters tall, while I... Uh, it's better not to talk about my height.

Note's glance hints that she would keep an eye on the older woman. Between them, there's no conversation, but their confrontation becomes a silent mental war in just a few minutes.

I know Note isn't jealous, but she recognizes P'Karan as someone so mean because she refused to show up for the seven years I'd been searching. Everyone in the medical faculty used to call me 'Weirdo Girl', so she kind of dislikes P'Karan.

"Is she your friend?"

While driving toward my house, the person sitting quietly for a long time finally speaks up.

I turn to answer without thinking.

"Yeah, but P'Karan has met Note before, right? Do you remember that night at the bar?"

"Um."

"Why is your reply so brief? Are you jealous?"

"Not really."

"Oh, okay."

"You two seem close."

"Yeah, we've known each other since our freshmen year. Sometimes, I'd hang out at Note's condo."

"...."

"P'Karan"

"I'm listening."

"Why can I sense your dissatisfaction?"

"You imagine it. I'm all fine."

Normal people don't try to unbutton up their shirts as if their burning hearts are causing their bodies to collapse. The expression on her face doesn't betray her emotions either. It makes me secretly smile at her when she is feeling jealous.

To ease the concerns of my CVT doctor, I smile until my eyes nearly close and sweetly say:

"She is just a friend. Please believe in me, P'Karan."

"I believe you,"

Her mouth says one thing, but her tone is not quite convinced.

"Oh, come on! Your picture has been circulating on the 'Let's Share Pretty Doctors' page, and there are comments from lots of people who want to be

your boyfriend or girlfriend. I still leave it alone."

"I don't know about that."

"Well, you're not active on social media, so you might haven't seen it."

The more I think about it, the more jealous I become.

"But anyway, the relationship between Kliao and Note is just pure friendship. I can't fall in love with anyone as much as with you."

That makes her feel a bit uncomfortable and speechless for a moment. Then she finally nods and sighs.

"Well, I know. I'm just afraid that she might secretly like you."

I can't help but chuckle a little, barely able to contain myself.

"Note just dislikes you because she saw me looking for you for many years. There's nothing more to it than that."

"Alright."

The older woman keeps her eyes on the busy street ahead where numerous cars are passing by. Nonetheless, her tone of voice reveals a genuine sense of guilt.

"I'm sorry..."

"It's okay. We finally met."

"What about this? From now on, I'll tell you know every time before I rewind time."

"Um... Will that be okay? It's your special ability."

"Excluding your matters, I rarely use it."

"Oh... Is that so?"

I feel a bit strange that she mentioned it like, from now on, if she's going to use her ability, she'll consult with me first. She used the word 'tell', but based on her tone and gestures, it's like a promise that I'll be involved in her decision making when she needs to use her power.

That's right. I'm her 'bride-to-be' after all.

Despite her calm and reserved appearance, P'Karan is quite a jealous type...isn't she?

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❀❀34. Butterfly Effect❀❀

We just arrived home...

It is past five in the evening, and Dad, Mom, and Fong-Samut are all present. My younger brother is the one who walks over to open the door. When he sees me, his eyes widen in surprise before he turns to P'Karan with a puzzled expression, wondering who she is.

His eyes widen even more when he notices the Ashton Martin parked against the wall of the house. But the younger one chooses not to ask anything and instead invites us inside first.

Dad is watching a singing competition on TV. P'Karan and I raise our hands to say hello in the wai gesture. He just glances at us and pretends not to care. As for Mom, as soon as she heard from Fong-Samut that I am home, she quickly left the kitchen to see me.

"At last, you're home. I couldn't reach you at all. Why are you so naughty?"

Mom says with a mixture of reproach and genuine joy upon seeing me standing here. Still, she can't refrain from hitting my arm as a punishment. Maybe she would continue hitting, if she didn't see that we have a guest, P'Karan, standing there.

"Are you a friend or a senior?"

Maybe because she is dressed more politely and seems more dignified than me, Mom hesitates.

"This is P'Karan, but let's talk about her at the dining table."

Because our status is an important matter, and I'm very serious about it, I don't want to introduce her too casually. Mom looks a little puzzled because she recognizes P'Karan as just a senior, so she wonders why we need to talk about her over dinner? Meanwhile, Fong-Samut, who walks over to sit on the sofa opposite Dad, looks lost in his thoughts.

Then, my mother smiles and accepts P'Karan's greetings. She's trying not to overthink, turning to me and saying...

"Come and help in the kitchen, dear. I'm preparing dinner."

"Fong-Samut doesn't need to help?"

"Why should he? This is a woman's job, and he's a boy."

"It's okay. I will help you today. P'Kliao seems tired, and she even brought her senior. She should wait in the room."

My younger brother stands up and tries to reconcile. It almost makes me unable to hold back from arguing with that absurdity. Nonetheless, it doesn't stop there. Dad, who is pretending to watch TV, suddenly speaks with intentional sarcasm.

"Incapable girl. She did nothing that should have been done and became crazy because of overstudying. Who would want to marry a girl like that?"

I am almost about to talk back and let out all my frustration if it wasn't for P'Karan's reassuring hand holding me back gently.

Holding back? Why did she hold me back? And now she's just staring silently at my father without saying anything.

"Dad, please. That's enough."

Fong-Samut tries to ease the tension with his words. The old man sitting on the sofa then makes a disapproving sound 'Ha!' in his throat.

The hoarse voice of the tall figure beside me holds me back again.

"Kliao Khluen"

"Yes?"

"Could you show me how you help with everything just like you used to do please?"

P'Karan speaks softly, making sure only we can hear. It makes me wonder a lot about what she's going to do, but I nod in agreement. After all, Dad would probably scold me with harsh words again if I refused.

So, in the kitchen, there are my mother, me, and P'Karan volunteering to help prepare dinner.

In summary, when Fong-Samut saw Mom getting assistance, my little brother felt comfortable enough to return to chatting with his girlfriend on the sofa without Dad saying a word of reproach.

He has been molded in a family where men view household chores as 'extra support,' even though in reality, housework should be everyone's responsibility regardless of gender. Fong-Samut grew up in a household where Dad and Mom ran a stationery store together, but when it came to housework, Dad would just sit and let Mom do it all.

He thought that his involvement in housework was 'giving a hand,' although he shouldn't have just sat there from the beginning, thinking it wasn't the son's duty.

"Kliao, I almost forgot. Collect the laundry from the backyard for me, will you? The ones with the green hangers belong to your little brother. Put them in his closet. The white hangers indicate mine and your father's. Just put them in my closet. Hang Dad's clothes in the front. Mine should go at the back or you can fold them and put them in the bottom drawer."

After finishing washing the vegetables, Mom orders a long list of chores, and I have to suppress my feelings and force myself to do all those things. Then, Mom's voice chimes in again.

"Oh! Don't forget to bring the used clothes basket in your brother's bedroom downstairs."

For the entire evening, Mom had me do everything I used to do. Whether it was separating my brother's clothes for washing tomorrow, changing the bed sheets, or even taking the large trash bag in the house and throwing it into the bin in front of the alley.

Then, when she walked back into the kitchen, she realized she hadn't ironed Fong-Samut's student uniform yet. This time, she didn't ask directly, but indirectly hinted that she was very busy. If I helped, it would be better. In the end, I gritted my teeth and suppressed my anger, then walked upstairs to do it, while Dad and Fong-Samut waited for their dinner in the living room.

Around a little past 7 PM, with rice and various curries that Mom and P'Karan helped prepare, everything was brought to the table adjacent to the living room.

Fong-Samut stopped chatting and walked to his usual spot. Dad turned off the TV and brought himself to sit in the chair at the head of the table. Mom nudged me and pointed to the rice cooker, indicating that I should serve rice for everyone.

Throughout every action and the meal, I can feel P'Karan subtly watching me

She hasn't formally introduced herself to this family yet, meaning she hasn't revealed her status. She remains calm and lets my father badmouth about me. She is quiet, offers no smiles, and never replies. It becomes a one-sided conversation to the point that Dad has to clear his throat. Then, Fong-Samut initiates the conversation instead.

And when dinner ends, Mom gathers the plates and nods this way, signaling that I should take them to the kitchen to wash.

I... I am nothing more than the one who has to do everything in this house.

I swallow my pride and gather all the dishes. Coming back home on weekends isn't relaxing at all. They label these chores as my responsibilities, making my weekends vastly different from Fong-Samut's.

As I carry the dishes to the sink, tears well up uncontrollably. I can't understand why just being born as a girl meant being treated like this. I'm labeled responsible for household chores and criticized as a toilet in front of the house.

Whether male or female, we're all human beings.

Can't we help each other with household chores? Shouldn't it be everyone's responsibility regardless of gender?

Yet, despite these thoughts, I feel strangely uneasy about today's events. Something is unsettling about P'Karan's attitude, and I wonder if her absence in the kitchen is intentional, perhaps to talk with my family?

As these thoughts swirl in my mind, I leave the sink and walk back towards the area connecting the kitchen and the living room. I position myself behind the wall, stealing glances at the four people still seated at the dining table. As expected... Dad, Mom, and Fong-Samut are held back for her to express the main purpose of her visit today.

Her husky voice is determined. Every word she says is emphasized, and she addresses everyone very formally.

"Thank you for the meal today. I appreciate it, and I would like to make a statement to both of you, Father and Mother, regarding an important matter."

"What would you like to say?"

My mother's smile seems forced, perhaps because the conversation has taken on a serious tone.

"I've come to take Kliao Khluen to leave this dysfunctional family."

Her words...hit hard.

In that second, everyone is frozen in shock. Fong-Samut is the quickest to regain composure. He alternates his gaze between my parents and P'Karan, as if fearing an imminent explosion. And indeed, even a stubborn person can sense the sarcasm in her polite words.

My father breathes heavily. His face tenses up, and then he erupts,

"What are you talking about?"

While P'Karan still stares at him, unwavering and undaunted.

"I've witnessed how the actions and words of people in this house have normalized certain behaviors. The assigned roles and deep-seated double standards persist despite significant developments in the world. Not to mention other actions and words that have suppressed your daughter's life."

"What!?"

My father's hands shake with anger, as P'Karan's words hit him hard.

"This evening, those household chores were the last ones Kliao Khluen will do."

"Wh-What do you mean?"

"It means from now on, I'll take care of everything myself. My wife shouldn't have to endure the exhaustion she's been through all these years."

My father's frustration peaks. I'm not sure if he could hear the word; wife clearly because he seems furious to the point of turning red and rising from his seat, causing the 'Crash!' sound of the fallen chair.

"What right do you have to meddle in other people's household affairs?! I don't see how I've raised my daughter wrong in any way. Housework is a woman's duty. In the future, she'll have to get married and take care of her husband and children. A woman going out to work is weird. What's happening in the world these days? So shameful!"

While my father's body language and words are extremely sharp, P'Karan stares back at him without fear and responds as if knowing exactly how the situation would unfold.

"The world is just constantly evolving, but you seem still stuck in a past full of mistakes."

I...wanted to say something like that to my own father all along.

The fact that I'm his child makes me unable to say anything. But today, P'Karan has spoken on my behalf. She looks so angry in my place.

Before the oldest person in this house can interject further, P'Karan continues with a calm yet cutting tone that reaches deep into everyone's hearts.

"And as for taking Kliao Khluen away, I'm not here to ask for permission. I'm here just to inform you."

"Inform of what? I don't get what you're saying. Go call Kliao out here and let's settle this right now!"

"We love each other, Dad. That's all."

In the end, I emerge from behind the wall with a simple explanation that makes my father understand everything. Now, I must admit that I feel grateful for what my lover had said earlier. I'm now yearning to argue with my parents too.

For other open-minded families, it might not be a big deal if their children prefer same-sex relationships. But for my parents, who are still quite conservative, they are deeply shocked. My mother's shock is evident as she raises her hand to cover her mouth, while Father's eyes widen in disbelief. In his heart, there are probably many conflicting emotions swirling around, but here's the first filtered sentence after learning that his daughter is a lesbian:

"People like you are pervert!"

My heart feels like it is being squeezed because those words came from my own father's mouth. Even my mother dares not object to anything. Fong-Samut opens his mouth as if he wants to alert Dad, but seeing our father's overwhelming anger, my younger brother chooses to protect himself by remaining silent.

Suddenly, I realize that it isn't just me who feels hurt by those harsh words. But P'Karan, who also likes women and has two mothers, probably feels the impact on her heart even more.

Her hands clench instantly, and her eyes flash with anger. If it were someone else, she might have responded more violently. But perhaps she realizes that the middle-aged man in front of her is my father, so she releases her grip and looks at me with eyes filled with understanding. She seems more mature than my father.

"Loving someone of the same sex is not pervert. I don't know if it's worth explaining any further because it seems like you won't listen to anything, even though human brains are designed to receive sounds and analyze them."

Ever since the argument began, P'Karan hasn't used any rude language, but her responses are so sharp that both Mom and I look abworried that Dad might flip the dining table over. Right now, Dad is so furious. And yes... He is the kind of person who would continually spew out hurtful words when he can't argue with reasons.

"Disgusting!"

"It's you who's disgusting!!"

I stop holding back and decide not to tolerate it anymore.

"How dare you insult your own father like that!?"

"P'Karan, please wait in the car. I'll join you in a moment."

I turn to say that to the tall figure. Seeing her about to protest, I force a smile and beg.

"Just give me ten minutes, please."

It's time for me to stand up for myself, not just let P'Karan shield me and receive those hurtful words. Nonetheless, she still doesn't want to leave because she wants to protect me, so I send a pleading look to her.

"Just a moment please."

"Fine..."

"Thank you so much."

And then, less than a minute later, only Dad, Mom, Fong-Samut, and I remain.

"Let's calm down."

My younger brother finally found his voice. He speaks softly, and I think that sentence is utterly useless at this point.

"Ha! Did I ever get it wrong? Having a daughter is like-"

"If Grandpa said something like that to you, how would you feel?"

His temper continues to rise. There's a moment when he raises his hand to press it against his chest, as if exhausted or physically hurt, yet he chooses to point his finger and scold me.

"Don't talk back to me! Just now, you insulted me. You're a bastard! Perverts like you are completely corrupted! No manners and forget your place! Is it not clear which gender is responsible for the household chores? You're so stupid!"

"Stop it, you piece of sh*t!"

Unexpectedly, Mom, who has always followed Dad's lead in everything, explodes. Dad, Fong-Samut, and I all turn our attention to the woman who has never shown this side of herself before.

"You... dared say that about your husband?"

"Yes! I'm so f*cking tired of living with you!"

Tears well up in Mom's eyes. Since I was born, I've accepted that we've never seen Mom demand anything for herself, so it makes the whole family speechless, especially Dad, who remains stunned.

"I have to wake up early and go to bed late every day. I have to help out at the store and take responsibility for all the household chores because you've decided it's the wife's duty. Even when I was pregnant, I still had to do everything. Whenever I wasn't feeling well, you accused me of being weak. When your parents were alive, you always sided with them against me. You never did anything. Not once did you speak up to defend me."

Mom looks at Dad, her eyes filled with pain, indicating how much those moments had drained her happiness.

"What Kliao and her girlfriend said is correct. It's my fault for enduring a life with you without a voice. I've been so miserable that I couldn't even protect my daughter. I've been too cowardly to ask my son for anything. In the end, I've become another person who passes down crazy thoughts, just like you!"

Mom speaks to Dad in a way she has never done before.

"I'm not any less tired than you are. I also work at the store, doing both accounting and sales. Just because you're the one driving to buy groceries doesn't mean you're the only one tired."

The woman, who has been stigmatized as her husband's supporter and homemaker, wipes the tears streaming down her cheeks. Mom doesn't sob aloud. Once she finally lets out all her feelings, the atmosphere among the

four of us becomes completely quiet, like a vortex swallowing everything in its path.

Dad looks at Mom, unsure of what he should say or do next. Right now, my heart beats fast, as if I can sense something. The dreams I had in different versions seem to connect with this event.

Perhaps... If Dad chooses to drop his ego and apologize... If he hugs us and changes this family for the better, we might come back together. They might show up as important people at my and P'Karan's wedding, just like in my first dream.

But if he chooses another path, it would turn into something horrible that shatters our bonds into pieces. It might turn the future into my second dream... A dream where none of my family members joined the wedding

Silence hangs in the air for a while, and then Dad's throat emits a grunt. It's a signal that he chooses not to apologize...but opts to turn in this direction, raising his dominant hand firmly.

Slap!!

Then his hand slams onto my left cheek with such force that I fall.

"Because of you! You're the one tearing our family apart!"

The moment Dad's hand strikes my face...

In that moment... I know for sure that there will be no one like him walking a bride down the aisle.

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35. Each Other's Sunshine

Fong-Samut looks shocked. Then, he tries to calm my father down. Even my mother couldn't protect me, despite being right there. Perhaps they are both afraid of my father too much to speak up even in the face of blatant aggression.

I instantly decided I wouldn't return to this place. Not again.

The final conversation I overheard after walking out of the house was my father's raging voice, unwilling to admit his fault. He insisted I was the culprit who tore our family apart.

The footsteps grow louder as my younger brother chose to run after me and grab my arm before I can slide open the gate.

"Sis, please calm down!"

"Let me go."

"I know what Dad thinks isn't right. But you and Mom hitting back at him only makes him more furious. No wonder he lost control and hit..."

"If you think violence is normal, you are part of this social problem, Fong."

I forcefully pull my hand away from my brother. His genuine thoughts are finally expressed through his words. My father's behavior has robbed me of childhood and adolescence happiness. He gaslighted my mother to carry all the housework, and he grew a seed in Fong-Samut to become just like him.

"Last time, you came to find me and said you didn't like how things were, but today I can see that if you had a family, you wouldn't be any different from Dad."

With that, I walk out of the house where I have grown up for twenty-four years.

It is a house where I used to secretly watch other kids playing outside while I helped my mother clean.

It is a house where, even when their daughter was sick, she couldn't just lie down but had to get up and wash dishes, while her younger brother wiggled his feet playing games.

It is a house where clothes must be separated by gender for laundry because my parents believe that women's clothing is inferior and can't be washed together with men's.

It is a house that says having daughters is like having a toilet in front of it.

A house...that is just a place to live.

I open the door of the Aston Martin and sit beside the driver. I don't cry, not even a bit. My heart decided it would no longer have anything to do with them the moment my father's hand struck my face, leaving me numb. My eyes focus straight ahead onto the village road. This will be my last visit.

The warm hand of the young woman sitting behind the wheel moves to grasp my hand gently, threading fingers through mine to comfort me. Then, her husky voice blurts like someone suppressing her emotions.

"I will turn back time."

She must have seen the red mark on my left cheek and guessed what had caused it.

"No need to, P'Karan."

"Kliao"

"He's already used force. I will remember, and he should remember it too. This will be an event that reminds me not to ever return."

"Can I say something to your father before we go?"

She is angry and vengeful, I can sense it all through her voice.

But I have decided firmly, so I shake my head.

"No, please. Don't step into that house ever again. Consider this a request from me, can you?"

"...."

"I know you want to protect me, but in this matter, the ones who should protect me the most are my mother and brother. As they chose to ignore, I will make sure that both Dad and them realize this is the reason why this daughter won't return."

My nerves can hear how cold my voice is at the moment. The rearview mirror reflects the eyes of someone who has no hope in that family. P'Karan looks at me with concern, but as she has promised to let me make decisions together, she refrains from using that ability.

The older person approaches, bringing her face close and lightly kissing my cheek where the red mark is as if to comfort me and tell me everything would be okay. The grip of her hand, holding onto mine, confirms that she will always stay by my side.

"I understand now... It's okay. I'll stay with you."

It is her again, the one who stays with me whenever I need somebody.

I clench my lips tightly. Finally, I lean in to hug her and let out a heavier sob than ever before.

My emotions now are tangled and intertwined. I can't express everything swirling in this ocean of feelings, but I know it is distilled into tears flowing down both cheeks, absorbed by P'Karan's shoulder.

When the car takes off, her hand remains clasped tightly around mine, not letting go. We don't need much conversation beyond that because she

knows too well that I can't say anything right now. The Aston Martin moves along the road towards her condo, which is quite far away. But tonight, that's what I need. I need a space that is warm and safe, a place where she is with me.

My Sunshine...

The person I love most, and I can feel just as strongly that her love overflows me the same. Tonight, I sleep once again on the soft bed in her condominium. The warm woman hugs me from behind. We are under the same blanket. I'm so tired, but there is something I want to say.

"P'Karan"

"Yes, what is it?"

"I'm still thinking about the evening... I'll help you do housework. I won't let you do it alone."

"But you've been doing it too much. What I saw today almost made me lose control."

"I don't care. We have to share. I don't want it to be limited to someone's duty."

"...."

"Please agree..."

"Um."

"I consider that your agreement then."

"Yes, as you wish."

After our heartfelt conversation is over, my swollen eyes slowly close in her warmth and the comforting scent that surrounds me. My nerves recognize the familiar whispering, gentle beside my ear, and a touch that feels like a light, soothing pat.

"Sweet dreams, my smart girl."

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Several days have passed since the breakdown. My mother and Fong-Samut have called me more than a hundred times. I have also muted their constant barrage of messages. It is quite challenging to act like nothing has happened. Sometimes, I'd sit idle in the staff common room. I don't know. I don't regret my decision to leave, but it is just that I have never experienced the feeling of no home to return to.

I thought I would have to feel like this during the internship, but I ended up feeling it even before I graduate.

And if I don't have P'Karan, I can't imagine what I would become by now.

Because whenever Meow has shifts, I secretly feel empty to the point where I don't want to be alone anymore. But she's like an umbrella unfolded on a rainy day. Just as I am about to be engulfed by the silence of the narrow room, she contacts me to meet her at the dorm entrance, telling me to bring clothes to stay overnight at her condo.

Being kicked out of the operating room by P'Karan makes me grow up. Whether I am having ward rounds, outpatient checks, shifts, or tasks in the operating room with other staff or senior colleagues, I leave those things behind and use my brain and heart to focus only on what is in front of me.

That's how life has been for a sixth-year medical student like me until Friday when Meow is supposed to meet with Tree to go out for a dinner date. I decide to buy something nearby to eat in my dormitory while waiting for my friend to return.

As I am walking down the stairs, the phone in my tote bag vibrates twice because of some messages.

I plan to check my phone when I reach the restaurant because I don't want to talk to anyone while walking at this late hour. But what makes me stop abruptly as I step onto the ground floor is the appearance of two people, and one of them stands there with an aggressive and tense posture.

Yes, they are my father and Fong-Samut.

The man is loudly and aggressively cursing, causing everyone else to turn and look at the eldest member of my family. My father still looks angry at me. Then, I realize that he's saying something like 'Call her!' or 'Tell them to call that bastard down!' And his gaze accidentally wanders towards me.

"You're finally here! Here! Take all your clothes."

I just notice a black bag placed next to where Fong-Samut is standing. Now, my younger brother turns to face me after our father points me out loudly. The college-aged young man lowers the phone attached to his ear. I guess he has tried calling me several times just now, which I have been blocking since the morning, completely unaware.

Dad marches over and grabs the black bag, likely containing my clothes, and forcefully swings it towards me, causing me to step back and feel pain in my arm. His violent outburst causes people in the dormitory's basement to turn and look at us curiously.

"From now on, don't you dare come back home!"

"Understood."

"Don't you have any shame at all?!"

"I have no plan to go back to that house,"

I reply calmly.

"Geez! Damn you-"

His retort is abruptly cut short as he clutches his chest, appearing to be in pain and struggling to speak. Then, his body collapses, seemingly losing

consciousness. I have to quickly release the black bag from my arm, hurriedly supporting him to prevent his head from hitting the ground because of my medical instincts.

"Dad!"

Fong-Samut screams alarmingly and hurries over to help support him too. Initially, I was startled, my eyes widening. However, upon closer observation, I realize that my father's heart has not stopped beating entirely. He is experiencing a syncopal episode, which has been signaled by his frequent chest pain.

Suddenly, I quickly remove my tote bag and grab a communication device to unlock the screen, intending to use it to call our emergency room which is the nearest one. Before doing so, I discover that the two recent chat messages are from P'Karan, who can foresee the future. The messages conveyed:

Karan_K:

Bring him to ER.

Karan_K:

Heart Valve Regurgitation

She saw the future of my father's condition...

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❀36. Believe in Me❀

If it weren't for being brought urgently into the hospital and taken to the emergency room for examination, my father would probably still be stubbornly refusing to undergo the physical examination he'd been avoiding for months.

Here we sit together, me and Fong-Samut, waiting to hear the results.

And my younger brother, with tears in his eyes, can only blame everything on me.

"Because of you and your girlfriend! You stressed him out and made Mom stop talking to him! Are you satisfied now? Why did you have to bring up just household matters and tear our family apart?"

"I..."

"It's too late to apologize now."

I furrow my brow at the taller guy, who seems to be full of himself and interrupts my sentence.

"I don't think you're stupid enough not to understand the problem at hand."

"And yet, even now, you still won't give in to Dad. What do you want?"

"I don't want anything. I'm just minding my own business. You and Dad are the ones who stuffed my clothes into a black bag and came here yourselves. He lost his temper and then fainted all by himself."

"But the root cause is you. If you didn't go out with a woman or bring up trivial matters like housework to pick a fight, would it be like this? Can't

you just do housework like other girls? Would it kill you or something?"

"You, who grew up with everything you wanted and had all the free time for yourself, should just shut up!"

I scold my younger brother in front of the emergency room. All the other patients' relatives, staff, and security guards turn this way, observing our argument. The security guard frowns, raising a finger to his lips as a gesture for us to quiet down, without coming over to chase us away. Perhaps, it's because he recognizes me - the medical student with deadly shifts.

Alright, I admit I got a bit too heated.

The best thing I can do is to part ways with Fong-Samut for a while, go get a cold drink from the nearby vending machine, and calm down my burning head and chest. Otherwise, seeing his face may only continue our argument.

"Where are you going? We need to wait for Dad's results. Don't be prejudiced and run away so easily like this."

"It would be better if you spent your time persuading him to agree to the surgery."

With that, I leave because I don't want to argue with him anymore. Although he visited me to express regret about our parents' bias and wished for our family to love each other and whatever, in the end, deep inside, his mind was already saturated with my father's philosophy.

Fong-Samut just wants Mom and Dad to show their love equally, but he doesn't understand the root of the problem, where it all started. If he could choose, he would still be a brother who wants his mother and sister doing housework and has his father as the highest authority in the family. He rather believes everyone must surrender to Dad without any objections.

It looks like P'Karan is on ER duty today, so she must be there. I guess from the word 'bring' in the chat. After sipping Sprite, cooling my head, and easing the strange feeling in my heart, I decide to avoid walking back in the

same direction and head to my dormitory, change into scrubs, and volunteer to help in the emergency room.

It's very chaotic inside. Dad's fainting episode case looks like the least serious. Although P'Karan suspected valve regurgitation from the vision she had, the results haven't come out yet. And I shouldn't be blamed for the deadly shift because there were some emergency patients from the beginning.

So this time, the nurse on duty like P'Chai was relieved to see another doctor coming to help.

There was a fire accident at a plastic shop and two injured individuals were brought in. P'Karan sees me in the ER, but she focuses on a patient with a third- degree burn, which is considered severe because burns of that degree damage deep skin layers.

It isn't the time to talk. This moment is an emergency.

At the same time, I am asked to help another case, a teenage girl trying to end her life because her boyfriend cheated. Her parents who are crying to death drove her to the hospital. Right now, her vitals are very weak, and she isn't conscious yet.

My decision to offer help here is the right one.

I don't hesitate to step up onto the bed and begin CPR, trying to save her life. My arms stretch straight, hands clasped over her chest, exerting full force with each compression.

Being scolded by Dad, criticized by my younger brother, makes me, the one pumping this girl's heart, overlay stories of my own on hers, although they are completely different.

I could see it... Your parents really love you. They are crying and wanting to come in here.

Why? Just because your boyfriend didn't treat you well, why did you choose to end your own life? For someone like me, who is hated by her own parents... I feel so bad seeing you like this!

So, I won't let you go! Not when you still don't see the worth of being loved by your family!

"Get me the defibrillator!"

I shout for the heart pump machine. P'Chai rushes to grab it and brings it beside the bed. She applies the gel and hands it to me as I climb down the bed, not touching the patient because the machine I am about to use has electric currents.

"1, 2, 3, clear!"

The petite body jerks from the electrical shock. I hand back the device before climbing back onto the bed again and continuing CPR with both hands. I lift my face to check her pulse, and there is still no sign of improvement.

"Again, please!"

I shout breathlessly, but P'Chai knows exactly what I meant. I climb down from the bed and perform the procedure again, but this time, my voice has some hint of exhaustion,

"1, 2, 3... clear!"

Then, I hand the device back to P'Chai and go back to pump her heart on the bed once more. I focus solely on the girl's body and her heartbeat, but from the corner of my eye, I notice P'Chai repeatedly checking her small wristwatch from a distance.

"Wake up... Your parents love you so much."

I don't know how much time has passed. I know only both my arms from performing CPR are completely exhausted. Sweat soaks through my shirt

until my hair is damp. The doctors and nurses in the emergency room are busy with other critical cases.

"Please come back..."

Her heart has stopped beating for several minutes, but I keep performing chest compressions. P'Chai takes over for me at one point because the other staff members are occupied. Then, after seeing P'Chai struggle with her bandaged hand that might have been caused by an accident, I take over again to continue the compressions on the girl's chest.

"Please... Your parents love you so much."-

So many people out there need love from their families. Please recognize its value a little more.

I try to bring her back without caring about the time, until...

"Doctor, please announce the time of death."

P'Chai speaks calmly, looking at my exhausted face as I continue pumping.

"It's been 30 minutes."

"..."

Only the sound of my labored breathing can be heard.

"It's over now."

"...."

I continue to exert force on the girl's chest, feeling as though I have lost consciousness somehow. The elder might be concerned that I am overexerting myself, as no one is available to relieve me, and seeing how much I am sweating from my arms and face makes her yell strongly.

"Doctor!"

P'Chai raises her voice, attempting to bring me back from what seems like madness like I might truly lose it if I couldn't save this girl.

But at that moment, the girl's pulse returns on its own. As the senior nurse's voice fades, I stop my hand that had been pumping her heart. Then, I speak while trying to grasp some air.

"She... She is...back."

That makes P'Chai widen her eyes in disbelief before stepping in to take over with the assistance as I step back weakly to stand beside the bed. Straightening my elbows and performing compressions over a hundred times per minute for this long is no different from running multiple laps around a football field. I don't know how I managed it because all I focused on was bringing this girl back.

As I stand there, catching my breath, I suddenly feel like I am being watched. When I turn to my left, I see a middle-aged man observing me, and that man is my father who has entered the emergency room earlier.

I don't know when he has regained consciousness, but I know he is staring at me with a stunned expression as if he is surprised about something.

But I don't say anything to him...

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The test results finally came out, and just as P'Karan saw with her own eyes in the vision, my father had a leaky heart valve. It seems like he's had it for a long time and refuses to get checked. He deludes himself into thinking these symptoms are just due to his advancing age.

In his case, the cause of the condition is mitral valve insufficiency, which leads to inadequate closure of the valve between the upper and lower left chambers of the heart, causing blood to flow backward into the upper chamber.

This isn't a particularly rare disease; it's quite common in the medical field. For the cardiovascular and thoracic surgery department, cases like this are somewhat frequent. Surgery typically takes about 3-5 hours, and our hospital has specialized doctors for this.

"We might need to replace the heart valve... right?"

"In reality, not every patient needs a replacement."

It's been a day since that night in the emergency room, and now we just have a chance to sit and talk in the quiet twilight after the ward rounds. We sit on the green grass by the pond near the medical residence.

"If he agrees to take the treatment, there will be a discussion on whether this case should be treated with replacement or repair."

"At the moment, Fong and Mom are persuading Dad to consider surgery."

"He's probably scared."

"Yes, I know he's been afraid to find out what's wrong with him. But now that he knows, why won't he say anything? Mom has stopped being angry, but he stays silent when everyone convinces him to seek treatment."

"I think he's scared of not waking up again."

"...."

"Many patients are afraid of dying during surgery. From a patient's perspective, they don't know if their case is easy or difficult. They're just worried about falling asleep in the operating room and not waking up."

"I don't know what to do. I don't want to go back home, but I don't want anyone in my family to be in pain either."

"It might take some time."

"Yes, hopefully, Dad will stop being stubborn and agree to treatment eventually."

I can't be sure if Dad will actually agree to the surgery. The future envisioned by P'Karan and I can always change if any variables come into play. So, I can't rely on that initial dream as a reference.

Perhaps, Dad might refuse to change altogether, or he might agree. And when it comes to treatment, it's divided into two types: heart valve replacement and heart valve repair, as P'Karan mentioned.

Rrrr!

Suddenly, a phone call rings. I reach for it from my gown pocket, thinking it might be a call on duty, but the displayed number stuns me.

After the incident, I stopped blocking my family members' numbers. However, maybe because they have been busy persuading Dad to treat his leaky heart valve, they didn't call me non-stop again. So, I can't help but feel surprised at Mom's call...

"You don't want to answer?"

"I'd rather not get too involved with my family again, but I'll pick up in case it's an emergency,"

I say openly to P'Karan, moving closer so our arms collide. P'Karan isn't wearing a gown, so our skins touch warmly.

[Are you available, Kliao?]

Just picking it up, Mom asks me in a serious tone. I don't want to get too involved with family matters, so I answer coldly.

"Not much. What's up?"

[Dad said he's willing to undergo surgery...]

"Well, that's good then."

[But there's a condition.]

"What condition? Does he still need anything else?"

[He said heart surgery is scary. He isn't confident about it even if we get an expert.]

"...."

[But he believes in your hand, Kliao.]

My hand...?

"What are you talking about? I haven't graduated yet. You need specialized surgery training. Besides, every doctor does their best."

[I don't know what's his mind, but Dad's confident that even if his heart stops, Kliao can bring him back.]

"...."

[So he mentioned that if Kliao is in the room too... Then, he'd agree to the surgery].

Dad complicates things for me...morally.

Yes, he saw me losing my self-control while performing CPR on that girl until her heartbeat returned. I'm not sure how long my father was watching, maybe since I climbed onto the bed initially. At that moment, I didn't care about anything else because I just wanted to ensure she didn't succumb to death. It was exhausting-all the sweat on my face and back, even my arms.

And the person in the next bed probably saw all of that.

"N...No way, Mom. They won't let a doctor operate on their own relative."

[Please, Kliao.]

"Mom, listen! I can't do it."

[Then, why study to become a doctor if you can't even help your father?]

"..."

[I'm begging you.]

Why? They are making it difficult for me.

Basically, even if I am a doctor, if the case involves my father, I would still have the status of a patient's relative, and the rule is that relatives are strictly prohibited from entering. It's a matter of the doctor's efficiency.

[Please do it for our family.]

They're... asking me to do something that goes against my ethics.

□□□□□

❖❖37. Expectation❖❖

I rejected my mother's request.

But she insisted I reconsider...

It's been three days since I haven't contacted my family altogether.

Theoretically, based on my conversation with P'Karan about a heart valve replacement, it is not a surgery with a low survival percentage. These days, she encounters such cases occasionally, like three cases a day, involving both metal and tissue replacements.

"But sometimes, using the repairing method yields better results. Patients don't have to take medication for life, and they don't need to introduce foreign objects into their bodies because their own tissue is used. However, I am still a fellow. In cases like this, I have to consult with other professors during case conferences."

The young woman who came to have lunch with me today at the restaurant across from the hospital gate talks about heart valve repair surgery as another option. I can sense that she prefers the repair approach more.

However, I think ultimately my father should undergo the metal heart valve replacement because in my dream, it seemed like my father would have to take blood-thinning medication for the rest of his life.

"By the way, can I ask you something unrelated? Why didn't you enroll in the 5-year CVT program from the beginning? What made you study in the surgical board for 4 years and then continue fellowship for another 2 years?"

"I don't know. I didn't think much about it. I just wanted to become a heart doctor after finishing the board."

"Is it because you saw a future where my father would have this disease?"

"No. Why do you think like that?"

"It's because you often sacrifice yourself for me. It's been many times already."

"I only know that you will come here as an extern."

"Huh?" But before I can ask her if she is joking or being serious..."

Rrrrr!

Her phone, which is placed on the table, suddenly rings. I can't see the caller ID, but it seems to be an important number because it makes her hurriedly pick up and answer the call. The other end says something for a while, causing P'Karan's expression to become serious and tense. At that moment, I understand immediately.

"Are you being called?"

I ask after she hung up.

"Yes, at the ICU."

"Please go ahead. Let's meet up later in the evening."

"Sorry about this."

"It's okay."

The young woman in the light-colored shirt quickly pulls out a one thousand bill and places it on the table. I am about to decline because it is too much, but before I can, the tall woman stands up and swiftly walks out of the restaurant towards the door in a rush.

Gosh, we've agreed that I'll treat this meal today. I shall return the bills this evening.

Rrrr! Rrrr! Rrrr!

This time, my communication device occasionally vibrates with incoming chats. Initially, I thought it might be my friends who like to keep in touch. However, the LINE ID that pops up belongs to my younger brother... I completely forgot that I had turned on notifications for Fong-Samut.

Fong Sa:

Sis

Fong Sa:

I decided to lie to Dad.

Fong Sa:

I lied that you agreed to be in the operating room.

After reading that, I immediately feel a heavy heart and frown. I pick up my phone right away, not to type a response, but because I am too upset and have to call him to express my dissatisfaction.

"Why did you do that?"

Certainly, we are still holding on to some resentment from our previous argument.

[What else? I want Dad to get treated.]

"I also want him to get treated. Just explain to Dad how advanced medical technology is today. The surgical team will work at their best. There's no need for an extern like me to be there. They will succeed without me."

[You may change your mind. Anyway, isn't it better for Dad to agree to receive treatment?]

"No, this is a matter of ethics."

[Just drop dead the ethics!]

"Are you trying to pressure me?"

[Is it really that difficult for you? You don't care about Dad anymore, do you?]

"What should I do to make you understand better?"

[Ha! You're so selfish-]

"I don't know if I can control myself when an emergency happens to my father in the operating room! That's why they don't allow doctors to operate on their own relatives!"

[...]

"I don't want to get involved with him... But I also don't want to see him die in front of me."

[...]

The other end stay silent for a long pause. As for me, I grip my hand tightly to prevent it from shaking when imagining those frightening scenes. I trust the surgical team, but... We all have anxious imaginations tucked away in the corners of our minds.

[I understand now...]

A softer voice rises.

[If that's the case, can I just use your name to deceive him that you're allowed to enter? You don't need to get in on the actual day.]

"Fong, don't do this. It's wrong. Tell the truth to Dad."

[I won't bother you anymore.]

"Wait-"

Before I can finish speaking, my younger brother hung up abruptly, as if knowing too well that I will surely refuse.

It seems like I'm being pressured into joining the lie...

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My father agreed to undergo treatment, and he insisted that it must be my hospital because he believes in his son's words.

However, my father has been oddly quiet and avoids eye contact with me for some unknown reasons.

It's better like this because although I'm worried about him, I think talking to him might not be beneficial, especially when we're fighting.

P'Karan mentioned that and recommending the repair of the heart valve, the case conference concluded that my father's treatment would involve a heart valve replacement with a metal prosthesis, which was the opinion of Professor Chaidej, his primary physician.

The professor identified some factors suggesting that replacement would be more suitable in this case. Although P'Karan preferred the repair method, she accepted the professor's reasons, and she would be assisting in the surgery as he recommended.

I know they often perform heart valve replacements, but from the daughter's perspective, I still feel secretly worried.

Once it's your own family, almost all doctors must feel the same way...

I consulted P'Karan about this issue that Fong-Samut called to discuss. She remained silent for a while, then gently stroked my head before saying that it was not my fault. It's right to refuse. This principle of ethics is established for the doctor's own sake and the patient's as well. What should be done is to change their mindset.

But that's very challenging. They just argued that they needed to borrow my name to deceive my father, which I disagreed with. What if my father is wheeled into the OR and doesn't find me there? Won't he feel upset?

I tried to keep the matter to myself and didn't talk to P'Karan about it anymore because I didn't want her to worry about it, but she noticed my condition very well. She reassured me by saying.

'I will talk to your father about the surgery myself.'

I think even if she explains what the surgery is about, my father must still be afraid.

I still need to continue with my normal life, performing my duties as an extern attentively. I move from the surgical ward to the orthopedics ward. I play music at a bar on some weekends or appear on TV shows with friends my bandmates.

My mother and Fong-Samut keep contacting me to go see my father. As for them, I don't respond much other than saying that we shouldn't lie from the beginning.

Initially, my father's surgery was scheduled to happen in three months. By then, I should probably be rotating to another hospital in the countryside. However, the following week, his condition worsened significantly, leading to an emergency room visit at a nearby hospital in the middle of the night.

This prompted Professor Chaidej to suggest that the surgery be scheduled sooner because my father's heart might not hold out, which meant the surgery day would take place during my rotation at this hospital.

...Things we worry about often happen unexpectedly and quickly, and not long after, that day arrives.

Phee Karan comes to see me after the morning ward round. She invites me up to the rooftop together.

Today, the sky is clear and the weather is not too hot. I'm not sure if the older woman knew this from the weather forecast or her vision, but she probably has a busy schedule ahead, yet she stopped by to check on me and even gently touched my forehead to see if I was feeling okay.

"Do you trust me and the team?"

"Yes, I trust you. You encounter cases like this often, I know." As I said, it's not a complex surgery or one with a low survival rate. But once you're in the patient's shoes, the perspective changes.

"For peace of mind, let's say if something happens... I will reverse the tim-"

"No, don't exchange your age for anyone else's."

"...."

"Do you remember that you promised me to make decisions together every time you use your abilities? So, this time, I don't allow it. One, because I know you and the team will do your best with this surgery. And two... because I don't want you to exchange it with your lifespan again."

"Um, understood."

She replies with her beautiful husky voice, then she asks with concern.

"Are you okay to work today?"

The breeze ruffles her hair gently; the scene fits well with her soft eyes that are meant for me alone.

"I'm okay. Just having some thoughts."

Actually, I'm thinking about so many things, but I don't want to worry her.

"I told you I already talked to your father."

"Yes..."

She probably refers to the details of the surgery.

"Don't worry too much. Later this evening, I'll take you out for ice cream."

Her soft-spoken words and the gentle touch of her hand on my head relax me. She is my first love and my sunshine. I smile thanks to her lovely behaviors. I can sense that she will keep her promises, no matter how small or large the issue is.

I plan to muster courage in the next few hours before half past one to speak the truth to my father.

However...by noon, I still lack that courage entirely.

My father's surgery is scheduled to start at forty minutes past one. At noon today, I didn't see P'Karan anywhere because she was having lunch in the staff lounge. Meanwhile, I sat down to eat grilled saba fish and a kiwi juice smoothie with my colleagues.

No one mentions my father's surgery. They engage in lively conversations about other topics as if to relieve the tension. But beneath the normalcy I project, my mind is still filled with many thoughts.

Mom and Fong-Samut don't call or message me anymore. They probably believe my silence is a definite rejection. Nonetheless, Fong-samut believes that getting Dad's consent for treatment is sufficient. Even if he didn't see me in the operating room, he probably wouldn't be able to withdraw.

But would that be for the best?

I strongly disagree with those two. Damn it!

At 1.05 PM, a professor calls me to join an interesting case.

At 1.10 PM, I wash my hands and prepare to enter Operating Room 1 as directed

At 1.15 PM, I don't know... I really don't know... In about another half an hour, Dad will know the truth.

From noon until now, I've been pondering and reflecting continuously. Although I initially thought being called to assist in this case was a good thing. However, when the anesthetist began administering sedatives to the patient in front of me and the patient finally fell asleep, I realized that I didn't have enough focus to assist the professor and the patient who had skeletal issues.

Where is my focus supposed to be? The answer lies in a patient who is scheduled for surgery at forty minutes past one. I can't bear the thought of deceiving my father, even though I don't want to get involved with him at all.

"Professor"

"Yes, what is it?"

"May I...leave the operating room?"

The professor from the Orthopedics Ward and the first-year resident, along with the whole surgical team in the room, all look up to me. Tension starts to build, making it difficult to explain. Fortunately, a scrub nurse probably knows enough of the situation. She doesn't look at me or any of the doctors, but she speaks briefly.

"Her father has surgery scheduled this afternoon."

I can't let a patient be deceived.

"I just want to talk to my father... I'll come back to study this case in the observation room."

"...."

Inside this room, silence lingers for a while, punctuated only by the sounds of medical equipment. Then, the professor nods and utters with understanding.

"Alright then, but if you come back early, come and assist me."

"Th... thank you very much, Professor."

With that, I exit the operating room swiftly, still in light blue scrubs, and head down the corridor. When I reach my father's bed, which hasn't been moved anywhere yet, Mom and Fong-Samut are sitting nearby.

All three of them turn to look at me as I catch my breath for several seconds, using both hands to support my knees, before standing upright and walking toward them.

It has been months of preparation for this surgery. Mom has mentioned that Dad had been abnormally silent within the family, hardly speaking to anyone. Today seems no different; there is no exchange of words, even upon seeing me appear.

"Sis..."

My younger brother's pale face immediately reveals his fear that I might blurt out the truth.

And yes, that's exactly why I'm here-to speak the truth.

"May I have a word with Dad, alone?"

Fong-Samut seems to be catching on. He furrows his brows.

"Why can't I and Mom stay?"

"Come on, Fong, take me to buy some water."

Mom urges, grabbing her son's arm before attempting to lead him away. At first, he resists, but after Dad, who has been silent for a long time, insists they go, my younger brother reluctantly obeys. He walks over to me and whispers in my ear, reminding me not to tell the truth that I wouldn't be in the operating room. Then, he leads Mom out of the area.

It is just the two of us now...

Dad stares at me with an incomprehensible gaze. Perhaps, my gestures probably indicate that I am about to speak of something distressing...

...It is time for those lies to be shattered.

And I can't tell what would happen once he knew the truth.

"I can't get inside."

He stays quiet for a moment before turning his gaze elsewhere and replies.

"I already knew."

□□□□□

🌿38. The Outcome🌿

"I can't get inside."

I said quietly before turning my gaze elsewhere and responding,

"I already know."

The listener remains silent for a moment before turning his gaze elsewhere and responds.

"I already knew."

"Huh?"

I am unexpectedly surprised.

"Your girlfriend and I have discussed this long time ago."

"P'Karan talked to you?"

"Yes, before I agreed, she explained the details of the disease, the surgery, the medications needed for life, and the doctor's ethics."

Suddenly, memories flash into my head about what P'Karan had said:

'I will talk to your dad about surgery myself.'

'I told you. I already talked to your dad.'

What she said...was not just explaining the disease as I thought, but telling the whole truth without lying. I pause for a moment due to the overwhelming feeling and then regain my composure.

"And...why didn't you say anything when Mom and Fong lied about I'm going in?"

"I didn't feel like saying anything."

I glance at the face with age lines. It seems like others are concerned for no reason. If he is mentally prepared like this, I should return to the operating room I was allowed to leave just now.

"If you already knew it, then I should go first."

However, the moment I am about to turn away, my hand is suddenly grabbed.

When I turn to face him, I am surprised to find my father staring at me with a gaze I have never seen before. It is the gaze of someone terrified to the core, and his eyes are watery.

"I am afraid..."

His voice trembles with despair. I immediately realize that sometimes adults cry just like children. But the fear embedded deep in his heart makes mine sink and throb.

"I'm afraid I won't wake up... Can you stay just a little longer?"

As I reflect on the situation more thoroughly, he might not want to reveal that he is afraid of surgery in front of others. Moreover, my father has a big ego and always complains that my mother is weak, so he has concealed this gaze, unwilling to say much as he might be bursting into tears.

Dad likes to sit at the head of the table during meals, counting the money in the house. The shop is named after him. He believes he is the head of the family. When all these conservative beliefs are combined, he is too embarrassed to admit it directly.

But because no one is around except for me and him, and the surgery time is approaching soon, these fears surface and overwhelm him. I glance at the

round wall clock, which is not far away. The staff probably arrive soon to take my father to the operating room.

Even though I might never return home after this, and my father wouldn't attend my wedding, I still turn back and hold his hand with my other hand. Although I don't give him a cheer-up smile because we have never shared good moments together, I see him now as just another patient.

"You want me in there because you saw me pump the patient's heart, right?"

The middle-aged man doesn't respond, but the trembling sound of his moan is the answer.

"But that's what all doctors do, Dad. You've just never seen it yourself."

"...."

"Anyway... I will watch the surgery from the observation room."

"..."

"When you wake up from the surgery, I will go to find you at the bedside."

Dad continues to sob through his throat, his face showing the vulnerability of an adult consumed by fear. The man who once saw his daughter's hands as only fit for household chores, not a profession, rests his head against my clasped hands.

It is uncomfortable enough that I want to pull away, but if letting him to hold on can bring him even the slightest comfort, then it is worth it. So, I let him continue in that manner.

Though I feel uneasy and sweaty, I still allow him to hold onto my hand until the medical staff comes to wheel the stretcher into the OR. When we reach the entrance of the room, things become increasingly tense. Once there, I let go to allow him to enter. Dad's eyes meet mine as much as they can, and I stand there silently, feeling strange.

It feels like the first time in our lives that we hold hands.

And perhaps it would be the last because our relationship is too hard to repair.

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I've witnessed heart valve replacement surgeries many times before, but this time, my heart is racing from the moment they pick up the scalpel. I now get it too well that a doctor shouldn't be in the operating room when their own relative is the patient. Just observing it, my focus barely exists, and my heart is in turmoil.

A resident joins me to watch. He is probably here more to learn, as he has a notebook filled with scribbles in his hand. The sound of his pen scratching on the paper only adds to my anxiety.

But standing here, I manage to keep my composure...

Three and a half hours feel like three days in my mind until it finally ends. The OR lights are turned off, everything goes smoothly, and I let out a sigh of relief so loud that the resident, who has been with me for hours, turns to look.

P'Karan and Prof. Dej haven't left the OR. Just a brief moment later, another patient is wheeled in to replace the previous one, with a similar case. They continue to work unchangeably diligently. As for me, just standing here watching, I feel drained and exhausted, perhaps due to the stiffness and worry, so I can't continue watching the next case.

Dad is taken to the CCU to be monitored, and everything is smooth. I go to look through the glass but have no intention of getting inside. Then, I go to attend to what needs to be done.

In the evening, P'Karan takes me out to have ice cream as promised at a nearby shop not far from the hospital. We walk together, hand in hand without letting go. Along the way, my lips close tightly because I don't know where to start. When we get inside and get our seats, after making an order, I finally manage to arrange my thoughts on what to say first.

"Thank you for telling my dad about that."

"Lying to a patient is wrong. So, I asked for time to talk to him alone. I told him everything and let him decide whether to have the surgery."

"Why did Dad agree, though? Normally, he's quite...stubborn. And he's argued with you before."

"I apologized to him first."

"Huh? Why would it be like that? What you said that day is all correct. I was listening too. Dad was the one who spoke harshly at you."

"Well, if I didn't show any signs of surrender, he probably wouldn't have listened at all and might have thought I couldn't separate work from personal matters. So, I had to start with an apology for speaking rudely to make him feel comfortable with me being in there."

"You apologized to convince Dad to have the surgery for me, right?"

"...."

"I will tell him to apologize to you."

"I don't care anymore."

"No way. If it's like this, we'll perpetuate the idea that adults don't need to apologize even when they're wrong. Everyone knew that you spoke with reasons that day, but Dad took it personally and rudely."

I hardly catch my breath as I speak, thinking about the unsettling incident. Dad used that word 'pervert' to smear P'Karan's face. It must have hurt her, especially since her Mom and Mommy are a lesbian couple. I can't let it go. P'Karan might not be the patient's primary caregiver, but she still helps with Dad's surgery to the best of her ability.

While I frown, two servings of ice cream are served just right. Vanilla for the other person and chocolate for me.

"Eat first. It'll lighten your mood."

She suggests, inviting me to forget about the stress.

Even though this issue is still on my mind, I don't want to ruin the sweet atmosphere of this place, so I pick up a spoonful of ice cream and hide that matter away in the corner of my mind for now.

Several days later, Dad was discharged from the CCU and moved to a special ward, where I managed his expenses using money I earned from playing music. In fact, I had just entered the pediatric ward, or as we call it, the "kids' ward," after being given permission to visit as promised...

It seems like deceiving a little patient in the ward to take medicine might make me late. Prof. Dej probably has left. Now, the only people left in this rectangular room are my family: Dad, Mom, my younger brother, and me, who has just arrived.

"Being a doctor...is quite tough, right?"

Dad speaks up apologetically. He is someone who used to scold me for not going home, accusing me of making excuses. But on that day, when he himself experienced the commotion in the emergency room and saw me pumping a young girl's heart like crazy for half an hour, his mindset changed.

I don't respond because we rarely have a nice conversation. So, I change the subject.

"How are you feeling?"

The person in the light-colored hospital gown slightly taps his chest and says softly,

"Feeling the pain is good because it means I'm still alive."

I smile upon hearing that.

"I told you everything will be smooth. It might take some time to rest and recover, but it won't be long."

Then, I bring up something that has to be said.

"Dad, can you apologize to P'Karan for the things you said?"

"Is this the right time for that, Sis?"

Fong-Samut's stern voice interjects with a hint of criticism, but Mom quickly grabs his arm to prevent an argument.

I wonder if Dad is silent because he pretends not to hear or he's just upset. But no, he looks down with lowered eyes.

"Of course... If I ever see that child again, I must apologize and say thank you."

I feel relieved upon knowing this.

It seems like... I should say something - something I would normally say if we were a warm, close family. But now that I've decided firmly to move forward with my life separate from this family, I'll assist financially with needs, but I won't go back.

Sometimes, we just want to move on.

That's why I won't say what I'm about to say at my wedding but right here, right now.

"From now on, no more alcohol drinking. And don't forget to take your medicine."

Yes, Dad knows there's more to it than that. This is one of those farewells. His eyes even look a bit sad after hearing that.

Why is Dad softened to this extent? Is it because of my cheer-up before his surgery? Staying beside him while he was crying? Holding his hand all the way to the operating room? Or maybe it's all of them combined. I can't tell.

"... So, you're really not going back home anymore?"

I smile slightly. "No, I'm not going back."

"Kliao, I'm sorry. Can you forgive me?"

"Yes, I can... But I won't be going back."

In the quiet room, Mom and Fong-Samut both know that there is nothing left to anchor me to them. Even if they were to change, I couldn't force myself back into that same spot.

Once, Dad was scolded by Mom for raising his voice and throwing away things, causing some damage. For a long time after, Mom stopped talking to him, then he agreed not to do it anymore. She accepted his apology.

But eventually, my father remained the same. Just because he agreed to say 'I won't do it anymore,' that was enough for Mom to return. However, although he had been forgiven, he either threw away things or destroyed stuff during his tantrums.

Sometimes, change can last a lifetime.

Or it might only last for a brief moment, just like before.

I have no idea which one this is.

So, I think it's time to protect what I call my 'feelings'.

If you apologize now, who will take responsibility for the painful 24 years of my life?

If I don't have P'Karan, I might not even want to live, right?

Walking away might seem cruel, but if I have to go back and face this family again, I will feel the same pain. I can't help but think,

'Can I have ever have my childhood happiness back?', 'Would it have been better if they had been kind to me from the start?', 'Do Mom and Dad love

their children equally now?' and 'Would things have been different if Dad hadn't decided to hit me that day?'

Therefore, not going back has a positive effect on my mental health.

"I will go to work first."

I briefly make eye contact with my little brother, then turn to wave goodbye to Mom and Dad, and then prepare to walk away from them.

I can see the man sitting on the bed with tears streaming down his face. He raises both trembling hands. His eyes, filled with a haunting gaze, look at his own hands as if he is pleading for forgiveness.

The sound of regret almost makes him want to turn back time to fix the past, from the day he hit me to the moment he chased me who just opened the dormitory door.

"What have I done? Oh... What have I done?"

Perhaps, I appear too callous.

But family relationships aren't always as they are depicted in fairy tales.

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39. The Connections

Even though I'm not an angelic heroine from a soap opera who has a radiant smile and infinite love toward children, I have to admit that working in the pediatric ward is far more peaceful than in other wards (except for those moments when the kids throw tantrums when they see needles or medicine),

When I was a fourth-year student, I had just entered the clinical program and hardly knew how to cope with them. I studied with lectures and learned from seniors. But now that I am an extern, I find myself directly facing the challenge of treating children.

Even though the ward seems less chaotic compared to others, it is still quite challenging.

"June, you have to take your medicine after meals. The pink fairy will disappoint with a bad girl..."

Sometimes, I have to become some kind of fairy representative to coax a primary school girl into taking her medicine after meals.

"No! No! No!"

The little girl who is still small and just admitted yesterday, is shaking her head with her crumpled face, as if on the verge of tears. In the end, I have to quickly pull out my secret weapon from my pocket to stop her pout. Now, her eyes are sparkling.

"But Doctor have candy for you."

I put effort into smiling, almost cracking my cheeks.

"No..."

But the girl still refuses because she has been tricked by another extern into thinking the medicine tasted like chewable milk tablets. Once she tasted the bitterness, she wasn't having it. And that's troubling me now.

"Come on, just take it."

I slowly unwrap the plastic of the lollipop, revealing its bright pink color because it is strawberry-flavored.

"I've opened it for you. Swallow the medicine first, then you can have the candy. June, don't you like it?"

"Mmm..."

She hesitates, making sounds in her throat.

"Okay, fine..."

And in the end, the little girl gives in to the candy.

Being late back to the dorm isn't because of anything else. It is because I usually spend so much time convincing the kids to take their medicine during dinner. And it's not like there is only June in the ward. Some older kids are easier to deal with, but with the younger ones, I have to rely on the things in my bag, and I have to buy them myself.

Okay, even with their stubborn side, sometimes kids show their adorable, innocent side.

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Sigh.

Today, I'm on the night shift. It is a ward shift. As soon as the evening round was done, I came back to my dorm to shower and change clothes

before 7 PM because I had a dinner appointment with someone. Of course, that someone was the young lady who always makes me smile, the CVT doctor who is known for her cold heart. Tonight, she's also on night duty.

The familiar Ashton Martin parked early again, drawing the attention of others in the dormitory. Everyone in the hospital already knows that we have a certain connection. It's to the point where when the 'Let's Share Pretty Doctors' page shares a new post, the hospital staff comment:

NiCha Kunna:

Stop dreaming, everyone. She already has a wife. She's also a doctor. Let me emphasize the word '*wife*'.

Oh my, what's with the term 'wife'? We aren't married yet...

But I'm not mad at you, Nicha. Why would I be? Thank you for letting the world know that P'Karan already has someone special!

"What are you smiling about?"

The charming husky voice pulls me out of my thoughts, and I blink to focus, looking at the beautiful face in the neat white shirt sitting opposite me. Then, I realize that I am smiling triumphantly, knowing that now the whole online community knows that she has a lover.

"I can't smile? I want to smile."

I pretend to pout before bursting out laughing when the other party reaches out to stroke my head with a gentle smile, which makes me blush.

"P'Karan, huh..."

"I'm sorry that I don't have much time."

"It's okay. I'm not exactly free either."

"Let's go out somewhere on a weekend?"

I nod with a smile.

"Sure, whenever it's convenient for you."

Even though we're both busy during this time, being able to come out and have a meal together like this softens my heart, reminding me that life still has a purpose waiting.

The dream is that once she becomes a professor and I finish my studies and internship, we'll move in together and have more time for each other. It's like an imminent future that I want to reach quickly.

While waiting for the steak to be served, I suddenly remember this month's schedule.

"Actually, next Friday Meow has a night shift."

"I'll come pick you up at 11 PM."

"You're in such a hurry."

I chuckle slightly at her desire to stay overnight with me at her condo. It's all expressed through her short sentence.

"I'd like us to watch a movie together."

"Just a movie, or more than that?"

Let me tease her a bit.

"Well, you look delicious just like this."

"P'Karan..."

She secretly smiles when she sees how embarrassed I become.

She seems cool yet so hot.

Afterward, when the waiter brings two plates to serve, we finally start eating dinner together. Mine is a pork chop steak, and hers is a dory fish steak. When satisfied with the main course, the older woman takes me to

our regular crepe shop and buys some to eat together at the table under the medical dormitory.

"P'Karan, are you lucky or deadly?"

"Just go with the flow."

"That's good. Everyone says I'm a deadly shift type. Ever since I got into my fourth year and now that I'm in my sixth year..."

Then, P'Karan sits and listens to me tell the story of my clinical life. She is a good listener and seems genuinely interested in my stories. However, being someone who speaks little, she tends to ask short questions, and I am the one who elaborates at length.

It is already past ten at night, and her questions remain as brief as ever, so my answers become shorter as well.

"You're not anxious about family matters anymore, right?"

"Are you sure? If there's anything on your mind, you can always talk to me directly."

"Absolutely. I've carefully thought about it, and I'm not upset at all."

I didn't lie to her, because since the last time I saw my parents and younger brother, it's like I've shed all my lingering sadness. There's no need to question whether they truly love me or not, because right now, I'm only interested in P'Karan, and that's all.

But there's a certain feeling that surfaces when I browse various items in shopping apps and can't resist buying some with the money in my account and sending them home just in case they need them. I just don't want to be considered cruel.

To lighten the tense atmosphere, after eating crepes, I playfully tease,

"But... Well-There's nowhere for me to live anymore."

"You're always welcome at my condo."

I chuckle at her quick offer.

"Sure, I'd love to help you pay the installments."

She slightly frowns.

"What installments? I bought it in cash."

"Oh!"

Hmm, how could I forget that she drives an Aston Martin, wears a Chopard wristwatch, and even has a mother who is an international investor?

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Part: Narrator

01:50

At the CVT department common room.

Today's shift could be described as quiet, with no critically ill patients sent from the emergency room. This brought a sense of calmness to the ward, with no bustling around. Karan sat alone in the physician's lounge, as the second-year resident, who was on duty with her, had gone out to buy something.

A young woman wears a light blue scrub attire. Her dark eyes are engrossed in a thick English-language book about blood vessels.

In the midst of the silence, the door creaks open slowly, revealing the tall figure of a man in a scrub suit but with a long gown on top. The young woman glances up abruptly, then recognizes Fiat, a close friend from the department. She turns her attention back to her book.

"I think you're not on duty today."

"I exchanged shifts with Tin a week ago, so I have to make up for it."

"I see."

"Don't freeze the room, okay? I beg you."

It's a half-joke from the young man who stretches his tired body. Then, he heads to the counter with a hot water kettle and a coffee sachet jar. Although seemingly insignificant, with her alarming instinct, the woman who has been sitting there covertly scrutinizes his movements.

Fiat quickly makes himself a coffee within a minute, using a small spoon to mix it before sipping it bit by bit, standing next to the common room's door, secretly glancing at the wall clock ticking away. When the caffeine is gone, Karan no longer pays attention to him. But the young man initiates a conversation.

"What happened that night?"

"...."

"There was a rumor spreading around that last year you substituted for Professor Dej. People are courteous around you, who's just a fellow."

"A rumor."

But... in reality, it was the truth.

That night, an emergency case was admitted to the department. Professor Chaidej was on call and needed to be here. When he arrived at the operating room, everything seemed normal. He had encountered cases like this before at the professor's level.

However, the hand holding the scalpel was shaking. Both the nurses and Karan turned to look at the elderly man who was the eldest in the operating room, with only one eye. The second he was about to slit with the knife, the young woman asked sharply:

'Are you drunk, Professor?'

'I...I'm not drunk...to that extent.'

His voice faltered, half denial, half acceptance.

Yes, he was drunk.

It was a long-awaited friend's birthday, despite being on call and having to stand by. But he thought it wouldn't hurt to have a few drinks until his senses dulled. Upon arriving home without even saying hello to his wife, he collapsed onto the sofa in the living room. While falling asleep without a sound, his communication device loudly summoned him to the hospital urgently.

Karan could tell from the various reactions and decided instantly that he wasn't ready to perform surgery tonight, especially with an urgent and critical case like this.

'I'll do it myself.'

'Hold on! No, you can't. It's too risky. You've only been a fellow for a year!'

'A surgeon with impaired consciousness poses a higher risk to patients.'

'But you're a woman... Your decision-making can't match with men's...'

'At this point, Professor, you're so impaired by alcohol that your personal biases are showing.'

The scrub nurse made eye contact with Chaidej.

'I agree with Dr. Karan...'

"...."

Not letting the silence linger too long, Karan always remembered that they had to help the patient first, so she spoke up,

'Would you mind stepping out of the field, Professor?'

Only those in the OR knew about the fact that Chaidej, who was still drunk, had to step aside and let the fellow in. The result was that the surgery proceeded smoothly as if the young woman had learned the procedures from the future. This left him a big impression.

When combined with his guilt of being intoxicated while on telephone duty, it made Chaidej considerate of Karan, reducing bias towards the female doctors and emphasizing the importance of being on call.

In the operating room that night, everyone knew well enough to keep quiet and not speak of it, but someone might have slipped up, leading to rumors spreading everywhere.

Rumors... that were actually true.

Fiat himself knew some of it, from working closely with Karan. He believed it to be the truth.

Pausing the past, back to the present story, it seemed like his coffee was about to run out

Rrrrr!

Karan's phone was on the table, ringing with an incoming call. The caller ID showed the name of a certain doctor in the CVT department, also specializing in lung surgeries. Without hesitation, Karan reached for the phone and answered the call, injecting her professional tone.

"Karan speaking."

[Come assist me in the OR, please.]

Looking at the way he called her directly like this, it seemed like he was asking her to come help. She listened to the details and then hung up hastily before reaching her destination.

Karan closed the book on the table and picked up a special glasses case with a magnifying lens, immediately standing up to her full height.

"Where are you going?"

"OR," she briefly replied. She put my phone in her scrub pocket, so she could have a free hand to open the glasses case and check its contents while walking.

But in a split second, Fiat, standing by the door, flashed a brief smile. He waited for the young woman to approach closer and closer, then suddenly, his thick hand reached behind him for a knife.

In that split second, he thrust the sharp edge into the left side of Karan's, nearly hitting the hilt. This caused the unprepared body to bend in pain, unable to even hold onto the instrument in hand.

The surgical glasses fell to the floor with a loud impact, leaving a shattered lens, a sight that had been familiar in her vision a long time ago.

"Ouch! You..."

Karan grabbed the man's gown. Now she knew he had no good intentions. Fiat's smile widened as he leaned in, whispering in the youngbwoman's ear.

"I heard that if blood spills, you can't use your abilities, right?"

His thick hand twisted the knife's handle, inflicting more physical pain on the young woman. He pulled it out once, causing blood to gush, splattering her light blue gown. Despite Karan's attempt to lift her hand towards his face, she couldn't react in time to stop the knife from plunging down again, this time at a speed that she couldn't resist because of her overwhelming agony.

Fiat stood, looking at his friend lying in a pool of blood with his handiwork.

He picked up the phone, dialed a number saved as 'M', and waited for the line to connect. With just one ring, the other end answered as if waiting

beforehand. The man spoke up while his gaze lingered on the fallen figure of the young woman on the floor.

"All done."

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On the other side, a slender woman was standing near her gray sedan with the trunk open. A small, discreet phone was attached to her ear. Upon hearing the first sentence from 'him' on the line, her sweet face broke into a smile, contrasted with the beads of sweat from her earlier action.

"Don't let her die."

[I know. Just a severe stab. It will take a while for the wound to heal.]

"Alright, I'm leaving the hospital now."

[Um, then I'll drive over... Ming.]

The caller hung up. In her other hand, she held an empty syringe that once contained liquid. The beautiful-faced doctor turned to look at the rear of her car, where someone was being maneuvered into the space. Her eyes flickered with a spark of recognition upon seeing the extern in a short gown, hands and feet bound.

Plunk!

The trunk closed shut. The slender figure stepped toward the driver's seat, opened the door, and settled in. Starting the car with the key already in place, she directed herself to a prearranged location, prepared earlier with Fiat.

The abduction of Kliao Khluen was to negotiate with a woman who could reverse time.

It was because Ming had learned about Karan's abilities seven years ago.

When Karan had rushed to grab Kliao Khluen 's hand as she was falling from a building, Ming was a fifth-year medical student who caught up in the event. She ran with all her might, determined to catch Karan, who was almost falling down.

Yes, she touched Karan in that moment when time was rewound. The Roman numeral clock in golden hues appeared to Ming's eyes back then.

She went back to the week before, along with Karan and Kliao Khluen. Since Karan's condition was not as limited as Mai-tree's, anyone touching her body would remember what happened... No matter how many people there were.

This event alone made Ming realize that the ability to rewind time was indeed real.

Initially, she felt disoriented and confused about dates and times. However, upon reflecting on what happened, she understood that this was more than just a miracle-it was extraordinary.

Furthermore, Ming's body was impacted at times, causing her to sometimes dream of different events, which would then materialize in reality, making them visions of the future.

She was aware that executing this plan alone would be extremely difficult, which is why she managed to involve Fiat.

And now, with the woman at the back of her car being the love of Karan, she couldn't avoid being the hostage...

As she thought about this, Ming smiled to herself while driving on the night- time road.

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📖❄️40. Taboo for the Other End📖❄️

Part: Kliao Khleun

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Where am I?

I feel a strange, heavy headache.

A musty, damp smell wafts into my nostrils. Pain throbs in my wrists and ankles. The image in front of me blurs until I blink to adjust my vision and realize this place resembles an old warehouse. Sunlight, tinted like an evening glow, seeps in from outside, indicating it's midday. I try to move but find myself restrained, tied to a chair with ropes that chafe my skin.

Thud! Thud!

My heart races with fear, but no, you must calm down, Kliao Khluen... Stay calm. I attempt to move my hands and feet, only to discover that it's causing me pain. I then look around, broadening my sight and searching for anyone. I shout out hoping someone outside might hear and come to help. But it's all meaningless.

What's going on?

I control my breathing, which is quick and shallow due to the panic, trying to bring it back to normal. Then, I lower my head to reflect on how I ended up here.

The last memory I can recall... It seems no patients came in at that time. I and another male intern went out to buy noodles late at night, with other

orders from the ER seniors too. On our way back, we helped each other carry bags into the hospital.

Then, upon reaching the connecting hallway, he reached into his bag as if looking for something. However, he stopped suddenly, searching every corner before exclaiming, 'Oops!' and mimicking himself,

'I forgot my phone! I must've left it on the table!'

'Huh?'

"You go ahead. I'll quickly go back and get it."

'Uh... okay.'

The young man in the same attire then turned back and ran in the direction we came. I was not fond of walking alone at night. It secretly scared me. I don't know...maybe because of the atmosphere combined with past events. But I reassured myself to keep moving forward.

And at that moment, I heard footsteps approaching from behind, about to turn around thinking it was my friend returning after finding his phone. But no, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a woman stepping closer. However, before I could see her face, she swiftly reached out and jabbed something that felt like a syringe into me.

In just a few seconds, my consciousness began to blur and fade. I collapsed and all the items in my hand scattered everywhere. I glimpsed the person standing there; it was a woman, but my consciousness slowly faded until I finally passed out.

Now that I can put it together... I must have been injected with a sedative.

But who was that 'woman' I briefly saw? And what's the reason for me being the target?

Saliva dribbles along with a heart beating almost out of my chest. This place is both frightening and inviting strange thoughts. At this moment, I

can't help but wonder if...I am approaching the nightmare of my throat being threatened with a knife.

Because of the damp smell and the location, I am instantly concerned about P'Karan, worrying that something might happen to her.

Because in that nightmare, she came to find me and even talked to the perpetrator.

The matter of Avatch has ended. Why does it still happen?

Does this mean the perpetrator has nothing to do with the late Avatch?

"You're awake."

A voice rings out, making me startle and turn my head to find the sweet-faced woman with her regular smile. She walks towards me, before sitting down so that our eyes can meet.

"P'Ming?"

I'm surprised to the utmost, and when another man followed, I am even more confused,

"P'Fiat?"

Both of them are here, but the way they look at me implies that they aren't here to help or even surprised to see me tied to this chair. The woman has a sly smile, while the man has a calm and blank expression, looking elsewhere, making me realize in an instant that they don't come for good, and both seem to be the ones who...brought me here.

"What do you all want?"

Despite feeling dry-throated, I ask with a semi-angry tone, not fully understanding the current situation.

The sweet-faced young woman, whose eyes now reflect a hint of hidden malice, slips out sarcastically.

"What do I want? Perhaps, a chance to come back from death, like what happened to you seven years ago?"

"You mean...up there on the rooftop?"

"That's right."

She stands up and walks over to my side, placing her hand lightly on my shoulder and patting it two or three times.

"Karan might have used her time-reversal ability with you many times, and that's what's made her such a skilled doctor."

I shake my head.

"P'Karan didn't do that. She's never used it on any patients, except what happened on the rooftop seven years ago."

"Well, that just emphasizes how important you are to Karan."

"....."

"Feeling better now, Fiat? Because it means no matter what, Karan will struggle and risk her life to help this girl."

"Um..."

The young man, looking visibly anxious, replies with a tense face.

"It reassures me that I don't have to worry about the news that came out this morning."

"Do you want to know what Fiat was talking about?"

Ming turns to look at me, a smirk dancing on her lips, making me furrow my brow due to the surging heat in my heart.

"What news?"

"The news about a doctor stabbing another in the doctor's lounge."

"!!"

"If blood comes out, Karan won't be able to use her ability until it stops completely. Do I understand correctly, Kliao Khluen?"

"You guys shouldn't do something like that!"

"But we did."

"You guys are f*cking evil!"

I curse without caring whether I am in an unfavorable state. These two collaborated to harm P'Karan's body to make sure that, until her wounds heal completely, her abilities are useless.

"Her ability can't be used to save lives, it has its limitations!"

Before I can finish speaking about the conditions that require heavy exchange, a black tape is swiftly brought over to cover my mouth by P'Ming. Annoyed, she puckers her lips while pressing down firmly on the tape until I can't even utter a word of condemnation. All I can do is glare at her with seething anger.

P'Fiat observes every action before he lifts his wristwatch to check the time, interjecting,

"By now, Karan should be leaving the operating room and recovering."

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The operating room...

That means it wasn't just a mere cut; from what I heard, they likely severely damaged her body. I feel nervous, attempting to free my bound hands from the back of the chair, but it is hopeless. Instead, I grit my teeth as I watch P'Ming grab my phone from P'Fiat and dial a certain number.

I pray that it wouldn't be P'Karan who answered... But it seems useless. The sweet-faced woman smiles after waiting for the call to connect.

"You hurriedly answer because it's Kliao Khluen's number, right? Well...are you recovered? How's the wound?"

P'Karan was the one who picked up the call...

Ha! How did she dare ask such a question? P'Ming looks unregretful; she even smiles coldly.

"Do you remember me? I'm your junior back when we were medical students. Dr. Mancharee from the Department of Anesthesiology."

P'Fiat walks towards me, bending down to check if the ropes aren't loose. He remains composed, showing no remorse for injuring someone. After a quick check, he stands up and walks over to join P'Ming, who is still on the phone.

"Calm down. Your wound would reopen. Kliao Khluen is with me, and if you want this girl to be safe, just listen to my instructions..."

The young woman approaches me, placing her hand on my head, but it is different from the gentle touch P'Karan usually gives to me. Instead, it feels threatening, indicating that I am under her control.

"One, don't notify the police. And two, I'll send the location. Within the next three hours, you must come alone without telling anyone. And once your bleeding stops, you must take me back to eight years ago."

Thud!

"Ouch!"

Before I know it, she kicks my leg forcefully, causing me to let out a cry of pain unintentionally. Even though my mouth is covered, there is still a muffled sound of pain, as if she purposely wants P'Karan to hear my painful cry as a confirmation that I've really been caught.

"Let's start the timer, and don't think of playing tricks because..."

P'Ming drags her words while glancing over at me. The weight on my head grows heavier, enough to make P'Fiat frown.

"If the police come... Kliao Khluen will die."

She tosses my hair...then grabs and pulls as if she already lost self-control.

"And if you're even a second late... Kliao Khluen will die."

I feel pain in both my leg and my scalp, but I try not to cry out because I know it would only worry the person on the other end even more.

"And if you wait until the bleeding stops and then go back before this girl is caught... I will make this event happen again and again because I've planned this for a long time."

I've never hated anyone's smile as much as this woman's in front of me.

"Remember, your lover will die repeatedly until you do as I say."

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❖41. While the Time Stops❖

I can't tell...how many minutes or hours have passed.

Outside is dark, with no light filtering through. The bulbs in the warehouse are on, but only a few are working. This creates an atmosphere that seems less safe than during the middle of the day. But judging from the fact that P'Karan is not here yet, I guess it's not yet three hours since that phone call from that annoying P'Ming.

And considering the amount of time both of them gave her to travel, it means the distance from the hospital to here must be quite considerable. Maybe she has to cross several provinces.

P'Fiat sits at an old wooden table, watching the news about him. Right now, the police are chasing after him. Thus, the CVT doctor who injured his friend has a serious expression, in contrast to P'Ming who sits crossed-legs on a chair not far away.

She is staring at her communication device screen, daydreaming, and then smiles as if her long wait is approaching its end.

If this were a drama, it would be useful to have a piece of broken glass or something sharp to cut the rope. But I was caught suddenly without anything to carry, and even the phone was taken away by that pretty woman. There is not a single piece of glass around my body right now.

Damn it! I am P'Karan's burden again.

She's hurt...and probably driving all the way here.

Right now, my status is that of hostage. In fact, I should be trembling and afraid of dying. But I'm more worried about P'Karan who is being forced to

come alone. She is in such a state that she cannot turn back time, which is no different from being controlled by P'Ming.

"I can't believe that this kind of power really exists..."

After the damp warehouse has been quiet for a long time, P'Fiat suddenly speaks up. This pulls P'Ming out of the daydream and turns to him.

"Fiat, I proved everything by telling the future five times, didn't I? And it happened exactly as I said. Weren't you shocked back then? Why are you still worried now?"

Future telling? How did she manage to do that? Did she have the dreams I had? But the only way to gain that ability must be the side effect of touching P'Karan's body while rewinding time. Maybe...

For some reason, this malicious woman accidentally touched her while she was using her ability, and supposedly, it might be because of that rooftop incident...

P'Fiat scratches the back of his neck, enduring his guilt.

"It's not that I don't believe, you know, because this kid and Karan act pretty clearly that time reversal power exists. But...I don't know. I don't like becoming a villain like this."

"When you stabbed down, didn't you think of anything other than wanting to go back and fix the past? Now, forget about other matters. Once this issue is resolved-"

Screech!

P'Ming hasn't finished her sentence as the sound of brakes echoes against the warehouse floor outside. All three of us turn towards the noise simultaneously. "She's finally here to see her bride-to-be," says the sweet-faced woman who, emphasizing the keyword deliberately. This clearly indicates that she too has dreamed of the future.

A few seconds later, a tall woman in our light-colored hospital patient's uniform appears with a pale face and bloodstains on the left side, as if her wound just reopened. She grits her teeth and walks towards us through the door, looking determined with each step.

My heart races with worry. The corners of my eyes are teary because I want to be able to do something instead of being the hostage that she has to rescue, especially while injured...The more those eyes looks this way with concern, the more it confirms that P'Karan doesn't care about herself at all at this moment.

P'Ming and P'Fiat stand up. The man walks over to shadow me, who is tied to the chair. The woman goes to confront the tall figure with blood-stained clothes. P'Ming picks up her phone to check the time before saying.

"It takes only two and a half hours. Driving too fast beyond the legal limit is dangerous, you know."

"Release Kliao Khluen. Then, we'll talk."

She says, her voice so dry that it squeezes my heart.

The younger one laughs, then walks over to stand next to me in place of P'Fiat

"You have no right to negotiate. I told you what I wanted over the phone earlier tonight. All that's left is for you to wait until the bleeding stops and then comply. Otherwise, your lover will be assassinated again and again."

However... This time, the pretty woman isn't just threatening. A black object is pulled out from behind her, a safety lock is released, and then it is aimed at my temple, causing my heart to beat faster with fear of a gun being this close. P'Karan widens her eyes and tries to run towards me, but with her slight movement, the barrel of the gun gets even closer to me than before, warning her to stay back.

"Ming!"

"The speed of a gun and your clock ticking backward. Do you want to know which one is faster? Oh, I completely forgot... You can't rewind time now."

"It's impossible to go back to eight years ago."

"You could turn back time to save your bride, but you can't do it for others?"

"Ming, stay calm and listen to me."

"...."

"I can't rewind time as you wish. Even if I want to follow your orders to end this mess."

"Ha! Why?!"

"My time travel limitation... If I go back to save one life, I have to exchange it with ten years of my life. And right now, I only have 88 years left."

So, that's her remaining life span...

That means if she didn't use her power to help me back then, she could live to be ninety-eight years old.

"What you want... it's 'beyond' what I can do."

"It's just 7 lives! Six for me, and one for Fiat! The total is 70 years! You still have 18 years left!"

P'Karan shakes her head slowly.

"If we count only the events you want to fix, it's 7, but you didn't include the people killed by Avatch, Avatch himself, and Kliao Khluen,"

"What are you trying to say?"

"If we have to go back by eight years, it means meddling with the deaths of those three again."

So, that's how it is...

If you go back according to P'Ming's demand, it means exchanging her lifespan with a total of 10 people, which is way beyond her ability.

Therefore, even if she learned directly from me that I got involved with Avatch because I ran into him, going back will cost another ten years because I've gone through an event where I would have died.

Time travel to save me that time isn't any different from a checkpoint.

P'Ming stays silent, with a difficult expression that's hard to decipher. Both look at each other; the woman injured grits her teeth tightly, making the veins on her neck visible. I feel like this situation resembles a calm sea that will be attacked by a large wave.

This isn't a good sign because the malicious woman holds a gun in her hand. Therefore, I try to lose the string tied to this stupid chair as much as possible.

"Ming...what are you going to do next?"

P'Fiat's anxiety seems to escalate further. He approaches and speaks lightly only for her to hear.

P'Karn's eyes emphasize that it couldn't be done that way, and P'Fiat's asks her with a heavy concern. Both pressure P'Ming's thoughts and decisions. The hand holding the dangerous weapon is trembling. The moment I thought she might calm down and talk it out, the woman suddenly jerks my hair and pulls me close to the gun before shouting loudly.

"Then, we'll lose together!!"

"No!!"

Bang!

I am confident...that my eyes saw a spark and my own ears heard the echo of P'Ming's rant.

However, in just a blink...

In just one blink, there is no bullet flying towards me, no gun in the woman's hand. It is as if someone has taken it all away, even removing the tape that has covered my mouth earlier.

P'Ming herself is stunned by the fact that her weapon suddenly disappeared too.

"How dare you hurt my big sister's bride?"

Then, a familiar voice furiously distracts both me and P'Ming to turn around and be surprised to see the small figure of P'Mai-Tree, who has instantly showed up next to P'Karan. In her left hand, she aims a gun towards P'Ming, while in her right hand...

Click!

Her right hand releases a bullet to fall and hit the rough warehouse floor. Her palm reddens, as if it has touched a piece of hot metal.

This woman... Did she stop time to catch the bullet and snatch the gun away like that?

The person who can stop time for ten minutes a day barely spares a glance at me.

"Sorry, shortie. I used up most of my time quota today investigating how my sister escaped from the hospital bed, so I didn't have enough time to untie you."

In summary, she swiftly grabbed the bullet and seized the gun to turn the barrel towards P'Ming instead of me.

I happen to know that P'Mai-Tree's ability cannot move a person unless she touches them before stopping time. Anyway... P'Mai-Tree at least opened my mouth when passing by each other.

But this means...she exchanged ten years of her life to protect me from dying.

P'Karan herself is equally shocked.

Judging from the current situation, the disadvantaged side would be the villains like P'Ming and P'Fiat, who no longer have heavy weapons in their hands. The young man who has been worried looks grimmer, as if regretting his life choice.

"I shouldn't..."

"Shut up, Fiat!"

She shouts at her worried co-conspirator. Although we all believe that P'Ming will inevitably raise both hands, at least physically, to surrender. However, this woman exceeds expectations.

It is a close-range weapon that, in fact, has been always behind P'Fiat. Her hand quickly reaches for it and aims it swiftly toward my neck, changing herself into the upper hand.

"Don't do this, Ming!"

P'Karan shouts vehemently, but the distance is too risky to compete with the poised knife at my neck. The wound at her side clearly indicates that she can't use her abilities right now.

P'Mai-Tree is indeed holding the gun, but at the moment, P'Ming uses her free hand to untie the rope binding me to the chair. She didn't release the rope around my wrist, just enough to force me to stand and act as a flesh shield.

P'Karan calmly steps forward, while P'Ming pulls me back, increasing the distance between us.

P'Fiat is slipping out of consciousness, just realizing that he is trouble now.

Meanwhile, P'Mai-Tree still holds the gun, looking distressed as I am being used to shield the enemy.

The next sentence from the woman behind me, using one arm to lock my neck, sends shivers down my spine and makes me breathe rapidly with fear.

"The same knife that stabbed you, but this time it will slit this girl's throat instead. No matter how many times you go back, I'll keep doing this!"

Yes, this is my worst nightmare coming true. That line is about to come out, as P'Karan is boiling with unbearable anger.

"Put down the knife right now! Have you lost your mind? You're also a doctor!"

There is a faint sob coming from the villain's throat, while holding me as a shield. Her words are whispered so hollowly, yet audible enough for me to hear the desperation in her voice.

"I've been losing my mind all along. Did you just realize it now?"

□□□□□

42. A Family, A White Teddy Bear, and A Girl in the Next Morning

Part: Ming

8 years ago

Our family consisted of five people:

My father, mother, younger brother, younger sister, and me.

We considered ourselves middle-class. Dad worked as an engineer at a certain company, while Mom was a hairstylist at a well-known salon. Their combined income, after deducting house installments and various expenses, left us with some pocket money.

The three siblings mentioned earlier consist of Ming, Oab, and Je-T'aime. Ming was me, the eldest sister.

Oab was my younger brother, three years younger than me, and the middle child.

Je-T'aime, on the other hand, was the youngest, still in elementary school. The age gap between her and her siblings was quite substantial.

We all adored Je-T'aime because she was like the cheerful, bright cloud of our home. Even her name conveyed her beloved nature.

Although both my father and mother were very dedicated about their work, they never pressured me or my siblings regarding our dreams. Whatever we

wanted to study, they supported us wholeheartedly. I remember vividly what led me to choose to study medicine. It was....my younger sister.

She had to undergo surgery once and cried inconsolably out of fear of pain. Despite my attempts to reassure her that the doctor would administer anesthesia first, young children don't always understand. Je- T'aime cried so much that she refused to have the surgery until she was finally persuaded after a long while.

The four of us, father, mother, Oab, and I, sat anxiously waiting during Je- T'aime's surgery. It was during this time that I had a thought: I wanted to become a doctor who administered anesthesia or sedatives, to be able to say something comforting to patients so they wouldn't be afraid of the pain, something like it would be okay during surgery.

That incident was the reason I wanted to become an anesthesiologist.

At the time, as a fourth-year medical student, my life's schedule was a bit chaotic because, in addition to lectures, there were rotations and on-call duties. Luckily, in this aspect, my family understood me very well to the point that I thought must have accumulated a lot of good karma in my past life.

Regularly, Mom prepared lunch boxes, and Dad dropped me off in the morning on his way to work to save time. Oab treated me like a princess in many ways. The clothes in my basket often disappeared. I'd find them again on the clothesline, as my kind-hearted younger brother had washed them until they were clean and fragrant.

Truth be told, our family never assigned household chores based on gender. It was more about everyone pitching in together. My younger brother also made himself endearing by often doing my laundry.

"P'Ming, you made chocolate~!"

One evening when our parents hadn't returned from work yet, the three of us siblings were together, and Je-T'aime, who came over to look at the dining table, spoke up when she saw what I had just arranged on the plates.

I smiled at the little one, still in her red schoolgirl dress, and raised my hand to gently pat her small head.

"No, I didn't. This is fried chicken. I made your favorite fried chicken for dinner."

At that moment, Oab, who had just finished his homework, came downstairs in comfortable home clothes. He glanced at the burnt fried chicken on the plate.

"That's charcoal!"

He cheerfully mocked before he got hit both by my gaze and my soft hand. He chuckled mischievously before heading to the refrigerator.

"I better to fry it myself. She can't eat your burnt chicken... Luckily, I often help Mom in the kitchen."

I laughed when I looked at my heavily charred fried chicken. This house only had Mom and my younger brother who were good at cooking. As for Dad and me, we didn't really get involved in cooking. Whenever I entered the kitchen, if it wasn't a disaster, I would make something strange.

Rather than giving Je-T'aime burnt food from me, I leaned over to hug the adorable blooming little one up.

"Then, while we wait, let's play the snake ladder game together."

"Yay!" Two small arms shot up in joy.

By around eight in the evening, Dad and Mom arrived home together. Usually, Dad would finish work and pick Mom up from the salon. Actually, the salon closed later than that, but Mom was worried about us at home, so she agreed to have part of her salary deducted to leave work earlier...and come home to eat dinner together with smiles on our faces.

Both of them understood us kids to the extent that they said *'Love or like whatever gender you want. We'll support your choices.'*

But as for Je-T'aime, Dad was really protective of her, maybe because of her cuteness and fragile body. Dad wanted someone who would genuinely care for Je-T'aime and never annoyed by her.

If any guy or girl wanted to court her in the future, they would have to pass Dad's toughest test first. And for sure, they would have to pass through Mom, my younger brother, and me too.

At ten past eight, a white sedan pulled up in front of the house. Oab had just finished frying chicken, making steamed eggs, and preparing stir-frying vegetables. Je-T'aime and I folded up the snakes-and-ladders board and left it beside the sofa. Then, we got up to greet Dad and Mom, who were tired from work.

When they saw our faces, they instantly brightened up with the same kind of energy.

'Warm' was the perfect definition for the five of us.

I smiled every day, feeling like I was being fulfilled.

When we were all together, it felt like a safe space.

Until one day...

That day...

That night, I was on duty. Normally, the afternoon shift ended at midnight, but because I was in my fourth year, I could leave at ten in the evening. However, it wasn't just any ordinary night because starting the next day would be a short-term break for fourth-year medical students.

Though it was just a few days long, Dad, being aware of this, took the opportunity to ask if we could go on a family trip to a natural attraction and stay overnight for two days. It would be a relaxing break.

I already knew a bit about it from being close to the fifth-year seniors who had a two-day break and from my friend extern, who didn't have a break at all. Since Dad mentioned it, I agreed without hesitation. It was a delightful

idea that our family would go on a trip together when everyone was available.

If any family member couldn't make it, the trip wouldn't happen, even if it was just a visit to an amusement park. Because we always shared our happy moments together.

Dad told me that, after my shift, he would pick me up immediately, and we would drive to another province. We had already planned the time, and we would arrive around mid-morning. During the trip, I would sleep in the car while Dad and Mom, who had rested during the day, would take turns driving.

Only one critically ill patient came in the evening, and besides that, the cases weren't too severe. It was considered fortunate for me. Everyone said that Ming was the most wanted fourth-year student to join the shift for the seniors because everyone else in the fourth year was destined for deadly shifts. I was the only one blessed with lucky shifts.

Rrrr! Rrrr!

Oab:

We're leaving the house!

Oab:

(Image Sent)

At dusk, while sitting in the common room, the family group chat pinged as my younger brother sent a message. When I opened it, I saw the aforementioned messages along with a photo of several travel bags packed at the back of a car, featuring my prominent green baggage covered in stickers.

Ming:

Oh? It's just past eight. Why the rush to leave home?

Oab:

We're stopping by the mall to buy some small items for little T'aime. Mom

wants to find a bedtime book for her to read for a change. Once we're done shopping, it'll be the perfect time to pick you up.

Ming:

Aha, got it. Safe travels!

Oab:

Sure!

Oab:

(Image Sent)

Then Oab sent another photo showing Dad fastening a seatbelt for T'aime, who was holding a white teddy bear and sitting in the back seat. It was the teddy bear I bought for T'aime when she was two, and until then, she still hugged it every night.

Even though it looked very worn out, she loved it dearly. The white bear even had a name. T'aime called it 'FiFi.' Without it, she couldn't sleep.

I smiled at the little one in the photo before sending a sticker in response to the chat, then returned to my phone screen, which displayed a family photo with all five members. Looking at it, I felt a supportive energy that helped us get through everything.

I thought that night would be the beginning of a joyful holiday for us.

But instead, it turned into a night of 'loss'.

A speeding sports car collided violently with a sedan and a motorcycle because the driver was in a rush to reserve a table at a bar. This resulted in a fatal accident involving a pregnant woman and her son. Another four injured individuals were being sent to the nearest hospital, where I hurried out of the room to prepare and assist my senior.

However...

I almost lost consciousness there when I realized that the car that was hit so hard was...

My family's car.

The injured patients brought in were my family members who had been on their way to the mall. Oab was the only one who remained conscious. My younger brother was injured in the leg and bleeding profusely, causing my heart to ache with pain.

When I turned to the adjacent bed, I found my father critically injured on the right side of his body and unconscious. My mother had a noticeable impact mark on her head but was still responsive.

All three of them were being attended to by senior doctors, both extern and residents. Dad and Oab were being prepared for surgery, while Mom was being examined because although her wound seemed non-threatening, it occurred near her head.

I was in a daze and my heart was pounding with fear, almost on the verge of tears. The blood of my family was squeezing my heart in a way that could not be described in words.

....But when Mom was about to be taken away...

"Je-T'aime..."

Her hollow voice asked for the little girl I hadn't seen yet.

Yes, that was it. My consciousness suddenly returned.

Where is Je-Taime?

I walked as if my feet weren't touching the ground to find the little girl and her white teddy bear.

There she is. I found her.

One of the residents was performing CPR on Je-T'aime. Being a primary school student and so small, it required just one hand to perform CPR. I approached, deaf to any sound, and saw Je-T'aime lying peacefully with closed eyes, her heart stopped and blood staining her favorite creamy dress.

I took over from the resident, trying to get Je-T'aime 's heart to beat again.

In that second, I simply wished for her pulse to return. I just hoped that this wasn't the last night we would spend together. Je-T'aime's eyelids closed as if she were just sleeping peacefully. If there were no blood and injuries, she would look like a little sleeping beauty.

"Je-T'aime, come back to me, please."

I continued to press firmly on her small body, my voice trembling with a soft, pleading tone, hoping for Heaven to send the little angel back to us.

"Where is your FiFi...?"

The doll should be in her small embrace. I continued to ask while pumping the heart that had stopped beating for a while.

"Come back to me quickly, my smart girl."

Tears welled up in my eyes and dripped down onto those adorable comforting cheeks.

The emergency room began to return to its normal state as some patients were sent to the operating room and others were discharged. However, time passed, and I continued to stand there pumping Je-T'aime's heart with hope, despite everything feeling so dark.

Half an hour.

One hour.

Two hours.

And...after more than two hours passed, with a motionless body that I didn't stop pumping, no matter how much sweat soaked me, the resident came back and stood silently looking at me with solemn eyes.

"Ming..."

"Just a little more, please. She is a resilient child."

My voice cracked from a long, deep sob.

The resident didn't say anything more. He quietly looked at me for a long moment. I...exerted all my strength with my right hand, crying desperately.

At a certain point, when everyone in the room felt that this tormenting period should come to an end, the male nurse pulled me away from the bedside, forbidding me who already lost consciousness, pleading to help my sister. The resident looked anguish, but he lifted his wristwatch to check the time before saying something I didn't want to hear.

"Time of death, 23:01."

No, they couldn't take the little girl away from me...

I wished it was just a bad dream, that I would wake up relieved, lying on the sofa, and find my sister leaning over, wondering what her older sister was doing.

The shock overwhelmed me. I hugged the lifeless body with no breathing or heartbeat, my face pressed against the beloved little girl.

..I had no strength to take even a step. At this moment, the male nurse supported me to the ward.

"Stay calm, Ming. Have some water first,"

Said the nurse as a glass of water was handed to me. I heard everything, but my weak hand struggled to lift it. Everything felt heavy, even speaking or swallowing saliva was more difficult than usual. Then came more devastating news as dawn approached.

My father, DOT.

My mother had a brain hemorrhage and died...

As for my younger brother... My dear Oab lost both legs.

No one had come straight to tell me, but I overheard two doctors standing by the coffee vending machine in intense conversation. The chief resident, whom I knew well, was consulting with the ward psychiatrist on how best to gradually break the news to me without causing excessive grief.

I'd heard it all...

I collapsed onto the cold floor, unable to utter a word. My chest felt like it was being crushed by a heavy weight. Tears streamed down silently once more, even though I had cried so much in the ward just moments ago.

Why wasn't I in that car? If I had died there too, I wouldn't be in this excruciating pain.

Just as all emotions descended into darkness, a voice of distress loudly caught my attention as a young man walked past me.

"Yep, that's right! I'm in the hospital. Hurry up and come get me. I'm so pissed off. Damn! Several people died. Someone lost their legs. My dad will yell at me like crazy."

I looked up to see that the teenage guy with some cuts on his body was the one from the online news-driving a flashy sports car, speeding around a corner, crashing into my family's sedan as well as a motorcycle ridden by a pregnant woman and her son.

He was the cause of it all.

He was almost uninjured.

But...he hardly felt remorse.

Bastard!

"You killed my family!"

I couldn't tell where I found the strength. I suddenly stood up and grabbed the collar of the guy who was still talking on the phone, startling him because he couldn't react in time.

"Hey! What's going on?"

"You deserve to die!!"

My hand moved to grip the taller guy's throat, hoping to stop his breath right there. I stood in front of this scumbag, representing my deceased and injured family. All the force and rage surged from my anger until my ears rang and my eyes blurred. I heard only him trying to cry out for help from anyone nearby.

"Ming!"

A familiar voice came from behind, it was the chief resident, who was talking to the ward psychiatrist just now. But I didn't care about anything except wanting this bastard to pay with his life right in front of me.

"Calm down, Ming,"

The senior resident hurried over to pull me away from him.

"How can I calm down!? He deserves to die!"

"No, Ming! You are a doctor! You can't hurt people!"

"He's not a patient! He's a scumbag! A murderer!"

"Ming, get a hold of yourself!"

"Ugh..."

I slumped back onto the floor again, but it was a sit-down that lacked any desire to continue living.

That was the dark morning of a new day.

A new day with indescribable losses.

The new day that my heart shattered into pieces.

And the new day that cries echoed throughout the corridor...

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43. A Long-Term Plan

Part: Ming

I had hoped for that scumbag to face his karma, but it seemed like he still lived a carefree life, wandering around like nothing happened. I spent the short semester break preparing the funerals for my parents and little sister while taking care of my little brother in the hospital. I had no time to rest until I felt physically exhausted and weak. Finally, the black-and-white period had passed, leaving behind only lingering grief and a quiet, desolate gray home.

Just when I should have been curling up for some rest, I found myself restless, picking up the phone to inquire about prosthetic limb prices for Oab. Oab definitely wouldn't be sitting in a wheelchair. I knew his determination and resilience well.

How should I tell my little brother...that it's just the two of us left now?

Despite trying to hide it during the funerals, when I wheeled my little brother back home from the hospital and thought about slowly revealing everything to him, the young boy who once had a lively spirit lowered his head and spoke a sentence that caused my heartache.

"I wish it were just a bad dream..."

"Did you know everything already?"

"Yeah, from the internet."

"...."

Silence fell over the house that once resounded with happiness, just before I sank down and covered my face with my hands, crying. I had held back tears for days, but eventually, the torment returned when I realized that it was the harsh reality I had to face.

I heard the sound of wheels moving into the nervous system, then felt the warmth of the only remaining family. Lifting my head from my hands, I saw Oab turning his wheelchair towards me, leaning forward to hug me with both arms.

He was crying too.

His shoulders trembling.

And there we sat, embracing each other, for an hour.

The litigant was born to a very...wealthy family. That bastard didn't have a driver's license yet. He was the same age as my younger brother - a high school student. His reckless yet fast driving, just to book a table at a bar, resulted in Oab losing his legs and having to stop studying for a year, taking away my parents' and my little girl's lives. Apart from them, another family on a motorcycle, a pregnant woman and a young boy, lost their lives too.

But what did he end up with?

He didn't end up in jail.

The case had been going on for a year, and there was no doubt about it. While he enjoys a new car and entered a prestigious university, my brother became disabled. Just the two of us were left in our family, and money was hard to make when neither of us had finished our studies. Despite getting our parents' insurance money, we still had a lot of debt to pay off, like the house mortgage that fell on the heir's shoulders, which was me.

I was 21 years old, just turning into a fifth-year medical student, burdened with so much that I didn't want my younger brother to know, fearing it would stress him out.

When tired from studying, scolded by teachers, or worried about expenses, only two things could lift my spirits.

First was the picture of our family still set as the phone's background. Everyone in it was smiling so happily that I couldn't help but think: Wouldn't it be nice if we could freeze time at that moment?

Second was FiFi, Je-T'aime's white teddy bear. It was found in the backseat of the car, blood-stained.

It was hard to say whether it was blood from the girl who hugged it or a mix of everyone in the car. But after washing it and neatly placing it on my little sister's bed, I felt like just hugging it gave me strength, like the gentle touch of the little girl who hadn't disappeared.

FiFi often wiped away my tears.

I prayed when this case finally ended, that bastard ultimately received some punishment.

But I was such a fool...

I forgot that ordinary people like us couldn't do anything against those with financial power.

I went to listen to the court judgment and came back to watch the news of the verdict and its unashamed expression on the television. My fists clenched, filled with the desire to kill that man. Life should be exchanged with life.

I harbored vengeance so intensely that I didn't know when it would explode. Sometimes, losing control, I would get up to plan the murder of that soulless scoundrel. But then I thought, if I really went ahead and killed him, there might be consequences.

How would my younger brother live if I got caught and ended up in prison? And what about the years of studying medicine that have been

meticulously arranged?What about...even if that scoundrel were to die, my family couldn't recover?

It would probably be better if we could go back and fix things that night so that they could still be alive.

But we couldn't go back in time... The world didn't work like that.

But one morning, another exhausting day, I took a bus to the hospital and all I could do was look at the family photo on the phone screen. Yet on that day, I hurriedly left home after making breakfast for my younger brother for a morning ward round, before my seniors and professors arrived, I encountered a pivotal event that completely changed my perspective.

A young girl, who was a patient at our hospital, was about to jump off the rooftop due to her parents' unequal love. She changed her mind about jumping because P'Karan, an extern, persuaded her. At the moment when the young girl was about to extend her hand to P'Karan as a sign of acceptance, a gunshot echoed through the air.

The bullet struck the shoulder of the person standing next to the roof's edge in the patient's hospital attire. P'Karan reacted swiftly, as if afraid of losing her, and bent down trying to grab her hand.

I knew that the young girl wouldn't survive when her body fell. My thoughts went blank at that moment. I ran out to grab P'Karan's hand because I was afraid she would fall.

In that split second, all I managed was a brief touch of her arm that slipped out of the short gown. Unexpectedly, something incredible happened. A gold Roman numeral clock appeared above the horizon. I barely saw its Hands moving backward before everything went dark and silent.

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The sound of the news program drifts into my nervous system, making me furrow my brow. I gradually lift my eyelids with a puzzled, bewildered look, like someone who can't make sense of everything.

Home... I am sitting at home on the sofa in front of the evening news on TV. The air conditioner is doing its job well. Everything is normal. Nothing is out of place or strange. My younger brother, sitting in a wheelchair, is repairing a pair of worn-out shoes for me.

But wait! How is it possible? I was just on the hospital rooftop earlier, wasn't I? How did I come back home!?

Could it be that what just happened was a dream? No, that is impossible because I remember everything I felt: the wind brushing against my skin, the thunderous gunshot, the touch on P'Karan's arm, and that clock...

I try to review my memory, pinching myself to check if it hurts, until several minutes pass and my brother finishes repairing the shoes and hands them to me to try on. That is when I regained enough consciousness to pick up the phone and check the date and time.

Wait... Did I come back from last week?

No, today is definitely last week.

What's going on? It's all so confusing. If we're referring to the rooftop incident as 'last week,' does that mean it already happened? But at this point, shouldn't it be the future?

Upon deeper reflection that night, I arrive at a startling conclusion.

For most people, starting from this point, it's the future, because it hasn't happened yet.

But for me, it's already happened and thus turned into the past, making it feel like 'last week.'

And the culprit behind the clock's backward movement can only be explained in two scenarios: either P'Karn or the girl who was shot and fell.

However, upon further thought, it is rather P'Karan because I touched her at that moment.

I got it now. God heard my prayers.

It is unbelievable to the point of being surreal, but I can tell that I didn't imagine it.

If that's the case, our family can come back to life together... I think while hugging FiFi tightly and smiling; the scent of my little Je-T'aime never fades from my memory.

Since then, I've become the junior who constantly tries to investigate P'Karan's story.

The news comes out that the scoundrel who destroyed my family was murdered. For the society, he was the victim. Many people mourned and cursed the man who committed the act. But as I watched the news on TV, I secretly smiled with satisfaction.

Didn't he deserve it?

Why should we pity such a scoundrel? By nature, he must have created enemies everywhere. It's not surprising if he faced revenge. I feel thankful to the man who dealt with him. It's a pity he got caught.

Nevertheless, even though he's dead, I'm still not discouraged from trying to bring my family back.

During my time as a medical student at the hospital with P'Karan, the more I learn and search, the more I realize she is too composed for me to approach directly.

I tried to hint about time-travel theories, but she plainly said she didn't believe it existed. So, I switched to constantly observing and shadowing her, hoping to find some weaknesses to exploit to my advantage.

But I found none. I couldn't find any vulnerability in her.

Even though I tried to find out if the girl shot on the rooftop had anything to do with her, they hardly ever crossed paths.

I keep observing and secretly investigating, delving deep into her

background. Despite gathering a lot of information, it is all ultimately useless because whenever I tried to use that information to manipulate her into going back to the point I wanted, I realized the difficulty and numerous loopholes.

Suppose that if someone were hired to abduct her, or even threaten her with a knife, she would probably rewind time and avoid it just in time.

What I want to find is her weak points related to her time-rewinding ability and her psychological vulnerabilities.

The first should be a condition for using the ability, while the second should involve someone she loves so deeply that she can't stand seeing that person being detained.

Then, while it seems like I've been losing my mind planning stuff, I suddenly realize that I often dream about events in the future, and they actually happen. It is similar to instinct, but when I connect it to the time-rewinding incident, I come up with the idea that it might be a consequence of touching P'Karan's body when the clock was ticking backward.

Dreaming about the future has made my life much more convenient on many occasions. I didn't forget to bring an umbrella when it's going to rain in the evening. I prepared myself well enough after knowing how severe the cases would be at night, and I foresaw the incident where my brother might stumble while using new prosthetic legs so that I could support him in time.

Just having the ability to foresee the future is extraordinary enough. And going back in time to fix everything... P'Karan must be using it to her advantage, right?

I don't hope for much more than just wanting my family to return together as they were before.

Just that.

Only one thing.

Just to prevent that accident from happening.

My father, mother, sister, that pregnant woman, and her son shouldn't have lost their lives because of that devil, and Oab shouldn't have endured this difficult life.

Time passes. I finished my fifth year of medical school and externship. Then,

I went on to have an internship in the countryside, taking my younger brother along. After that, I returned to residency. Even though I'm working in another location, there isn't a day I'm not deeply engrossed in thoughts about that P'Karan who can rewind time.

Until the completion of my anesthetic internship board...

I decided to move to work at the same hospital as her.

Here, she still remains cool and indifferent to everyone as usual. However, after a convict has escaped from prison, I noticed something peculiar-she seems distracted and concerned about one of the externs...the girl from the rooftop incident.

It seems I've found her psychological weak point.

Following that is the weak point in her ability, which I've heard is that she cannot rewind time when she's bleeding.

Everything I need is in place; all that's missing is just one more person to help me out.

It's extremely difficult to ask someone for help in this kind of situation. They would probably think I'm crazy and imagine things. That makes me a bit distressed.

It isn't until recently that I learn about a fellow in the same department as P'Karan. Around the same time, he suffered injustice from the family of that blue supercar owner.

Fiat lost his younger brother because that scoundrel dragged and beat him to death. He went to protest for justice on the day of the trial, only to find out that his brother had died for other reasons due to fabricated evidence with the power of money, leaving the perpetrator to escape unscathed.

That devil has already destroyed lives once. Having caused numerous deaths while driving, he has no regard for human life.

The relentless search for the family's cover-up led me to stumble upon a news story many years ago on a shady-looking website. There was Fiat holding up a paper sign pleading for justice, even though the case had concluded months earlier.

His face reflected pain and loss, and I was certain this man must harbor hidden hope in his heart. Even now, he might appear tough and resigned, but if he were given another chance... Somehow, he would have to choose to seek redemption.

Indeed, he seems close to P'Karan in some ways. Both of them are about the same age. Yet, I reserve the term 'P' solely for P'Karan, perhaps because I've been used to it since my days as a medical student.

I walk down the hallway, this time without the tears and turmoil of the past. Everyone around me is heading towards a specific location- the medical staff room of the CVT department where Fiat is expected to be. Even if he is in the operating room, I will wait until we can talk about rectifying the losses from years ago.

Fortunately, he is there, dressed in a light blue scrub like the other doctors, sitting and laughing with colleagues from the same department. As soon as the door is opened by an unfamiliar anesthetist like me, all eyes turn, accompanied by a sense of suspicion.

"What's up?" asks one person, somewhat puzzled, urging me to explain my presence.

But my gaze is fixed solely on him.

"Fiat, can we talk for a moment?"

□□□□□

❀44. Something Forgotten❀

Part: Kliao Khluen

At Present

P'Ming, who is holding me as a hostage... is crying.

Although I can't see her face because she locks me up and threatens me with a sharp knife, I can sense the trembling and hear the suppressed sounds coming from her throat.

Her emotions, which I can't predict, make my heart beat with fear that the sharpness might hit my major blood vessel and suddenly turn everything dark. More importantly, there's P'Karan... If she waits until the blood stops flowing and then uses her abilities to save my life again, wouldn't that decrease her lifespan?

So, I just don't want to die.

My breath gets stuck; I keep holding it when P'Ming's hand moves.

"You lied about the need to trade for your lifespan... You just didn't want to turn back time for me, did you?"

"If I didn't need to trade for it, I would have used it to help every patient I have."

"..."

"You have experienced pain and loss too, so why are you now harming others who have nothing to do with it? Can't your years as a doctor make you realize about it!?"

"I..."

"Ming, think about how good it felt when you saved someone's life, so now drop the knife you're about to harm someone with."

"..."

Silence falls.

I can hear only the sound of my own shallow breathing. Out of the corner of my eye, I see P'Fiat taking a step back, his hair tousled, clearly overwhelmed by the current situation. The oppressive heat in the air makes us sweat, but it doesn't distract us from the impending death facing us. I notice that P'Mai-Tree, with pursed lips, holds a gun tightly in her hand.

Amidst P'Ming's confusion and internal turmoil, a footstep sounds at the warehouse entrance. A tall, young man appears, dressed in a round-necked T-shirt and shorts that reveal his prosthetic legs.

"Sis... What are you doing?"

His voice carries a mix of confusion and concern, all evident in his tone and facial expression.

He is P'Ming's younger brother whom I have seen once at the hospital.

"Oab! How did you get here?"

The older sister asks, sounding alarmed.

"No! It's dangerous. Get out of here right now!"

Upon hearing that, P'Mai-Tree interjects loudly.

"Ha! At least now you're concerned about someone you love."

The newcomer enters slowly, perhaps tired from running. He stares at his older sister and the sharp knife with disbelief in his eyes, before turning towards P'Karan, who looks pale from a bleeding wound.

"The doctor contacted me and said you were in trouble."

"I'm not in trouble or anything. Get out!"

"If you're not in trouble... Then why is a doctor like you holding a knife at someone's throat?"

"!!"

The shocked reaction from P'Ming makes me realize that family is her weakness, and P'Karan is clever enough to contact Oab.

The disappointment in Oab's eyes towards his sister causes P'Ming's locked arm around my neck to loosen slightly, especially when his teary eyes portray the pain he is experiencing. The young woman behind me seems to regret for what is happening.

"What are you actually doing? Is this worthy that it makes you kidnap and hurt someone else like this?"

"...."

"Since Mom, Dad, and Little T'aime passed away, I knew our family would never be the same. But you... You're only concerned about something else. We've barely shared a meal together."

"Oab, you're also important to me. I'm just trying to fix everything the way it should be."

"Is that why you're hurting someone right now?"

"Oab..."

"I've been so sorry about what happened eight years ago. But when I was with you, I always thought that at least I still had a life to support my talented older sister in small ways. I wanted to make breakfast for you and help with household expenses, even though my salary isn't high. I wanted to be a part of helping you succeed in life."

The young man broke down, his voice choked with emotion, and even though he didn't sob, his tone was hollow.

"But all this time, you..."

She's only focused on P'Karan.

P'Ming focuses too much on time reversal, forgetting to pay attention to another family member who has been with her all along-the one who makes lunchboxes for her, wants to eat with her. and suffers just as much as her.

"Oab, don't cry. I..."

Before she can finish speaking, the loud siren of a police car echoes, shocking all of our nerves. The knife in P'Ming's hand almost drops, but her hand turns into a tighter grip, raised high enough to sever the blood vessels in my neck.

But then-

Bang!

As P'Mai-tree stares and aims for a long time, the bullet she fired hits accurately yet scarily into the left shoulder of the woman behind me. As soon as I slip out of her grip and the danger of the knife, I immediately rush forward into P'Karan's right arm. She pulls me close to protect and support me from a fall.

"Did you...call the police!?"

The slender woman, who just fell and is now drenched in the dark red blood on her shoulder, says with a biting tone; her vengeful eyes pierce our direction. P'Mai-tree chuckles at the pathetic woman once again before announcing.

"P'Karan didn't call. It was me who called."

".!!!."

"Damn it!"

P'Fiat realizes he is in a precarious situation. Just as the young man is about to run towards another door at the back of the warehouse, the police officers, who seem a bit slow and miss the thrilling moments manage to appear at the large door that Oab just entered. The commanding announcement to halt resounds, causing the friend who stabbed P'Karan to stop and raise his hands above his head, trembling with fear.

P'Karan gently unties the ropes and then tightens her arms around me, holding me firmly as if unwilling to let go for any reason. I look up into her face. It is pale from the side wound, but she still doesn't release me from her embrace easily, as everything isn't settled yet.

Amidst the chaos of the police rushing in to arrest P'Fiat, P'Ming raises her hand to her shoulder, which is soaked in dark red blood. Her face is stained with tear streaks from a moment ago. She looks toward us with anger, but as her gaze slowly shifts toward where her younger brother stands, her expression softens and transforms into guilt.

Guilt for exposing this side of hers to her younger brother...

"Is this what you wanted all along?"

"Oab..."

But before paying more attention to the siblings, I notice that the tall woman embracing me is starting to sway and seems about to collapse. Fortunately, I manage to grasp her waist just in time, realizing that at this moment, her face is so pale that I can hardly see any blood, and both her eyelids are gradually closing.

"P'Karan!"

I cry out her name, my heart filled with fear at the thought of losing my sunshine. This world would surely be very dark without her. But all I can do is hold onto the body of the woman, who is still in her patient gown, and cry weakly.

Hope is rekindled once more when the ambulance siren blares, piercing through my nerves.

"I know that someone would be injured."

I can hear P'Mai-tree speak with a hint of anger to P'Ming and P'Fiat.

At that moment, all I can do is stare at the unconscious face of P'Karan. I blame everyone, from P'Ming, P'Fiat, to the supercar's driver that caused the accident, resulting in this situation.

And I blame myself for being the weak point that makes her worry and insists on driving in this state.

I stay by her side throughout the journey to the ambulance, gripping her cold hand. I wait outside the emergency room. Despite being her lover... Deep down, I feel a heavy ache when the nurse comes looking for her and says:

'Miss Karan's relatives need to give consent for the surgery.'

'I'm her lover.'

'You're her friend...'

'Not just a friend!'

"..."

'I came with her. We've been together-'

'If you're not a relative or a registered partner, you can't sign.'

'Does this country allow our registration?!'

I shout out, tears flowing with emotions of pain to the extreme. The nurse in front remains silent, not saying anything because she can't change anything. When I realize I am losing consciousness, tears flow even more than before. A sob mixes with an unfair question:

'What kind of madness... is this?'

Because Article 1448 states that engagement and marriage are permitted only between men and women...even though it should be changed to 'between individuals.'

They claim that the country is open-minded... But we don't see anything that truly supports equal rights for same-sex couples.

Luckily, P'Mai-tree ran to catch up just in time. She's her younger sister, so she can authorize the surgery.

While waiting with the lawyer, all I can do is cry, blaming myself, and lamenting the unfairness of only registered heterosexual couples being allowed.

In cases where relatives can't be contacted to authorize treatment and the patient is unconscious, doctors must make decisions for urgent situations.

But this legal status affects many other aspects of life.

It's not fair at all to same-sex couples. But when we demand change, they respond with calm phrases like, *'You guys are so demanding!'*, *'What else do you want?'*, or *'You're lucky to have this much, you perverts.'*

I am bowing my head to these words I have encountered online. Suddenly, a small voice from beside me speaks up hesitantly.

"She'll be alright. You've seen your marriage in the vision, right?"

"Yes... Even so, I am still worried. And...[Sob]... I regret not being able to authorize the surgery for P'Karan."

"Stop it! Stop crying! I don't know how to comfort people!"

I turn to look at the same-sized petite woman, whose tears also well up in her eyes out of concern like mine, but trying to be strong.

"Stop being sad. You and my sister won't encounter this kind of situation again, okay?"

"How would you know... Ugh!"

"Oh, kid, I must know! Our family holds dual citizenship, and the other country supports same-sex marriage registration. Otherwise, can our mom and mommy get married and have us? In any case, my sister will take you there to register your marriage, got it?"

"Really?"

"Well, yes, why would I lie about it? Why are you looking at me with even more teary eyes than before? Wait! Don't hug me! No! ...Goshhh"

"Thank you, P'Mai-tree... *[Sniff]*"

"I... I'm just speaking the truth!"

"Thanks for reassuring me and exchanging ten years of life to stop time and save my life! Waah!"

"...."

Eventually, it turns out that I'm hugging someone much older and thanking her for her kindness. That makes the other party burst into tears too after holding back for so long.

The sadness and inequality of this country's laws persist, but deep inside, there's a glimmer of hope. At least... P'Karan and I will have legal status and won't have to face this situation again.

Even though I know that in the future, I won't have to suffer from the laws that this country doesn't support because I'll probably marry P'Karan. Yet, I myself want to push forward the same-sex marriage law and hope that someday people will stop citing morality and truly accept sexual diversity.

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Several days later

P'Karan is now out of danger. Her wounds have healed significantly, but she still needs to be monitored closely.

When she regains consciousness, she asks for me first, followed by questions about P'Mai-tree, and ends by furrowing her brow and wondering about her sister.

"You haven't told Mom and Mommy, have you?"

"I haven't. I thought it would make both them and you feel uneasy, so I plan to call them when you recover."

With that, the lawyer sister picks up her phone and steps out onto the balcony of this hospital suite to make an international call to inform her parents overseas.

Leaving me alone with P'Karan in the room.

Her bed is adjusted to a semi-sitting position. Without hesitation, I get up and reheat the hot porridge I bought in front of the hospital, using a spoon to feed her while sitting beside the chair.

Raising my head, I notice P'Karan looking at me with a slight smile.

"What's with the smile when you're still injured?"

"I've been scared by a vision that your throat was threatened with a knife. Now that I see you're safe, I can't think of anything better."

"But I made you..."

"No more negative thinking. At least right now, everything is fine."

"Yes." I agree, not blaming myself as the other party has suggested.

"Thank you so much for waking up."

"I have to wake up. We haven't gotten married yet."

"Wait, how can you say that? If we get married, does that mean death doesn't matter anymore?"

"Especially once married, I can't die because my wife is too adorable."

"P'Karan is insane..."

Speaking with such a serious expression concealed beneath a calm facade would make anyone blush. My cheeks turn hot and likely flush. She pats my head gently and smiles happily. This is the truth, not a dream.

While P'Mai-tree makes an international call to tell the story to their mothers, I adjust my emotions, so as not to appear too embarrassed, and help feed porridge to P'Karan while recounting everything she missed while still unconscious.

...P'Fiat was arrested and imprisoned because of CCTV evidence showing he was the one who stabbed P'Karan and fled from the medical room. Being considered a flight risk meant he couldn't get bail.

Meanwhile, P'Ming continued to deny all accusations. She claimed she was coerced by P'Fiat and was now seeking bail with collateral and a lawyer.

I continue with more news: two days after the incident at the warehouse, we learned that P'Ming's younger brother had attempted suicide by drinking detergent in the bathroom...

A neighbor happened to see and 'incorrectly' administered first aid, causing him to vomit before being sent to the hospital. The caustic properties of the detergent he swallowed corroded his esophagus and stomach.

Even though he reached the doctor's hands and survived, Oab likely faces lifelong physical suffering and may never be able to eat normally again...

Just hearing this, I feel dismayed because of, first, the mental state of the Oab, who was so sad that he chose to do that, and second, the misguided first aid that led to his suffering.

In reality, cases involving corrosive acids or alkalis should be sent to the hospital immediately. It's not like overdosing on a drug and vomiting will make it lighter. For detergents, vomiting passes through the digestive tract and destroys everything it touches...

"Perhaps, if P'Ming knew, she might wish to turn back time and have dinner with her younger brother instead of worrying about other things."

I use the spoon to stir rice porridge, which has decreased slightly when talking about the young woman who is currently imprisoned.

Suddenly, P'Karan seems to have thought of something. She gently touches the wound where she was stabbed before turning to look at me seriously and expressing her desire,

"I want to go see Ming."

"No, I can't let you go."

"I already know what needs to be done to resolve this."

"No way, P'Ming still denies all the allegations and shifts the blame onto P'Fiat."

"But with my method... It might be the only way to prevent the incident from happening again when we get married."

"...."

"I won't...lose you again."

I stare deeply into P'Karan's dark eyes and sense her unwavering determination to keep me out of danger at all costs. No matter how much I try to guess, I can't tell what P'Karan is thinking.

I am about to firmly reject her, but then I realize that if I were shot again, it would force her to turn back time for sure, and what would follow is that she would have to exchange ten more years of life.

If that's the case...we should try to fix it now.

"If you insist that you need to meet P'Ming, that's fine, but there's one condition... I have to go with you."

Because she isn't fully recovered yet, even though she isn't bleeding anymore, I can't let her face that woman all by herself.

□□□□□

❁❁45. Our Dinner❁❁

Today, P'Ming will be released after successfully posting bail with collateral. It's a Tuesday afternoon, a suitable time, perhaps due to P'Karan vision that the other party might arrive by taxi at her doorstep at this time. As soon as Aston Martin's faint voice enters the alley, P'Ming happens to be standing in front of the door of a two- story house.

On her left shoulder, she still has a bandage covering a wound. I heard that the bullet grazed her but did not penetrate, so she doesn't have a serious injury.

She hasn't noticed our arrival yet because she is peering into the courtyard. She frowns and then shouts loudly, calling out to someone with her voice filled with concern.

"Oab! It's me, I'm back. Why aren't you answering the phone?"

"...."

There is only silence in response. P'Karan and I look at the back of the woman with a troubled face.

"Are you mad at me? Listen to me first."

"...."

"Oab-"

"He's not here."

Finally, the charming, husky voice reveals the truth. P'Ming startles when she turns and notices that we are right here, not far away. Her tired eyes

widen in alarm, and she steps back almost hitting the house gate.

"What do you want from me!?"

At this moment, the person who seems to have the upper hand is P'Karan, who has stopped bleeding. It is not surprising that the woman looks alarmed.

"Your younger brother is at the hospital."

"What?!"

"He tried...to commit suicide."

In any case, it is difficult to inform relatives who knew nothing while being detained. Moreover, P'Ming and Oab only have each other. P'Karan's voice is softened in fear that the other party wouldn't be able to accept it.

"No way! You... You're lying to me! You try to trick me into going somewhere, aren't you?"

"It's true, P'Ming."

I reaffirm.

"The auntie who lives next door saw everything..."

The slender figure struggles to accept the truth, her face showing disbelief. She reaches for her phone, hands trembling with each movement. It takes her longer than usual to find the contact she needs to call, her fingers shaking the entire time. Even her voice quivers with fear when the call is answered by the other end.

"A...Auntie Phorn, it's Ming. I live next door to you. I just came back home, but I can't find anyone. Where is...my younger brother?"

The neighbor auntie, on the other end of the line, takes a moment to tell the truth, straightforwardly.

And it turns out just as we have feared because the listener reacts immediately upon hearing the end of the sentence.

Her mouth, devoid of any expression, opens wide and trembles. Her throat seems to want to emit sound but instead remains silent. Her eyes are wide with shock, unable to shed tears or even blink.

And she collapses to her knees, overcome by her lack of strength...

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An hour later, the three of us are at the hospital nearest P'Ming's house, where Oab has been admitted for treatment. The condition of the young man isn't great, which causes immediate tears to well up in the face of his older sister. Repeated phrases slip out of her lips as she reaches out to grasp the thick hand of her younger sibling lying there with an IV in his neck.

"I'm sorry... Oab, I'm really sorry."

She might have just realized the extent of her younger brother's emotional distress, as she finally can't bear it anymore.

"I'm sorry... I was wrong."

I turn to look at the tall figure of P'Karn, who is standing beside me.

She gazes at the siblings with eyes that others might perceive as calm and composed, but to me, who knows her deeply, I can see that part of her - a woman who can control time - is full of sorrow too, as she has to bring the sister to see her brother in this state.

But what would P'Karan do next?

I haven't asked yet because yesterday, after reluctantly agreeing and submitting my terms to be here, P'Mai-Tree walked back from the balcony with a phone in hand, on a call with her mothers abroad. Both wanted to speak to P'Karan after hearing the news.

She was told that they were flying here as fast as possible.

Her Mom had booked their plane tickets, and her Mommy was complaining so much that her voice was trembling with worry (every word punctuated by concern and a shaky voice). This meant that I would soon meet them both for the first time, but P'Karan had secretly told P'Mai-Tree afterward.

'We won't meet them.'

'Huh? Why?'

'I'm going to rewind time.'

She said that, although our agreement required her to inform me before using her ability, until now, I still can't figure out how she intends to use it to fix the situation, as P'Ming has planned everything for a long time.

Returning to the forefront view, the sister is gently cupping her younger brother's cheek with a hand that lacks the strength to lift on its own. It is a pitiful and depressing sight, especially when she realizes how much harder things will be for Oab in the future, not just because of the difficulty of walking with a prosthetic leg but also the challenges with eating and digestion.

"Why does our family have to encounter something like this..."

The sound of P'Ming's sob still carries a hint of blaming everything. Even though it is soft-spoken and exhausted, the two of us standing behind can feel it pierce our hearts.

"Ming"

P'Karan calls her junior's name during this vulnerable moment. She turns towards us. Her face is stained with tears, devoid of any malice. Perhaps, she was too overwhelmed by her brother's situation.

"I can't go back eight years ago to help everyone in your family, but we can still fix some things."

"You already went back in time to save someone you love from dying. That's why you could say it."

Although the younger side starts being sarcastic, P'Karan responds calmly and composedly.

"Eight years ago, it wasn't fair, but it was beyond my abilities."

"Yeah, it was totally unfair. So, you're asking me to just let go of any hope I've had all along?"

P'Ming, still teary-eyed, looks at P'Karan and asks with a tone that indicates she can't easily accept it. "Did my family and Fiat do something wrong to deserve having our loved ones taken away like this?"

"Then, what mistake did Kliao Khluen make to deserve being a hostage and physically harmed by you?"

"This girl is just a tool to force you to help me, that's all."

"In that case, you should bring back your conscience."

"I..."

The young woman's eyes reflect pain as she reluctantly accepts the reality that going back in time eight years ago is impossible. She lowers her head, her voice barely audible like the rustle of falling feathers.

"I just thought if we could go back to eight years ago, everything would end happily."

There is a silence between us as we pause.

I hug P'Karan's arm, feeling sorry for her even more upon learning the reason behind someone resorting to such actions. However, I'll always remember that she and P'Fiat are both willing to stab P'Karan, so I can't bring myself to forgive them completely.

P'Karan waits until her junior's soft sobbing subsides before continuing.

"The culprit was killed seven years ago, and his entire family fell apart because they were exposed for cheating and nearly turned against each other."

"...."

"I know it's not easy to come to terms with that, but what I can offer now is to return your brother to a state where he's not suffering."

"And... What do I have to do?"

"We'll go back before all this chaos happened, so you can shift your focus from your plans... Back to caring for the family member who needs you the most."

The older person reaches out, signaling P'Ming to rest her hand hers. By now, I can guess that the golden clock indicating P'Karan's ability is about to appear as soon as there's a touch between them. The three of us will be sent back in time before all the chaos starts.

The only thing that could stop the bloodshed at our wedding is the change in P'Ming's mindset so that she wouldn't be emotionally tied to us.

The small hand trembles and then hides behind herself. Uncertainty still shows on that face, but when she looks at her tortured brother lying there, she seems to decide that nothing else might matter more than him now.

P'Ming's gaze meets Phee Karan's.

"This isn't a trap, right?"

"I'm not that kind of person."

"You might be angry because I kidnapped Kliao Khluen and ordered Fiat to injure you."

"I'm angry."

The first sentence, full of aggression, makes P'Ming's shoulders tremble slightly, but my lover continues saying,

"But this time travel will prevent those events from happening."

"When... When do you plan to go back?"

"Tell me the date you were about to approach Fiat and involve him in your plan

"Ming, pull yourself out of the past. Your plan hasn't benefited anyone. What's happening right now proves that, doesn't it?"

"...."

The other party remains silent for a moment before finally agreeing to disclose the date, which P'Karan acknowledges with a slight nod and a gesture to encourage the younger woman to place her hand down.

P'Ming compresses her lips tightly at every movement, lifting her hand to bring it down. This might not have been what she imagined would happen after years of effort, but going back to the time when her brother is not in this state is the best option P'Karan could offer.

As usual, the beautiful golden clock emerges above everything else. Its hands move backward, the surroundings shifting rapidly in reverse. I hold onto my lover's arm more tightly, seeking warmth in touch, not paying attention to anything else. Darkness envelopes the area.

My memories won't be erased because I'm touching the time controller.

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The cold seeps through my skin, awakening me to the sound of fingers snapping in front of my face.

As I blink away the remnants of sleep, I find Tree walking down the hallway and notice me standing there with my eyes closed. He stops and shakes me awake.

"What's wrong? Are you feeling unwell?"

Ignoring my fellow extern, I quickly grab my phone from my bag to check the date and time.

Before realizing... It is today, the day I decided to leave my family. When I turn to look behind, I find myself facing the door to the hospital suite where my father has just recuperated from heart surgery.

I see. The date she mentioned is today - the day I decided to leave my family.

P'Karan had promised to rewind time before the chaos erupted. That chaos likely referred to the day P'Ming was about to spill the beans about P'Karan's miraculous ability to P'Fiat, proving a vision of the future and starting a plan they had concocted together.

With that in mind, I don't care about anything except running forward to reach the CVT Department common room because my brain suggests me that if not P'Karan then P'Fiat might be there.

"Hey! What's going on with you, Kliao?"

Tree's voice follows my steps, confused by my sudden actions. However, in that moment of terror, my greatest fear is that P'Ming would not cooperate. Who knows? That woman might pull a trick and try to tighten her old plan.

The fear is over the top like this wouldn't be the end.

I run for a while, my feet abruptly halting as I turn and see P'Ming standing not far away, her hand gripping the doorknob of the CVT department's common room. She remains there in that position, her gaze floating, staring blankly at the door as if her mind is preoccupied with many thoughts.

"P'Ming..."

I start to call out, but it seems like her peripheral nerves were momentarily cut off.

A few meters away, P'Karan pauses on the opposite side of the hallway. observing the reaction of the younger doctor after running here. She stands tall in her light blue scrub attire, her narrow eyes showing immediate concern as she turns to my way and then stares at absent-minded P'Ming's face.

The three of us are back in time to the moment when P'Ming is about to open the door to introduce herself to P'Fiat for a sinister plan.

My sweat begins to emerge. I'm unable to guess what she is thinking at that moment.

Then, in that split second.

She withdraws her hand.

She slips it into her gown pocket to pull out a communication device instead. She is calling someone. Even with P'Karn and me standing here, it seems like P'Ming is completely indifferent to her surroundings.

"Oab?"

She asks with her trembling voice, as soon as the other end answers the call. We can tell immediately who she's calling.

"I'm sorry..."

Tears don't down her cheeks, yet they cling to the edges of her eyes as she speaks. Oab might not understand what his sister is talking about. The anesthesiologist shakes her head, even though the end of the call is out of sight.

"It's nothing, just...sorry for making you feel lonelyall this time."

She explains her reasons before her lips slowly reveal a gentle smile as she glances over.

"Tonight, let's go home and have dinner. Would you like me to buy some desserts on the way back?"

She changed... from plotting some evil plan to showing interest in her dinner with her younger brother.

My heart suddenly eases after anxiously speculating where P'Ming's thoughts might be headed. After hearing her words indicating that she probably cared more about dinner plans with her brother than any scheme, I turn to glance at P'Karan. She briefly nods, implying 'It's okay. Let's leave.' Then, we leave P'Ming there and walk away.

I sneak a glance back and see her slender figure sitting down, burying her face in her hands, quietly weeping.

"I do feel relieved, but I'm still a bit nervous."

After leaving the CVT department, we continue holding hands as we walk down the corridor. I voice my inner lingering concerns, but P'Karan's response is reassuring.

"Don't worry anymore. Ming might need time, but she'll be okay."

"Why? Did you just glimpse a future omen?"

"Yes..."

"What happened? Tell me about it."

"It's about our wedding."

Her beautiful face lowers. There's a hint of a smile when talking about the moment I would become a bride.

"I saw Ming attend the event, not as an enemy but as a guest."

Upon hearing that, I smile as I realize the nightmare wouldn't come true. The decision to seek out P'Ming and turn back time to help save her brother

is indeed the right one. If we weren't on duty, I'd want to jump and hug her because it took a lot for us to get through this long journey.

No need to be afraid anymore.

I look at her face... This woman has always protected me from everything, and even now she still holds my hand.

Whether it's something small or big, she's always there when I need her, and even though my feelings overflow in my chest, it's too much to put into words. Just a brief glance at her profile and these few words slip out.

"That's great..."

Before I get surprised and refocus on the situation around us, suddenly the taller figure stops walking, causing me to pause too. She turns to look at me, and we haven't let go of each other's hands. Her dark eyes stare at me as if she has something serious to say. My guess is correct because her charming husky voice says:

"Kliao Khluen."

"Yes, P'Karan?"

"Do you want to meet my mom and mommy?"

I freeze for a moment, pretty shocked by her direct question, wondering if I want to see both her mothers. Perhaps because before turning back time, I inadvertently made a disappointed face about not seeing both. P'Karan must have subtly noticed. Once everything cleared up, she brought up the subject of wanting to meet them. I am excited, but I nod with a sweet smile.

"I'd really love to."

Because I want to thank both of them so much, for raising P'Karan into such a warm-hearted woman.

My sunshine...

□□□□

46. Playing Hard to Get

Initially, I thought meeting P'Karan's mom and mommy would require flying abroad.

But then P'Karan immediately called to tell them about her partner, and they both decided to come back to visit their daughter in Thailand next week instead. I almost went crazy like a hamster couldn't find her nest. Look! In just a few days, I'll be meeting them. I haven't even prepared myself mentally or physically for this.

Right now, I'm at P'Karan's condo. We've finished dinner and are now sitting on the sofa watching TV together. But as soon as the older person casually mentions that her mothers would come to visit next Monday, I am left speechless and restless.

"Why are you afraid? My mom and mommy are also a lesbian couple."

"But P'Karn's family is very wealthy, and I'm not a young lady. I need to practice cooking or something to showcase my skills, but both of them are coming next Monday. There's no time to prepare!"

P'Karan notices my anxious demeanor, with my cheeks blushing, and she laughs softly, extending her hand to comfort me.

"It's okay. Mommy probably understands you because she also doesn't like cooking much. Usually, Mom is the one who cooks."

"But... I don't have any special abilities to speak of."

"Do you really need to have one?"

"I don't know how to make the adults like me..."

"My family, they'll love my bride for sure."

Looking at how P'Mai-Tree was willing to sacrifice ten years of her lifespan to help me, I understand that if a family member loves someone, they will also love that person (even though P'Mai-Tree had a bias towards me until recently.)

But even if she said so, I still want to have something noteworthy to talk about. It's a shame that no matter how much I try to think of one, it seems like I have never sought out a hobby or special ability. Because my childhood was consumed by the expectation that as a daughter, I had to focus solely on housework. But my household skills are not outstanding either. Even P'Karan's laundry smells better than mine.

Oh gosh, Kliao Khluen, you cannot be like this.

I sigh before I can think about something...

"P'Karan"

"Hmm, what's up, sweetie?"

"Can you tell me what your mom and mommy are like? I...just want to know a bit about them beforehand. If I meet them without knowing anything, I might get too nervous."

"Sure," the young woman in the light orange pajamas picks up the remote control and lowers the TV volume before moving closer and patting her lap as an invitation for me to sit there.

I blink a few times, feeling a bit embarrassed as I move to sit on her warm lap, though enjoying the familiar comfort of her embrace. She is tucked behind me, wrapping both arms around me warmly, resting her chin on my left shoulder as she often did when we were alone together.

P'Karan starts by recounting their backgrounds, personalities, and characters.

Her mother, named 'Simaysa' or nicknamed 'Four,' had come from a wealthy family. She used to be a volleyball player, a striker during high school who stood at over 170 centimeters, as tall as P'Karan. Mrs. Four had dreamt of joining the national team. But due to certain events, she suffered a leg fracture and had to wear a cast for a year. After recovering and being able to walk normally again, she couldn't return to play.

Mrs. Four's life at university wasn't as smooth, compounded by her rough appearance and indifferent attitude, which made her seem unapproachable. She was misunderstood by others. However, one woman saw her from a different perspective.

'Jattawa' was the name of P'Karan's mommy. P'Karan mentioned that Mrs. Jattawa was petite, about ten centimeters taller than me. She was a woman who faced hardships, having to work extra jobs to fund her studies and support herself and her younger sister. She dreamt of becoming a lawyer (though she eventually became a public prosecutor).

Mrs. Jattawa is a rational woman who is good at articulation because she has engaged in verbal sparring with lawyers. She also often teaches both her daughters to appreciate the value of food every meal, due to her struggles during adolescence to earn every single baht.

One unforgettable aspect is that Mrs. Jattawa inherited the ability to control time.

She and her younger sister, ViVi, are different from others. Ms. ViVi can see glimpses of the future, while Mrs. Jattawa can stop and rewind time for 10 minutes each day, with their abilities reset at midnight.

"Mommy told me that our abilities will be passed down to all children but only the eldest's descendants can pass them."

This means that all siblings will have time abilities, but only the eldest's descendants can pass on the time-related abilities.

"What exactly are the conditions for your Mommy's ability?"

"I think she's the only one in the family with the most complete ability because there are no conditions that cause negative consequences."

This makes me exclaim 'Wow!' in astonishment.

Now, about their personal relationship, Mrs. Four and Mrs. Jattawa met each other during college. Mrs. Four was in her fourth year of business major, while Mrs. Jattawa was in her first year of law school. As for the details, I can't fully explain, but summarizing, although they weren't initially close because Mrs.

Four never opened up to anyone and Mrs. Jattawa had heard negative rumors about the other side from friends, they had been through a lot together, both in school and at work.

One day, when they decided to have a child to inherit this power, Mrs. Four researched how to obtain citizenship in a country where same-sex couples could register their marriage. She met the investment requirements there, and once she obtained citizenship, she married to Mrs. Jattawa. They relocated there and settled in that country. After that, they used sperm banks to conceive their first daughter, P'Karan.

As for P'Karan, Mrs. Jattawa intended to use her own eggs and let Mrs. Four carry the pregnancy and give birth.

As for P'Mai-Tree, they swapped roles, using Mrs. Four's eggs while Mrs. Jattawa carried the pregnancy and gave birth.

Simply put, they took turns getting pregnant.

Reading up to this point, you might be puzzled as to how P'Mai-tree gained this ability since she was born from Mrs. Four's eggs...

At this point, even the family members themselves were puzzled. However, they thought it might be a relationship bound by love that allowed P'Mai-tree, the youngest daughter, to have this ability.

Because the word 'family' doesn't just mean birth, but rather a group of people tied together by heart.

Even though many adults in this country would frame family as consisting of parents and children, that's not the truth. Look at me as an example. My family shouldn't be called a family as they have bias and prejudice against me so much.

I feel warm inside when I heard about Mrs. Four and Mrs. Jattawa raising and taking care of their daughters with love until they grew up. There were times when they got angry, but I know that it is for a reason, not to assert power in any way.

That night, after I had gotten to know both of them, I fell asleep in the arms of the P'Karan. I vaguely remembered that she helped me arrange ourselves to lie down on the long, soft sofa. She hugged me from behind. We fell asleep with the air conditioning not too cold and just a single blanket. The warmth of P'Karan's chest made me curl up even more to be embraced by her.

Since she came into my life, I have felt that being together with her is a safe space like no other.

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The next morning, I still go to perform my duties as an extern, sitting next to P'Karan in Aston Martin, as usual. But there is news in the hospital that I just heard from Meow and Tree:

'P'Ming submitted her resignation.'

The reason is unknown to anyone. She still has to work for a while longer, but she refuses to explain to any doctor or nurse why she resigned. I happen to pass by her in the morning on Monday and ask her why.

P'Ming acts as if time reversal doesn't exist. She acts as if she never intended to harm P'Karan or blame on P'Fiat, or anything of the sort. Then, she responds briefly, just as she did with others.

"It's for personal reasons."

She says with a defiant smile before excusing herself to return to work.

I don't understand much. I chat with P'Karan to ask if she has seen anything unusual. She replies that she hasn't. She only saw P'Ming attending the wedding as our guest.

Anyway, the current situation turns out well. She goes back to pay attention to her younger brother. P'Fiat doesn't have to join any plans that lead him to jail. Today, as I have an important evening appointment to meet P'Karan's mothers, I decide to set aside my doubts about P'Ming's situation. I figure that one day I will find out the reason for myself. As long as the outcome turns out well, that is sufficient.

During the day, I work with mixed feelings-excitement about tonight's dinner and worry about not having any outstanding qualities that prompt me to seek advice from friends about what to do.

My friends, including Khim and members of The Edge of the Universe, are both contacted by me at noon and in the evening when I am done with ward rounds because P'Karan will come to pick me up at the medical dormitory at six in the evening.

Here is a summary of each person's advice:

"I believe They'll love their daughter-in-law, I can feel it." - Khim

"Don't overthink it. If their daughter loves you, her mothers will love you too." - Nene

"Just relax and be your cheerful self when you meet them." - Belle

"They must like you. Their daughter likes you. If there's any interference, just run away together!" - Frang

"Just don't care. You've liked P'Karan for so long. Just a problem with her mothers-in-law wouldn't stop you, right?" - Lady Note

Damn it! Those two people at the end are really something!

The dating outfit has been chosen for a long time. Today, I've spent too much time on it. Perhaps because I am afraid of being disrespectful to adults. Mrs. Jattawa used to be a public prosecutor, so she might be serious about this. I pull everything out of the closet to look at. Meow who is eating TARO[] at her desk, looks at me with a boring look until finally, at thirty-three minutes past five, my roommate utters a sigh.

"Oh, you've been trying on two outfits back and forth. Just pick one already! I can barely see the difference. At this rate, you'll be out at midnight!"

That's it. I finally decide because of the motivation to go out.

The outfit I wear today is a knee-length mint green mini dress. I tidy up my ponytail with small, sweet hairpins. The shoes remain the same white-cream espadrilles that I have worn on a date with P'Karan.

After dressing and finishing my makeup around 5.55 PM, I wave goodbye to my roommate and head out of the room to stand under the dormitory. I don't have to endure standing tiredly waiting that long because as soon as I step down from the last stair of the staircase, I see P'Karan's flashy car waiting.

P'Karan is still in a formal attire as she has just finished a case conference with the professors. She said she would stop by the condo to shower and change clothes quickly before going 'home' where her mothers had arrived since morning. At that time, I have a question, so I ask as the car moves along the road.

"Why are you staying at the condo?"

"The house is a bit far from the hospital. I think it's inconvenient if I'm on call or have emergency cases and get called in."

"Then, who's at home?"

"Mai-Tree and Auntie. I usually go back once or twice a week."

Auntie... Oh, I remember. She's Mrs. Jattawa's sister. Her name is Jaravi, and her nickname is Vi. She has the ability to see the future.

The fact that my lover's family has time control abilities really adds excitement and pressure. Just think about it. Maybe only I am the ordinary one at the dining table. Oh! No, Mrs. Four doesn't have time control abilities either. I'm quite relieved...

While sitting in the car heading to her condominium, or during the time waiting for P'Karan to finish showering and changing clothes, I can't calm my mind sitting on the sofa in the living room no matter how hard I try.

Especially when teased by P'Mai-Tree with a chat message saying, 'Mom and Mommy look forward to seeing their daughter-in-law. Hehe.' Right now, what I focus on is the laughter at the end of that sentence. What does it mean?!

After P'Karan comes down the stairs in a new outfit, a mint green long-sleeve knitted cardigan paired with perfectly fitted white jeans, it almost feels like she deliberately dressed us up as a matching set. Her face is nicely decorated with light makeup, and her sleek black hair doesn't require much effort, just letting it down.

She takes less than a minute to decide on her shoes, perhaps because she already has in mind that she would wear black and white Vans similar to a checkerboard pattern.

We take the elevator down dressed as a couple, looking like we planned it ahead, but the reality is quite different. When I think about it that way, I can't hold back my smile while heading to dinner.

Um... While sitting in the car, what could possibly calm my mind?

I suddenly realize that I have never opened up about this with my fan club who follows our The Edge of the Universe band. Perhaps, today should be

the day. Well, after all, the worst situations have turned into something good.

I conclude in my mind that I would introduce my female lover openly to everyone, without hiding anything, so that I can receive encouraging comments to soothe my heart before facing the elders. Then, I pick up my phone to capture a woman turning the steering wheel. Everyone can tell from the photo that it is the arm and hand of a woman.

The caption read 'My Love' followed by heart emojis and pride flags, symbols of sexual diversity.

After posting that on Twitter and Facebook, likes, retweets, and comments pour in overwhelmingly, I manage to read through many comments on both platforms simultaneously.

Sunshine Sunflower: Pride flag... Does that mean?!!!

Finstagram of Booby: So, P'Kliao is dating a girl, huh?

Beb To beb: That's a very couple-like photo. Are you introducing her to us?

IrisCha: You've grown up into a young lady, little one of our band. Someone's taken care of you, and I'm happy for this mommy. P.S. I really want to know who the hand belongs to. Because if she hurts our Kliao, she'll be in big trouble!

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Even though there are many positive comments coming in, there are still negative-minded people out there, especially in a society where many are still closed- minded...

Some comments express regret that our The Edge of the Universe band is lesbian. Some say we shouldn't be perverts. And others are outright vulgar. There's a comment I read that makes my eyebrows twitch. It is a long, stretched-out comment arguing that a woman not loving a man is a global

absurdity, topped off with a poetic verse. It ends by wishing for a change of heart before it's too late.

I want to respond strongly, without worrying about my image. Many curses come to mind, but because I have many followers, I just reply with:

"What's wrong with you?"

That's it, perhaps the origin of the phrase '*a million words in one's heart.*'

What? I want to read positive comments to calm my mind before meeting P'Karan's Mom and Mommy, but I come across this...

P'Karan's sharp eyes glance at me. She waits for the red light and then lightly pulls my cheek.

"What's wrong? Why are you pouting?"

"Well... I just revealed that I'm in love with a woman. There are both positive and negative comments. Although the negatives are far fewer, reading them isn't really okay."

"Don't care about those people."

"I'm trying. Some responses are manageable, but some of them are purely rude comments."

Upon hearing that there are also rude comments, along with my fading voice, the older person frowns, unwilling to let it go. Initially, she was calmer.

"Don't worry. I'll screenshot it and send it to Mai-Tree to handle."

"Calm down! It's okay!"

It turns out that I have to step in to prevent her from getting angry instead. I firmly warn her not to escalate things to court, but P'Karan insists that those who leave rude comments have no right to criticize her bride-to-be like that.

It seems like she's about to burst, even if she isn't showing it on her face...

Her reaction actually eases my tension and stress.

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At past seven in the evening, Aston Martin drives into a certain village. Even though it is dark, it is clear that each house isn't cheap. My eyes widen, but I am not that surprised because I already knew P'Karan's financial status from the beginning.

I just feel like I've known what I'll encounter. Her house is large. There's a swimming pool, a garage, a security guard station next to the house gate, and a very spacious courtyard.

Walking into the house with stiff steps, everything here is so well-decorated that I can feel that each piece must be very expensive. I walk through various rooms until I reach the dining area.

And what appears before me makes me surprised. Because in my mind, I have imagined having meals at a long table like in a drama.

But in fact, it is just a table big enough for eight people.

"What's confusing you, shortie?"

Her voice, suddenly bursting into my ear, makes me startled. When I turn around, I see P'Mai-Tree in a casual outfit, looking adorable, holding a plate of dumplings in her hand. Her round eyes guess what I am thinking.

"Our house doesn't have those long tables you're imagining. Otherwise, it would be inconvenient when passing soy sauce bottles to each other."

Although this little sister of the house is annoyingly nagging, I understand the meaning well that this family doesn't care whether they have to bring in a big, long table to maintain their status. They just want warmth, closeness, and happiness during meals.

I look at P'Mai-Tree with gratitude...because there is one thing that can't be changed by time travel: Ten years of P'Mai-Tree's lifespan that had been exchanged for stopping the bullet cannot be returned. The lawyer can't remember what happened, but she knows that her lifespan has decreased.

After everything settled down, P'Karan told her everything. However, when the young woman who stopped time found out, she didn't regret it at all. At that moment, she just turned to me and said.

'As long as you're okay, that's fine.'

Hearing that, I couldn't hold back my tears and hugged the person who was chasing me away. It was a mix of guilt, gratitude, and warmth. Even though I was verbally attacked by the lawyer, I didn't let her go.

Back to the present...

The tall woman standing beside me glances around the dining room before asking,

"Tree, what about the others?"

"Auntie Vi is busy drawing in the study. Mom and Mommy are rushing to prepare more dishes because ten minutes ago Mommy burnt two of them."

"Oh..."

P'Karan nods slightly, as if understanding that it is normal for Mommy to burn things, before muttering while setting the dining table,

"Too bad that Auntie Vi isn't available."

"Too bad indeed~"

Mai-Tree turns towards me.

"You should taste her cooking; Auntie Vi makes delicious food. I eat it every day. I also ask her to pack a lunchbox for work."

"Oh..."

"Sure, you must come here often. You'll get to taste it eventually. After all, she's your future wife."

"Y...yes, please take care of me."

I rub my neck and respond hesitantly, feeling shy because we both know that what P'Mai-Tee said is true.

"But... is there anything for me to help with?"

When I volunteer myself with all my heart, P'Mai-Tree prepares to pull me into the kitchen immediately. However, the CVT doctor in her mint green knitted cardigan intervenes and insists on being the one to escort me to find Mom and Mommy herself. The little lawyer doesn't object and casually grabs a piece of spring roll to eat.

The tall figure next to me holds my hand, warming me up with her fingers and palms, before looking at me and asking with her gaze 'Are you ready?' I say nothing but smile, then P'Karan leads me to the kitchen.

I remember searching for the appearance of Mrs. Four and Mrs. Jattawa on Google. The pictures showed one as a businesswoman and the other as a public prosecutor who opens a page to educate about the law. But upon meeting their actual selves, with significant height differences and bickering about what menu to replace the burned dishes, they are both more beautiful than in the static images.

"Mom, Mommy, hello."

P'Karan's hoarse voice silences both and hurries them to turn toward us instead.

Then, the attention of both adults turns to me

As the eldest daughter introduces me as her 'bride-to-be,' I can't stand quietly without courtesy. I raise my trembling hands to greet the elders, my words stuttering slightly.

"H-hello, my name is Kliao Khluen. I'm a sixth-year medical student at the hospital where P'Karan works."

Both Mrs. Four and Mrs. Jattawa listen quietly and stay like that for a while until I start feeling tense, wondering if they dislike something about me.

Do they dislike me just by seeing my face?

Or is there something wrong with my outfit?

No way! I must have unintentionally done something wrong!

While my consciousness almost slips away, Mrs. Jattawa nudges her partner with her elbow and then turns to whisper. I stand close enough to hear her say,

"I told you, didn't I? She's younger than Ran, and even younger than Tree."

"Yes, honey. I was wrong about that."

Younger... Are they talking about me?

Were they playing guessing games whether I was older or younger than their eldest daughter?

My face blushes momentarily before Mrs. Jattawa kindly reveals a gentle smile, while Mrs. Four, although not expressing it through her lips, has a glint of tenderness in her eyes.

Both invite me to join in deciding what two replacement dishes would be good. Initially, entering the kitchen makes me feel awkward because I've never been spoken to like this by my own parents. However, seeing P'Karan standing there with a reassuring smile allows me to muster my courage.

There are also the head chef and housekeeper here. But whenever there is a moment to eat together, they choose to cook themselves, especially knowing that P'Karan would bring... um...her bride-to-be. The table is filled with so many dishes that it looks like a feast of celebration.

Ms. Vi, Mrs. Jattawa's younger sister, comes down when the meal is about to start. She seems to be rushing with a lot of work, but as far as I can tell, she is cute both in appearance and character. She leans in to hug and make a lovely face at her older sister before coming over to me and greeting me as if we have met once or twice before.

"Auntie Vi saw you around quite often,"

P'Mai-Tree whispers to me. I then understand the situation and feel a slight embarrassment after what happened earlier.

Dinner starts around a little past 8 PM, delayed a bit because we cooked ourselves. However, it allows us all to participate and share stories about each dish. I sit next to P'Karan, while on the other side is Mrs. Jattawa, who quietly asks if her eldest daughter has bothered me.

What should I say? She hasn't bothered me, but she always leaves some red marks on my body.

We finish eating around 9 PM and then help each other clear the table and wash the dishes. After that, we spend time together in the living room. There are Mrs. Four, Mrs. Jattawa, P'Karan, P'Mai-Tree, and me (Auntie Vi quickly went back to work). They ask about me and how P'Karan and I fell in love, and it's surprising how this joyful conversation lasts until 11 PM.

At first, Mrs. Jattawa suggested that we stay overnight, but tomorrow P'Karan and I have to rush to work early. If we leave here in the morning, we would be definitely late, so we have to reluctantly decline and say that maybe we can come back on Friday or Saturday.

Many things this evening warmed my heart, but one thing I liked the most is the tone of endearment when my lover called her mothers 'Mom' and 'Mommy.' Especially with the latter one, her voice sounds so adorable that it warmed my heart.

Just past midnight, the two of us hold hands and walk out of the house, heading towards the garden path to the parking lot. I smile because tonight is filled with wonderful stories and contentment. A hummed tune emerges

lightly, which I come up with on my own. By the way, I've been wanting to compose a song... And yes, just like that, I use my free hand to pick up my phone and type out a verse that has popped into my head on the Note app.

The song that symbolizes my love for P'Karan.

The song that describes the feelings I have for her.

We sit together in the Aston Martin, heading towards her condominium near the hospital. The atmosphere feels different this time when the older woman takes a deep breath, as if about to say something important.

And it seems like I guess right.

"Kliao Khluen"

"Huh?"

"Marry me, please."

"...."

I didn't expect that. I sit in stunned silence for a moment, with only our breaths and the rhythm of our hearts sounding.

As I reflect and ponder during this stillness, I gaze deeply into her earnest eyes, gaining insight into the depth of our relationship beyond our visible love. She cares about me in every way-whether it's welfare, healthcare, or legal matters-which drives her strong desire to marry.

Finally, I found my answer.

"Not yet."

"Why..."

The beautiful woman transmits a voice full of heartfelt disappointment.

"When we first met seven years ago, you were cold to me. And now you're pleading like this?"

"I can surrender like a dog for you."

Her eyes filled with pleading.

"You agreed to go that far?"

"Yes, I agree to everything. Let's get married. We'll fly to register our marriage."

"We will... But not now."

"...."

"She pauses, waiting to hear my reason, knowing I am serious.

"I'm still an extern. I'll be taking another two or three years of internship, paying my student loans in the countryside"

"I'll pay for you."

"No, I don't want that. I still want to be an intern because I plan to pursue a specialization."

"...."

"I really want to get married. I want it so much, but right now, I want to study and become an intern first."

"...."

"During that time, we'll be together, dating, but only getting married when I become a resident."

"So, it can't be now.."

She, in her mint green knitted cardigan, leans in closer, her warm breath brushing against my left cheek, as if secretly whispering her bargain,

"What about after you complete your sixth year?"

"No... It's too soon."

P'Karan blows out a warm breath.

"How about during the internship?"

"No, I'm not that easy."

She pauses her coaxing, then shifts slightly to meet my gaze.

"I'd like you to wait a bit... Can you?"

After a brief silence, she chuckles softly, then raises her hand to pat my head affectionately.

"Alright, I understand. I'll wait. Let's get married when you become a resident."

"Yep... Thank you so much, P'Karan."

It's not because I want to play hard to get or anything.

But because getting married and becoming her wife is incredibly important to me, more than words can describe. That's what I eagerly await day by day. Therefore, I want to finish my studies and secure my finances before becoming her dream bride.

In the meantime, we'll continue holding hands, side by side, and remain each other's sunshine without change.

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47. The Path

One year later

Having passed through the life of an extern, I transition into working on my internship and become an 'intern.'

After completing my sixth year of medical school, I become an intern in the northeastern province.

If you were to ask if life was tough, I would have to admit that it is quite challenging indeed. Despite having traveled to different provinces during my student days, they are relatively short stays, not years like this.

No longer in the extern status, I find myself having to acquire more knowledge and take on more responsibilities, especially in this 30-bed hospital. I almost become a senior doctor here since there are no specialists. Often, we have patients with diverse conditions that exceed my abilities as a doctor. In such cases, I have to refer them to hospitals in other provinces to be under the care of specialists.

Although six years of medical education provide a strong foundation, they don't cover every disease, as many might assume. I still have a long way to go in terms of further studies. I'm still weighing my options about where to go next after my scholarship runs out, but I don't have much free time to sit and ponder.

In summary, the workload here is overwhelming for the number of staff we have, and we rarely get as much rest as we'd like.

It's fortunate that P'Karan flies to visit me every weekend, taking me out for ice cream, smoothies, grilled squid, or cooking together. She bought a condominium in this province so that we can spend weekends together. The

woman who is now a cardiothoracic surgeon remains constant and unwavering, from beginning to end.

I sometimes wonder why I'm so lucky.

If you were to ask if I missed her during the times we're apart or what I do when feeling down?

I would have to say that she's left behind tokens of her heart to comfort me in those moments.

She gave me a pocket watch with a silver case and a Roman numeral dial that she always carried with her. It's a beautiful timepiece resembling a golden hourglass showing up when she uses her time-rewinding ability. Mrs. Jattawa had it custom-made for her daughter, and she chose to give it to me as a form of...an engagement gift in a way.

An engagement gift in the style of someone who controls time, huh?

I always carry it with me because it reassures me that P'Karan is always there to support me.

Let's talk about social media.

No one dares to slander in my territory anymore, especially after P'Karan meticulously screenshotted the comments and sent them to P'Mai-Tree to handle it. Some were anti-fans, and others were adults who disliked same-sex couples, but they were all legally reprimanded by the lawyer. The amount they had to pay was too much for them to bear, so they had to post an apology according to the conditions.

Apart from that issue, all the fans have now learned about who is the owner of the hand that steered the wheel back then. This is because a few months ago, I posted our first couple photograph on April 9th, which happened to be P'Karan's birthday. P'Karan's beauty and charisma caused a social media uproar all at once. It even trended in Thailand. People were trying to find ways to follow her every channel, but she kept hers private.

So, many entertainment media outlets contacted me to take her out on a show. Because I responded late (because I'm quite busy as a doctor), they contacted the leader of The Edge of the Universe, Belle, instead. And of course, I told my friends in the group that.

'We won't show up. I want to P'Karan for myself.'

As a result, there haven't been any shows where we've gone to discuss until now.

The apartment they arranged for me to complete my internship is not far from the hospital. I reach it in a moment with my bike. It's safe to say that I get some fresh air along the way. But every time I sweep my gaze towards the evening view, I see a variety of structural problems. Because sometimes life in the countryside isn't always as comfortable as portrayed in dramas.

While riding my bike back to the apartment in the evening, when the sky is bathed in orange, I regularly pass by a certain pond.

Normally, I don't pay much attention to anything else because my goal is food and snacks in the room. But this time, a certain woman's slim figure makes me furrow my brows because of the familiarity.

As I ride closer until I can see the profile of the person sitting and staring at the water, I have to brake suddenly.

"P'Ming..."

It is really her.

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5.35 PM

"Long time no see. How are you?"

Normally, I should have gone back to my room and texted P'Karan that I had arrived safely at the residence like I always did. But today, I find myself sitting next to P'Ming, casting my gaze onto the pond that has once captured my sincere interest. Then, I ask about her who had left the hospital where we used to work together for a year.

"I'm fine," the Anesthesiologist replies shortly, then lets the breeze pass through without further conversation.

As far as I can tell, there is no lingering tension in our interactions anymore. That might have been why P'Ming doesn't run away but even answer my questions.

To be honest, yes, I am still concerned about the nightmares from the wedding scene where she walked in with a gun. That is the reason why I decided to get off my bike a moment ago, parked it not far away from us, and requested permission to sit here and observe her reaction discreetly.

"So... P'Ming, did you move to work in this province?"

"Yes, I'm at the provincial hospital," seeing my doubtful reaction, she continues,

"I just came here for some errands. The shuttle back is coming at 6:30, so I'm just sitting here waiting like a fool."

"Oh..."

At this point, I think the other party might let the conversation die again. But it turns out that isn't the case. The eyes of the young woman next to me are overflowing with various emotions that are tightly packed inside her chest. She can't bear to stay silent any longer. And it just happens that I am sitting here with her. The clear water starts to well up her eyes, accompanied the well-arranged stories.

"I've been feeling increasingly sorry for myself for many years...The day I went back to have lunch with my younger brother made me realize just how

poor his mental health has been, both due to work pressure and various emotional states,"

She continues, acknowledging how she had been so focused on other things that she overlooked Oab, her remaining family member. I don't interrupt, allowing P'Ming to let it all out.

"When I took time to reflect, I remembered that Oab had always wanted to open a barbershop. In fact, I was interested in opening one in Bangkok. But despite having more people, the cost of living there is too high. People like us from the middle class would struggle, so I asked if he wanted to move back to our parents' hometown province. At least the traffic is lighter, the rent is cheaper, and commuting is easier."

"Do you have another house here?"

"Not really. Even though there are relatives, we're not that close. I can't ask to stay with them. At that time, my house in Bangkok was almost paid off. I decided to sell it and bought a house here with Oab. Then, I had enough money to help him rent a building to start his business."

"P'Oab must be much more relieved now. He has his own business and someone to talk to."

"Yes... I'm a doctor, and I don't have much free time for him during the day. Now, he can work freely without a mean boss like before, and he can interact with more people. It has greatly improved his mental health."

"Congratulations on everything working out well."

"Yeah, I kept thinking about my family who passed away. But what I'd overlooked for eight full years is that God still left Oab with me..." A faint smile spreads across the young woman's face. She takes a deep breath as if she has just relieved a long-held feeling before raising her hand to wipe a tear from the corner of her eye, then turns to me and asks,

"So, how about you and P'Karan?"

"As for Kliao and P'Karan... we're dating."

"How about the wedding?"

Indeed, P'Ming is another person who has been impacted by P'Karan's time-traveling touch, causing her to frequently dream of future events just like I do. And it seems like she might be certain that P'Karan and I will get married.

"Well... If the financial situation works out, we'll get married."

After I said that somewhat hesitantly, P'Ming paused for a moment before bursting into laughter, teasingly saying,

"Why do you look so stiff? Don't tell me you're afraid I'll pull out a gun and shoot you?"

It's like she dreams through it all.

"Well, I..."

This time she stops laughing, changing to a slight smile and a gaze that seems to be reflecting inward.

"Don't worry. I'm not going back to be that crazy b*tch anymore."

Because I must have inadvertently shown my concern, she noticed it clearly. However, now that she's changed her mind, there's no sign of anger. P'Ming probably feels guilty towards her family and those around her for the damage caused during her dark times. So, she turns her tense expression into a wry smile and sighs.

Seeing her like this, I think I should improve the atmosphere, so I take out my phone, open the green app, navigate to the 'Add Friend' page, and hand it to someone older.

"Alright then, as we met again... May I have P'Ming's contact, please? Maybe to send you an invitation card."

The woman called Ming looks at the phone screen and then looks up at me. I give her a sincere smile.

The anesthetist looks confused as I try to keep in touch, but she accepts the phone, allowing her fingers to slowly type in the English letters for an ID into the input field.

When finished, she presses search, and her profile with a white teddy bear picture appears.

"I'm sorry..."

Her soft voice mixed with the evening breeze whispers out.

"It's alright, P'Ming."

I smile warmly and accept the phone back before adding her as a friend.

Initially, I thought she might not accept immediately, but I guessed wrong. Now, she takes out her communication device and presses the 'Accept Friend' button. Then, she sends a cute white bear sticker greeting and tucks the phone back into her pocket, ready to chat a bit more.

"When you finish the internship, which specialization are you leaning towards?"

"I'm interested in neurology, but I'm not sure whether to go the medical or surgical route."

"Good luck with whichever path you choose."

"Thank you."

It's wonderful how the story has unfolded this way...

She turns her gaze back to the front, and I follow suit, becoming two people sitting silently under the evening sun and the cool breeze passing by.

I continue to think about my family that I haven't returned to. Being a medical student, my expenses often result in deductions from my salary, leaving little to transfer to my mother's account every month. Yet, every time my mother would reply,

'Don't worry about sending money. Just come home once in a while. Your father misses you all the time.'

It's a shame that I don't want to go back there at all.

Furthermore, my thoughts expand to the complex memories... Recently, there have been many times when I felt overwhelmed by fleeting memories, all involving events from high school to university where P'Karan and I were together.

They swirled around, almost merging together.

Yes, Indeed, after the time travel incident at the rooftop, P'Karan never disappeared.

The first time, she waited in front of the school. We introduced ourselves briefly, but P'Karan felt like she was being watched, and at that moment, she saw in her vision that I was taken as a hostage in the blink of an eye. She didn't know that the person who was secretly looking at us was P'Ming, so she decided to travel back in time to never meet me on that day.

Before the golden clock appeared, my seventeen-year-old self asked her:

'Will you come to see me again?'

'Yes, I will.'

That's her answer.

The second time, on my birthday, when no one in my family remembered, she appeared with a cake in hand.

The third time, we accidentally met when I was wandering at a shopping mall because I was arguing with my father. Maybe, it was not a coincidence

after all, when I think about it carefully. She walked up to me, holding a bucket of popcorn in her hand, and greeted me saying, 'Remember me? I was the doctor on the rooftop that day.' Of course, I couldn't forget.

The fourth time, we met in Siam Square and had Korean food together.

The fifth time, we met on the bus at night...

And countless other encounters, activities, and things we've done together.

It's most regrettable that in the end, she had to rewind time and get to know me again in another timeline, starting from when I was in Grade 11 until university. One thing P'Karan liked to do was squeeze my hand for encouragement or pat my head thoughtfully.

Perhaps because many events resembled each other, it intensified the déjà vu and resulted in a positive impact.

Now, I remember it all... But I don't tell her as intended. I just want to keep the sweet love with me myself.

Rrrr! Rrrr!

The phone vibrates briefly. I pick it up to see who is contacting me, and I smile when the name of the person I am thinking about appears along with a message showing concern.

Karan_K:

Are you home yet?

Karan_K:

Don't forget to have your dinner. See you tomorrow.

By the way...

One thing I realize from those swirling memories...

The letter 'K' she used at the end of her username...

It's short for the name '**Kliao Khluen**' after all.

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🌿Epilogue : Across Millions of Orbits🌿

Part: Narrator

They say that 'time' always extends when you're waiting for it to arrive, Since the time Kliao Khluen met Ming when she was still an intern in the countryside, another year had passed.

Time continued its course until they finally reached their ultimate dream. Now, Karan had become a specialist in heart surgery, and Kliao Khluen...had transformed into a first-year resident in the Neurosurgery Department.

Both of them started to live together again when the younger one became a resident doctor at a hospital in Bangkok. Although they worked at different places, Karan was always happy to drive her there every morning. She was relieved to know that her condominium wouldn't be lonely anymore.

Despite becoming a resident, Kliao Khluen had to wait for many things to settle before moving in completely. It took several months for her to adjust to the new working environment, systems, and people. Soon enough, she whispered sweetly to Karan herself, saying:

'I'm ready.'

And so, on a Sunday at the end of August, a church in Thailand was prepared for an important event for a couple. One was a heart surgeon, and the other was studying to become a brain surgeon...

Rain fell steadily during the early morning of that day. As it gradually transitioned into late morning, the God of Rain stopped using his power, allowing the droplets to cling gently to the damp petals of flowers. The sky was clear, with the bright sun shining and pristine white clouds.

'The two brides' were separately getting ready in different rooms. On Karan's side, preparations for makeup and hair were underway as she was getting ready to stand and wait for the ceremony... She wanted to see her bride walk towards her and be the one to receive her, standing together to profess their love.

A song from the phone's speaker just finished playing before starting again for the fourth round. The instrumental melody was followed by the sweet, clear voice of a female lead singer inviting everyone to listen without getting bored.

"You seem to really like this song by The Edge of the Universe."

The hairstylist asked, as if wanting to engage the beautiful bride in conversation, still fumbling with the long, silky hair of the CVT doctor.

Karan glanced briefly at the woman at the back through the mirror before lowering her gaze and smiling to herself as she replies.

"My bride composed it for me."

"Wow! So, our Kliao Khluen wrote and sang this song all by herself!?"

The young woman just smiled in acknowledgment of the hairstylist's correct assumption and let every verse and melody of the song With You...Every Moment, performed by The Edge of the Universe Band, echo in the dressing room.

Kliao Khluen spent a year composing this song. It was a result of being occupied with the medical internship and not knowing how to express the significant love for Karan within just four minutes. The young woman mentioned that when she wrote about her feelings for her lover, she spent just a moment putting down lengthy notes on several A4-sized pages.

However, when she had to condense it into a song with not too many words, it took her a long time to craft concise sentences.

However, a year ago, The Edge of the Universe Band released that very song which quickly climbed the charts and stayed in people's ears for several months. The fact that the composer was also the singer added a direct emotional touch to the message, reaching the heart of someone like Karan and leaving the CVT doctor unable to resist adding it to her favorite playlist. It became both a waiting tune and a must-listen whenever there was a spare moment.

For example, as they were about to enter the wedding ceremony... Would there be any reason not to play it?

Despite having seen this scenario many times before, Karan's heart was still excited to soon see her bride walk down the aisle.

The door to the room opened. The young woman who had just finished her hair and makeup looked in the mirror and then glanced towards the figure she knew so well, who was now entering.

It was Four, who had returned from abroad several days prior, particularly for this important event with Jattawa. Only moments before, she had been chatting with guests at the event, giving her just a little time to sneak away and visit her eldest daughter.

The timing was perfect as the hairstylist completed her task, stepping back and allowing Karan a moment to chat with her mother.

The similar height between the mother and daughter made it so that when they stood up and faced each other, their eye contact was at the same level,

"Where are Mommy and Tree?"

"They are talking to the band that will perform when Kliao walks in for the ceremony."

Four checked the bride's outfit that Karan had chosen. Then, she asked,

"Once the ceremony is over, will you two fly off to register your marriage immediately?"

"Yes, we'll register together and go on our honeymoon."

The mother observed that everything about the hair and attire was neatly put together. She took a step back to glance at the younger person in the clean, white Empire-style wedding dress. The long sleeves were delicate and beautifully patterned, complementing the faintly shimmering silver earrings that swayed as she moved.

Her makeup was subtle yet perfectly matched, enhancing the beauty she naturally possessed. Her hair was styled into a cascading braid that flowed gracefully and spread below.

"Auntie Vi has seen the vision from the wedding and told us that you would be stunning, but I never imagined you would be this beautiful."

"Just like Mom," a hoarse voice replied, referencing the wedding album of Mom and Mommy that Karan had seen.

In the album, memories were captured when they were both young. Mother Four looked elegant and dignified, smiling only when her eyes met her own bride. Meanwhile, Mommy Jattawa was so adorable that Karan, as a child, could hardly believe the mischievous girl in the picture would grow up to be the fierce mother of the house.

Four chuckled softly. Today, her eldest daughter was unusually talkative and happy, which was quite rare for her. The mother could tell she was really happy.

"It's almost time. Are you ready to go and wait for your bride?"

The young woman smiled openly.

"I can barely contain my excitement now."

It could be said that Karan had been ready for a long time.

Ever since she saw the visions during high school, she had been waiting for this bride all along.

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As for Kliao Khluen... There was a bustling scene with the petite bride in her streamlined A-line wedding dress, detailed with intricate layers of lace. The neurologist, not accustomed to this style of dressing for social events, encountered difficulty with her shoes, prompting the bride's close friend, Khim, to step in and help.

"Thanks~"

"Gosh, all the members of The Edge of the Universe are busy with other tasks at the event, so I have to look after this hamster dressing up."

Despite complaining, Khim continued to assist her close friend since high school with shoe-wearing. Just like she said, Note, Frang, Nene, and Belle, although in roles similar to bridesmaids, had to manage various tasks within the event.

This was because the guests ranged from doctors and nurses to acquaintances. Additionally, journalists were present to capture moments, especially since one of the brides was a renowned lead singer of a famous band.

"Khim, you're so heartless," teased the person whose hair was intricately styled and covered in a thin veil.

"Isn't it true?"

She continued playfully, before breaking into a smile.

"Oh gosh, you're such a..."

Khim understood how important this day was for Kliao Khluen, especially after receiving excited messages the night before. She had to shake off her

excitement and send voice messages to ensure the petite bride could finally get some rest!

"Okay, stay here and calm down."

"Huh? Where are you going?"

"Just going to sneak a peek at the guests and see if there are any handsome doctors."

"Are you ditching your friend?"

"Hey, come on! We've been together since the crack of dawn! Yes, you're getting married, but I'm still single!"

Kliao Khluen laughed approvingly at successfully teasing their friend before adopting a tone of mock resignation, allowing the other side to go and ogle at the guests as they pleased.

"Alright, hurry back."

"Sure thing! Be right back. Just a moment"

"Take care!"

After the young screenwriter cheerfully walked out with her small purse, the dressing room was left with just Kliao Khluen alone. She stood now in front of the mirror, gazing at her own round eyes. The reflection looked peculiar because her clothes and hairstyle were meticulously arranged for this significant occasion.

Sunlight filtered through the glass doors into the small rectangular room, maintaining a serene yet not overly solemn atmosphere. It was perfect for calming the fluttering nerves.

Indeed, Kliao Khluen did not send invitations to her father, mother, and younger brother. Consequently, during the ceremony, she would have to walk alone, holding flowers, without her father's arm to lean on. Only her bridesmaids would follow behind.

However, she didn't feel lacking in any way. The presence of her friends surrounding her made her feel complete, and most importantly... at this moment, she was about to marry Karan, the warm-spirited woman she loved dearly.

Her small hand reached into her bag and retrieved something-

A silver pocket watch with Roman numerals that Karan had given her before starting the medical internship. Despite now being a first-year resident doctor in the neurology department, she still carried it with her everywhere. Whether going to work, playing music with her band on weekends, shopping for figurines for their condo, or traveling near and far, the watch was a constant companion everywhere she went.

Her thumb lightly brushed against the clean and well-maintained glass of the mirror, prompting a smile because every time she looked into it, she thought of the golden hour glass that often appeared when Karan used her time travel ability-a testament to the love of the woman who had captured Kliao Khluen's heart. Soon, in just a few minutes... they would exchange vows together.

Knock! Knock!

The sound grew louder, calling the petite woman out of her reverie. The person entering through the door was one of her close friends who had come to help with the event. However, only M.R. Netapsorn or Lady Note, who wasn't in a dress due to her role as a photographer requiring agility, had changed from her regular aloha shirt to a cream-colored blouse and clean white pants suitable for the occasion.

In fact, Karan hired a photographer, but Kliao Khluen wanted her friends to capture additional ambiance, both in video and photographs. So, her royal friend volunteered for this task.

"Our lead singer looks so beautiful today," Belle said while smiling half-teasingly at her petite friend, who looked exceptionally stunning today.

Kliao Khluen smiled in response, before a thought struck her, causing her to withdraw slightly and make a mischievous face, playfully teasing.

"No messing up my hair today!"

The other four laughed at this cuteness before Frang walked in, pulling the neurologist's arm to sit straight on the couch together.

"Oh, you crazy girl. I better not mess it up. Otherwise, the bride would have to spend extra time on her hair!"

When the five members of The Edge of the Universe band were sitting on a small sofa set, Nene and Belle sat on one side, Frang sat on another side, and Note sat on the armrest. The conversation among friends continued.

"So, after the ceremony, are you going straight to honeymoon?"

Nene was curious because she had heard her petite friend mention that, after the ceremony, they would both get on the plane together on the same day.

"Um, we will take the flight to register there. They allow same-sex marriage registrations.

Note's eyes remained focused on the photos she had taken with her camera, but she asked,

"So, do you have to change your surname to hers?"

"Um."

"Hey"

"What's up, Frang?"

"I don't know what makes you love P'Karan so much, but either way, we all just want you to be happy."

The bride-to-be felt warm with her friends, who had shared music, joys, and sorrows throughout their university lives together. A smile adorned her

beautiful face.

These four people were essential to the song ***With You...Every Moment*** that Kliao Khluen recorded and composed. Without the guitar, bass, drums, and piano played by all four of them, the song wouldn't have turned out so beautifully.

"Thank you. You all have helped my song complete."

The clear voice sincerely conveyed her inner thoughts that had been desired to be said all along. In the past, The Edge of the Universe was established as a small band for a university competition. Initially, they didn't win any awards, and some people even left negative comments on the page because of Belle the Leader's cheerful personality. Their relationships hadn't been solidified back then.

It took time and stories for them to become close like this.

Belle's reason for forming the band was just to fulfill her dream. Nene secretly liked Belle and wanted to help make her dream come true. Frang needed prize money to buy food for her beloved cats and other animals she kept. As for Lady Note, she had issues with her father and wanted to keep herself busy.

And Kliao Khluen... She joined the band hoping that every time she performed, a certain woman she was looking for might happen to see her.

Over those seven years, she thought she was alone, but it turned out that she had someone older with her all along, protecting her from any harm. Until now, even with every breath she took, Kliao Khluen thanked the warm hand that held hers as they crossed the road together on that day.

Reflecting on it, she almost couldn't believe a miraculous story would happen to her too.

Time reversal.

Future foreseeing.

And the woman named '*Karan*.'

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Part: Karan

Kliao Khluen's guests are sitting on the left side of the church, while my guests are on the right. From this angle, I can see the ceremony podium. Given that the brides are both doctors, I notice that over 80% of this place is filled with medical professionals dressed in their finest attire. Even Fiat himself is wearing his best suit.

Mother Four, Mommy Jattawa, little naughty Mai-Tree, or even Auntie Vi- all four of them are sitting gracefully at the event after helping prepare everything for this crucial moment. I smile again to thank them sincerely, feeling good with the family- style response reflected in their smiles and warm glances.

Glancing towards the left side of the church, I see Ming attending the event. She's in a polite cream-colored dress, devoid of any grudges or ostentation. It's a good confirmation that there won't be any unpleasant events happening at this wedding for sure.

I stand waiting for another bride's appearance, remembering our conversation last night as we talked on the bed.

'Do you know, P'Karan, how much I've been looking forward to this tomorrow moment?'

My 'bride-to-be' voice expressed her excitement openly, her face still beaming with a sweet smile even in the dimly lit room.

Little did she know that I myself had been eagerly waiting for the morning to come soon. My heart beat fast to the extent that I had set advance reminders in my calendar for years while waiting for her to finish her studies.

I reached out to adjust the hair of the person with large round eyes, and the warmth of our touch made me speak my innermost thought aloud:

'We can come back as often as we want.'

'You mean coming back for more wedding days?'

'Um I'd never get tired of affirming my love for her.'

'Would that be nice...?'

'It won't change anyone's fate of death, no matter how many times we rewind.'

'In that case, Kliao would try other wedding dress styles!'

'Sure.'

Because no matter what attire she wears, she looks more beautiful than any fabric could ever be.

I responded shortly, but inside, I was filled with a myriad of emotions. Everything about her captivated me to the point where I didn't want to come back to reality.

Before we went to try on wedding dresses, I saw her hesitating over which style to choose. Ball gown, mermaid, or A-line - every time she showed me a picture, I had nothing more to say except to let her decide based on what she liked best... Because no matter what, Kliao Khluen looks the best in my eyes.

With a blink after stepping out of the reverie, the church door that was opened calls all my attention back to the present.

The petite bride is in an elegant A-line wedding dress with beautiful layers. The top of the dress is adorned with delicate embroidery, similar to mine for us to match. Her face is partially covered with a veil, revealing just enough to make me almost forget to breathe for a moment.

She delicately holds a bouquet of flowers as she walks into the ceremony. The music played so beautifully drives her forward like an angel from heaven approaching me gradually.

However, when Kliao Khluen and the bridesmaids who follow behind reach halfway, I, being another bride, step off the ceremony podium to walk towards her, intending to hold her hand and walk together. Under the thin veil, the younger one shows a shy smile and then confidently places her hands-on mine, trusting in everything.

Throughout the path, I can only gaze admiringly at the person on my left side. No matter how beautifully decorated the surroundings are, nothing can draw my attention away from her.

As we stand facing each other, the light falling upon the thin veil makes the petite woman in front of me look stunning without any exceptions.

She shines...like the warmth of the sun giving comfort in every season.

She, who was yesterday's bride-to-be...

And today, she has become my bride.

And from tomorrow onward, she will be my wife...

If there's ever a day we're upset with each other for any reason, I'll rewind time to make everything better.

Or if one day she opens the wedding photo album and misses the atmosphere of today, I will courageously kiss the back of her hand and then confidently rewind back without hesitation.

To stand here again...and again.

As I contemplate thoroughly, perhaps God did not bestow these abilities upon me for use in any situation. Rather, he graciously gave them to me so that I could have 'time' in abundance with the one I love.

The time we will spend together from now on can only be compared to the Earth revolving around the Sun endlessly, like thousands, millions....

Or even billions of orbits...

-----**THE END**-----

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01. The Reason for Being Clingy



Part: Kliao Khluen

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Two months after the wedding, I've now changed to become a woman using the same surname as P'Karan.

Actually, she asked me if I wanted to keep my old surname as my middle name, but I shook my head in response because I didn't have any good memories with my parents and younger brother as I should. So, taking it out is a kind of relieving my feelings in a way.

I even think it's better this way.

And then, about whether to change from Miss to Mrs., I think it's a personal preference. Men can use Mister for life, whether married or not, and women have the right to use Miss throughout as well, right? The law now certifies this. And I like the first word better because I used to be comfortable using it.

So, now I am 'Miss Kliao-Khluen Narawattanawej,' with the status of the wife of '*Miss Kaosaysa Narawattanawej*,' that's it.

In the neurosurgery department where I work as a resident, there are both those who are happy and others who still find lesbian love strange. But I don't bother to argue or care about this kind of thing because being P'Karan's wife fills my heart with immense love. Our love is very special

already. Anyone who doesn't understand it can bear the burden of their own ignorance.

But wait! If anyone dares to speak ill of my love, I am ready to fight with my full spirit. Everyone in the department and as far as those who know me in the hospital is aware of this.

Feeling somewhat like a first-year resident who is typically obedient but would instantly transform into a hamster shooting fire if someone criticizes her P'Karan. No one wants to see that again, especially since Kliao Khluen revealed it to them when a third-year resident cracked a joke mocking gender issues that no one found funny.

Despite being small, I can do it. Believe me.

The sound of a key card tap followed by the noise of a condominium door opening loudly jolts my senses, reminding me of my hospital experiences both as a student and as a professional.

When I glance at the clock, it shows midnight and forty minutes. A tall young woman who just returned from the evening shift appears.

"You're not sleeping yet?"

She asks upon seeing me in the living room.

"I'm waiting to shower with P'Karan."

She frowns while removing her sneakers because of my earlier statement, "it's late."

"I just want to take a bath with you, can't I?"

"Alright, but if you feel sleepy, don't force yourself to wait. Take a shower and go to bed first, understand?"

"Understood."

I nod, though in truth, I'm not easily drowsy at all. Waiting to soak with her brings immense joy.

"Actually, I want to practice cooking tomorrow. Can we go buy groceries together and fill up the fridge?"

"Where did you get the idea?"

She asks briefly in her husky voice.

I respond from the sofa with a smile,

"I just want to surprise P'Karan a bit. I want to practice making your favorite dishes."

"No need for that."

"I promise not to turn the kitchen into a bomb."

I say jokingly while walking over to stand in front of the tall figure who finished taking off her shoes and is now unbuttoning her shirt.

P'Karan softens her gaze, expressing concern.

"It's not that. I just don't want you to get tired,"

"Please, I really want to practice."

I am not just talking; I even lean in to hug her warm body, looking up into her eyes pleadingly, refraining her stunned hands from unbuttoning the last button.

"...Why are you so clingy today?"

"Please~"

Miss Kaomaysa's ears turn red. Though she keeps everything under a normal face, I can tell she finds my eagerness and sweet tone endearing.

Without further questioning, the owner of the husky voice reluctantly agrees.

"Um..."

"Yay! Thank you!"

"Let's go take a shower. It's getting late."

The older person quickly suggests, probably seeing how late it is. I don't back away immediately; I still want to hug and soak in the warmth I have been thinking about all day. The taller person doesn't say much but comb through my hair, tucking my ears.

If we consider midnight as the beginning of a new day, then today is a very special day. It's the reason why I want to practice cooking a certain dish to give to her.

After a brief moment of hugging, we finally let go.

Together, P'Karan and I walk up the stairs to the first room on the second floor, which is currently 'our' bedroom.

Inside, there's a soft king-sized bed, two pillows, a moon-shaped lamp, and the lingering scent of love.

As for the next room, the bed and belongings have all been moved to P'Karan's house. This room has been transformed into our private library, filled with books related to medicine as well as novels and comics for stress relief. Additionally, there's a cozy corner for relaxation.

In the final room, if you ever wonder when my well-proportioned P'Karan finds time to hit the gym, this is the room that answers that question. It's because all the treadmills and equipment are kept here. Moreover, it's a sliding-door room, and when you slide it open, you'll find it's a glass wall that offers a beautiful view both during the day and at night.

This is why whenever P'Karan exercises, I often come in and sit on the comfortable bean bag chair to enjoy the view, sipping coffee or reading

something enjoyable, spending quality time together.

At 0.57 AM, two sets of clothes are taken off and placed in the basket. Two women are under the same showerhead to rinse off before soaking in warm water. Once we're done washing off all the bath cream, P'Karan, the tall, lean figure, is the first to step into the tub, and then I follow to sit on the opposite side, gazing at that beautiful gaze that hints some exhaustion.

I have to focus on her face because if I lower my gaze below the shoulders, I'll blush for sure.

It's a familiar sight indeed, but I also like the chest and those sweet nipples...

"Mm, you must have had a tough day. Do you want a massage from me?"

"No, it's okay."

"Oh, alright then. But tomorrow evening, I will take care of everything in the kitchen. You don't have to help."

"You have to go that far?"

The person massaging her neck suddenly raises an eyebrow.

"Yes, just sit and watch TV or do something while you wait."

Her slender lips form a slight smile.

"Are you trying to seduce me?"

"Why seducing you? Just this much, you're completely hooked, right?"

"You know it all."

With her sexy body, the slender woman plays with my heart by smirking and leaning in closer, causing our faces to be so close that we can feel each other's breath.

"But it's no surprise; you've been sitting in my heart all this time."

The sudden attack...makes my heart skip a beat.

"I want to eat you."

Those eyes again, as if they're about to devour me for real.

And I have to admit, this Kliao Khluen is something different from the person she was two years ago...

I lean in to quickly kiss P'Karan's lips before revealing a smile.

"Then...you shall eat."

You can say I've become quite the tease.

Her eyes, which looked weary moments ago from the heavy workload, now sparkles with anticipation.

"Consider this permission granted."

Her whisper by my ear makes my heart race with excitement.

The warm water we are soaking in is so clear that I can see everything when I glance down. Now, I can see the delicate hand of the other woman moving closer. She chooses to place it on my thigh gently, starting to knead softly. As the arousal begins to stir, she gradually parts my legs, revealing the rose petals to her gaze.

This is our first time in the bathtub...

"So beautiful...my smart girl."

The older person compliments me while her eyes admire my sensitive spot, causing me to blush even more deeply. Before her warm fingers slowly move closer and slip inside, creating a tight and pleasurable sensation.

Before I manage to let out a moan, my mouth is captured by her sucking kiss. Only a groan can escape from my throat. The more my below part is stimulated, the more my throat makes more frequent and earnest sounds. And believe me, the older woman is enjoying it so much that she doesn't even relent to remove the kiss.

"Um"

Devoid of words, my body sways in response to the movements of her fingers.

After a while, my labored breaths might have revealed to her that I am growing increasingly breathless. Eventually, she reluctantly withdraws her lips, but still leaves a trail of red marks along my shoulder - something she often likes to make.

"A....ah"

The stuttered exclamation trails off into a long groan as emotions surge again like a whirlwind. One of my arms clasps around her neck tightly.

I feel good when those two fingers increase their speed even more, while the warm lips continue to create various red marks of satisfaction, all of which would remain within the confines of the sheets.

My gaze slides down to see the mesmerized rounded chest of the woman who is enjoying her expression of love. The sweet peaks rise due to her inner emotions running wild; they show up above the water's surface from the bend of her knees.

That provokes me, multiplying my feelings exponentially, unable to resist stirring up her heat. So, with the sound of excitement echoing throughout the spacious bathroom, I don't hesitate to lean in and play with her collarbone until her shoulders tremble slightly from being caught off guard.

Seeing that, I chuckle with satisfaction and gently suck on the peaks of her chest, responsive to her fingertips moving rhythmically across my body.

The warm water in the tub envelopes our bodies, blending us as one.

P'Karan's sighs mingle with the sensation as her nipples are teased by my tongue, each touch causing us to moan with joyful anticipation.

I reach the climax earlier due to stimulation both below from the touch of fingers and the pressing of clitoris. Then, I reciprocate with my partner by teasing her with the tip of my tongue, alternating between playfully licking and sucking the tips of her chest.

Then, I direct my attention downwards, using my finger to stroke the buttons gently, causing my partner to arch her back and release a restrained groan.

"Kliao..."

Her husky voice is alluring from the begging, now further enhanced by the trembling from our synchronized movements, accompanied by tones of pleading and yearning, P'Karan's appeal multiply several times over.

I want to hear more of her voice...

So, I tease her repeatedly until I finally help my partner reach the peak.

Tonight, we spend more time in the warm water than usual. There's no doubt why...

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The next day

After Aston Martin drove to pick me up at the hospital where I work, we head to the market together to buy fresh ingredients and other products.

P'Karan has been asking since we got stuck at the red light what menu I wanted to make, but I kept coyly silent, just smiling knowingly to keep the secret. Finally, I replied.

"It's a secret.

"Hmm, mean girl."

Even though she said so, the tall figure stepped out of the car to help me carry the items. To ensure that she wouldn't know what we were planning to cook, I bought various ingredients to mislead her. Even if I don't use them today, the rest will be stored in the fridge. Um, yeah.

It takes quite a while at the market. Luckily, the condo isn't far, and we return around six-thirty in the evening. I have time to shower, change clothes, and then prepare dinner.

"Are you sure you want to do this alone?"

"Yes, P'Karan. Go watch TV or read a book."

I don't say it aloud, but I gesture for the taller figure to leave the kitchen counter area.

"You're so weird today."

"I'm not weird. Stop overthinking."

I believe that deep down, P'Karan has already noticed my gestures and expressions, knowing that I want to make something special for some occasion, although she isn't sure what occasion it is.

When the CVT doctor walks over and plops down on the sofa in front of the TV, I take a moment to gather my courage, inhaling deeply before playing a cooking tutorial clip from the iPad to my left, the wireless earbuds nestled in my right ear.

In the past, we'd help each other with household chores (because I wouldn't let P'Karan do everything alone), but when it came to cooking, she was always the one involved, given my lack of talent in this area. If I were to play the role of a cook...

Well, perhaps some burning, pan-sticking mishaps, or accidentally oversalting, P'Karan would eventually chuckle and assure me not to worry. Then, she would handle the cooking herself.

But today, on this special occasion, I have to give it the best I can.

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I have to admit that it took me a long time to finish, even though I only made three dishes. If it were a MasterChef competition, I'd be eliminated for not meeting their deadlines. But this is our dinner menu, so it's okay to be a little late. I just worried whether P'Karan would be hungry, especially since my own stomach was protesting loudly.

"It's ready!"

After arranging everything beautifully on the dining table, I turn to call my loved one, who is watching international news on TV.

She lift the remote control to turn it off, uninterested in the contents, as if she's been eager to know what I had been doing for hours. The tall figure stands up and walks over to the kitchen area, scanning every dish I made and arranged.

It consists of spaghetti with dry chili and sausage stuffing, baked cheese mussels, and creamy mushroom soup. The drink is fresh-squeezed orange juice.

"They look as delicious as the chef."

P'Karan compliments in amaze, while I blush awkwardly due to the flirt.

"Let's eat. Sit down quickly."

"Um."

I take off my stained apron to hang it up, then come back to sit opposite the woman who has just seated a moment ago. The spaghetti is the only dish

made in two portions, divided between her and me.

We start rolling our pasta and eating together. For me, I feel like I made mine a bit too spicy, but P'Karan responds with a long, throaty sound and a nod, indicating it is delicious.

I feel really happy...

Then, we move on to try the second dish, the baked cheese mussels, which P'Karn praises so much that she even starts pairing them with the spaghetti and enjoying them together.

But the third dish, the creamy mushroom soup, is the one that I feel like I didn't quite get it right. I am not sure if I have forgotten to add key ingredients or what happened to make it turn out like this...despite putting my utmost effort into it.

"I'm sorry..."

"Why are you sorry? It tastes good."

"You're just saying that to make me feel better."

"No, I'm not lying, really."

And the pretty woman says it isn't bad at all. This mushroom cream soup is decent, just not as outstanding as the first two dishes. Besides, she also says that if I sold these three dishes, I would sell a hundred plates easily. That encourages me to keep practicing cooking.

I know very well that my skills aren't as good as P'Karan's when it comes to seasoning and presentation, but I just want her to enjoy herself today.

Then, the right time has come.

I carefully pull out a small square box from my sweater pocket.

It's a white gift box wrapped with red ribbons. A non-talented craftgirl like me had tried to learn gift wrapping for half an hour to create it.

"Well... I have a gift for you."

"...."

The person sitting across from me raises her eyebrow in surprise.

"Last month, during lunch break, I secretly took time to order this."

Upon saying that, I hand the box to P'Karan,

"Go ahead, open it."

I say, curious to see her reaction when she sees what is inside.

She takes the box, and her eyes narrow with intrigue. "Thank you," she says softly, putting down her fork and knife. Then, she starts carefully unwrapping the gift step by step, as if she is afraid of tearing the paper or damaging what is inside.

Inside is a black velvet box. She gently lifts the lid, revealing what I have ordered from a skilled craftsman and ordered since last month, specifically for today... It's a beautiful golden pocket watch. It is the same style as the one she gave me as an engagement gift.

I had taken the silver one to a middle-aged craftsman to replicate it almost exactly. The price is reasonable, and the result is satisfying because it looks identical to the original.

"You don't have to trouble yourself..."

Her husky voice speaks as she picks up the watch. Her lovely lips curl into a smile that hints at her liking for this item, or perhaps she's just happy that I am the one who give it to her.

P'Karan might not remember, but today...is the day she rewound time on the rooftop to save my life.

That day when I was supposed to take my last breath, she exchanged her lifespan for ten years to turn back the clock to the previous week, just

before I got hit by a car on the crosswalk.

Even if she doesn't remember, I'm not upset. I just want to do something for her, like cooking this meal and giving her a gift.

"Kliao Khluen"

"Yes-"

I answer cheerfully before blinking in surprise, similar to her previous reaction. The pretty woman reaches behind the chair and grabs a flat, brown paper bag that has been hidden for a while. Then, she hands it to me.

"Go ahead, open it."

Never did I imagine I'd receive a gift today. My heart races faster than usual, especially when I unwrap it to find a cream-colored knit hat with my name embroidered in small English letters inside.

"Wait, P'Karan, did you knit this yourself!?"

"Yeah, during lunch breaks or stand-by times at work."

That answer leaves me speechless for a moment until I regain my composure.

"Did you...remember today?"

"I never forget anything about you."

Feeling the knit hat in my hands, coupled with her beautiful voice, reminds me that we are living together. It suddenly dawns on me that I'm not the only one who values the events of our past.

"Thank you. I'll treasure it."

Her slender eyebrows furrow slightly.

"Then wear it, don't keep it."

"I'm afraid it will get old..."

"It's okay. If it's old, I'll knit a new one for you."

"You must be tired because it's handcrafted."

"Just seeing my wife wear it gives me energy."

Hearing what she said, even though we've been married for two months, I still can't help but blush. I just notice that I am hiding my smiling face; my cheeks nearly burst. However, I can't escape P'Karan's gaze. She doesn't say anything but smile joyfully. She gives my heart some time to scream before starting to plead.

"Therefore, if there's a chance, please try wearing this."

"I got it."

I lift my face and reply, then promptly put on the beautiful cream-colored knit hat on my head, causing the woman who knitted it to pause for a moment when she looks over.

"It's even cuter than I thought..."

She openly admires without reservation. Surely, I smile wider than before.

P'Karan takes her pocket watch back into its velvet box, promising to keep it in her bag. Whether for work, shopping, travel, or anything else, this precious item will be with her at all times.

I feel so happy...

Today's dinner is a blend of both joy and exceeding expectations.

At least, I did something special for the woman in front of me.

And beyond that, we both will remember today...

What we gave each other is the evidence.

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❀02. One Day of Karan❀

Part: Karan

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"I think you should show a little less love to your wife, sis."

As I hear my little sister saying that, I who have been sipping my coffee slightly frown before asking back calmly.

"Less?"

"Yes, don't you realize, sis?"

"...."

"Okay, I think you are unaware."

She says mischievously, hugging her knees and looking at me seriously.

"It's not just ordinary love! It's a super deep love! Sometimes, it feels like you only have that kid on your mind all day."

"..."

I don't know what triggered her to speak or think like that.

I don't say anything because I'm still wondering. Today, I agreed to help her carry things, so what made her believe I've been thinking about Kliao Khluen all day? Still, I don't argue but say,

"Really? I'll observe myself then."

Today is a free Sunday for both me and Kliao Khluen. We had no plans to go anywhere because we wanted to rest. But then, this morning, my mischievous little sister called me, pleading with a whining voice to take her shopping.

Initially, I wanted to hand over the car keys to my sister so she could drive herself because I wanted to be with Kliao Khluen. But my neurologist advised me to go with her so we could spend some time together as siblings.

So, I end up with this.

Actually, I can tell why Mai-Tree made those pleading sounds. The purpose is just to make me her servant for a day.

"Where else do you want to go?"

"You're asking because you want to return to your condo, right?"

""

"That's true.

"I'm thinking of stopping by a stationery store outside the mall first, then heading to the tailor to pick up my clothes, and I also want to visit the hair salon."

"That sounds like a lot."

"If I were Kliao Khluen, you probably take me to different ten places without getting tired."

""

That's...right.

"Goshhh, it looks like you're head over heels for your wife, just like how Mom is for Mommy."

She slowly shakes her head, playfully pursed her lips a couple of times, and then lifts her glass of matcha latte to drink.

I remain silent to ponder with myself. Ever since I can remember, I can see how deeply my mother, Four, has fallen in love with Mommy Jattawa. She caters to Mama's every whim and yields to everything. Occasionally, they argue, and usually, it is my mother who surrenders, unless Mommy is genuinely at fault and decides to apologize first.

Looking back at me and Kliao Khluen, I'm not sure how I behave when I'm with her. However, I can tell that I enjoy waking up and seeing her face. I love cooking for her and hearing her say she is happy. Whatever I can do to make Kliao Khluen happy, I am willing to do it.

There are no mirrors around to reflect my thoughts. So, I'm not sure if I am smitten or what Mai-Tree said is just true.

The rest of the day is spent accompanying my mischievous younger sister to the places she wants to go. This includes waiting for her while she gets her hair done at the salon. It feels like it is taking forever, so I pick up my phone to text Kliao Khluen that she would need to wait a bit longer.

Two hours feel like two years.

Finally, I've regained my freedom. I drove my sister back home, and it was already quite late by that time.

On the way back, I think about what to cook for dinner. It is already past 6 PM, and I don't want to spend too much time cooking. Otherwise, my wife might get hungry.

What should I make? Or should I just buy something?

Without a conclusion, just as the traffic light turns green, I have a chance to call someone who is probably at home watching a TV series.

[Yes, P'Karan.]

A clear, warm voice answers the call.

"I'm heading back. Do you want anything to eat?"

[Aren't you going to cook it yourself today?]

"Well...just in case you're bored."

[No, I won't. Your cooking is the best.]

That response inevitably creates a slight smile on my face. Then, the person on the other end continues.

[But if you went shopping with P'Mai-Tree, you must have used a lot of energy, so how about! cook tonight? I can make simple dishes. Remember that spaghetti we had last time?]

"I remember, but you might be tired."

[How am I supposed to get tired? I'm been watching TV series all day. Let me handle it. You come back to eat, that's all.]

"Um...okay, if that's the case."

In that case, I have to hurry back to help her.

Kliao Khluen shouldn't have to waste her energy on a day off like this.

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Arriving at my condo, the dining table is neatly set up. I guess, after hanging up the call with the little one, she immediately got up to arrange everything. I want to blame myself and the latest red light for obstructing me; otherwise, I should've been her apprentice.

Tonight, my wife chose a simple menu consisting of fried rice with an omelet, slightly burnt around the edges. The taste is quite delicious by someone who rarely cooks.

"Why do you only eat the edges?"

"They're crispy, and I like them."

I respond, placing the dark brown edges of the omelet onto my plate. I just don't want her to eat the burnt parts; they aren't very healthy.

Kliao Khluen doesn't notice my intention. She's eager to chat about the romantic foreign series she'd been watching all day. I'm not particularly fond of the genre, but I can watch it with her. So, I agree to continue binge-watching it after dinner.

I glance over at her wide smile as she is about to have someone to join her.

Well...

She's so adorable.

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The next day

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In the morning, I give the neurologist a ride to her hospital as usual, then I head towards my own workplace. The song playing in the car, *With Your...Every Moment*, always provides me with work motivation whenever and wherever.

Speaking of myself...

My nickname, '*The OR Freezer*,' hasn't changed; I just transformed from a fellow into a staff member. Perhaps, for some nurses and other doctors, my

freezing would be even colder than before.

It is another day with a heart surgery case since the morning. But now, I no longer need to assist because I completed my residency a year ago and became a team leader. Today, a third-year resident is assisting me.

Kliao Khluen once mentioned that I was too quiet in the operating room, meaning quiet when 'she wasn't around.' So, I improved by speaking more.

Yes, speaking more. For example, I converse with residents or nurses, but keep the conversation limited to surgery topics. At least, I try not to be too silent in the surgical field. However, because of my emotionless face (except with Kliao Khluen) and my calm tone, they might think I'm criticizing them. That's why a freezer becomes a snowstorm. At the end of the day, I decide to be quiet again and let the music clear the air, which is better. I don't mind because I've never been good at talking from the start.

Fiat is still here. He plans to move to work at a hospital in the southern province where his girlfriend lives. But it doesn't seem to be happening anytime soon. Me too. In the future, I plan to take Kliao Khluen to work and settle in my home country because our marital status is legally approved there. We can benefit from the state welfare as a married couple.

I asked Kliao Khluen about it, and she said she's ready to move there after completing her board exam, which is good news.

During lunch, Fiat, a female first-year resident, and I come out from the same department to have a simple meal at a nearby restaurant near the hospital because we don't want to go far. We still have cases to attend to in the afternoon.

"Am I a third wheel for you guys?"

Prow, a first-year resident, who came looking for something to eat outside with us, asks cheerfully. This makes me and Fiat both knit our brows tightly. Observing our reactions, she asks again in confusion.

"Oh, you two aren't together?"

"I already have a wife," I reply.

"What?"

The youngest among us looks surprised upon hearing my response.

"I already have a girlfriend too." Fiat continues.

"Well... I understand P'Fiat's point, but P'Karan is joking, right?"

The only man at the table smiles.

"Karan got married just a few months ago."

"With a woman?"

I don't know why, whenever this topic arises, I want to explain to everyone that I'm already married.

"Yes, we're also registered."

I say, reaching for my phone to show my lock screen picture to my junior; it's Kliao Khluen in her pre-wedding dress. I don't say anything further ... just want to her cuteness to the world.

Prow exclaims "Wow!" while gazing at my wife, then she compliments.

"She's so cute!"

At that moment, I inadvertently nod in agreement.

The person in the picture is indeed very cute.

Three dishes are served simultaneously. I ordered stir-fried basil with shrimp, a simple and classic menu without complications. The shop owner herself didn't bother to garnish much; she just served the rice separately with the hot stir-fried dish on top. It looks like an ordinary dish.

Despite that, I decide to unlock my phone and open the camera to take a picture to send to Kliao Khluen.

Karan_K:

Today's lunch.

Karan_K:

(Image Sent)

On the other side, she must be having her lunch break as well. The LINE app shows 'Read' within a few minutes.

Kliao K:

Just got out of the OR. Thinking of going to the hospital cafeteria.

Kliao K:

Maybe it's better to eat the same as you.

While Prow and Fiat are eating their food and chatting lightly about the morning news, I eat my stir-fried basil with shrimp and sneakily glance at my phone. Kliao Khluen disappears for about ten minutes, then sends back a picture of her chicken basil dish.

Kliao K:

The vendor said they don't have shrimp. Too bad.

Kliao K:

(A Sticker of a Pursed-lip Hamster Sent)

Kliao K:

I want to eat shrimp!

Karan_K:

Noted.

After work, I'll stop by to get some 'shrimp' until they completely run out of stock.

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Kliao Khluen is not on duty tonight, but due to an unexpected turn of events, she has to swap shifts with another colleague. As a result, my wife would be on the night shift, and it is an ER shift.

"Then... I'll pick you up at midnight."

[No, please rest. I'll go back by myself.]

"I can't sleep. I want to go pick you up."

[Oh...]

The person on the end knows I am worried about her. After a brief pause, she agrees.

[Alright, but you can have dinner first. I will have boxed meals in the common room.]

"Alright. Wish you a lucky shift."

[Okay, I'll go now.]

I hang up and glance at the fresh shrimp in the large bag that I just bought a whole lot from the merchant uncle. They would become null for this meal. I am still standing in the bustling market, with a shopping bag full of ingredients to prepare various dishes for the neurologist.

What should I do next? If I use them for tomorrow morning's meal, would it be too heavy?

Despite a slight frown, thinking about her food options, I continue walking, eyeing the fruits destined for the refrigerator. There, I find what Kliao Khluen enjoys - kiwi. She always orders this smoothie without knowing it is her favorite.

With that in mind, I buy some other fruits a little and focus mainly on kiwi. I intend to make a smoothie for her to enjoy.

Back to the condo, I put away the groceries and realize how empty it is again. I climb the stairs to our bedroom, intending to find some used clothes to wash, but the basket is empty. Yesterday morning, Kliao Khluen must have sneakily taken them away while I was cooking.

This means I'll be free...until she finishes her afternoon shift.

There's nothing else to do. Dishes have been washed since morning.

The car just entered the car care yesterday.

I don't like being free...except when I'm with Kliao Khluen. Everything's fine when she's around.

Finally, it's time for a simple dinner around 8 PM - just a salad. Then, I exit the condo to shop again, this time for furniture and home decor. I remember my wife complaining the day before about wanting a box to store her reused paper.

My regular store isn't far from the hospital where I work. They have several furniture pieces in style that Kliao Khluen and I both like. Additionally, they regularly introduce new imports every two weeks. We often come here together on holidays.

Before we dated and got married, I used to walk alone without feeling strange. However, this time, pushing the cart without the little one leading me cheerfully, I miss her without reason.

I walk through various zones starting from the lights, bathrooms, tools, bedrooms, cleaning, and tiles, taking half an hour as there is no hurry. As I look at the cart in front, I notice that, besides the box my wife wants, I didn't pick up anything else. It seems like I'm just here for window shopping.

Then, when I enter the decorative zone, and my peripheral vision catches onto something just right to fit in my hand, placed on the shelf in a row above.

It is a brown hamster figurine holding sunflower seeds...

Adorable, just like my wife.

No, no, my wife is cuter.

Even though it reminds me of the little one, she's even cuter.

Anyway... it's better to buy it and place it above the bed.

I immediately decide and reach out to pick up the round hamster figurine and place it in the cart.

At that moment, the voice of Mai-Tree from yesterday pops into my head.

'It's not just ordinary love! It's a super deep love! Sometimes, it feels like you only have that kid on your mind all day.'

I stare at the chubby hamster for a moment, then finally let out a soft chuckle to myself.

From morning to evening, or any spare moment (except when seriously caring for patients), my mind is filled with thoughts of her. Some appear on their own, while others are welcome to run and play in my mind and soul.

Even now, the cart contains the box she needs and a hamster figurine resembling her.

I guess it's true.

For me...each day is all about Kliao Khluen.

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03. On the Sea Surface, Amidst the Waves

Part: Kilao Khluen

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The Edge of the Universe has another trip.

This time it's a two-day, one-night yacht trip!

The one proposing this is our group leader, Belle, who wanted us to open our eyes after working relentlessly day and night, even on our days off. In reality, her mom runs a duck noodle shop, and Belle wants to continue it. However, Belle isn't good at cooking; no matter how hard she tries, she can't replicate her mother's recipe.

So, she ends up working as an accountant in an office, which aligns with her field of study. As for the duck noodle shop, her mom still runs it to fend off loneliness, even though her daughter advised her to retire and take care of herself.

On the other hand, Nene, Frang, and Note readily agreed to the travel plan. But Frang had one condition, which is to bring her girlfriend along. Of course, Belle really welcomed her. Why not? Nene is already Belle's girlfriend.

So, suppose Frang brings her girlfriend, and then P'Karan and I join in. It's like a triple date trips...which is too bad for Lady Note, who is currently single.

Here's the conversation we had a month ago on a video call.

(So, are you coming with us, Doctor?)

Belle asked, double-checked after everyone else had agreed except me.

"I'm not available this month."

[Just for three days.]

Frang insisted. She was still at the veterinary clinic because she worked as a veterinarian, but she was about to finish her shift.

"I might have some free time next month, but three days is a bit long."

[How about just two days and one night?]

Nene, who was in the same frame as Belle, negotiated.

"Um... That should work."

[Great, it's settled then. No backing out, okay?]

My royal friend took the wind out of my sails. Last year, our forest hiking trip plan failed because I was on duty out of town.

"Sure, no backing out. Last time, I was on internship. I was almost the head doctor. But now, I'm a resident. You guys choose the date then, just tell me in advance and I will clear my schedule for it."

As always, Belle was excited at the prospect of experiencing something new. She promptly arranged a date and contacted the yacht. It's certainly expensive because the yacht chosen by our group leader isn't ordinary.

But our band has been in the industry for a while, and we are at a point where each gig isn't small. Plus, everyone's working now, so each of us has an income enough to afford something nice.

A month and a little more have passed quickly as each member has been busy with work. Belle was on the verge of tears from accounting tasks,

while Nene was trying to expand her father's car care business. Frang worked as a veterinarian at a vet clinic and planned to open her own.

Note was an architect at a renowned company and had become quite occupied. As for me, I was focused on studying neurosurgery, or simply put, brain surgery (including the spine and nerves).

Believe me, we hardly had any music gigs together. Occasionally, we covered songs and uploaded them on YouTube because the fans missed us.

Time blended with work, and days progressed steadily. Finally, tomorrow would be the day *The Edge of the Universe* bring their loved ones together for a trip.

"I'm so excited. I can't sleep."

Restlessly, I move around on the bed, pouring out my thoughts to P'Karan who is lying beside me. Her eyes softens, accompanied by a gentle smile at the corner of her lips.

"Didn't The Edge of the Universe frequently have trips together?"

"Yes, that's right. The first time we went as volunteers, the second time to the beach, the third time we climbed a mountain, and now this time we'll be on a yacht overnight. I can't help but get excited because I usually stay on land! This time I'm going to be in the water!"

Then, I suddenly pause in curiosity.

"By the way, P'Karan, have you ever been on a yacht before?"

The CVT doctor in the matching orange nightgown reaches over to pull the blanket over my shoulders, charmingly replying with her husky voice,

"Yes, but not in this country."

"Oh, you've experienced it before then?"

"It's been a while."

"That's it. But this is my first time on a yacht. I'm afraid of getting seasick..."

"Don't worry too much. I'll be here the whole time... Now, it's time to sleep. We have to take off early tomorrow."

"Okay..."

I respond softly before snuggling closer to seek warmth from the older woman, the way I always like to do when there is a lot on my mind.

Her arms wrap around me, and her hand gently pats my back twice, a soothing gesture. The sweet scent of her shower cream mixed with her natural fragrance eases my mind into a safe and familiar comfort, gradually lulling me to sleep in the quiet of the night.

Mmm...

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The journey from Bangkok to Phuket is considered best by air because if you were to go by car, it would take about ten hours. Besides, P'Karan and I rarely have our days off. We still have patients waiting for us on Monday. Right now, it feels like giving our brains a little break and freshen up our lives.

A quick flight takes just over an hour. We sit in a car for a little bit more, and then we reach the port, about to board the yacht.

"I'm hungry."

Just before we reach the pier, Belle pouts and complains, prompting Nene, who's helping her carry the bags, to say.

"Wanna eat something first?"

"Okay!"

So we wait for Nene to take Belle, our big eater, to buy some snacks and soft drinks for lunch on the boat. Meanwhile, each of us has our own activities. Note grabs a camera to take pictures of various scenes, places, and people, while Frang ties up Klai-Duen's hair bang.

P'Karan replies some work-related messages from a junior colleague in her department. As for me, I gaze across the wide expanse of water, letting my mind and heart drift freely. I'm absorbing the atmosphere of relaxation

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Suddenly, a loud crashing noise jolts my nerves. I automatically turn towards the source, only to come across a teenage girl lying jerked and stiff not far from where we are. People rush in to see, but what really widens my eyes is a shopkeeper tossing her own merchandise aside and running towards the girl with a spoon ready to force into her mouth.

"No! Don't!"

P'Karan shouts, making the auntie pause immediately.

Then, all of us divert our attention away from everything and rush to that spot.

I am no longer an extern now, but a medical doctor who has completed her studies and is now pursuing neurosurgical training. Thus, I am the one who kneels down to examine the patient's condition.

I gently remove the tightly wrapped clothing from the young girl. P'Karan then removes her outer shirt and quickly hands it to me. I take the shirt skillfully to cushion the head of the seizing patient and help her lie on her side.

No utensils in the mouth for someone having a seizure!" I exclaim.

The aunt refuses to listen and tries to force a spoon into the patient's mouth. Fortunately, P'Karan helps to keep her away. However, the middle-aged woman's mouth spews out.

"Are you crazy? What are you doing? Have you never seen this in a drama?"

"I am a doctor."

I turn to tell the outraged shopkeeper. There's a huge misunderstanding in Thai society. As a neurosurgeon, I must make them understand the right approach with a calm voice.

"Forcing objects into the mouth like in dramas is dangerous. It can break teeth and block the airway, leading to death."

I explain, while observing the seizing girl's conditions.

More people start to gather, making the air denser. My friends help me to block them out.

It takes two minutes and another ten seconds to stop the girl's convulsions.

I exhale as she did not seize for more than five minutes. After she gradually regained consciousness, P'Karan stops holding the shopkeeper, causing the aunt to run in with a startled and tearful face.

"Are you okay, dear!?"

"Yes... Auntie."

They must be an aunt and her niece.

I pick up the fallen jacket and stand up, holding it, before handing it back to P'Karan with a thankful smile for her prompt help, no need to saying much. The tall woman nods as if to acknowledge that she is also a doctor.

However, one thing I find difficult to let go of is talking to that shopkeeper, who has turned away to comfort her niece.

"Auntie... The seizure is caused by abnormal brain waves. It's important to take her for a thorough examination to find the underlying cause. If the patient has another seizure like this in the future, follow the method I told

you-use a pillow to cushion her head, lay her on her side to prevent choking on saliva, and observe closely. Normally, seizures stop on their own, but if it lasts more than 5 minutes, it's urgent to see a doctor."

"Ha!"

"If you go to the hospital, the doctors there will recommend the same approach. Trust me."

There is no thank you from the aunt, just a skeptical look sent my way. I overhear her telling her niece that she will close the shop and take her to the hospital immediately.

That's fine, because either way, the doctor at the hospital will advise the same precautions as me-no objects in the mouth during a seizure. Then, the auntie will know that I wasn't lying.

Klai-Duen (Frang's girlfriend), the youngest in our group, admires me with her eyes. She's a girl who's a couple of years younger than me. She looks delicate; no wonder why Frangis always protecting her. I smile back at her as the older one...even though we're about the same size.

Belle and Nene return from buying snacks just in time to see us leaving the area where people were just dispersing from the festival. They look puzzled and ask what happened. Note explains angrily, as the vendor glared and retorted at us like that.

But I reassure them, saying it's okay. After all, when I went to help and described basic first aid methods, I wasn't thinking about anything else. It just happened automatically.

"Shall we go on board?"

I don't want everyone to be annoyed, so I suggest we head to the yacht we have booked in advance.

The others agree. Each seems to leave what happened between us and that aunt here by nodding in assent before we go to find the staff and meet our

boat's captain.

I'm not a fan of boats, so I've been clinging to P'Karan's arm ever since we stepped onto the dock and settled into the luxurious interior of this premium yacht. The seven of us feel like we are staying at a top-tier hotel, and even as the vessel moves on the vast waters, I still feel attached to my lover. She doesn't complain at all but keep asking if I am okay or have a seasick. Then, she invites me to admire the interior to ease my worries.

This yacht has four bedrooms and private bathrooms. We pair off for sleeping: Nene with Belle, Frang with Klai-Duen, me with P'Karan, and Note all on her own.

We go to unpack at our individual rooms, inspecting bathrooms and organizing the bedrooms. As noon approaches, we gather in the central area, which looks like a living room.

Everyone has been waiting there ahead of us.

"I'm feeling seasick..."

Nene speaks softly, looking slightly pale while sitting on the sofa. Belle stays close by, looking after her.

During lunch, we eat some simple dishes in the living room. We haven't stopped at any islands yet as we intend to do that on our way back tomorrow. Later in the afternoon, the captain takes us to various islands for different activities like kayaking to enjoy the scenery.

I hold P'Karan's hand all the time, or if we are separated, like when we are rowing single-seater boats, I often turn to look at her. She always sends reassuring smiles, as if to say, *'Don't worry, I'm here with you.'*

Looking back to my childhood, I rarely experienced moments like this except during girl scouts camping. My fear slowly fades, replaced by excitement and admiration for such atmospheres.

At 4:30 PM, we board the boat again and prepare dinner together.

I almost forgot to mention that this yacht has a kitchen area, so we get to showcase our skills with the ingredients prepared by the crew in the fridge. We choose to cook by ourselves since we have four skilled cooks in the group: Frang, Klai-Duen (they probably acquire the skills from frequent homecooking), Nene, and P'Karan.

As for Belle, Note, and me, we sit in the lounge area together, sometimes looking out the windows or exploring other parts of the boat, occasionally helping the four with trivial tasks.

When it is almost 6 PM, dinner is ready to be served.

During the midday sail, the boat is fast and noisy at the rear, but now that we are stationed, dining at the aft table in the open, peaceful area is a different experience altogether. Of course, the three of us who didn't really help with the meal prepare the plates and cutlery and lay out all the food.

Several years ago, I visited the sea, and everything was also delicious then. However, now I'm sitting comfortably and eating continuously, enjoying the changing sky as it turns to night, with a spread of seafood grill and spicy seafood dipping sauces, steamed shrimp with vermicelli, crispy seafood pancake, crab in curry powder, and squid fried rice-it is truly a dinner that can fulfill our stomachs and make everyone very happy all at once.

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8.28 PM

The weather is quite chilly, but we bring blankets with us to the rooftop area to sit and gaze at the night sky. There is a Jacuzzi available for bathing, but it doesn't seem like the right moment for that now, as everyone is more interested in the surroundings.

Belle, who is usually enthusiastic about this, lays down on Nene's lap and takes out her phone to livestream for the fan club on our band's page. Comments flow in as they join us virtually.

Frang and Klai-Duen open a tablet to access a CCTV app installed at home to watch their pets. They both smile happily while zooming in on their animals.

As for Note...

Our beautiful royal descendant sits alone, looking up at the stars above, seemingly lost in thought.

I turn back to P'Karan, whom I am leaning against. The beautiful young woman in a thick long-sleeved shirt looks at me and murmurs "Hmm?" in her throat, as if asking what's wrong.

"Can I go see Note for a bit?"

"Why ask for this small matter?"

"I'm afraid you might be jealous."

Hearing that, the older person laughs.

"We've been married for so long. Note and Kliao are friends. I'm not going to be childishly jealous like before."

She mentioned about the time we weren't registered as a couple yet in regret. For me, I understand her jealousy. P'Karan also tried to understand and never brought up a fight. So, her jealous style was pretty mature.

I smile. "Thank you."

She isn't a talkative person, so she doesn't respond but pick up a blanket to cover my shoulders to protect me from the cold.

I get up to sit beside Her Grace who is sitting near the edge of the roof. Today, Note had been wearing an aloha shirt all day long, but now she's wearing a long-sleeved white shirt to protect herself against the cold. The young woman glances briefly to identify who it is before returning her attention to the evening sky once again.

I start a conversation.

"What are you enjoying the wind here?"

"The stars are beautiful."

I look up a bit, not just glancing, but exploring the universe's mysteries. Then, I discover that the twinkling stars are truly beautiful. Although I had done some stargazing at the glass room in our condo, I never experienced something like this.

The night breeze blows past. I tighten the blanket that P'Karan has covered me with earlier because it feels cold. Note still doesn't say anything, even though this should have been an open-minded moment. Perhaps because she is thinking over some stories. Therefore, my mouth asks out of curiosity.

"You don't really care about love. Is there already someone in your heart?"

"Yeah, there's my first love."

I am surprised and excited, nudging my friend with my elbow.

"Who is it? Come on, introduce her to your friend."

This time, she lowers her gaze, looking towards the sea reflecting the moon and stars instead.

"Only if we meet again someday..."

There's someone in Note's heart...and in her memories, isn't it?

"Are you sad?"

"Nah, just nostalgic...I guess. I'm just thinking about it."

At this moment, with this atmosphere, she probably wants to release her thoughts to the beauty of the universe we can see from the Earth. So, I don't say anything more than that because just knowing that she isn't sad put me at ease.

I sit silently with my friend for a while. After about five minutes passed, I get up and go back to sit and share warmth with P'Karan, as usual.

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All seven of us descend from the skydeck at 10 PM and head to our separate bedrooms.

Perhaps due to exhaustion from the flight and afternoon activities, I feel into a deep sleep in P'Karan's embrace, without any disturbance.

It feels warm...like my dream is going to be warm too.

This warmth is from both my body temperature and heart temperature.

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The next day

5.38 AM

Accustomed to waking up early every morning as a doctor, I find myself waking up at dawn. I can see P'Karan getting up to wash her face and brush her teeth, then she leans over to give me a kiss, mentioning she is heading to the kitchen area to make some hot drinks.

Hearing that, I lazily stay in bed for a while before getting up to tend to myself in the bathroom. Then, I follow her out.

It smells like corn...

My nose catches that scent. As expected, the older person hands me a glass of corn-flavored drink. Her right hand holds her own glass.

"Thank you."

The two of us who woke up earlier than the others walk towards the area at the back which was used as a dining spot last night, sipping on our hot drinks while gazing at the sky nearing six in the morning.

"Are you still afraid of being on the ship?"

Her concerned voice asks.

"No, not anymore."

Because you're right beside me....

In front of us is the sea and the horizon. It is hard to find a peaceful moment in the morning like this in our doctor lives.

"This place is more suitable for watching the sunset."

P'Karan says out of the blue.

It's true that Phuket is more suitable for watching the sunset than the sunrise at this time. If you really want to see it, you might have to go to certain spots like the Stone Bridge, not where our ship is floating. But that doesn't make me feel bad at all.

I sip the corn drink that she brewed for me, then turn to smile at her.

"It's okay."

"Aren't you disappointed?"

"I have my own sun."

The listener stays silent for a moment when she realizes I am comparing it to 'her.' Shortly after, a beautiful mouth smiles softly while replying.

"That's right. I also have my own sun right here."

Without either of us saying a word, just by glancing at each other for a second, we both know what the other wants. The magnetic attraction of Prof. Karan's demeanor never wavers, even slightly, from the time she was

still a fellow. We both lean closer to allow our lips to touch closely and taste the sweetness together.

The kiss is warm, fragrant, and alluring, leaving me wanting to savor it for a long time.

Our warm tongues touch, sharing moisture and merging into all the stories we have shared together. The clock's hand continues ticking and, perhaps, revolving until completing several rounds.

When we are both satisfied with this sweet morning, P'Karan gently withdraws her warm lips before moving her beautiful face closer to whisper gently by my ear with her charming husky voice to continue her statement, causing my heart to race.

"...And you're the cutest sun in the universe."

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- Special Parts End -

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